

KNIGHTS AND LADIES OF MARSHALL LECTURE(S) SERIES

**MARSHALL MOREAU MURAT MEMORIAL LECTURES
2014 – 2023**

Compiled by
HRBC

August 2023

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A series of Biennial Lectures Delivered over the Period

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August 2023

¹ Historical Research and Beatification Committee (HRBC) of the Knights and Ladies of Marshall

The Knights and Ladies of Marshall have instituted the biennial Marshall Moreau Murat Memorial Lectures to honour the memory of Sir James Marshall² and Rev. Fathers Auguste Moreau and Eugene Murat, of the Society of African Missions (SMA), who contributed immensely to the establishment of the Catholic Mission in the Gold Coast (Ghana) in 1880.

² Sir James Marshall was, for some time, a Chief Magistrate and Judicial Assessor at Cape Coast, Gold Coast (Ghana), Puisne Judge at Lagos and finally Chief Justice of the Gold Coast and Nigeria, resident at Accra, Gold Coast. (*Manual of the Noble Order of the Knights of Marshall, Page 18*)

CONTENTS

1.	A Christian and a Citizen in Church – State Relations: The Post Synod Exhortation “Africae Munus” and Christian Social Commitment	6
	<i>His Eminence Cardinal Peter Appiah Turkson</i>	
2.	Working on Our Christian Identity as a Means of Transmitting the Faith.....	31
	<i>Most Rev. John Bonaventure Kwofie, CSSp</i>	
3.	Responding to the <i>Amoris Laetitia</i> with Love in the Family: The Marshallan.....	58
	<i>Most Rev. Philip Naameh</i>	
4.	Our Call to Fraternity and Social Friendship in view of <i>Fratelli Tutti</i> : The Marshallan.....	84
	<i>Most Rev. Matthew Kwasi Gyamfi</i>	
5.	The Quest of a Christian for Spirituality: Some Pathways for Catholics and Marshallans in Particular.....	118
	<i>Most Rev. Emmanuel Kofi Fianu, SVD</i>	
	Appendix	132

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL PETER APPIAH TURKSON



Photo Source: Vatican News

13th – 14th August, 2014

**A CHRISTIAN AND A CITIZEN IN CHURCH – STATE RELATIONS: THE POST
SYNOD EXHORTATION, “AFRICAEMUNUS” AND CHRISTIAN SOCIAL
COMMITMENT**

By

Cardinal Peter Appiah Turkson
President, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

INTRODUCTION

I thank the Order of the Knights and Ladies of Marshall for the invitation to deliver this year's version of the Marshall Moreau Murat Memorial Lectures; and with my sentiments of gratitude come my warm felicitations for institutionalizing the memory of the beginnings of Catholic missionary evangelization in our country. This institutionalized memory and the just concluded Pastoral Congress in Sunyani on *New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith in Ghana in the light of "Africae Munus"* make me want to consider how the three parameters, proposed by the 2nd Synod for Africa for *New evangelization*, namely, *service to reconciliation, justice and peace*, may also inspire and engender forms of Christian engagement in society for the Marshallan Christian and Citizen. This will reflect our effort to lend credence to the universal ecclesial value of the *II Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa*³ and suggest an application of its fruits gathered in the post-Synod Exhortation, *Africae Munus*.

As you may know, on 19th. November 2011 and in the chapel of the Major Seminary at Ouidah, Benin, Pope Benedict signed the post-Synod Exhortation, *Africae munus*, making the fruits of the 2nd. Synod for Africa part of the universal Magisterium (teaching office) of the Church. Barely two days after Pope Benedict XVI had signed the post-Synod Exhortation, *Africae Munus*, the Standing Committee of the *Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar* (SECAM) gathered the African clergy (Cardinals, Bishops, Priests and Religious) who had joined the Pope on his visit to Benin in a meeting to discuss the implementation of the newly-signed post-Synod Exhortation (*Africae Munus*). The African prelates left Cotonou resolved to *find efficient and effective ways for the dissemination and implementation of the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI: Africae Munus*.⁴

I trust that the same resolve for implementation will greet the profiles of Christian social commitment which we shall attempt to describe together in *Africae Munus* tonight.

³The *II Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa* will henceforth be referred to simply as "2nd Synod for Africa".

⁴An excellent summary of the post-synod exhortation, *Africae Munus*, by Archbishop Nikola Eterovic, the General Secretary of the *Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops*, is available at (<http://www.radiovaticana.net/en3/Articolo.asp?c=539346>)

"AFRICAE MUNUS" IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

The place and the significance of the post-Synod Exhortation, *Africae Munus*, as the gathering of the fruits of the II Special Assembly for Africa, within the Church⁵ is easily determined by the resonances between the Exhortation and other documents and events of the universal Church which constituted the setting of the 2nd. Synod for Africa and affected the composition of the post-Synod Exhortation. These events (and documents) are:

- the I Special Assembly for Africa (1994) and its post-Synodal Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995);
- the Synod on the Eucharist and its post-Synodal Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007);⁶
- the year of St. Paul (2009);
- the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Cameroon and Angola (2009);
- the first social encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009);
- the Synod on the Word of God and its post-Synodal Exhortation, *Verbum Domini* (2010);⁷
- the *Year of Priests* (2009-2010);⁸
- the announcement of the holding of a Synod on *New Evangelization* (Oct. 2010).⁹

For the purposes of this lecture: its brevity and easy listening, we shall consider more fully the influences on *Africae Munus* of the I Special Assembly for Africa (1st. Synod for Africa), the papal travels in Africa *before* and *after* the holding of the Synod: *before* the synod to deliver the *Instrumentum laboris* of the Synod and *after* the synod to sign and to promulgate the post-synod exhortation, and the first social encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*. Only passing references will be made to the other ecclesial events and documents.

From the I Special Assembly (1st African Synod) to the II Special Assembly (2nd African Synod)

Benedict XVI is explicit in *Africae Munus* about his intention that the 2nd. Synod for Africa should continue the 1st. Synod for Africa of 1994.¹⁰ Accordingly, the 1st. Synod, which was

⁵Pope Benedict XVI's clear affirmation of the significance of the Special Assemblies for the universal Church is clear in *Africae Munus*: The Special Assembly dealt with problems facing "*their particular churches and the universal Church*" (§4). The Pope calls upon the whole Church to look to Africa with faith and hope (§5); and the image, *Church-family of God*, is significant for the universal Church (§7,8).

⁶Already, during his visit to Angola to deliver the *instrumentum laboris* of the II Special Assembly, Pope Benedict XVI, pointed to the Eucharist and the Word of life as source of "light and nourishment" for Africa's mission of *service to reconciliation, justice and peace*. (*Address of the Holy Father....: Meeting with the Special Council of the Synod for Africa*. Yaoundé, 19 March 2009). Cf. too, *Africae Munus*, § 109, 152-154.

⁷ The first chapter of *Africae Munus* identifies servants of *reconciliation, justice and peace* as also "authentic servants of God's Word" (§ 15). Similarly, to the various agents of the Spirit's charism for the common good in part II of the Exhortation are recommended various ways of feeding on the Word of God. Cf. too, § 150-151.

⁸Cf. *Africae Munus*, §108

⁹Thus, *Africae Munus*, §2 affirms that *New Evangelization* was already the aim of the I Special Assembly for Africa.

¹⁰*Africae Munus*, §1

called a "synod of Resurrection and hope",¹¹ lead to a 2nd Synod, which in turn was called a "synod of a new Pentecost",¹² just as Pentecost follows after Easter. Similarly, "Africa's commitment to the Lord Jesus" (*AfricaeMunus*) which in the 2nd Synod for Africa did inspire the task of the African Church as *service to reconciliation, justice and peace*,¹³ was the same commitment which had inspired in the 1st Synod for Africa the theological characterization of the Church as *family of God*.¹⁴ A statement of characterization or **identity** (*church-family of God*) in the 1st. Synod lead to a statement of task or **mission** in the 2nd. Synod for Africa, as *service to reconciliation, justice and peace*; and it is these tasks that we wish to present as possible forms of engagement in the social order as citizens, but most importantly, as Christians (Knights and Ladies).

"Church-Family of God" as "Servant of reconciliation, justice and peace"

The first synod of Bishops for Africa enriched our understanding of the Church by considering her a *family of God*. The image of *church-family of God* is first and foremost one that describes *communion* and *integration* as the basic **identity** of the Church. The Church-family of God is a reality in *communion: in communion with God and in communion with one another*.¹⁵ In this light, the theme of the 2nd. Synod for Africa follows upon that of that of the 1st. Synod as an expression of **mission (task=munus)** for a *church-family of God* whose identity and nature is *communion*.

It becomes immediately evident that there is a dialectic tension between the **identity** and the **mission** of the Church; and that it is in dealing with this dialectic tension that the Church in Africa realizes her historical character and begins to respond to her true character and identity as *church-family of God* and the (*fraternal*) *body of Christ*.

In the 2nd. Synod for Africa, the Church in Africa recognized that she becomes truly the *family of God* and the *brotherhood of Christ* to the extent that she promotes an African Church and society in which people are reconciled and integrated over and above their tribal and ethnic ties,

¹¹Cf. SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR AFRICA OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS, *Message of the Synod* (6 May 1994), 2; *EIA.*, 13, 57.

¹²The Holy Father, reflecting on the words of the opening song of the mid-morning prayer: "*nunc, sancte, nobis Spiritus*", at the first gathering of the synod assembly, said: "*We pray that Pentecost may not only be an event of the past, at the very beginning of the Church, but that it may be today, indeed, 'nunc, sancte, nobis Spiritus.'*" He went on then to exhort the synod assembly: "*Let us pray the Lord to give us the Holy Spirit, that he may inspire a new Pentecost and help us to be his servants in the world at this time*". (Reflection of His Holiness Benedict XVI during the First General Congregation, 5 October 2009). Cf. too, *AfricaeMunus*: "*They (Christians) are called to cooperate with the grace of the Holy Spirit, so that the miracle of Pentecost may spread..... and everyone may become an apostle of reconciliation, justice and peace*" (§176).

¹³*Africaemunus*, §3 ("...the Church seeks to offer the fruits of love: reconciliation, peace and justice [cf. 1Cor. 13:4-7]. This is her specific mission").

¹⁴*Idem*, §3, 7.

¹⁵*Idem*, §8

their racial and cast determinations, and their marginalization.¹⁶ The Church in Africa recognized that she can become truly the *family of God* she claims to be only to the extent that she becomes and promotes a society that lives in communion and enjoys peace. In other words, *church-family of God* realizes her nature and identity as family and brotherhood to the extent that she causes “*family*”, “*brotherhood*”, “*communion*” and “*belongingness*” to happen: to the extent that she becomes incarnate on earth (*inculturates*) in the Christian communities, in human society and in human history as *members of a family in communion and fully belonging*. Indeed, the Church in Africa must be the historical form (face) of the *Kingdom of God* on the continent; and the Church cannot have an identity that does not become historical and real in history. So, the invitation to the *church-family of God* in Africa by the Synod theme to be *servants of reconciliation, justice and peace* (as *salt of the earth and light of the world*) is a challenge to the Church in Africa to live up to her nature in the historical and concrete life of the continent by promoting communion and integration through reconciliation, justice and peace. It is a challenge to historical relevance and to concrete witness of identity (*to inculturate*) in the life and experiences of the continent: the promotion of the family virtues of belongingness, integration and communion through reconciliation, justice and peace.

Indeed, the image and identity of the church as *family of God*, cannot be a mere affirmation, it must engender a mission, an action and a ministry; for, as the Holy Father observed in the opening mass of the 2nd. Synod for Africa, *it is ideological to merely make proposals without moving on to action (fare proposte senza passare all' azione è un' ideologia)*. This means that, to merely affirm that the Church is *the family of God*, as the 1st. Synod did, without committing to making it really so in the Churches we belong to and in the societies we live in is ideological. That is why, reflecting on the theme of the Synod with the Roman Curia, as a mission-statement for the Church in Africa, the Holy Father observed: “*The task of Bishops was to transform theology into pastoral care, namely into a very concrete pastoral ministry in which the great perspectives found in sacred Scripture and Tradition find application in the activity of Bishops and priests in specific times and places.*”¹⁷ The practical application of this theological understanding of the Church as *family of God* must now take the form of committing to what it takes to make our Churches and nation (society) places of *communion, inclusive belongingness, warmth of relationship and solidarity*. In the language of the 2nd. Synod, our Churches and their Christians must now commit to serving the *reconciliation-needs*, the *justice-needs* and the *peace-needs* of our Churches and nation, *as salt of the earth and light of the world*.

Serving reconciliation, justice and peace- needs: The Way of the Shepherd

The Church, like the nation, is a body (= family), whose members live in communion with God and with one another. Indeed, communion after the manner of the life of the Trinity, is the life of

¹⁶Thus, when the Pope met with the Bishops of Cameroon, he exhorted to *communion*, saying: "In this way, the faithful are led to grasp the fact that the Church is truly God's family, gathered in brotherly love; this leaves no room for ethnocentrism or factionalism, and it contributes towards reconciliation and cooperation among ethnic groups for the good of all" (*Address of the Holy Father Benedict XVI Meeting with the Bishops of Cameroon*, 18 March 2009).

¹⁷*Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Members of the Roman Curia.....*, 21 Dec. 2009; *Africaemunus*, § 10. Cf. too, *Africaemunus*§14.

the Church and human society. Between God and man *communion* is a life of *relationship* which is engendered by God's gratuitous initiative of the *covenant*. This life of *relationship* is based on *justice*; and when *justice* is respected, there is *peace*. The co-existence of people in society (political co-existence) present the same situation in which *justice* becomes the basis of their relationships for a harmonious and peaceful co-existence.

Often rendered in the Bible as *righteousness*, *justice* is essentially a relationship-term. It is what qualifies a person to be in relationship; for it is essentially *to respect the demands of the relationship in which one stands*¹⁸: creature before a God-creator, husband before wife, wife before husband, children before parents, parents before children, citizens before Government, Government before citizens, workers and supervisors, management and workers, a person before his/her neighbour etc. When one respects the demands of the relationship in which one stands, then one is *just!* The *unjust/wicked* (*rasha'*) is one who does not respect or honour the demands of a relationship he/she stands in, and so breaks relationships. With God, this is when one sins against God, infringing upon his covenant terms. With men and in a family and nation, since the family is by nature a community based on mutual trust, mutual support and sincere respect, it is when people become offensive in conduct and behaviour, oppressive of others and breaking trust etc.

When, then, one infringes on God's covenant, disrespecting the demands of his covenant, one becomes *unjust* before God, making himself unworthy/unfit for a life of relationship with God. The *relationship* is broken. A similar thing happens when people break trust and respect, offending against one another. They break relationships. When *relationships* are broken and communion destroyed, it is *reconciliation* that repairs and restores them. *Reconciliation*, however it is celebrated: generous offer of pardon, a judiciary process, the *palaver* system, ADRs etc., re-introduces people into relationships, making them fit again for relationships. That is the reason why, *reconciliation* is also referred to in Scriptures as *justification*: people are *justified*, made *just* again, and, therefore, fit again for relationships. Only just (righteous) people, then, can be in and stay in relationships. Thus by restoring *justice*, and thereby repairing and mending *relationships*, *reconciliation* also repairs and maintains *communion*; and the fruit is the harmony of *peace!* "*Reconciled to live in communion*": this is really the life of the Church and a very common experience we make as members of the human community. That is why the African Synod proposes *service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace* as parameters of the *new evangelization*; and that is why we wish to propose the same services as forms of our concrete engagement for the improvement of life in society.

Now, the transformation of theology into pastoral care: into concrete pastoral ministry, requires an "*experience*" and a "*method*". On the one hand, underlying and most fundamental to all forms of ministry and living the implications of our faith in the social order is the faith experience of the ecclesial community itself. Responding to God's revelation of his love and truth in Jesus, people are transformed by the power of God's Word and re-socialized by His love in the Holy Spirit. This new social reality, the ecclesial community or any part of it proclaims the

¹⁸Cf. The Scholastic sense of "*giving one what is his/her due*".

love and truth of the Trinitarian life which surrounds it.¹⁹ From this experience, people become subjects of love and of truth, called to become agents of *reconciliation, justice and peace*. On the other hand, this identity and experience of the Church and her members need to be borne out in their engagements with the realities of the social order, and to respond to the various situations of political, economic, social, religious, ethnic-tribal, environmental, cultural and resource abuses on the continent; and this requires a **method**: *what must be done to inculturatethe particular identity of the Church and her faithful in the current social order? How do we witness to our faith and the charity of Christ in our world and the social order?*

The 2nd. Synod grappled with the issue; and the post-Synod Exhortation (*AfricaeMunus*) recalls it. The theme of the 2nd. Synod for Africa, “*the church in Africa in service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*”, indeed, had to do with human life in society; but it was not a political theme, at least not primarily so. The theme was a theological and a pastoral one: one which fulfilled, on the one hand, the image of “*Church-family of God*” of the 1st. Synod for Africa, and called, on the other hand, on pastors *to transform theology into pastoral care*, as observed above.

Accordingly, just as the Holy Father found reason to remind the synod that it was not primarily “*a study session*”, so did the synod fathers also repeatedly remind themselves that their gathering was not a “*a type of the United Nations General Assembly*, where some political line of action was to be discussed and adopted.

All the same, the one clear lesson that one learns from the experiences of local churches in Latin America and their applications of the *theology of liberation* is that: *addressing the justice- and peace-needs of oppressed and badly wounded peoples is a very tricky business, and a rather tight rope to walk in a field of political and ideological landmines!* Local churches in Latin America and, indeed, also in Africa and Asia, know of priests (pastors) who have forsaken the pastoral ministry to pursue political options. In the face of looming and widespread injustices, some pastors have preferred to be politicians and political leaders, believing more in political solutions than in pastoral solutions to the miseries of their communities.²⁰

But, the Synod preferred to see her pastors and faithful, as *servants of the Holy Spirit*, engage in society, as *servants of reconciliation, justice and peace*, in the manner of **shepherds and elders of a family**. Accordingly, addressing his collaborators in the Roman Curia, the Holy Father (Pope Benedict XVI) asked: “*Did the Synod Fathers succeed in finding the rather narrow path between mere theological theory and immediate political action, the 'path of the shepherd'?*” He continued: “*In my brief address at the end of the Synod I answered this question in the affirmative, in a conscious and explicit way*”.²¹ What, then, is this “*way of the shepherd*”?

To begin with, the “*way of the shepherd*” is an image which clearly distinguishes between the role of the pastor or elder of a family and the role of the lay faithful or the members of the family, although together they form the Church. On this distinction of roles between the pastor and the lay faithful, and its implications for the Church's presence and activities in society, Pope

¹⁹*Caritas in veritate*, § 54. In the light of the revealed mystery of the Trinity, we understand that true openness does not mean loss of individual identity but profound interpenetration.

²⁰Cf. *Idem*, § 102, 108

²¹*Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Members of the Roman Curia.....*, 21 Dec. 2009, pg.4

Benedict XVI is explicit. "*It is worth repeating that, while a distinction must be made between the role of pastors and that of the lay faithful, the church's mission is not political in nature. Her task is to open the world to the religious sense by proclaiming Christ.*"²² For the same reason, the Church does not seek to interfere in any way in the politics of the state.

The **political question** in Church and State relationship is deeply rooted in teachings about Church-State relationship that the Popes, from Pope Leo XIII on, have passionately taught. The Church and the State are distinct, but *without either being extraneous -- much less opposed -- to the other.*

It was Christianity that did introduce the novelty, completely original in character, of distinguishing between *political power* and *religious power*, following its understanding of the human person as created *body* and *spirit*. Accordingly, the Church has always maintained her **freedom of speech** and **action**, and her autonomy before *political power*, which she respects and whose respect she promotes, especially, when it serves the *common good*, and when *civil law respects natural law*. Thus the Church and the State are two distinct, but inter-related spheres.

Today, we have many a State very opposed to the Church, trying to make it and keep it as extraneous as possible to society. Many still have gone amiss with this teaching of the Popes and have compartmentalized the two realities. On the one hand, the State, as they see it, is oriented to this world and this life, to which faith ought to remain extraneous. On the other hand, the Church is directed towards a purely other-worldly salvation, which neither enlightens nor directs existence on earth. This, according to Pope Leo XIII, is a "fatal principle of separation of Church and State".²³ Nothing, indeed, can be farther from the minds of the Popes than such a principle of separation. For, founded to build the Kingdom of heaven on earth rather than to acquire temporal power, the Church openly avows that the two powers -- Church and State -- are distinct from one another, each being supreme in its own sphere of competency. But, "though dissimilar in functions and unequal in degree", the Church and the State "ought to live in concord by harmony in their action and the faithful discharge of their respective duties".²⁴

The great need for the Church and the State to live in "concord by harmony" was taken up in Pope Paul VI's teaching on "Church - State collaboration" when he wrote, a hundred years after Pope Leo XIII: "It is of course true that the purposes of the Church and the State are of different orders, and that both are perfect societies, endowed therefore with their own means, and are autonomous in their respective spheres of activity. But it is also true that both the one and the other undertake to serve the good of the same common subject, man, called by God to eternal

²²*Africae Munus*, §23.

²³ Encyclical letter: *Libertas*, §38 (20 June 1888): "*La funesta opinione che la Chiesa deve essere separata dallo Stato*;" .

²⁴*Ibid.* Cf. too, §45: "And the Church approves of every one devoting his services to the common good, and doing all that he can for the defence, preservation, and prosperity of his country".

salvation and put on earth so that he might, with the help of grace, attain unto salvation through his work, which brings him well-being in the peaceful setting of society."²⁵

Similarly, during his pilgrimage to Uganda in 1969, Pope Paul VI addresses the Parliament of Uganda in these words: "Have no fear of the Church; she honours you, she educates honest and loyal citizens for you, she does not foment rivalries and divisions, she seeks to promote healthy liberty, social justice, and peace. If she has any preference at all, it is for the poor, for the education of little ones and of the people, for the care of the suffering and abandoned.²⁶ The Church does not make her faithful sons strangers to civil life and national interests; on the contrary, she trains and engages them in the service of the public good."²⁷

The reason Pope Paul VI gave for inviting representatives of the temporal power not to fear the Church is that the Church is an ally of society, not an enemy. She does not steal anything from society. On the contrary, the Church serves society "through its moral and practical support" by providing the "interpretation of human life in time, and beyond time." In other words, the Church wants to share with society a treasure of evangelical inspiration and the richness of her 2000-year-old tradition of teaching and commitment to serving man and society. Recognizing the connections between evangelization and human advancement,²⁸ the Church wants to contribute to man's development in her own field, that "of human conscience made more aware by the Gospel message; for by the light of that message the dignity of a people is seen more clearly, and the demands arising from that dignity are recognized. Those demands have their reflection in every aspect of human life, which is elevated to the fullness of personal responsibility, and inserted into a collectivity governed by justice and love."²⁹ These ways of accompanying human society for its welfare with tools and expressions of her faith represent the Church's *way of the shepherd*.

²⁵"È ben vero che le finalità della Chiesa e dello Stato sono di ordine diverso e che ambedue sono società perfette, dotate, quindi, di mezzi propri, e sono indipendenti nella rispettiva sfera d'azione, ma è anche vero che l'una e l'altro agiscono a beneficio di un soggetto comune, l'uomo, da Dio chiamato alla salvezza eterna e posto sulla terra per permettergli, con l'aiuto della grazia, di conseguirla con una vita di lavoro, che porti a lui benessere, nella pacifica convivenza con i suoi simili." (Apostolic Letter, *Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum*, 24 Giugno, 1969). To the parliament of Uganda, the Pontiff presented the separation between the Church and State/Society as follows: "We avail Ourselves of this opportunity also to declare to you what the Catholic Church does, and what she does not do, on this Continent - and, indeed, wherever she carries on her mission. The Church thanks you for your recognition of her freedom: freedom to exist, and to fulfill her mission. She appreciates this freedom, which means independence in her proper domain, the religious domain; which also means her autonomy in religious matters, together with respect for the political authority. She has no temporal interests of her own; she does not engage in politics in the proper sense of the term; she renders to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's (cf. *Mt. 22, 21*)..... The Church does not make her faithful sons strangers to civil life and national interests; on the contrary, she trains and engages them in the service of the public good (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 75, etc.)" (*Address to the Parliament of Uganda*, Kampala, 1 August 1969).

²⁶Cf. Reference to *Mater et Magistra*, (Introduction); *Gaudium et Spes*, § 42, 76, 88.

²⁷*Address to the Parliament of Uganda*, Kampala, 1 August 1969; Cf. too, *Gaudium et Spes*, § 75 etc.

²⁸ PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 31.

²⁹ PAUL VI, Address to the Parliament of Uganda, Kampala (1 August 1969).

My dear friends, these two statements of Pope Paul VI situate and help us land our attempt to invite the Marshallan Confraternity to seriously consider their positive engagement in the civic and political spheres as part of their engagement in the social order for its transformation (*evangelization*). Let me bring the reminders again: Pope Paul VI had said,

- a. "The Church does not make her faithful sons (and daughters) strangers to civil life and national interests; on the contrary, she trains and engages them in the service of the public good."
- b. "Recognizing the connections between evangelization and human advancement, the Church wants to contribute to man's development in her own field, that of human conscience made more aware by the Gospel message; for by the light of that message the dignity of a people is seen more clearly, and the demands arising from that dignity are recognized. Those demands have their reflection in every aspect of human life, which is elevated to the fullness of personal responsibility, and inserted into a collectivity governed by justice and love."

My dear friends, dwelling within society and among men as *servants of the Holy Spirit*, as the 2nd Synod for Africa calls you, we are and should be the historical form of the *Kingdom of God*, as its seed, sign and instrument.³⁰ Scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel³¹, let the Marshallan, in deep solidarity with the rest of the people of this land with whom he/she shares the same national aspirations as well as broken dreams endeavour to become "*a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God.*"³²

In the spirit of the address of Pope Paul VI to the Ugandan Parliament, which shows how the Church prepares her lay faithful not to be strangers to civil life and national interests, let us also recognize that "*the just ordering of society and the state is the central responsibility of politics; for justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics, where politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life. The origin and the goal of politics are found in justice, which by its very nature has to do with ethics. The State must inevitably face the question of how justice can be achieved here and now.*"³³

This is where faith comes to the help of political reason; and this is the area of the privileged contribution of the citizen as Christian; for "*one of the tasks of the Church in Africa consists in forming upright consciences receptive to the demands of justice, so as to produce men and women willing and able to build this just social order by their responsible conduct.*"³⁴

³⁰*Redemptoris Missio*, §18.

³¹*Gaudium et Spes* §3,4.

³²*Compendium of the Social doctrine of the Church*, §96; *Gaudium et spes*, §40.

³³*Deus Caritas est*, § 28; cf. too, *Africae Munus*, 22

³⁴*Africae Munus*, §22. cf. too, §23

CONCLUSION

So, my dear friends, let the *Marshallan servants of the Holy Spirit* heed the healing call of the 2nd Synod for Africa to *arise and walk*, serving the reconciliation-needs, justice-needs and peace-needs of this nation. Buoyed up by the wings of faith and reason, even political reason, let us build in our land an earthly city that anticipates and is a pre-figuration of the heavenly city: the Kingdom of God, which we pray for everyday.

DAY TWO – August 14, 2014

(PART 1 OF DAY 2)

INTRODUCTION

Following the presentation, in the first lecture, of *service to reconciliation, justice and peace* of the 2nd. African Synod (*Africaemunus*) as possible forms of Marshallan engagement in the social order, as agents of the *New Evangelization* and as citizens of a State, I wish to introduce an additional form of Marshallan engagement in the social order as suggested by *Africaemunus*. This is the challenge of the Marshallan as an agent of “*hope-in-action*” proposed by *Africaemunus*.

The African Church goes to a 2nd. Synod

At the time the Bishops of the Church in Africa gathered for a second time in synod with the Holy Father and other Bishops (2009), the situation on the continent had changed somewhat.³⁵ Although forms of the miseries of hunger, poverty, bad governance and conflict persisted in certain areas, views about the continent were more positive: the continent was now generally considered to occupy the tenth position in world economy. Africa was the second emerging world market after China; and the G8 summit (in L’Aquila, Italy 2009) labelled it, *a continent of opportunities*.³⁶

The mood was certainly optimistic; and when the Pope prayed at the beginning of the Synod that “*Pentecost may not only be an event of the past, at the very beginning of the Church, but that it may be today*”, making all “*servants of the Holy Spirit in the world at this time*”,³⁷ he imbued the Synod with a great sense of hope and expectation. Accordingly, both the final message of the 2nd Synod and the post Synod Exhortation, *Africaemunus*, thought that the time had come for Africa to be conjured out of its debilitating ineptitude: They thought the time had come for Africa to hear and to respond to the healing words of Jesus, *Africa, stand up and walk!* Yes, Africa was exhorted to be hopeful about its future: its emergence from poverty, neo-colonization, underdevelopment, lack of self-confidence and lack of commitment to its ideals etc. Africa was

³⁵Cfr. *Ecclesia in Africa* #13-14, 39-42, 51; *Lineamenta: II Special Assembly for Africa*, “Preface” and # 6-8.

³⁶ Two year later (2011), Cameroon introduced the celebration of her 50th anniversary of independence with a symposium under the title “*L’Afrique, une chance pour le monde. Réalités et défis*”.

³⁷ Reflection of His Holiness Benedict XVI during the First General Congregation, 5 October 2009.

exhorted to make a "conviction" the Church has about her a propulsive spiritual power of its transformation and growth.

Africa must live by Faith and Hope in God

AfricaeMunus did not only extol Africa's religiosity and healthy humanism as an "immense spiritual lung" and a "precious treasure" in a world of "spiritual burdens and shadows". The post Synod Exhortation also addressed to Africa a rather persistent call to **hopefulness**.

Before a gathering of the President of Benin, his Ministers, Diplomats and Religious Leaders, Pope Benedict XVI said: "*The word **hope** is found several times in the post-Synod Apostolic Exhortation, AfricaeMunus, which I am shortly going to sign.*"³⁸ Right after greeting the dignitaries gathered in the presidential palace, the Holy Father began his address with these words: "*Speaking on other occasions, I have often joined the word **hope** to the word **Africa**. I did so in Luanda two years ago as well as in reference to the Synod..... When I say that Africa is a continent of hope, I am not indulging in mere rhetoric, but simply expressing a personal conviction which is also that of the Church.*" Indeed, for the Church, and so also for Pope Benedict XVI, to talk of *hope* is to talk about that which "*generates energy, which stimulates the intellect and gives the will all its dynamism*"; and this is so, because "to talk of *hope* is to talk of the *future*", and to talk of the future is to talk of God. Having hope does not mean being ingenuous but making an act of faith in God, the Lord of history, and the Lord of our future.³⁹

Between the terms: *hope*, *future* and *God*, there is a unity of reciprocal implication. Though rooted in the present, *hope* always belongs to the *future*; and there is no *future* without *God*. Thus the denial of *God* means the renunciation/rejection of *future* and the killing of *hope*. That is why in view of the threats of secularism and nihilistic thinking to Africa the Holy Father could write in *AfricaeMunus*: "*To deprive the African continent of God would be to make it die a slow death, by taking away its very soul*".⁴⁰

But the threats to Africa's *hope*, the source of that "*energy which stimulates the intellect and gives the will its dynamism*" do not come only from outside the continent. The Pope identified two sources of threats to Africa's *hope* from within itself:⁴¹

1. "The first relates in a general way to the socio-political and economic life of the continent": the prevalence of scandals and injustices, corruption and greed, errors and lies, violence which leads to misery and to death;
2. and the second relates to the lack or failure of a functioning ecumenical, and interreligious dialogue, and the dominance of prejudice, bigotry and "humanly self-

³⁸Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI: Meeting with Government Members, Representatives of Institutions of the Republic, Diplomatic Corps and Representatives of major Religions, Presidential Palace, Cotonou, Sat., 19 Nov. 2011. Emphasis mine. (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2011/no). Cf. too, *AfricaeMunus*, §9,10,12, 172.

³⁹*Idem*.

⁴⁰*AfricaeMunus*, §7.

⁴¹cf. Address of his Holiness Benedict XVI: Meeting with Government Members, Representatives of Institutions of the Republic, Diplomatic Corps and Representatives of major Religions, Presidential Palace, Cotonou, Nov. 2011.

centered truth", whose fruits are intolerance and the display of the base instincts of aggression.

In view of these enemies of *hope* within Africa, the Holy Father made this passionate appeal in the presidential palace at Cotonou: "*From this place, I launch an appeal to all political and economic leaders of African countries and the rest of the world. Do not deprive your peoples of hope! Do not cut them off from their future by mutilating their present! You must become true servants of hope!. May you all be sowers of hope!*" For, *hope* is communion.

Furthermore, the Pope identified the conditions under which *hope* becomes the source of such transformative energy and challenged Africa and its Church: its leaders and people, to make *hope* operational. The *hopefulness* of the Synod must be *hope-in-action*. Accordingly, when he told the Angolans (Africans) that they knew the time had come for Africa to be the "*Continent of Hope*", he immediately spoke about the transformation of the continent with virtuous lives: "*Friends*", he said, "*armed with integrity, magnanimity and compassion, you can transform this continent, freeing your people from the scourges of greed, violence and unrest a determination born from the conversion of hearts to excise corruption once and for all.*"⁴²

As a result, the multitude of Angolans who lived below the threshold of absolute poverty were not to be forgotten, and their expectations disappointed.⁴³ They were to hope in the change of their situation. They were to have hope in *rising out of their situation*; for, indeed, *God has enabled human beings to fly, over and above their natural tendencies, on the wings of reason and faith. If they let these wings bear them aloft, they will easily recognize their neighbour as a brother or sister, born with the same fundamental human rights.*⁴⁴

Thus a key objective of the II Special Assembly for Africa and its post-Synod Exhortation appears to be an invitation to the Church in Africa to become an agent of *hope-in-action*, through the promotion of a concept of the person, of human dignity and of his relationship with reality that is the fruit of a profound spiritual renewal..... *a conversion of heart, and a humanism whose true measure is only Christ*. It is such conversion and Christian humanism which create the godly (virtuous) lives which engender Africa's hope and guide its attainment; for "*all upright human conduct is hope in action.*"⁴⁵ Hope-in-action, then, describes how *upright human conduct* motivates and guides the various forms of social commitment of the Church in Africa. And, if at the end of the Synod, both the Pope and the Synod Fathers trusted that it was time for Africa to hear the healing call of Jesus to *stand up and walk*,⁴⁶ it was because they believed that Christian evangelization has produced enough holy and upright Africans who are going to take charge of institutions, direct affairs of State and commit themselves to the development and the transformation of life on the continent.

⁴²Address of the Holy Father, Meeting with Political and civil Authorities and the Diplomatic Corps (20/3/09).

⁴³Address of Holy Father Benedict XVI, Welcome Ceremony, Angola airport, 20 March, 2009.

⁴⁴cf. *Idem*,

⁴⁵Address of Holy Father Benedict XVI, Meeting with Political and Civil Authorities.....

⁴⁶*Africae Munus*, § 172ff.

The globalized context of hope-in-action and the need for Partnerships

The 2nd Synod also recalled the globalized context of all life and activities on the continent, and the benefits and challenges that globalization can pose to agents and activities of *hope-in-action*. In response to the benefits of globalization, and by way of meeting its challenges, the 2nd Synod recommended the creations of *partnerships*.

In a globalized world, Africa's hope-in-action alone does not suffice to make Africa *stand up and walk*. The enhanced mobility of capital and labour, and the enhanced interconnectedness of nations and peoples, facilitated by improved communication technologies, make the development of *partnerships* necessary for the realization of Africa's hope and its miracle-experience of *standing up and walking*. "Social and economic development in Africa", as the Holy Father observed before the gathering of Political and Civil Authorities and Diplomats in Luanda, "bring into partnership national leadership together with regional initiatives and international resolve. Such partnerships require that African nations be seen not simply as the receivers of others' plans and solutions. African men and women themselves, working together for the good of their communities, should be the primary agents of their own development." Africans, then, must spearhead Africa's development! Indeed, holy and upright Africans: credible and committed agents of *hope-in-action* must lead Africa's growth.

Curiously, at the TICAD III Conference in Tokyo (2003), Dr. Uschi Eid, Parliamentary State Secretary in the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development..., expressed practically the same view, when he said: "Cooperation means to realize a vision together with the people in Africa, the vision of an Africa that is modern and independent, where self-confident African men and women shape their own life, their own future and pursue their own path of a sustainable and a democratic development. Only stimuli and efforts coming from within Africa will lead to success." Well, let's see!

Partnerships and Commitment, The Significance of "Hope-in-action"

The onset of the third millennium appeared to have coincided with an emerging continental desire on the part of African leaders themselves for a new Africa. A new breed of African leaders dreamt of a new Africa and wanted to spearhead Africa's response to her vocation to pursue her own development. Thabo Mbeki of South Africa's ANC party, for example, believed that "there was an African renaissance on the way which would change both the perception and the reality of Africa's drive towards modernization and prosperity," and that "it required renewal of our values and re-definition of our methods."

Another politician from more than half way across the continent— Ghana's former minister of Foreign Affairs, Nana Akuffo-Addo – would echo the sentiments of Mbeki, claiming that there was "a new contemporary African self-assertion to build an African civilization which would be responsive to the dictates of our times, namely, economic prosperity, political freedom and social solidarity." In July 2009, President Kikwete of Tanzania repeated the same sentiments: "In

Africa there are already strong leaders who are ready to go ahead, and we would like to be by their side.”⁴⁷

Such were the sentiments that fuelled the formation of *NEPAD* (the New Partnership for Africa’s Development). African political leaders, it appeared, were determined to change the face of political administration on the continent. They spearheaded, accordingly, a critical self-appraisal of Africa, which identified poor and even bad governance on the continent as a cause of Africa’s poverty. They charted a path of good governance, accountability and transparency, and adopted a framework that would guide performance and set the tone for Africa’s renewal through transparent political leadership.

NEPAD received worldwide recognition and applause; and it was extolled as a development framework fashioned by Africans to guide Africa’s emergence from poverty and its attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

NEPAD, the G8, the EU

Accordingly, in July 2001, NEPAD was presented to the G8 leaders at Genoa. They committed themselves to preparing a G8 Africa Action Plan.

The five president initiators of NEPAD presented the Action Plan in October 2001 to the EU at Brussels. The EU issued a joint statement expressing strong support for the African initiative, especially for the political values at the heart of NEPAD and for its commitment to poverty eradication. It also provided a follow-up mechanism to focus on capacity-building and infrastructure. The Action Plan was also endorsed at a G8 summit held 26-27 June 2002 at Kananaskis, Canada, in the presence of the former UN Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and four of the five African initiators. In the words of one commentator, “The aim of the G8 Africa Action Plan was neither to provide a massive infusion of funding nor to underwrite NEPAD. It was to put in place a new partnership to unlock much greater resources, both public and private. Trade and investment were to be favoured over loans and grants, through deregulation, removal of controls, and creating an appropriate investment climate.”⁴⁸

But alas, the African leaders and architects of NEPAD failed to appreciate and to live up to the challenges of their own commitments and agenda, and thereby provided their external partners with an escape from honouring theirs. NEPAD went dormant; and it would be the African Union (AU) to adopt some of its ideas and strategic visions to inspire ongoing EU-African cooperation, such as, the EU-Africa summit of December 2007 and that of Libya in 2010.

⁴⁷*Fraternité Matin*, 10 July 2009, p. 1 “il existe déjà en Afrique des dirigeants forts qui sont prêts à aller de l’avant; et nous souhaitons être à leurs côtés.” Our translation into English.

⁴⁸ Dr. Francisco Granell, Principal Adviser at the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Development and Professor at Barcelona University, in the ACP-EU Courier, no, 194, September-October 2002, pp. 28-29.

Clearly, then, failure to live up to the challenges of the leaders' own commitments spelt the failure of *NEPAD* to signal an African Renaissance for the people of the continent; and the question we ask is: What went wrong, especially, when leaders and nations defaulted on their contributions to *NEPAD*? What was missing in the Leaders' commitment to *NEPAD*'s vision?

My dear friends, when Pope Benedict XVI formulated an African trajectory of emancipation, general wellbeing and growth that had to be African in creation, he posed a critical condition. His vision of Africans for Africa's development had to be borne on two wings: that of *reason* (*political reason*) and that of *faith*, especially, in the way the implications of Christian faith in the social order have been formulated these past 2000 years in the *Social Teachings of the Church*.

Concern for the social wellbeing of humankind and faith reflection on what it means to be authentically human in history and culture, is the core business of the *Social Teachings of the Church*, and they go back to the Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church. For us human beings and our wellbeing have been God's main concern since the beginning.

Down through the ages, holy men and women, dioceses, ecclesial movements and religious orders, inspired by faith and charity, carried out every imaginable form of service to the poor and the needy, including prisoners, the sick and dying, pilgrims and slaves, and so on and on. These many responses to Christ's teaching on justice also influenced spirituality, theology and especially moral theology, and they have found their way into the Church's teachings of today. In the *Social Teachings of the Church* then, the Gospel values of hope, truth, freedom, love, and justice are presented as *animating forces for politics, economy and civil society*, indeed, for every aspect of social life and every form of human coexistence. In these social teachings, the Church continuously discerns the new choices that face God's people, and under the guidance of her rich inheritance of principles and values, it proposes possibilities for the greater flourishing of the human person.⁴⁹

So, with our *Catholic Social Teachings*, we find ourselves exactly at the point where *Christian faith* and the *love of Christ* encounter the social order. But most fundamentally, the *Social Teachings of the Church* and a true understanding of Church ministry start with the faith experience of the ecclesial community itself. Responding to God's revelation of his love and truth in Jesus, people are transformed by the power of God's word and re-socialized by His love in the Holy Spirit. This new social reality, the ecclesial community or any part of it, such as the Marshallan Confraternity, proclaims the love and truth of the Trinitarian life which surrounds it.⁵⁰ From this experience, people become subjects of love and of truth, called to become agents of *hope-in-action*.

CONCLUSION

With this profile of the agent of *hope-in-action* as one transformed by the power of God's word and re-socialized by His love in the Holy Spirit, and with the rich heritage of the *Church's Social Teachings* as a tool, would it be inordinate to invite the members of the Noble Order and Ladies

⁴⁹ Cf. Paul Murray, ed. *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning*, p. xii.

⁵⁰ *Caritas in veritate*, § 54. In the light of the revealed mystery of the Trinity, we understand that true openness does not mean loss of individual identity but profound interpenetration.

of Marshall, indeed all Christians, to consider the living out of their commitments in the social order for its transformation as **agents of hope-in-action** of the 2nd African synod. For, it is only with such a *wing of faith* and a *wing of political reason* that we can shape the earthly city in unity and peace, rendering it to some degree an anticipation and a pre-figuration of the undivided city of God, the *Kingdom of God* on earth, that we pray for every day.

(PART II OF DAY 2)

INTRODUCTION

In this session, I wish to invite you to explore together the foundation for peace in a just Society. I also wish to try to identify some essential elements, or so-called “building blocks”, needed to create greater justice and peace in our world? How are Christians to contribute most appropriately to the building-up of more just and more peaceful societies? How can they go about it?

About fifty years ago, during the pontificate of Pope John XXIII, the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world perilously to the precipice of a nuclear war. The tensions of the *Cold war* between the USA and the USSR came close to a breaking point. The peace of the world was ominously threatened and human love for and commitment to peace was sorely tried. It was at the height of this tension that Pope John XXIII wrote his encyclical letter, *Pacem in terris*,⁵¹ and its opening line was: "*Peace on Earth—which man throughout the ages has so longed for and sought after—can never be established, never guaranteed, except by the diligent observance of the divinely established order*".

In those moments of darkness and despair, Pope John XXIII gave tangible hope to the world, as he gently, but persuasively, proposed a solution of *practical politics of mediation, justice and political friendship*. This was the first Encyclical directed not only to Catholics but also “to all men of good will” who are called to a great task: “to establish with truth, justice, love and freedom new methods of relationships in human society”. For, *political friendship across differences is a foundational practice for social justice*⁵²(and peace).

Building Blocks as Attitudinal Postures

After Pope John Paul XXIII, the most complete and authoritative answer available today may be found in *Caritas in veritate*,⁵³ which gathers many resources of our Catholic social tradition and

⁵¹ Pope John XXIII signed this encyclical (*Pacem in terris = Peace on earth*) on April 11, 1963 before the television camera for the whole world to see it, as if he was leaving the world his parting legacy.

⁵² Cf. Ann Rowland, "What does CST have to offer to politicians: Some introductory reflections", *Seminar Papers: 50th Anniversary of Pacem in Terris*, Pontifical council for Justice and Peace, Rome 2013.

⁵³ *Caritas in veritate* is the first social encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, and its central theme was the integral development of the human person, body, soul and his environment. Initially conceived to celebrate the anniversaries of two previous social encyclicals which treated the subject of *human development*: 40th anniversary of *Populorum Progressio* of Pope Paul VI and the 20th anniversary of *Sollicitudine socialis* of Pope John Paul II, the

brings them to bear upon the basic crucial social questions of the early 21st century. The Encyclical rephrases – and properly situates – our concern about “building blocks” as follows: How are we “to shape the earthly city in unity and peace, rendering it to some degree anticipation and a prefiguration of the undivided city of God”?⁵⁴ Please note: the architects, the builders, the inhabitants are ALL secular – we do NOT build Christian cities of man!

How then does man, as a citizen of the here-and-now as well as of the heavenly city, contribute to the building of an earthly city more reflective of the heavenly one? To this great question, *Caritas in Veritate* provides a summary answer: “The earthly city is promoted not merely by relationships of rights and duties, but to an even greater and more fundamental extent by relationships of gratuitousness (gratuitous love), mercy and communion” (*Civ* § 6). It is a matter of healing broken relationships of violence and violation and of promoting healthy constructive ones of justice and love.

In one brief paragraph, about 130 words, the Holy Father details the qualities and virtues needed for our building. Let me read the passage slowly:

"The complexity and gravity of the present economic situation rightly cause us concern, but we must adopt a realistic attitude as we take up with confidence and hope the new responsibilities to which we are called by the prospect of a world in need of profound cultural renewal, a world that needs to rediscover fundamental values on which to build a better future. The current crisis obliges us to re-plan our journey, to set ourselves new rules and to discover new forms of commitment, to build on positive experiences and to reject negative ones. The crisis thus becomes *an opportunity for discernment, in which to shape a new vision for the future*. In this spirit, with confidence rather than resignation, it is appropriate to address the difficulties of the present time." (*Civ* § 21)

No plans or recipes here, the Holy Father does not prescribe any blocks. Instead, he seems to lay out five ways which he recommends – indeed urges – for building-up the city of man with qualities closer to the City of God:

- 1 – Begin with a realistic attitude, approaching the difficulties of the present time with discernment
- 2 – Ground the work in fundamental values, a new vision for the future
- 3 – With confidence rather than resignation, take up the new responsibilities
- 4 – Be open to profound cultural renewal, with confidence and hope
- 5 – Commit to new rules, new forms of commitment, with coherence and consistency

These are five profound competences, five focuses on how to make us better builders – and builders of better blocks – and perhaps as the prayer of St Francis says, “Make me a channel of

final form of *Caritas in veritate* was affected by the financial crisis of 2008. It was edited to reflect the incidence of the financial crisis.

⁵⁴ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, 2009, § 7; henceforth *Civ.*.

your peace,” these five areas will prepare us to be better reconcilers. Let us explore each one briefly.

Attitudinal Postures as Competencies

1. The first step is surely to face *the difficulties of the present time*, not with ready-made answers or simplistic ideologies, but with *a realistic attitude* and *with discernment*.

In order to confront the problems of our world we must first study them, we must learn to SEE them clearly and recognize injustice at every level. “Seeing” demands more than a glance based on presumptions of ideology or prejudice. Rather, using the available scientific tools, we must conduct a rigorous analysis of social conditions, their causes and interconnections, their effects, especially on the poor and marginalized, and the contemporary experiences of the People of God who struggle. Besides, an empirical analysis, we make use of biblical insight, the tradition of our Church’s social teaching, theological reflection to “judge” the situation described. And out of this effort – which sometimes entails solitary research but often is a collaborative task – emerges a way forward and proposals of what to do and how to “act”.

In 1967 Paul VI stressed in *Populorum Progressio* that the Church has the duty “of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in light of the Gospel.”⁵⁵ Reading the signs of the times is not something that happens automatically, but needs to be learned and practiced. Such genuine signs are the result or product of the past with all its efforts and mistakes, providing the basis and challenges for what we must do now in order to build – hopefully according to a vision for the future. Here are some of the signs which Pope Benedict identifies and explores in *Caritas in veritate*: the economic crisis (§§ 40-41), globalization (§ 42), population (§ 44), business and ethics (§§ 46-47), environment (§§ 48-51), education (§ 61), international tourism (§ 61), migration (§ 62), poverty and unemployment (§§ 63-64), media (§ 73) and bioethics (§ 74).

Let us take just one example: Today some 925 million people are undernourished; poor nutrition plays a role in at least half of the 10.9 million child deaths each year; and 1 out of 3 people in developing countries are supposedly affected by vitamin and mineral deficiencies.⁵⁶ We must feed those who are hungry (especially since there is so much excess and surplus food). At the same time, injustices related to control of seeds and land as well as issues of distribution must be addressed at the structural level in order to overcome hunger. “The World Food Summit estimates that \$30 billion a year could eradicate world hunger. That’s what the world spends on the military in a single week.”⁵⁷

Complex social and economic patterns – such as those underlying hunger and malnutrition – must be addressed systemically, structurally, both globally and locally. So our first step is reading the signs of the times with *a realistic attitude*, with suitable research and *with discernment*, in order to uncover the injustices at every level of society and to shape the needed remedies.

⁵⁵ See http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_en.html .

⁵⁶ See <http://www.worldhunger.org/articles/Learn/worldhungerfacts2002/?id=1915> .

⁵⁷ See <http://tenthousandthingsfromkyoto.blogspot.com/2010/12/global-day-of-action-on-military.html> .

2. Our next step is to ground the work *in fundamental values, a new vision for the future*, which can only begin with oneself, and so this second competence can rightly be called conversion, *metanoia*.⁵⁸ To know and accept oneself is the beginning of wisdom. And this attitude must be accompanied by a willingness to change, to work on oneself.

The Holy Father explains clearly the spiritual roots of the new vision we require. “When he is far away from God, man is unsettled and ill at ease” (*Civ* § 76). “Reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence, but it cannot establish fraternity. This originates in a transcendent vocation from God the Father, who loved us first, teaching us through the Son what fraternal charity is” (*Civ* § 19).

The ‘outer ecology’ of the structures of our family, our community and our society – what we call justice and peace or their absence – reflects the ‘inner ecology’ of each individual, community and organization. Individuals who refuse to change will contribute to the establishment or maintenance of unjust and conflictive societies. Are we producers, carriers, distributors of inner toxic waste - “*practical materialism, combined with relativist and nihilistic thought*”. The Pope referred to the latter as “*sickness of the spirit*” and “*spiritual toxic refuse*” which the so-called first world was exporting and thereby contaminating the peoples of other continents with it.

“Without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is” (*Civ* § 78). A culture of peace is developed by those who practice peace in their everyday lives. This begins with individual choices to live non-violently in the world and is strengthened when groups in society commit themselves to resolve conflict and differences using this methodology. Commitment to nonviolence is intrinsically connected to a conversion process. For some, it is motivated by a realization that violent solutions tend not to restore or facilitate long lasting peaceful integration in societies, but often lead to increases in other expressions of violence. Others become advocates of peaceful and nonviolent solutions when they come in contact with the human suffering caused by violence. Peacemakers tend to emerge from situations of suffering rather than from academic settings. Those who promote peaceful transformation of the world in a convincing way have usually worked to transform violent and oppressive tendencies in themselves and have become advocates for those who are suffering the violent consequences of unjust structures. If we are not actively part of the solution, then we are surely part of the problem.

3. *With confidence rather than resignation*, let us *take up the new responsibilities* which go with a new vocation and mission. For a Christian the starting point and the goal of all building is Christ, the Alpha and the Omega. Our vision is entirely shaped by God’s salvific plan for the world – as set out in Scriptures and definitively expressed in the life and mission of Christ, continued through time in the Church – and at its centre is the human person. This is the foundation of our life and work.

⁵⁸ See http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0219/_PA.HTM. In *Redemptoris Missio* §§ 87-91, John Paul II speaks of the need to live the Beatitudes and to have the spirituality of missionaries in today’s world.

Vision or mission is the third competence necessary for building a more just and peaceful society; and it is clarity about our human calling. How do we understand the place of human beings in the world? What kind of world do we want to live in, and to leave for future generations? Do we see ourselves as autonomous and self-sufficient, or do we accept that we are creatures, dependent and inter-connected? The acquisition of this third competence—clarity of vision—may well entail the grace of healing, as in Mk 8:22.

The industrial and scientific revolution irreversibly changed western humanity's picture of the world and man's place in it. The earth is reduced to a collection of material objects, structured like a machine, and treated as such, rather than recognizing the intrinsic worth of every creature. Having replaced God at the centre of Creation with man, what man sees only is rights without duties or responsibilities. In the name of *science*, the human sciences too have produced an *ideology*, according to which *man is only the product of culture and the author of himself, of his life and of his society* (Civ § 34). Man feels self-sufficient; and not only does he *replace God*, he does away with God completely. Consequently, man thinks that he owes nothing to anyone, except to himself; and he believes that he *only* has rights. He makes appeals to alleged rights, arbitrary and non-essential in nature, accompanied by the demand that they be recognized and promoted by public structures, while, on the other hand, elementary and basic rights remain unacknowledged and are violated in much of society (Civ § 43).

So, how we treat the earth and its vulnerable creatures is a reflection of what we truly believe. When the root causes of violence, war and inequality are examined, what emerges is a grave alienation from ourselves, from others, from creation and ultimately from God, the source of all life. If the other is not recognized as equal in dignity and worthy of respect, then something else moves in to fill the vacuum and this something is the ego, preoccupation with self, with one's own interests and plans, in isolation from others. "The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbours, the more effectively we love them. Every Christian is called to practise this charity, in a manner corresponding to his vocation and according to the degree of influence he wields in the *polis*" (Civ § 7).

The whole of life is about relationships or the lack of them. When we live and respect the demands of the relationships in which we stand, we are *just, and we act with justice*;⁵⁹ and the fruit of justice is peace. Peace is directly related to the quality of personal and community relationships. To build a more peaceful world, work needs to be done at the personal level, between individuals communities and nations, with creation and ultimately with God. Everyone contributes to a more just and less violent society to the extent that we cultivate right and just relations at every level of our lives. Are we moving towards more just relations or in the opposite direction?

The environmental crisis serves as a case study. In their Messages for the World Day of Peace in 1990 and 2010, both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have eloquently taught that, rather than simply being technological, the environmental crisis is fundamentally ethical as

⁵⁹ In the Bible, the "*wicked*" (שׂעִיר) is one who does not respect the demands of the relationships in which he stands

well.⁶⁰ In the past mankind was able to overcome perplexing problems through technological innovation, and facile confidence trusts that it will once again come to our rescue – thus, business continues ‘as usual’. But now technology is proving insufficient to compensate for the excesses of the developed world, with their negative impact on the earth’s ecosystems of the earth. Nor can technology address the injustices that are perpetrated as a result of environmental problems. So questions are just beginning to be raised from an ethical perspective: Does the ability to do something actually justify doing it? What is technically possible may not be ethically justifiable. Instead, a responsible ethics of the use of the earth’s goods will in turn help to forge solutions that are more mutual and solidary between peoples, more respectful of the environment, and therefore more sustainable.

Our vision, therefore, is not simply technological nor merely humanistic. “The vocation to development on the part of individuals and peoples is not based simply on human choice, but is an intrinsic part of a plan that is prior to us and constitutes for all of us a duty to be freely accepted” (*Civ* § 52). If we are followers of Jesus, then we have a responsibility to collaborate in bringing about the kind of world he envisioned. When he stood up in the Synagogue at Nazareth, unrolled the scroll and read from the Prophet Isaiah, he announced his mission to “give sight to the blind, liberty to captives and to announce the good news to the poor” (Lk 4). The good news, according to Jesus, was that the Kingdom of God is very near at hand (Mk 1:15), but not the kingdom expected by the Jews, whereby a warrior-king would expel the Romans and re-establish the monarchy. Rather, Jesus proclaimed a true Messiah would bring justice, and defend the poor and the exploited (Ps 72: 1-4, 12-14; Is 42: 1-4, 49: 9-13). Jesus himself showed the way to foster the Kingdom in our midst: he not only preached it tirelessly, but performed actions that embodied its coming. The preferential recipients of his saving action were the poor and the marginalized. And Jesus understood the coming of the Kingdom as his Father’s initiative inviting human conversion and involvement.

4. For the fourth competence, the fourth “*how*”, the Holy Father would have us be open to *profound cultural renewal* and show *confidence and hope*. Yes, it is fashionable to be negative, nihilistic, pessimist — it not only leaves one off the hook, but also absent from history, both human and divine. Quite counter-culturally, therefore, we Christians firmly believe that a more just and peaceful world is possible, and all the more so if we share a Franciscan spirituality.

Let us consider the question of military spending. The group *Global Day of Action on Military Spending* noted that in 2009 “the world spent \$1.53 trillion dollars on the military. That is an almost inconceivable number. To put this number in perspective, in light of military spending why should it be deemed impossible by so many to overcome the injustices of our world? It makes no sense for anyone to argue that, because these problems have been with us since time began, therefore they necessarily have to be with us into the future. Where is our passion for justice? Where is our faith in the power of nonviolence and our conviction that faith can move

⁶⁰See http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19891208_xxiii-world-day-for-peace_en.html , message of John Paul II for World Day of Peace, 1990, and http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20091208_xliii-world-day-peace_en.html , message of Benedict XVI for World Day of Peace, 2010.

mountains? Do we depend fundamentally on our own power and means to improve the world, or do we recognize our dependence on God who can make us worthy instruments for bringing about His kingdom on earth? If we were to take just 10% of what is employed for arms and apply it to humanitarian needs, the international community could more realistically work to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Material resources are not lacking, but rather the conviction and political will to bring about such vital and life-giving change.

Let us take the concrete example of climate change. While there are quite different scientific theories about the exact nature and extent of human contribution to climate change, many fear that global temperatures will continue to rise, with disastrous consequences for all life forms on earth, and therefore urge less dependence on fossil fuels.⁶¹ And yet short-term economic interests, with which concrete options made by you and by me tie in, continue to dictate political decisions.

If we resign ourselves to fatalism, this can have drastic consequences for our overall wellbeing and for the wellbeing of others. For, despite the naysayers, economic resources exist that could help wipe the tears from the eyes of those who suffer injustice, who lack the basics of a dignified life, and who are in danger from any deterioration in the climate. The poor do benefit from champions in solidarity who believe that injustice can be reduced, that harmonious relationships can be fostered, that our planetary ecology can be made sustainable, that a world of greater communion is possible.

As Christians, each of us needs to believe in Christ's promise of peace. A culture of peace is built up by individuals who believe that peace is possible and act accordingly. As the number of people who adhere to this belief grows, the greater is the likelihood that societal change for the better will actually take place.

5. Finally, gathering the wisdom of the previous four, the fifth competence would have us commit to *new rules, new forms of commitment*, with coherence and consistency. Appreciating God's plan and our place in it, "is what gives rise to the duty of believers to unite their efforts with those of all men and women of good will, with the followers of other religions and with non-believers, so that this world of ours may effectively correspond to the divine plan: living as a family under the Creator's watchful eye" (*Civ* § 57).

In his 2011 Message for the World Day of Peace, Pope Benedict said that: "Today too, in an increasingly globalized world, Christians are called, not only through their responsible involvement in civic, economic and political life but also through the witness of their charity and faith, to offer a valuable contribution to the laborious and stimulating pursuit of justice, integral human development and the right ordering of human affairs."⁶²

The fifth "competence" for building a society of greater peace and justice, therefore, is cooperation, collaboration, networking and solidarity – all that binds people together in the

⁶¹Climate Change 2007", the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report., go to: http://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/publications_and_data_reports.shtml#1

⁶² See http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20101208_xliv-world-day-peace_en.html, § 7.

multiple efforts required. This means that groups, organizations, institutions and movements of different persuasions – whether Catholic, Christian, inter-religious or non-confessional – need to respect one another’s identities and differences, and not see one another as threatening or competing with one another. We must cooperate, coordinate, and make our efforts converge towards the very same goals: greater justice, greater security, greater transparency, greater peace.

In September 2000, 189 nations formally endorsed eight Millennium Development Goals. The eight MDGs are: to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; to achieve universal primary education; to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education; to reduce child mortality; to improve maternal health; to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; to ensure environmental sustainability; and to develop a global partnership for development. These goals, to be achieved by 2015,⁶³ were evaluated at a U.N Summit in New York in September 2010. Some progress was noted, but the goals remain far-off targets.

As Head of the Delegation of the Holy See, I expressed appreciation for the Millennium Declaration and its recognition that “the international struggle against poverty could not be limited to the management of the great economic variables, such as finances and foreign debts, commerce and development aid.” Instead, “the Family of Nations needs to appreciate the more specifically “human” aspects of development, such as eradicating hunger, promoting education, providing health care and social services, ensuring equal opportunities for work, and advocating responsible stewardship of the environment.”⁶⁴

So, “the Family of Nations has committed itself to fighting material poverty. This is a key and noble goal to pursue; but in this effort let us never forget that material poverty has partners — relational, emotional, and spiritual poverty. The human person must be at the centre of concern in our quest for development. If everyone’s political, religious and economic rights and freedoms are respected, we will shift the paradigm from merely trying to manage poverty, to creating wealth; from viewing the poor as a burden, to welcoming them as part of the solution.”

Underlying all cooperation, therefore, and indeed underlying the other four aspects of building that we have examined, there is the human person as the *centre of our concern*. This must be our focus, as Pope Benedict XVI teaches, if we are indeed to build a city of man worthy of ourselves and our descendants for generations to come.

CONCLUSION

“Make me a channel of your peace,” prayed St. Francis, “Make us builders of the city of man which deserves the name *Shalom*”. In *Caritas in Veritate*, we have found five complementary competences for taking up this noble human calling: 1) Realism and discernment; 2) New vision and fundamental values; 3) Confidence and responsibility; 4) Cultural renewal and renewed hope; and 5) New commitment and new rules.

⁶³ See Caritas Internationalis, *Breaking with Business as Usual: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*, 2007, pp. 2-7.

⁶⁴ Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson, *Statement*, Summit of Heads of State and Government on the Millennium Development Goals, New York, 20 September 2010.

These are five profound competences, five focuses on how to make us better builders. Since we are gathered here in this Franciscan centre of learning, it is important to recall the approach of Saint Francis and the Franciscans for living such virtues of the Kingdom. Francis considered himself a brother not only to every man, woman and child, but to all creatures, who have a common Creator and Father in heaven and are therefore related. The Universe is God's home. All things are created by Him, and thus they are good, indeed they are family. Family members are responsible for one another, especially for the vulnerable.

Accordingly, we are invited to become the peace that we preach to the wider world, which is a more beautiful and more Franciscan way of urging us to make the five competences our own. "Man's earthly activity, when inspired and sustained by charity, contributes to the building of the universal city of God, which is the goal of the history of the human family..." (CiV § 7). "As we contemplate the vast amount of work to be done, we are sustained by our faith that God is present alongside those who come together in his name to work for justice" and peace (CiV 78).

Let me conclude with an image from the Encyclical's conclusion: "Development – *building the city*, we would say today – needs Christians with their arms raised towards God in prayer, Christians moved by the knowledge that truth-filled love, *caritas-in-veritate*, from which authentic development proceeds, is not produced by us, but given to us. For this reason, even in the most difficult and complex times, besides recognizing what is happening, we must above all else turn to God's love." On this day celebrating St. Anthony declared a Doctor of the Church and opening the Week of Prayer for reconciliation and unity, we declare: "Christians long for the entire human family to call upon God as *Our Father!* In union with the only-begotten Son, may all people learn to pray to the Father and to ask him, in the words that Jesus himself taught us, for the grace to glorify him by living according to his will, to receive the daily bread that we need, to be understanding and generous towards our debtors, not to be tempted beyond our limits, and to be delivered from evil (cf. Mt 6:9-13)."⁶⁵ Amen!

⁶⁵*Caritas in veritate*, § 78.

MOST REV. JOHN BONAVENTURE KWOFIE, CSSp



Photo Source: Prime News Ghana

10th – 11th November, 2016

**WORKING ON OUR CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AS A MEANS OF
TRANSMITTING THE FAITH**

By

Most Rev. John Bonaventure Kwofie, CSSp
Bishop of Sekondi - Takoradi

1. INTRODUCTION

I would like to reflect with you on being Christian in Ghana especially as we live two key moments in our Catholic Christian lives: the New Evangelization and the Year of Mercy. This reflection is also about the search to enhance our Christian identity in living the challenges that society and culture present. Each Christian, by virtue of his/her baptism, has been entrusted with the mission of transmitting the Christian faith by what s/he does and says. The faith has reached us through many people. It is our turn to also hand it on to future generations.

It is over 2000 years when Christ gave the missionary mandate to his disciples, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore, make disciples of 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 give you. Look I am with you always, yes, to the end of time”* (Mt 28:18-20). However, the Gospel reached us a little under 150 years ago. We thank God that our churches are full and reasonably full on Sundays and our liturgy is lively. There are signs of vitality and enthusiasm among our lay people. Our youths enkindle our hope in the future. Vocations to the priesthood and religious life are for now encouraging. Young couples think of the Sacrament of Marriage more frequently than before. We thank God for our schools and hospitals and other facilities that continue to offer social services. We thank God for an active and vibrant lay people like you and the many ways you contribute to the life and mission of the church. Our Church in Ghana has many Diocesan Commissions and Councils, Sodalties - Lay Associations, Guilds, Societies, praying Groups, Fraternities, Confraternities, and social groups – for charitable or religious purposes. Most of these are made up of lay people. They make our church really active. We thank God for what He has achieved in our country through the instrumentality of the Catholic Church and her faithful. Yet some of us are also worried that as church, we are losing some of our members to the Charismatic and Pentecostal churches that are springing up here and

there. Recently I read that the population of Ghana is 71.2% Christian, 17.6% Muslim and 5.2% Traditionalist. The Charismatic-Pentecostals are first among the Christians with 28.3%, the Protestants with 18.4%, Catholics with 13.1% and other Christian denominations with 11.4%. I have no way to control these figures. I present them as aid for reflection.

Not too long ago, I gave a talk to the Marshallans of the Western South Region. I noted in that presentation that as a “mission territory”, we know what is called “primary evangelization”. The missionaries brought us the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus. They condemned some of our cultural practices whether they understood them or not. They therefore missed a great opportunity to inculturate the Christian message and practices. Many who heard the Christian message accepted it and are doing their best to remain faithful to it. Somewho became believers have not totally converted to the message and practices of the Christian faith. Others too have already lost sense of the Gospel and have not allowed it to impact on their lives. They move from one faith to the other. We jokingly say, some of us are “Sunday Christians and Weekday Traditionalists”. Signposts and advertising billboards have been erected along major roads indicating places for consultation of fetishes. Fetish priests are in great business. Some self-styled pastors are also employing the same or similar method to invite people to go to them for consultation and counseling on personal and existential issues. Some who call themselves prophets are also leading people into doing questionable things for spiritual self-defense and or warfare. In many cases, the way of doing things by these self-styled and so-called pastors and prophets are contrary to Christian teachings and are confusing many people who are doing their best to live as Christ did. If Ghana is 71.2% Christian, we can safely conclude that many who consult these fetishes and are keeping them in market are our Christian believers. We have therefore compartmentalized our Christian faith and separated it from our daily practices. I will like to build on my first reflection at this second opportunity by looking at the following:

- a. *The Evangelizing Method of the Early Missionaries*
- b. *The Meeting of Christianity and Local Cultures*
- c. *Our Struggle for Christian Identity*
- d. *Our Church in Society*
- e. *The Universal Relevance of the Message to the Seven Churches*

f. The Church, Our Church

g. The Church as a Community of Disciples

2. THE EVANGELIZING METHOD OF THE EARLY MISSIONARIES

In 1877, Sir James Marshall, a magistrate working for the British Colony, called the attention of the Propagation of the Faith to the fact that there was no single priest and no mission in the Gold Coast, a new British colony. Propagation of the Faith therefore sent an Alsatian Holy Ghost Father, Fr. Gommenginger, to do feasibility studies of the Gold Coast and to report its findings to this Roman Dicastery. On the strength of his report, Propagation of the Faith eventually erected the Apostolic Prefecture of the Gold Coast separating it from the Vicariate of the Two Guineas and entrusted it to the SMA Fathers.

This was the beginning of rigorous missionary activities in the Gold Coast. El-Mina, which was a prominent Portuguese post, became the center of this Apostolic Prefecture of the Gold Coast. SMA Missionaries from the Western countries, notably Holland, came to southern Ghana and evangelized with a particular method. They invested in education by building schools and sending boys to school. The first graduates of a school they established in El-Mina were made into Catechists who took the Catholic Church from El-Mina to different places in Ghana such as Kumasi and Accra. These graduates also became interpreters of the missionaries whose knowledge of the local language was minimal. Through the efforts of these graduates of the first school established by the SMA in El-Mina, some Catholic communities were established outside El-Mina where the missionaries went to consolidate the faith of the new converts. Interest in the education of the girl-child made them invite the OLA Sisters who arrived in 1883 and started a girl school a year later with 26 girls.

In the north, the Missionaries of Africa arrived a little later than the SMA in the south. They arrived in Navrongo in 1906 from now Burkina Faso. This was going to be the beginning of evangelization activity of the northern sector of the country. They confined their missionary activities to the north eastern region for about 25 years before going to Wa in the North West. It was only in 1946 when they arrived in Tamale. In Tamale they met already well-established Moslem communities. These Moslem chiefs gave them warm welcome and allowed them space to carry out their evangelizing mission. This gesture already sowed seeds of friendship and

harmony that would nurture good relationship between people of these two different faiths in the Region.

These missionaries did not know our local cultures yet were able to bring Christ to parts unknown. They braved their ways into villages and areas untouched. They did not have mission houses yet they found places to pass the night. They did not speak our languages (if they did, they spoke it poorly) yet they were able to communicate the language of love and compassion that won the hearts of many. They built schools and educated our people. They built health centers to provide health care. They were not nurses, paramedics and medical doctors yet some of them saved precious lives in remote areas by providing much needed first-aid to the sick, the injured and those bitten by venomous snakes and scorpions. They spent time in the villages and slept in huts and on hard planks. These were not only missionaries but adventurers! Those who wanted to be “careful” so that they would not contract diarrheal diseases, Guinea worm diseases, typhoid and others trekked our villages with flasks of hot water for their afternoon tea and also to avoid drinking water from the village streams and hand-dug wells. Our people who did not know that these prudent missionaries came with their boiled water in water flasks concluded that these men were “angels” who had come from overseas and could go for days without food. It was prudent to stay healthy if they were to effectively serve the people. They fed on bananas, oranges and other fruits all day long. On the other hand, the “courageously imprudent” missionaries ate from our cooking-pots covered by smoke from the bio-fuels, notably firewood. Some of us have admirable and others not too inspiring memories of these missionaries and the impressive way they did their work. Their zeal was singular and it showed in their commitment. To some of them, mission work was also an adventure.

The missionaries learnt our local languages and translated the Bible, liturgical books and hymns into our local languages. Robert J. Schreier, in his ground-breaking work, *Constructing Local Theologies*, is of the view that missionaries resorted to the translation model where they freed “the Christian message as much as possible from its previous cultural accretions” as the first step and then, as a second step, it is translated into its new situation (Schreier, 7). You enter a Church in Europe or any African country and with pleasant surprise you recognize that tunes are familiar. Then in your ignorance, you immediately start wondering “who copied whom”?

May I add that translating the message into its new situation was not as successful as they intended because they were in hurry to save the damned African souls that they had no time to do a deep and proper analysis of the receiving culture and its categories to permit an authentic translation into the new situation. Pastoral urgency did not allow the luxury of time and so demanded some kind of adaptation of the original message to the local cultural situation “in ritual, in catechesis and in rendering of significant texts into local languages (Schreiter, 7).

Praise-worthy works were done that became abundantly beneficial for our human and religious formation. For example, there was *Fr. Pageaut's Dagbanli Penny Catechism* used in the north. Fr. Moreau also wrote the *Fante Catechism* which became a resource for religious instruction and evangelization. The challenge is ours, generations that have come after the early missionaries, to do more to improve on them. The translation model seeks to maintain the original message in its pristine nature but loses out when translators do not first enter into the cultural categories of the receiving culture. For the translation model to be effective, the missionary needed first to be abreast with the Christian message in its fullness and secondly to have fully entered into the culture of his new “home”.

Our reflection on the translation model also presupposes that the Christian message itself came to us robed in a particular cultural garb, normally that of its messenger. In the case of Christianity, we must recognize that it has reached us after making a long route. It came from the Judean region, through Asia Minor and then crossed over to Macedonia into the Greco-Roman world and eventually to the West. It has reached us heavily clothed in the cultural garb of Western missionaries. We hardly realize the significance of the vision in Acts of the Apostles when a man of Macedonia stood beseeching the Apostle Paul in a vision, “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). Whilst this message gave divine approbation to the geographic movement and expansion of the Christian message, it also permitted the Gospel to cross over to Europe and eventually reached us through our early missionaries.

3. THE MEETING OF CHRISTIANITY AND LOCAL CULTURES

When the missionaries brought us the good news of Christ, they came into local cultures that believed in the existence of many gods, tribal and national gods. Like Israel of old, it took a long time to come to accept and affirm the definition of the existence of one God. In our religious worldview, God the creature of the heavens and earth has always existed with other gods, and so

we talk of the supreme God and the small gods. The prophets asserted “the impotence of the false gods and worthlessness of idols” (NJB, 1163). They spent a lot of time teaching against idolatry and encouraging the people to see the nothingness of these hand-crafted gods. “Do not learn the ways of the nations.... The customs of the peoples are quite futile: wood, nothing more, cut out of the forest, worked with a blade by a carver’s hand then embellished with silver and gold then fastened with hammer and nails to keep it from moving” (Jer 10:2-4). “At this all people stand stupefied, uncomprehending, every goldsmith blushes for his idols; his casting are but delusion with no breath in them” (Jer 10:14). “Yahweh says this, ‘what did your ancestors find wrong with me for them to have deserted me so far as to follow Futility and become futile themselves?’” (Jer 2:5). The prophets clearly maintained that idols are nothings and those who follow them become like them.

We need to shout out this message clearly even today from our churches and Christian assemblies, blow it from the roof-tops, at the street-corners and at public squares. We have to do as did Wisdom calling people to learn from her in the Book of Proverbs: “Is not Wisdom calling? Is not Understanding raising her voice? On the heights overlooking the road, at the crossways, she takes her stand; at the gates, at the entrance to the city, on the access-roads, she cries out, ‘I am calling to you, all people, my words are addressed to all humanity. Simpletons, learn how to behave, fools, come to your senses. Listen, I have something important to tell you, when I speak my words are right...” (Prov 8:1ff.). Wisdom is employing the style of the itinerant salesman or woman who goes out in our streets with a bell in the hand shouting and ringing the bell to call people’s attention to her articles and telling us that the items they offer for sale are of better quality than others. The writer of Proverbs ends that passage with a poignant exhortation and an interesting description of herself, “Accept my discipline rather than silver, and knowledge of me in preference to finest gold, For Wisdom is more precious than jewels, and nothing else is so worthy of desire To me belong good advice and prudence, I am perception: power is mine. By me monarchs rule and princes decree what is right; by me rulers govern, so do nobles the lawful authorities. I love those who love me and whoever searches eagerly for me finds me” (Prov 8:10-17). This passage from Proverbs has a lot to tell us, Christians of today, for Wisdom is God Himself. At the same time it is the character of God. Those who seek her - Wisdom - find her. But for other preferences in life, we do abandon the search for her. And so she tells us, “accept my discipline rather than silver”.

The Church has, since the first Pentecost, met challenges especially in the interaction between the Christian message and local cultures. The message of Christ, once proclaimed, invites responses from the hearer. The hearer of the message has been created “in the image and likeness of God” (Gn 1:26-27). This natural state gives us the privilege and the dignity of transcendence with capacity for God and for higher and nobler matters. This divine imprint on us is indeed our “true personhood” (Rahner, 26). This status constitutes in our person the ability to choose how to respond to the message. Because we have the ability to know what is right and wrong, good and bad, moral and immoral, godly and ungodly, weak and strong, we are able to cast blame on others or circumstances that we describe as “beyond our control”. If we reckon that those circumstances are within our control then we accuse ourselves as guilty.

Our transcendence allows us a freedom that makes us responsible for ourselves, the choices and actions that define us and also responsible for the world. Our ability to respond is, in fact, influenced by some subjective and objective factors. One of these objective factors is the cultural environment where we are located. However receptive we are to the message, we sometimes have difficulty harmonizing some cultural values and the Christian message. The Second Vatican Council, in fact, recognized that “there have been difficulties in the way of harmonizing culture with Christian thought” (Gaudium et Spes, 62).

I will highlight three of such responses here, two negative and one positive: syncretism, the problem of dual system (Schreiter) and Christian transformational change (Kraft).

Syncretism: This word itself captures the issues we are considering. Those who accept Christianity combine their Christian faith with cultural practices. Christianity and African cultural values are fused in our Christian performance. They blend the “two worlds” into one: the world of their new Christian faith and the world of their ancestral traditional faith. They bring into each other the religious forms, metaphors, and symbols of the other. This has led to the founding of what has come to be known as the “African Independent Churches”. This nomination, though the best available, does not do justice to the reality. Suffice here to say that these churches lay emphasis on healing, exorcism and prophetic ministry. They have borrowed a lot from both Christianity and local cultures (cf. Schreiter, 148). They refuse to accept that the cultural garb of the evangelization activities carried out by the missionaries must be allowed to replace our cultures. They believe that it is possible to be an authentic Christian and African at the same

time. The two-worlds fuse into one. For example, some traditional religious cultures adopt the use of Christian sacramentals such as, crucifixes, holy water, candles, etc. to “enhance the power of the ritual action” (Schreiter, 147). There are also those who use rituals of local cultures and apply them to Christian practices. This is particularly pronounced among some African Independent Churches such as the Aladura Church.

The Problem of Dual Systems: The challenge of the dual-system is also real among Christians. Unlike the syncretists who blend various religious systems into one, people of the dual-system follow “the religious practices of two distinct systems” (Schreiter, 148). They are both Christians and African traditional religionists. Each of the religion is followed as needs occur. The African Christian follows his/her Christian practices but does not abandon his/her cultural religious practices. They are guided by the adage “nyame kakra, eduro kakra”, which could be translated, “have a bit of the Christian God and a bit of fetishism of traditional religion”.

Normally the elements practiced from the other system are not acceptable to Christian religion. Such practices include consulting fetishes and gods, divination of spirits, necromancy, occultism, offering sacrifices to gods, ritual killing, witchcraft, smearing some strange oils and ointments on the body, ritual bathing, etc. These practices often happen at critical moments such as sickness, incomprehensible and unexplained suffering and death; looking for promotion at work places, seeking to become wealthy, wooing a loved one, death of a loved one, electioneering campaign, seeking success of business or other projects, etc. Sometimes too, it happens when we are neurotically ambitious and want to acquire some success or wealth of dramatic proportions without reasonable labour.

Adherence to the dual religious system is an immense pastoral problem to the church and Christians who practice them. It raises questions; whether we have not been groomed with a misguided and false understanding of what religion is about; whether we are not misapplying religion and our Christian faith and principles; whether Christian evangelization went deep enough to address recurring existential and social questions of our Christian faithful; whether the pedagogy of Christian catechesis was clear enough to help the new converts unveil their hidden questions and whether the sign systems of the new Christian culture were adequately explained. People in the dual system seem to trust in the power of their local deities than in the saving mystery of the Son of God.

The Challenge of Christian transformation: What we desire in the meeting of Christianity with indigenous cultures is transformation. Kraft calls it “Christian transformational change” (Kraft, 345). God has always acted and continually interacts with human beings within culture not outside it. The mystery of the incarnation happened within a cultural locale. God revealed Himself within a cultural matrix and continuously uses culture and cultural categories to communicate Himself and His message of salvation. Culture is thus important to God as it is important to humanity. No one has ever lived in a cultural vacuum or outside culture. God is therefore not against culture because He uses it to communicate to us. Not everything about culture of a particularized milieu is, however, acceptable as a means of communicating the values of God. Cultures need to be transformed in order to acquire the forms for authentic Christian communication. However, it is human beings who create and maintain cultures. How then does a culture meet with transformation?

The first stage in the line of the process is **conversion**. Total conversion is a kind of a *paradigm shift* that enables us to see things differently and also through a new prism. Conversion from one position to another can however be slow and sometimes tedious. Kraft speaks of various stages towards attaining paradigm shift:

- The first is *change of allegiance* from previous allegiances to “other gods” to God.
- The second is *reformulation or restatement of worldviews* that takes as starting point the newly acquired allegiance to God. When this “re-location” towards transformation is achieved, a question that demonstrates transformation in the life of the person when confronted with choices or a dilemma is, “what does God desire in this matter”?
- The third and last is *re-habitation*. The new convert imbibes Christian values in his/her proper attitudes. There is no ambiguity in Christian forms. Change is seen in the life-choices of the Christian believer. S/He has become a “new creation”. Paul expressed this in many ways: “Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new creature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:22-24; see also Rom 6:6; Col 3:10; 2 Cor 5:17; etc.).

The second stage are the **activities** of the Christian message. His newly acquired faith acts like “leaven”. One of Jesus’ parables likens the kingdom of heaven to “leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour” (Mt 13:33). It leavened the whole. That is how Christianity acts in the midst of culture when Christians become totally converted, when they have gone through that “paradigm shift”. The intention of God is that the “three measures of flour” will be thoroughly leavened. When culture is transformed, the kingdom of God becomes more visible in it. God speaks readily using the cultural forms of that culture.

I would like to mention the phenomenon of “popular piety”. This emerges spontaneously in any given culture in the Christian performance of devotions and religious festivities. In the meeting of Christianity and local cultures, the faith becomes “embodied” and is passed on from one generation to the next through some pious practices. Pope Francis says popular piety contains an evangelizing power that must not be underestimated. Its expressions are “a *locus theologicus* which demands our attention, especially at a time when we are looking to the new evangelization” (EG, 126). This impetus from the Holy Father gives a new meaning and beauty to the inculturated faith. He summarizes it beautifully, “Culture is a dynamic reality which a people constantly recreates; each generation passes on a whole series of ways of approaching different existential situations to the next generation, which must in turn reformulate it as it confronts its own challenges. Being human means “being at the same time son and father of the culture to which one belongs”. Once the Gospel has been inculturated in a people, in their process of transmitting their culture they also transmit their faith in ever new forms; hence the importance of understanding evangelization as inculturation” (EG, 122). Vat II already encouraged Christ’s faithful, “popular devotion of the Christian people, provided they conform to the laws and the norms of the Church, are to be highly recommended, especially where they are ordered by the Apostolic See” (SC # 13)

4. OUR STRUGGLE FOR CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

Christianity met us in a cultural context that was heavily religious. Mbiti’s famous saying that the “Africans are notoriously religious” only confirms it. As already mentioned, our culture was receptive to the Christian message. But there is an issue to face that concerns Christian identity. The average Ghanaian Catholic is struggling with his or her Christian identity as we saw above. How can one be faithful to Christian practices in the context of cultural beliefs and practices? I

find Schreiter's reflection on identifying local theologies useful and also applicable to the question of Christian identity. Schreiter offers five principles which must be fulfilled in order for a Christian identity to emerge (cf. Schreiter, 117-121): These five principles do serve as criteria for an analysis of our Christian identity.

- a. There must be cohesiveness between what we believe as Christians and Christian traditions. We must be able to identify elements of continuity between what we believe and do as individuals and Church's traditions.
- b. The second is the principle of the consistency between what we believe in and our worship. This is the famous, *lex credendi, lex orandi* – the way we pray issues from our belief system. In other words, our belief influences our religious practices and worship.
- c. The third is the principle of consistency between our faith and actions. This is the famous interplay between ortho-doxy and ortho-praxis. Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mt 7:21). Lip-service is not pleasing to the Lord, and, certainly, Christian religion is not a matter of lip-service.
- d. The Christian does not stand alone. He lives in community with other Christians with whom he/she shares and professes faith in Jesus. A Christian excludes him/herself from the community when they alienate themselves from the community and act contrary to what identifies and holds them together. This principle presupposes a good and sound knowledge of Christian teachings and catechesis. Jesus thus confirms that a sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit and that you know them by their fruits (cf. Mt 7:18,20).
- e. "Catholicity" is an important criterion for Christian identity. When a community closes itself up and does not go beyond itself to share in the "joys and pains" of its neighbour, it becomes incomplete. A community that is concerned only with its particular needs and forgets its communal responsibility does not share in the "catholicity" of the Christian community. The missionary nature of the church presupposes this. Local churches or Arch/Dioceses establish "mission offices" to make them attentive to the needs of the wider and universal ecclesial community. Sometimes I have the feeling that some of our

big and wealthy parishes have not come to this realization. They do not realize their responsibility for the smaller and struggling churches. We have lost our sense of being brother's keepers.

5. OUR CHURCH IN SOCIETY

We shall conclude this part of our reflection with the question, "What do we do as Church"? The Church, from the time of the great missionary commissioning by our Lord to go and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19) engaged in activities that we term pastoral. It also presented herself as "the universal sacrament of salvation" (Lumen Gentium, 48; Ad Gentes, 1). The Church, "the universal sacrament of salvation", expresses herself in different faith communities and is present to all peoples and cultures through its structure, organization, worship and mission. As a sacrament, the Church is the visible presence of the grace of Christ in the human community. Those who belong to the Church identify with the Israelites to whom God said, "You shall be my people and I will be your God" (Ezek 36:28; Jer 30:22). They find identity in these same words. The Church is that mystical community of the baptized who are bonded together by a common faith in the Lord and derive life and strength through worship and the celebration of the word and mysteries, especially the Eucharist.

The Church's mission has traditionally been defined as *kerygma* (*proclamation*), *leitourgia* (*worship*) and *diakonia* (*service*).

- a. *Kerygma* is the responsibility of the Church to proclaim the saving mysteries of Jesus Christ. The encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* reminded the Church of its essential mission to proclaim the reign of God. To the Church has been given the grace to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to all peoples and to reveal to all the plan of his mystery hidden for ages (Eph 3:8-9). To her and every individual is addressed the words, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19). We need men and women in our church in Ghana whose lives proclaim the compassion and mercy of God, the love and gentleness of God, the justice and peace of God, etc. We need people whose lives are prophetic witness in our Church. We need the "Mother Therasas" to witness to the love and compassion of God to the poor and abandoned. We need the "Charles de Foucaulds" to remind us of the God who is present with us. We need the "Francis-es of Assisi" who will

constantly remind us of the need for renewal, etc. We need people, living saints, who inspire us to greater heroic choices. This is mission in and to the world.

- b. *Leitourgia* brings us to the worship-activity of the Church. The Second Vatican Council stated, “The liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows” (SC # 10). Worship and prayer are the mission of the Church for herself and the world. “It is praise and adoration of God; it is asking forgiveness for corporate and personal failings and sins; it is about asking God to be present with the power of His healing grace and reconciliation in our lives, in the lives of others and in the events of the world in which we live” (Bevan/Schroeder, 361). The church can go out of herself if she has life in herself. The way to acquire this life is to stay connected through prayer and worship. The church, like her Master, exists for the other. “The church is most the church when it is assembled for worship; the Christian is most a Christian when he or she is in attentive dialogue with God; prayer and liturgy are the center of Christian life, and yet that center will only hold if Christian eyes are not on the center but on its periphery” (Bevan/Schroeder, 362).

The Eucharist forms and defines the church. In it we proclaim the love Christ demonstrated to humanity. It is the summit and fountain of Christian worship. The community at worship is the locale where missionary disciples of mercy and charity are formed and sent forth to proclaim the mercy and love of Christ that reached its peak on the cross.

- c. This brings us to the third aspect of our mission as Church in the society. *Diakonia* is the service we give as church to build up Church and society. The Church is present in the world through the many services it offers to different peoples and institutions: schools, health facilities, refugee centers, marriage counselling; ministry of justice and peace and care for our common home, visits to the sick and imprisoned, We build and run hospitals and other health centers to continue the healing ministry of Christ.

The Gospel according to John is helpful. It is a Gospel where we do not hear of the missionary command, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). We also do not hear of the narrative of the institution of the Eucharist or the Eucharistic command, “Do this in

memory of me” (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:25). It is however the Gospel where we hear that Jesus stooped and washed the feet of the disciples and enjoined them to do the same (Jn 13:14-15). “You call me Lord and master ... if I have done this to you, go and do the same”. Jesus is also “the shepherd who tends the sheep that belong to him, knowing them and calling each by name” (Brown, 87). It is the Gospel where love for the Lord is an invitation to shepherding God’s flock. This is the challenge for you and me.

DAY TWO – NOVEMBER 11, 2016

6. THE UNIVERSAL RELEVANCE OF THE MESSAGE TO THE “SEVEN CHURCHES”

I wish to offer a reflection on the first three chapters of the Book of Revelation and particularly on the “message to the seven churches”. I am arguing that the profile of the seven churches in the first three chapters of the Book of Revelation is universal and timeless. Our Church in Ghana can see herself in the commendations offered for their positive performance and reproaches given them for their poor performance. The challenges mentioned in the life of those seven churches are equally ours. Craig R. Koester maintains that the Book of Revelation “addresses not only those Christians who feel the threat of persecution, but Christians who are being lulled into complacency because of their prosperity, and those who are inclined to back away from the claims of faith in order to assimilate into the surrounding culture” (Koester, 40).

I would like to mention three preliminary points before we look at the churches individually.

- a. The very first verse of the Book is significant, “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servant what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John” (Rev 1:1). Rev 1:4 shows the destination of these messages, “the seven churches that are in Asia”. We can summarize these two verses (Rev 1:1.4) thus: God revealed these matters to Jesus who sent an angel or a messenger to give these messages to John to transmit to the seven churches that are in Asia
- b. The second is the phrase “I know” which precedes the message. The speaker repeatedly uses the expression “I know”. To the church in Ephesus, he said, “I know your works,

toils and patient endurance” (2:2). To the church in Smyrna he said, “I know your tribulations and poverty” (2:9). To the church in Pergamum, he said, “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is” (2:13). To Thyatira, “I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance” (2:19). To the churches in Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, “I know your works (3:1.8.15). “I know” demonstrates intimacy between the speaker and the addressee; in this case between the Risen Lord who is addressing these words to John and the churches to whom the words must be transmitted. The phrase, “I know” depicts the fact that the Lord is very close to those churches. He abides with the Church and the individual churches. He shares in their good works, riches, poverty and also tribulations. He monitors their evolution, struggles, challenges, and the quality of their responsiveness to the Spirit. It is not surprising that each of the messages end, “He who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (2:7.11.17.29; 3:6.13.22). The Spirit does not only speak in the person of the visionary who is told to write down these things but has always been speaking to the churches. This intimacy is also shared by John who identifies himself as “your brother and partner in hardships” (1:9). By so doing, he aligns himself with all Christians everywhere who are going through persecution with patient endurance on account of the word of God and their witness to the Lord. These are the people he encourages to stand firm in the faith.

- c. Second, the “seven churches that are in Asia (Rev 1:4)” (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea) to whom these words are addressed are representative of the universal Church. Obviously there were more than seven churches in Asia during the time the revelations were given to John on the island of Patmos. There were other churches that had been started by Paul during his missionary journeys but were not mentioned here. There was a congregation of Christians in Colossae (Col 1:2), Hieropolis (Col 4:13), Troas (Acts 20:5), etc. The mention of the “seven churches” may, therefore, be a symbolic indication that the messages here are addressed to the worldwide church. Often, the number “seven” indicates totality and completeness (Koester, 48). These churches are selected probably on account of their historical, commercial or administrative importance.

Now, we take the churches individually:

1. *Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7)*

Ephesus was one of the centers where Paul visited during his missionary journeys. As was his custom, he went to the synagogue, presented his new message and, of course, argued with the Jews (Acts 18:19ff.). A Christian center notwithstanding, there were people there who worshipped the fertility goddess Artemis whose massive temple was erected there and other gods. The church in Ephesus seems to have been a church that was once vibrant and committed to the values of the gospel. It even fought against intrusive ideologies that were dangerous to the Christian faith. The Nicolaitans, for example, compromised their Christian faith with heathen practices (i.e. idolatry) and encouraged others to do so (2:6); cf. 2:14-15. They are called “evil men” (2:2). Their love for the risen Lord, depicted here as one who “walks amongst the seven golden lampstands” (2:1) had, unfortunately, dissipated. The church in Ephesus has “fallen” (2:5) into complacency and was living in its past glory – so much stuck in the glory of its past that it had very little to offer the present age. It was a church that had lost its relevance. The challenge for this church was how to get out of their complacency, oppose the teachings of the false apostles and make out what was acceptable from unacceptable Christian practices. Those who styled themselves as “apostles” were rather charlatans (cf. 2 Cor 11:4-5) and were causing more harm to the Christian community than good (see Koester, 58).

2. *Smyrna (Rev 2:8-11)*

Smyrna was a great place for games and awards of crowns for winners. It is easy therefore to understand the promise, “Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). Awards are normally given to people who come out victorious in sport-events and those who excel in their academic performance through hard work. These are people who persevere (who do not give up or get easily disappointed and discouraged) in their given situations. There will be a “crown of life” for those who remain faithful unto death (2:10). North America has the admirable tradition of rewarding heroes and heroines – a motivating principle for all to make America great.

Smyrna was a church that was endowed spiritually but, unfortunately, had a very poor self-image (2:9). It had gone through so much tribulations and material poverty that it defined itself in such categories. The divine favors that abounded in this church were, unfortunately, not recognized. Her members thought of themselves poor with nothing to offer the larger Christian family. It was

like the proverbial old woman who was sitting on a deposit of gold but was persistently crying of poverty. It was also a church that had some of its members make big claim of their Christian vocation but their very lives and choices were incongruent with their Christian faith. Such people degraded the quality of Christian life and witness. They were detractors who would easily discourage their more committed colleagues from remaining steadfast during time of suffering and tribulation. The challenge for this church was how to make them recognize their spiritual endowment and encourage its committed Christians not to give up in the face of tribulations. The message entreated such committed people, “do not be afraid” (2:10) for fidelity and steadfastness are the requirements for winning a crown.

3. *Pergamum (2:12-17)*

The church in **Pergamum** had similar challenges like the church in Ephesus where Christians had compromised their faith with pagan and idolatrous practices. Pergamum was the center where the cult of the emperor was very much practiced. The tendency to join this cult of the emperor was easy. This makes the promise, “to him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone with a new name written on it” comprehensible. Pergamum is described as the place where “Satan dwells” (2:13). This could refer to the temple of Zeus that was there. The church in Pergamum had also gone through difficult times. They are praised that they did not bow to the pressure of the situation but held fast to Christ even in the midst of persecution. But among them were those whose delight was to act as stumbling blocks to the faith development of others. They were the “Balaams” who were misleading others by turning their hearts to idolatrous practices (cf. Nm 25:1-2). They persuaded other believers to eat food sacrificed to idols. Even if Paul allowed the conditional eating of meat sacrificed to idols, the message here considers it an idolatrous practice.

4. *Thyatira (Rev 2:18-29)*

Thyatira was a business center for the purple-dye trade, As a business center, there were associations of potters, tailors, leather workers, etc. (Koester 61). It was the home of Lydia whose conversion is narrated in Acts 16:11-15. Thyatira had many good works and services to her credit. The faith of its people and their perseverance in times of persecution were laudable. Yet it was a community that was deeply stained by immoral practices (Rev 2:20) and had learnt the “deep things of Satan” (2:24). They forgot that the Lord was capable of probing the deepest

secrets of the human heart - that all human activities, even the ones done in secret chambers, lay open before Him. The people of Thyatira had indeed lost their conscience for sound ethical practices. They had lost their balance because they had developed a sort of worldview on account of the teachings and beguiling of the “woman Jezebel”. The Jezebel of the Old Testament did not see anything wrong with immoral and wicked choices and practices. She promoted idolatry in the days of the prophets Elijah and Elisha and supported the 450 prophets of Baal and another 400 who followed the goddess Asherah (1 Kg 18:19). She also supported harlotry (2 Kg 9:22). She had given herself totally to Satan. One of the job descriptions of Satan is to tell lies and deceive people, and people who follow Satan learn to behave like Satan because they learn the “deep things of Satan”. The promise is to those who stood against the temptation of deceit. They will be given the “morning star” (Rev. 2:28), Christ himself (Rev 22:16).

5. *Sardis (Rev 3:1-6)*

The church in **Sardis** had the unfortunate reputation of thinking herself alive but in truth was spiritually dead. This complacency has not helped her since it felt so comfortable that it made no effort to be more fervent. They found in their complacency a false security that did not permit them to be vigilant. This is the reason for the call to “wake up” (3:2,3). The danger was compounded by the fact that those who were spiritually alive were also at the verge of collapsing their faith (3:2). The work of the angel of the church in Sardis was to guard what was still alive, prepare and protect the remnant for survival. The few people who were alive had “not soiled their garment” (3:4). They needed to be saved. The only way for the community of Sardis to become vibrant again was that they “remember” the past teachings and practices.

6. *Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13)*

Philadelphia was a small and poor community (Koester 65)). Unlike some of the churches mentioned, it did not have much to show as regards wealth. But it was praised for its fidelity in keeping the word of God and holding firm to the values of the Gospel especially in times of temptation and trials. However, inside the community of believers were liars who belonged to what was called the “synagogue of Satan” (3:9). These were people who lived double lives. They called themselves Jews but were not faithful to the obligations of the covenant. The faithful ones are, however, warned against the danger of drifting and are exhorted to remain steadfast so that no one will seize the crown reserved for them. “he who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the

temple of my God” (3:11-12) because Christ holds the “key of David”. When He opens no one can shut, and when he shuts no one can open (Rev 3: 7). In Smyrna, those who belonged to the “synagogue of Satan” (2:9) are rebuked for being blasphemous, in Philadelphia they are rebuked for practicing deceit.

7. *Laodicea (Rev 3:14-22)*

The church in **Laodicea** is, probably, the one we know better because it received the most severe message among the seven churches. There was nothing positive said about Laodicea that could balance its image as was the case of the other churches. Laodicea was accused of being “neither cold nor hot” (3:15). It seemed not to know the truth about herself (Koester 68). Its lukewarmness attracted divine punishment. The Lord will “spew them from his mouth” (3:16). As the church in Sardis reputed itself for being alive yet dead, Laodicea reputed itself for being rich and self-sufficient but it was “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” (3:17). Their deeds were known by everyone even if they themselves failed to see their shameful nakedness. They were blinded by their own pomposity. The Lord, however, stands ready to change their situation. But they needed to demonstrate their readiness to allow the Lord change the situation. He says, “I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with me”. (3:20). Laodicea needed zeal and repentance. Sometimes we too fail to permit the Lord to enter and act. We take over completely and have no space for God.

Having informed ourselves of the strengths and weaknesses of the seven churches and the challenges that faced them, let us turn the search light on our own situation and see what lessons to learn from the message to the seven churches:

- Every church lives with the risk of becoming prey to intrusive ideologies that could be dangerous to the journey of faith of its faithful. The quality of faith of those who belong to the church vary from one to the other. The risk of getting discouraged or their faith destroyed is high. (Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira)
- As Church, we live with the risk of getting stuck to the good works and glory of the past but are seemingly unable to adapt to present day needs. We tend to draw our energy and beauty from past practices and resist new practices. When this happens, we become

inward looking and diminish our relevance to the contemporary population. (Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira)

- We may be a church that does not recognize the divine favors and graces that abound in our church. Its members run to other faith communities in search of the same favors and graces that are in the church. We think ourselves poor when in fact we are rich. The risk involved in this poor self-image is the drifting of its members, especially those whose faith is threatened. We become nonchalant and, like the proverbial bird, bury our heads in the sand as if nothing is happening. (Smyrna, Philadelphia)
- We make public and sometimes ostentatious claim of being Christian yet our lives and choices are incongruous with our Christian vocation. When our lives become double-standard, we tend to detract and minimize the efficacy of Christian witnessing and then become stumbling blocks to others, especially those with little faith. (Smyrna, Pergamum)
- We can also be a church that has lost its conscience and ultimately its sense of morality. Every ideology is defined as human right. We put the liberty of the person at the center and put God out of the bracket. Every behavior is acceptable because it is the right of that person to behave the way he/she chooses. Everything is relativized. It is a philosophy that has lost its sense of God and the divine. In such a situation, boundaries are blurred, confused and eventually erased. (Thyatira)
- Sometimes, a church may think that it is alive when, in fact, it is dead, rich when, in fact, miserable. We tend to be too comfortable in our sitting places and make no effort to move higher. This is a cancer that can eat into the fabric of a church and gradually assumes incurability. (Sardis, Laodicea)
- Another risk is to be a church without conviction and has no position on issues in society. This is a church that is carried along by society and dances to the tune proposed by political and civil leaders to advance their political cause. A church needs to be clear and make its position known to her faithful and the society at large. (Laodicea).

7. THE CHURCH, OUR CHURCH

We have identified some core issues concerning the seven churches of Asia to whom these timeless and universal messages were addressed. The Lord recognized and commended them for their good works and chastised them for behaviours that were unbecoming of His followers. These issues are real in our contemporary Church in Ghana. There are stark challenges that confront us and merit attention both as community and as individuals. This notwithstanding, we recognize the immense effort our Church is making to show the face of Jesus in the different societies where we live. There are individuals whose lives are exemplary and evangelical. They have given themselves totally to loving God and their neighbor and making endless sacrifices to promote justice in society and peace among people. Their love for the Church can be described as heroic for these are people who would no doubt witness to the Lord by choosing to suffer martyrdom without the least hesitation. Groups and fraternal associations, like yours, have been at the forefront of helping society realize the responsibility we owe to one another socially and spiritually. The sense of social responsibility has led individuals and societies to engage in humanitarian actions in order to reduce poverty and promote human dignity. They have from their meager resources shared with the needy and indigent of society. Many are those who have been beneficiaries of this self-sacrificing love.

As members of the Church, we tend to cast blame regarding issues of concern to the life of the Church and by so doing, avoid facing challenging questions on the practice of our faith both as individuals and as community. Some think that the Church is the hierarchy. Those who think this way renounce responsibility for the Church. If it is going well, give credit to the hierarchy, if not blame them. The question, “what is the Church doing about this?” essentially means to them what is the Pope or bishops or priests doing about that specific issue. Lay people are excluded in this impoverished definition of Church that sees them as only to sing, pay their monthly dues and be preached to. It is the task of the ordained members of the Church, by virtue of its teaching office, to deepen and expand the ecclesiological understanding of our lay faithful so that they would understand the Church as an “assembly of the faithful united by a common baptism”. This assembly is both the non-ordained and ordained members of Christ’s faithful - everyone who is baptized.

Scripture has many ways of describing the Church. I would like to refer to one of Pauline image; the Church as “the household of God” (Eph 2:19). “So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God” (Eph 2:19). The image of “household” carries along other ancillary images or sub-images. A household in the Greco-Roman world was made up of parents, children and servants if there were any. The Church as the “household of God” is not only of people who share the same biological affinity but people who are made into one family regardless of where they come from – blood, tribe or nation. Paul says, “You are the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus since everyone of you that has been baptized has been clothed in Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, slave or freeman, male nor female – for you are all one in Christ” (Gal 3:28 cf. Col 3:11). Faith in Christ has united us and made us into one family regardless of our biological, geographical and sociological differences. No wonder, the African Synod adopted the image of the Church as the “family of God”.

8. THE CHURCH AS A COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES

Your Noble Order’s 90th anniversary celebration has as theme, “The Marshallan and the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Faith”. The concern for the transmission of the faith was the theme that guided the South-Western regional conference at which I gave the key-note address a few months ago. I would like to emphasize that when every member of the church (priests, religious and lay people) lives faithfully the Christian faith, it is a powerful way of transmitting the faith. The most effective way to evangelize is through a life-style that is consistent with one’s Christian belief. The Church exists as a sacrament of God’s presence in the world. It proclaims Him by word and action through the celebration of the word and the saving mysteries. The Church exists to witness to the Lord’s mercy and compassion not only through the preaching of the Gospel but also through services to society. This makes the message of the Year of Mercy urgent for everyone who professes faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ last conversation with his disciples in the Gospel according to John included the instruction to feed, protect and care for the Lord’s sheep (Jn 21:15-17). The triple question on whether or not Peter loved the Lord led to the definition of the pastoral responsibility of Peter for the flock entrusted to him. The functions of feeding, tending, caring and protecting are (Jn 21:15-17) all contained in the more comprehensive function of “shepherding” (Jn 21:16). This is a huge

responsibility because Yahweh defined Himself as “the shepherd of Israel” (Hos 4:16; Is 40:11; Jer 31:10; etc.). Jesus also presented himself as the “good shepherd”, the one who gives his life for his sheep (Jn 10:11) and who loved his own “to the end” (Jn 13:1). When the Lord entrusts to you the responsibility of shepherding his people, he tells you to do like him. Would Peter be able to carry out this difficult charge of which he knew many who came before him in Israel had failed to live up to the mark (Jer 23:1-2; Ezek 34)? It is not for nothing that this passage is followed by the Lord’s command to Peter who is entrusted with the task of shepherding, “follow me” (Jn 21:19). “Follow me” is an invitation to discipleship. Peter the shepherd is first and foremost a disciple. The shepherd will learn from the Lord and love his flock to the end as Jesus did. The Church is essentially a community of disciples because we are people who follow the Lord.

The same idea runs through the last periscope of the Gospel according to Matthew. The last words of Jesus in this Gospel are referred to as the great missionary commissioning of the Eleven (having lost Judas). I call your attention to the fact that these apostles are called the “eleven disciples” (Mt 28:16). Even as they are sent out as apostles to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19), the idea behind their nomination as “disciples” is that even they themselves are disciples. They are apostles precisely because they are disciples, “students’ at the school of Jesus sent to go out to evangelize. This principle would guide the church’s missionary enterprise into the future. Every missionary must recognize that they share in the community of the Lord’s disciples – and so must be ready to learn. In his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Pope wrote, “*The Church which goes forth is a community of **missionary disciples** who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. 1 Jn 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast*” (EG 24). Notice what the Pope calls the Church, “community of missionary disciples”!

Jesus underlined the meaning of discipleship. Let us look at some few passages in scriptures that tell us about discipleship.

- a. The disciple is not greater than the master (Mt 10:24; Lk 6:40; Jn 15:20). In the Gospel according to John, we have a significant addition, “nor is he who is sent greater than the

one sent him (Jn 13:16). Both the disciple and the apostle are not greater than the master. The example of service, as already demonstrated in the washing of the feet (Jn 13:1-15), is a copious example of what it means to be a disciple of the Lord. Imitating the master in his example of service and humility is also presented by the Lord as a source of great happiness of the disciple; “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (Jn 13:17).

- b. In the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus made reference to the manner civil authorities and the Roman imperial authorities understood and exercised authority. It was contradictory to His understanding of the exercise of authority. He therefore taught them what Christian leadership is about: “You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever will be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all” (Mk 10:42-44). Even if the disciple has a privileged relationship with the master, the destiny of humility is implied in such relationship (Tassin, 114).
- c. The “Passion Narratives” in the Gospel according to Mark are presented as a pedagogy for discipleship. Quite early in the Gospel, we are informed that Jesus would go through suffering. After the healing of the man with withered hand on the Sabbath, the Pharisees “immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him” (Mk 3:6). The reader is already alerted of the destiny that awaited Jesus on account of the healing he performed on a Sabbath. Jesus became explicit about his imminent suffering and death after Peter had confessed him as the Christ (Mk 8:27-30). This confession was followed by three predictions of his passion and death – what are called the “**Passion Predictions**” (8:31-33; 9:30-32; 10:32-34). We note that after each prediction, Mark included a story to inform the reader of the meaning of being a disciple of Jesus.
 - a. After the first prediction (Mk 8:31-33), Jesus teaches that those who follow him will also suffer. Discipleship means “affliction and pain, not power and prestige”. “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me...” (Mk 8:34-38). Those who will follow the Lord must forgo worldly prestige and honor and take up the cross of rejection and humiliation.

- b. After the second prediction (Mk 9:30-32), the disciples begin to argue who is the greatest amongst them. Jesus grabs the opportunity and teaches that to be a disciple is a life of service and self-donation. “If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” (cf. Mk 9:33-37).
- c. After the third prediction (Mk 10:32-34), James and John, two of Jesus’ disciples, request the favour of being granted positions of prominence when Jesus enters his glory (10:35-40). Jesus tells the two brothers, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” (Mk 10:38). He then teaches the disciples about Christian leadership. The tendency of imitating the gentiles who make their authority felt by lording it over them was easy. Jesus said, “It shall not be so among you”. If they want to be great they must become slaves of all. This, in fact, is what Jesus himself did: “The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:41-45).

It is through gestures such as these that Christians witness to their faith in the public spaces and at work places and can thus evangelize the world. It is through gestures such as this that Christians can make a difference in society. Christianity has a lot to teach society. Our ability to teach, however, implies that we learn at the feet of Jesus. Jesus requires this of us as He said, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:20).

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MOST REV. PHILIP NAAMEH



Photo Source: Archdiocese of Tamale

11th-12th July, 2019

**RESPONDING TO THE AMORIS LAETITIA WITH LOVE IN THE FAMILY:
THE MARSHALLAN**

Most Rev. Phillip Naameh
Archbishop of Tamale & President of the Ghana
Catholic Bishops Conference

INTRODUCTION

Madam Chairperson, Supreme Knight, Grand Lady, Grand Knights and Noble Ladies (both past and present), members of the Order of the Knights and Ladies of Marshall, representatives of the Knights and Ladies Auxiliary of St. John International, distinguished invited guests, ladies and gentlemen. I wish to thank the Knights and Ladies of Marshall for inviting me to deliver the 2019 edition of the Marshall Moreau Murat Memorial Lectures. With deep sentiments of gratitude to you, I also wish to commend you for the institution of these memorial lectures. These memorial lectures would continue to be great opportunity to reflect on some of the documents and teachings of the Church. It is my hope that the issues that are raised at these lectures are given the needed follow-ups.

Pope Francis' letter on the 100th anniversary of the promulgation of the Apostolic Letter of Pope Benedict XV (*Maximum Illud*), underscored the need to intensify the missionary activity of the Church. In the letter addressed to Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Pope Francis reminds us that the Church exists to evangelize by bringing the love of God to all. By virtue of baptism, every Christian is called to evangelize. We all have a responsibility to be brothers and sisters to each other (cf. *Lumen Fidei*, 54). The *Instrumentum Laboris* which formed the working document for the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops for the New Evangelization also stated that Christian families exist to evangelize (New Evangelization, *Instrumentum Laboris*, 110).

On the same subject, Pope St. John Paul II also observed that the Christian family, in fact, is the first community called to announce the Gospel to the human person during growth and to bring him or her, through a progressive education and catechesis, to full human and Christian maturity (*Familiaris Consortio*, 2). In order for families to fulfill their task as evangelizers, they need to

be strong. However, the realities in which families in the world live today point to a disturbing reality of suffering and crisis in families. It is for this reason that I want to share with you the proposals made by the Synod Fathers and Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia* as a way of strengthening families for their role in the mission of the Church.

It is my hope that this engagement will provide us the ideas espoused in *Amoris Laetitia* on the responsibilities of each one of us, the Christian community and the Marshallese brothers and sisters in particular in building stronger families. It is in the families that we first learn our Christian faith and have our Christian identity (*Lumen Fidei*, 52). This will also create the opportunity for the Marshallese Order to apply the fruits of this important exhortation in our context. As observed, despite the challenges, marriage is still desired by many young people. As the Synod Fathers noted, “for all the many signs of crisis in the institution of marriage, the desire to marry and form a family remains vibrant, especially among young people” is an inspiration to the Church (cf. *Lumen Fidei*, 1). We must fix our gaze on Jesus Christ in tackling the challenges that rob families of their joy.

THE CHURCH’S DOCTRINE ON THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

In the world today, there is a lot of discussion and debate about the meaning and purpose of marriage and the sacrament of marriage as a sign of God’s love in the world. And because of the many ideas about marriage in the world, the Christian understanding of marriage as total commitment is at stake. However, it is the Christian understanding of marriage as a sacrament that will ensure this life time commitment and the stability of marriage. It is therefore necessary that I preface my lecture with a consideration of the Church’s doctrine about marriage and family life.

Since the sacrament of marriage is also the focus of Pope Francis teaching in *Amoris Laetitia*, it is important to consider briefly the doctrine of the Church on the sacrament of marriage in order to appreciate the contribution of *Amoris Laetitia* to the official teaching of the Church on marriage and family life.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Christian marriage is a covenant established between a man and a woman for their whole life for the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children (CCC, 1601). Marriage unites a man and his wife in an indissoluble

bond. Peter Lombard spoke about this aspect of the unity of the couples when he said the marital union involves the two living together in undivided partnership.

In the Catholic Church, marriage between a baptized man and a baptized woman has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament - a sign of divine grace. By virtue of it being a sacrament, it becomes a worthy symbol of the love of Christ for his body the Church. Couples therefore make visible the love Christ has for the world by the way they live their marriage life in fidelity to each other and in service of the society. Christ freely and totally loved his Church and gave himself in perfect sacrifice on the cross. Therefore, the love of Christ becomes the model for the love of husband and wife. Married couples who give themselves freely and in totality reflect this love of Christ for his Church. Through the sacramental sign, their mutual belonging becomes a real representation of the same relationship between Christ and the Church. Therefore, married couples are a permanent reminder for the Church of what took place on the cross – total self-giving of Christ for the world. By his sacrifice on the cross, Jesus returned marriage and the family to their original form and raised it to the sacramental sign of his love for the Church (cf. Matthew 19.1-12). Through the Church, marriage and the family receive the grace of the Holy Spirit from Christ, in order to bear witness to the Gospel of God's love.

In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis reminds us that in Christian marriage Christ himself encounters the spouses, dwells with them to give them strength to take up their crosses and follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another's burdens in love. Because Christian marriage is a sign of how much Christ loved his Church in the covenant sealed on the cross, it makes that love present in the communion of the spouses (*Amoris Laetitia*, 73). It is important to stress that the act of Christ giving himself on the cross for his Church was a free act of self-giving in totality. Christian marriage reflects this mystery of Christ's own faithful and sacrificial love for his body, the Church. This free act of total self-giving is central to Christian marriage because it strengthens the life time commitment of the spouses. Couples who want to marry must freely choose to unite themselves in marriage, to give themselves to each other in totality in order to commit themselves to a life time relationship. For the validity of the marriage, this free choice devoid of any form of coercion and influence is necessary to ensure the stability of the marriage and the family. When people freely choose to love the other for life in the sacrament of marriage, this love becomes open to procreation, the fruit of their conjugal love. In

accepting each other freely, and with the grace of Christ, the couple promises each other total self-giving, faithfulness and openness to new life. They are to live their lives in fidelity to each other and be saved as married couples since God is present in their married life and leading them by the help of his grace to come to heaven. Since God is the author of marriage, he has endowed it with his grace, hence the meaning and values of marriage do not depend on man but on God who has also endowed it with benefits and purposes. The Church holds that the sacrament of marriage is a gift given by God for the service of society and the Christian family. It is therefore understood that marriage is also a vocation because it is a response to a specific call to experience conjugal love as a sign - though imperfect - of the love between Christ and the Church. Consequently, the decision to marry and to have a family ought to be the fruit of a process of vocational discernment which would lead to making a free choice in the matter.

THE HOLY TRINITY AND THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

Christian marriage is modelled after the three divine persons of the Trinity whose gift of themselves is one of totality, unity, and fidelity. We learn from *Amoris Laetitia* that Scripture and Tradition give us access to a knowledge of the Trinity, which is revealed with the features of a family. The family is the image of God, who is a communion of persons. We know this from Christ's baptism when the Father called Jesus his beloved Son, and in this love we can recognize the Holy Spirit (cf. Mark 1.10-11). Christian marriage therefore mirrors the love of the divine persons in the Most Holy Trinity.

Jesus Christ revealed the mysterious and wondrous secret of the inner life of the Most Holy Trinity. Through the revelation of the Holy Trinity a new dimension of the understanding of the reality of whom the human person is and the purpose of his existence has been revealed. The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, it is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the hierarchy of the truths of faith (CCC, 234). With the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, our understanding of the relationship between the Holy Trinity and the human person has unfolded by the light of the Holy Spirit working through the Church.

Christ's revelation of the inner life of God illumines not only our dependence on God, but how we should relate to others as a communion of persons. Therefore the Most Holy Trinity is the Light that enlightens every aspect of the human person. The revelation in Christ of the mystery of God as Trinitarian love is at the same time the revelation of the vocation of the human person to love. This revelation sheds light on every aspect of the personal dignity and freedom of men and women. Being a person in the image and likeness of God involves existing in a relationship because God himself is the communion of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. In this communion of love that is God, the three divine persons mutually love one another and are the One God. In this love, the human person is called to discover the origin and goal of his existence. Since the model for interpreting ourselves is God as Trinity, as a communion of persons, we can easily extend this principle to include marriage and family as a communion of persons.

One of the features of the love in the Holy Trinity is the inseparable relationship between the three distinct persons. The Father loves the Son, the Son loves the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and Son. We might say that the life of the Triune God is the highest and supreme principle of familial relationship. This profound bond of unity among the three divine persons makes them inseparable in what they are, and inseparable in what they do (CCC, 267). This inseparable unity also occurs in holy matrimony in which the marital bond between husband and wife is established and sealed by God himself (cf. CCC, 1639-1640). In the Trinity, the three persons love each other equally and totally. In the nuptial act husband and wife become one flesh, a reflection of Jesus' communion with the Father (John 10.30: "I and the Father are one"). Following this revelation in Jesus Christ, husband and wife become one flesh and live in this inseparable bond of unity for life.

The Church wants her children to know that marriage is the very heart of the loving plan of God for humanity. We are created by the Trinitarian God and called to mirror the mystery of his love as a family. Married couples carry out this vocation in a full and definitive communion of life in the family. When a man and a woman celebrate the sacrament of marriage, they mirror the image of God as communion of persons in their marital life and family. They are also marked with the indelible character of his love. Here we see the mystery of marriage revealed when God makes one existence and one flesh husband and wife in the image of his divine love. This communion of persons of husband and wife draws its origin and its strength from God – the Holy Trinity.

According to Catholic doctrine, for marriage to experience the joy of love and the communion between God and humanity, it has to be centred on true love. *The communion of love between God and people, a fundamental part of the Revelation and faith experience of Israel, finds a meaningful expression in the marriage covenant which is established between a man and a woman. For this reason the central word of Revelation, "God loves His people," is likewise proclaimed through the living and concrete word whereby a man and a woman express their conjugal love. Their bond of love becomes the image and the symbol of the covenant which unites God and His People (Familiaris Consortio, 12).* Since the love of man and woman cannot be perfect, it requires the grace of God to remain strong for spouses to live in self-sacrifice.

In order to enable husband and wife to offer their love for each other in a humanly possible manner, the Church continues to hold on to her tradition on the characteristics of marriage. From Scripture and Tradition, Christian marriage has the features of unity, fidelity, stability, indissolubility, permanence and procreation. This is because the Church has the responsibility to ensure that marriages are not destroyed by the so-called secularist wisdom and ideas. It is alarming how the secularist ideas about marriage destroy the institution of marriage. Secularist and relativist ideologies have been some of the threats to Catholic doctrines, according to Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI.

For the secularist, it is okay or prudent for people to first try-out their intended spouses before committing to marriage. It proposed that couples should live together for a time and get to know each other before deciding. Those who propose this argued that this *trying-out* would help couples to check their compatibility in order to eliminate any surprises if and when they decide to marry. Also in our own cultures, because of the high bride price, a number of men and women are living together until such a time that they are able to raise the needed amount. Some of these people have lived together for many years without going to the altar and they see nothing wrong with that. This kind of contract or agreement is faulty and deceptive, because the relationship is incomplete. Such unions are without true and sincere gift of self. This is a selfish attitude in which one person is used by another for personal advantage. Such relationships are not modelled on the inseparable unity of the Holy Trinity. Christian marriage for what it is mirrors the ultimate reality about the inner life of the Trinity which Christ revealed to humanity.

CHARACTERISTICS/PROPERTIES OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE - (UNITY, PERMANENCE, INDISSOLUBILITY OF MARRIAGE BOND, PROCREATION AND THE GOOD OF COUPLES)

The characteristic of the sacrament of marriage which include fidelity, inseparability of the bond, unity, indissolubility, permanence and procreation must be understood in order to maintain stability in marriage. These characteristics are discussed in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church which states that the characteristic traits of marriage are: *totality*, by which the spouses give themselves to each other mutually in every aspect of their person, physical and spiritual. Another characteristic of Christian marriage is *unity* which makes the spouses “one flesh”. The definitive mutual giving of self requires *indissolubility* and *fidelity* of marriage because marriage should naturally be opened to *fruitfulness*. The Church goes on to say that God’s plan for marriage cannot be evaluated exclusively in light of the de facto behaviour and concrete situations that are at divergence with it (cf. CSDC, 217-218).

All these characteristics are ordered towards the good of the spouses and their children. For instance, the character of unity is to guard against conflicts that may arise as a result of individual differences of husband and wife. This is why the Church teaches that every man must have one wife and every woman must have one husband. This will enhance the unity between the man and his wife. This will also enable the couples to find solutions to their problems together with patience, determination and understanding.

On the subject of married love, Pope Paul VI said: *This love is above all fully human, a compound of sense and spirit. It is not, then, merely a question of natural instinct or emotional drive. It is also, and above all, an act of the free will, whose trust is such that it is meant not only to survive the joys and sorrows of daily life, but also to grow, so that husband and wife become in a way one heart and one soul, and together attain their human fulfillment. It is a love which is total—that very special form of personal friendship in which husband and wife generously share everything, allowing no unreasonable exceptions and not thinking solely of their own convenience. Whoever really loves his partner loves not only for what he receives, but loves that partner for the partner's own sake, content to be able to enrich the other with the gift of himself (Humanae Vitae, 9).*

Another aspect of the sacrament of marriage is its monogamous nature which states that marriage is between one man and one woman modelled on the undivided love of Christ for his Church. The Church's tradition of one man one wife, apart from being modelled on the love of Christ for his Church, it also promotes women emancipation and equal dignity. The doctrine of one man and one woman has the purpose to ensure the totality of self-giving love and fidelity of both, not only one, in order to safeguard the stability and permanence of Christian marriage. This is the reason why the Church following her master and Lord continues to hold and teach that a radical denial of God's original plan is found in polygamy, *because it is contrary to the equal personal dignity of men and women who in matrimony give themselves with a love that is total and therefore unique and exclusive*(CSDC, 217). The practice of the Church of one man marrying one woman is a response to the command of the master (cf. Matthew 19.3-9; Ephesians 5.21-33; 1 Corinthians 7.10-13, 39).

The doctrine of indissolubility also ensures the stability and the permanence of Christian marriage for the future of the children. Apart from indissolubility maintaining the sanctity of the marriage bond, it also ensures that parents stay together despite their challenges in order to educate and train their children.

In the Letter to the Ephesians St. Paul wrote that the relationship of husband and wife is a sign that points to the mystery of Christ's love for the Church (Ephesians 5.32) because marriage reveals the invisible reality of God's love. St. Paul also speaks about service of one another as an important aspect of this love of spouses in Ephesians (5.21-33). He calls on spouses to live in loving service as to the Lord. He urged wives to submit to their husbands and husbands should love their wives. The submission is not to be understood as oppression; rather a submission to the mission of the husband as the husband and husbands also should love their wives as their own bodies by submitting himself to the mission of the wife. By their love for one another, the spirit of selfishness will be removed. In marriage, each couple should not be focused on taking care of himself or herself alone at the expense of the other and the children.

Madame Chairperson, Supreme Knight, Sir Knights, Grand Ladies, Grand Knights, Noble Ladies, invited guests, the Apostle Paul admonished Christian husbands to love their wives as Christ loved his body the Church and gave his life for the Church. Love and service are central to

the Christian understanding of marriage. This love must be free of any influence; it must be unconditional and totally given, right from the beginning to the end. This love is manifested in the consent of couples. The code of canon law makes it clear that canonical marriage is governed by the principle of free consent. Only the free consent of the parties can constitute marriage. This means both parties must give the consent through an irrevocable covenant and mutually give and accept one another in marriage. Hence no human power can substitute for this consent, nor can anyone bind another by their own authority. Even in marriage by proxy, the proxy only manifests the consent which is given in writing by the absent party (cf. Canon 1057 § 1-2, see also CCC 1625-1629).

To protect the sanctity of the consent, the Church looks out for other issues or circumstances that could impede a freely given consent. These things are called impediments. The code of the canon law again states that impediments are facts or circumstances that impede marriage by rendering the person or persons incapable of validly celebrating the sacrament of marriage. The impediments have the purpose of protecting the dignity and sanctity of marriage itself, the rights or duties of the spouses, protection of the common good and safe environment for children (Canon 1073-1075). Impediments are very important in ensuring that people enter into marriage with the right intention and motive, hence the Church has always looked out for impediments in the process leading to the celebration of the sacrament.

People who have been married before cannot enter into marriage because of the impediment of the prior bond of the previous marriage. Madam Chairperson, this demands a lot of patience on the part of those who wish to marry after a previous marriage is broken. They need to go through the proper or right process to declare the first marriage as non-existent canonically from the beginning before they can enter into another marriage. Impediments signify directly what hinders a person or that which is *not* right in the preparation process of marriage. It is important to know that the issue of impediments is to ensure that people freely consent to choice of their spouses and to protect the sanctity of love. To make sure people do not go into marriage because of money or other forms of wealth.

Madam Chairperson, also the issue of pressure from parents for their sons or daughters to get married at the convenience of the parents needs mention here. This phenomenon has forced a

number of people to marry against their will. In such cases the consent to marry is given just to please the parents, this cannot be a matrimonial consent. Therefore, I urge all of you to take up the responsibility of educating our people on this issue. This would safe-guard the stability of the marriage, avoid violence and abuses and enable a quality and totality of each couple giving themselves freely to each other. Therefore, looking for signs of impediments in the process would also enforce the indissolubility of the marriage bond. It is important that when and where impediments are discovered, they must be investigated properly. Most of the divorce cases are happening today because people overlooked or disregarded impediments and went ahead to bless their marriages. The solution to divorce cases is here, when we take issues of impediments serious in our marriage investigation.

It is important that priests in the parishes take the marriage investigations seriously because it is a divine duty to ensure that elements that can impede persons are dealt with. It is also important to intensify education about marriage, especially with regards to impediments. People who wish to marry must be supported to make the right choice in absolute freedom. They must be helped to discuss true love and should be ready to make total commitment. Any idea or lifestyle that would impede this total commitment be it money or other influence becomes an impediment.

To ensure the stability of marriage, fidelity of couples is indispensable. Many people argue that fidelity is impossible especially in our world today. Even though fidelity of husband and wife sometimes presents difficulties, no one has the right to assert that it is impossible; it is, on the contrary, always honourable and meritorious. The example of countless married couples proves not only that fidelity is in accord with the nature of marriage, but also that it is the source of profound and enduring happiness. Fidelity aims at a deeply personal unity which is beyond union in one flesh and leads to forming one heart and soul; it demands indissolubility and faithfulness in definitive mutual giving; and is open to fertility (*Humanae vitae*, 9).

Divorce or separation is a serious wound to indissolubility of the marriage bond and the good of marriage in general. Conjugal communion is characterized not only by its unity but also by its indissolubility. In the marriage bond the two persons become one, their unity is not in one person but in the substance of their love. As a mutual gift of two persons, this intimate union, as well as the good of children, imposes total fidelity on the spouses and argues for an unbreakable oneness

between them. It is a fundamental duty of the Church to reaffirm strongly the doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage. Pope St. John Paul II pointed to the challenge facing the Church's teaching about indissolubility of marriage, that some consider it as difficult and impossible. He said: *To all those who, in our times, consider it too difficult, or indeed impossible, to be bound to one person for the whole of life, and to those caught up in a culture that rejects the indissolubility of marriage and openly mocks the commitment of spouses to fidelity, it is necessary to reconfirm the good news of the definitive nature of that conjugal love that has in Christ its foundation and strength (Familiaris Consortio, 20).*

Couples must see their marriage bond as a reflection of the bond of love of Christ for his body the Church. By Christ's institution, the baptized live the inherent human reality of marriage in the supernatural form of a sacrament, a sign and instrument of grace. It is in the spousal love of Christ for the Church, which shows its fullness in the offering made on the cross that the sacramentality of marriage originates. At the centre of the revelation of *the divine plan of love is the gift that God makes to humanity in his Son, Jesus Christ, "the Bridegroom who loves and gives himself as the Saviour of humanity, uniting it to himself as his body. He reveals the original truth of marriage, the truth of the 'beginning' (cf. Genesis 2.24; Matthew 19.5), and, freeing man from his hardness of heart, he makes man capable of realizing this truth in its entirety"* (CSDC, 219). In the plan of God, marriage is the foundation of the wider community of the family, since the very institution of marriage and conjugal love are ordained to the procreation and education of children, in whom they find their crowning.

Christ showed his love for the Church by giving his life on the cross and rose on the third day becoming the head of his body, the Church. The Church therefore understands marriage as an all-embracing communion of life and love. This is expressed between a man and a woman in both body and spirit, who mutually give themselves and receive one another as persons. In the teaching of the Church, indissolubility of marriage reflects the image of God's enduring love for his people and of Christ's irrevocable fidelity to his body, the Church. Marriage therefore is a sign of God's love and fidelity. As a sign of God's enduring love, spouses promise to love each other "until death do us part". In this total self-giving of husband and wife the permanence or indissolubility of marriage is not seen as a limit on their freedom as spouses, rather as a source of stability which provides a sure foundation for a lasting relationship based on trust and fidelity.

Christian spouses help each other on their way to holiness. They each journey as the spouse of the other who is one with him or her. Besides offering each other mutual help on the path to holiness, Christian spouses also become a sign and an instrument of Christ's love in the world. By their very lives they are called to bear witness to and proclaim the meaning of marriage in the world. Again John Paul II offers us a better understanding that the communion between God and his people finds its definitive fulfillment in Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom who loves and gives himself as the Saviour of humanity, uniting it to himself as his body. By his love for his body, Christ reveals the original truth of marriage. The marriage of baptized persons thus becomes a real symbol of that new and eternal covenant sanctioned in the blood of Christ. The Spirit which the Lord pours forth gives a new heart, and renders man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ has loved us. Conjugal love reaches that fullness to which it is interiorly ordained, conjugal charity, which is the proper and specific way in which the spouses participate in and are called to live the very charity of Christ who gave himself on the cross (*Familiaris Consortio*, 13).

Marriage has a place in God's plan for humanity to lead humanity to the heart of God's design, which is a plan for a covenant with his people. Marriage itself represents God's fidelity to his covenant with his people. It provides us also with the image of God as Trinity. In marriage it is not only the man or only the woman, but both of them who together mirror the image of the Communion of persons of the Trinity in order to experience a profound joy of love. To ensure the presence of joy and happiness in families, the Church's doctrine on marriage and the family must be adhered to by all Christ's faithful.

However, the reality of families reveals that for some reasons many marriages are in crisis. Some marriages have ended in divorce and remarriage, single parenting or without children. Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia* is inviting all members of the Church to a conversation towards conversion from our judgemental position to an attitude of mercy, love and compassion towards those who, for some reasons, do not experience the joy of love. It is for this attitude of moving towards a genuine conversion of heart that Pope Francis invites us to read the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

DAY TWO

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *AMORIS LAETITIA*

On October 8, 2013, Pope Francis announced that there would be an Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2014 to discuss contemporary issues on the family and evangelization. It was also announced that this Synod would be followed by another Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2015. These two Synods formed a single organic unity in discussing topics on the challenges facing the family. The document we are discussing today, *Amoris Laetitia*, is the fruit of the deliberations of the two synods of bishops in 2014 and 2015. On March 19, 2016, during the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, at Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, Pope Francis issued the Post-Synodal Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* ("The Joy of Love"). By this act of promulgation, *Amoris Laetitia* has become part of the official teaching of the Church on marriage and the family. The most recent Synod of Bishops on marriage and the family was the Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in 1980 which resulted in the promulgation of the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope St. John Paul II's *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) under the theme *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*.

The significance of *Amoris Laetitia*, lies in its contribution to the official teaching of the Church on marriage and family life and its particular focus on wounded families. Pope Francis wants to make sure that the Church as a Mother invites all her children to feed and be nourished by her rich teachings. This calls for the inclusion of all of God's children to ensure that no one is left out or felt excluded because they have fallen foul to the laws of the Church. Also *Amoris Laetitia* has proposed some pastoral guidelines for accompanying those in these difficult situations. Stressing on the importance to uphold the teaching of the Church at all times, the Pope also appealed to pastors of the Church to consider each case by looking at the particularity of each and to discern the will of God in order to open the doors of mercy and compassion to all people. Pastors should have the attitudes of Jesus, who set forth a demanding ideal yet never failed to show compassion and closeness to the frailty of individuals. The Pope is of the view that, with true spiritual discernment, we can find concrete solutions to the many difficulties and innumerable challenges confronting families today.

From its structure, we can learn a lot about the document. The opening chapter, according to Pope Francis himself, is inspired by the Scriptures to set a proper tone and then examined the

actual situation of families today in order to have a proper grasp of the reality. This is followed by the presentation on the essential aspects of the teaching of the Church on marriage and family. This paved the way for the two central chapters (fourth and five) dedicated to love. Finally, he said *I will offer an invitation to mercy and the pastoral discernment of those situations that fall short of what the Lord demands of us, and conclude with a brief discussion of family spirituality* (n 6).

The Synod Fathers, according to the Pope have discussed many legitimate concerns and raised honest questions which have enriched the document. This is why the Pope thought it appropriate to prepare a Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to gather the contributions of the two Synods on the family, while adding other considerations as an aid to reflection and pastoral practice, and as a help and encouragement to families in their daily commitments and challenges (n 4). Pope Francis makes it clear that love is the most important ingredient for building strong families for which reason he invites all to read the two *central* chapters. They concern *love* which is the core of this document. Following what the Pope said, we will consider the discussions in these two chapters and how they can guide us in our efforts to build strong families.

The Reality of the Family Today

The two Synods of Bishops that were celebrated in 2014 and 2015 deliberated on information and experiences gathered from all over the world: *The responses given to the two pre-synodal consultations spoke of a great variety of situations and the new challenges that they pose* (n 50). They listened carefully to experiences shared and looked critically and examined the information, the testimonies and recommendations brought before them and courageously confronted the issues. From the information gathered, it was evidently clear that in every part of the world there are some pastoral challenges with regard to marriage and the family.

The first Synod which was the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops met in Rome to discuss: *The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization*. Indeed, the purpose of this Extraordinary Synod was to *thoroughly examine and analyze the information, testimonies and recommendations received from particular churches in order to respond to the new challenges of the family* (III Extraordinary Synod, *Instrumentum Laboris*). This Extraordinary Synod was also to define the *status quaestionis* (current situation) and further gather from the experiences of bishops the way forward in order to proclaim the

Gospel of the family in a credible manner that would reflect the actual situations of the family. The *Instrumentum Laboris* provided the relevant information which was the result of the questionnaire distributed to the bishops in order to have the true reflection of the challenges. It also outlined the theme that was to be discussed at the Ordinary Synod which was to come after the Extraordinary Synod. From the discussion, the synod has exposed to the Church the real pastoral challenges of many families.

As a response to this situation of the crisis in the families, the Synod Fathers took special interest in the challenges facing the families. In order to have a fruitful discussion of the issues, the bishops of the Extraordinary Synod structured their reflection under three headings: *listening* at the reality of the family today in all its complexities, both joys and sorrows; *looking* by fixing their gaze on Christ to ponder, with renewed freshness and enthusiasm, what revelation says about the beauty, the role and the dignity of the family; and finally *confronting the situation* with an eye on the Lord Jesus, to discern the ways in which the Church and society can renew their commitment to the family founded upon the marriage between a man and a woman (*RelatioSynodi*, n 4).

It is worth stating that Church and society in particular thrive on strong families because the family is the first to teach its members about God and how to function in society. Hence, whatever affects the family trickles down into the society. Strong families build good and strong communities where everybody is important. Indeed, the strength of the family lies in its capacity to love and to teach its members how to love the *neighbour*. According to Pope Francis, despite its problems and challenges, a family can always grow, beginning with love (n 53). It is in the family that the individual is loved and shown how to love, when the family provides love and warmth to all of its members. Our experience of faith, happiness and joy is experienced first in the family by all the members before they (members) can share this in the society. It is therefore appropriate to state that a weak and failing society reflects a fundamental problem in the family systems. Pope Francis puts it this way, that *the Joy of Love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church* (n 1). In the same way, the strength of the family is also the strength of the Church and the crisis experienced by families is also the crisis of the Church.

So we see in *Amoris Laetitia*, that the Pope has acknowledged with deep concern the great deal of suffering, grief and trials that many families have to go through. From the Synod Fathers, he

was confronted with the reality that many families face tremendous difficulties in our time. He also acknowledged those families that continue to stand despite the challenges they face: *I thank God that many families, which are far from considering themselves perfect, live in love, fulfill their calling and keep moving forward, even if they fall many times along the way. The Synod's reflections show us that there is no stereo-type of the ideal family, but rather a challenging mosaic made up of many different realities, with all their joys, hopes and problems. The situations that concern us are challenges* (n 57). The unconditional love practice by many families in the world has ensured their continuous living together despite the challenges.

Pope Francis dedicated the second chapter to treat the experiences and challenges of families. Before treating the message of love, he engaged a dialogue between the Word of God (chapter 1), the actual situation in the world today (chapter 2) and the doctrine of the Church on marriage (chapter 3). Pope Francis in the first chapter underscored the importance of the Word of God in the life of the family especially couples who look to Jesus Christ. He observed that the Bible is full of families, births, love stories and family crises and violence but these families also exhibit some enduring strengths which should encourage all families (n 8). He said *Jesus' description of the two houses, one built on rock and the other on sand (cf. Mt 7:24-27), symbolizes any number of family situations shaped by the exercise of their members' freedom, for, as the poet says, every home is a lamp stand* (ibid). The Pope also emphasized the centrality of the Word of God in ensuring a stable family. It was the intention of the Pope to present to us stories of some of the families in Scriptures to underscore the point that every family even in Scripture has its own moments of joy and challenges, but the underlining factor is the ability to face those challenges without collapsing – holding each other in love.

He observed that in the light of the Word, marriage and family life is a gift of God to humanity, an invitation to share in his continuous creative work. He said *the couple that loves and begets life is a true, living icon – not an idol like those of stone or gold prohibited by the Decalogue – capable of revealing God the Creator and Saviour. For this reason, fruitful love becomes a symbol of God's inner life*. He continued that *the triune God is a communion of love, and the family is its living reflection* (n 11). Pope Francis presented the family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph and their own challenges as the example for all families to look up to. He said every family should look to the Holy Family of Nazareth: *Its daily life had its share of burdens and even*

nightmares, as when they met with Herod's implacable violence. This last was an experience that, sad to say, continues to afflict the many refugee families who in our day feel rejected and helpless. Like the Magi, our families are invited to contemplate the Child and his Mother, to bow down and worship him (cf. Mt 2:11). Like Mary, they are asked to face their family's challenges with courage and serenity, in good times and bad, and to keep in their heart the great things which God has done (cf. Lk2:19, 51)(n 30).

In the second chapter the Pope discussed the experiences of families in the world today in order to present the actual situation for the Church to take appropriate pastoral action in favour of these families. The Pope pointed out that amidst the challenges the welfare of the family is a decisive element for the future of the world and that of the Church. He is however worried about the current problems and challenges that face marriages and families and pushing some to the collapse (cf 31). The Pope further observed in *Amoris Laetitia* that some of these happenings are a result of the lifestyle and ideological choices that people make in their lives, which makes the ideal of marriage, marked by a commitment to exclusivity and stability, unattractive and sometimes swept aside whenever it proves inconvenient or tiresome (cf n 34). He encouraged Christians to continue to advocate the sanctity of marriage and family life despite the pressure from contemporary ideologies about marriage and the family.

The Pope also condemned what he calls "artificial theological ideal of marriage" which has been emphasized by many, that *we have often been on the defensive, wasting pastoral energy on denouncing a decadent world without being proactive in proposing ways of finding true happiness* (n 38). He said we need a healthy dose of self-criticism. He said we also need to be humble and realistic and to acknowledge that our style of handling people, the way we present our doctrines and treat other people has helped contribute to the problems of today. He thinks that the doctrines of the Church on marriage have been taught with the wrong emphasis: *At times we have also proposed a far too abstract and almost artificial theological ideal of marriage, far removed from the concrete situations and practical possibilities of real families. This excessive idealization, especially when we have failed to inspire trust in God's grace, has not helped to make marriage more desirable and attractive, but quite the opposite*(n 36). In his view, the doctrines are often emphasized without the show of mercy and compassion for the situation of the person. He made the point this way that: *many people feel that the Church's message on mar-*

riage and the family does not clearly reflect the preaching and attitudes of Jesus, who set forth a demanding ideal yet never failed to show compassion and closeness to the frailty of individuals like the Samaritan woman or the woman caught in adultery (n 38).

The Pope is also concerned about the way the culture of throwaway has been shifted to include using human beings and ‘throwing them away’ at will. The situation where human beings especially women are treated as material objects to be used and disposed at will is worrying and has to be confronted by all. He observed that affective relationships are treated by a number of people as material objects just in the same way we treat the environment with the mentality that *everything is disposable; everyone uses and throws away, takes and breaks, exploits and squeezes to the last drop. Then, goodbye (n 39).*

He laments also the exploitation of the bodies of young ladies especially by international magazines for profits and only to be thrown away after use. This same culture has also led many to terminate the lives of innocent babies through abortions. This is also a problem here. The question is often asked whether a pregnancy is wanted or not. The fast rate at which our women especially young ladies dispose of pregnancy should be a serious concern for us. It shows a lack of respect for the dignity of human life and deepens the throwaway culture that the Pope has been fighting. Some of them even fall into the hands of quack doctors who end up destroying their wombs and creating a big future problem of childless families with its serious implication for the family (particularly the woman).

Another situation highlighted by Pope Francis is the fear of permanent commitments and the idea of independence or freedom mostly among older adults. This issue was also touched on by the Synod Fathers who observed with concern *the distrust of many young people in relation to a commitment in marriage and suffers at the haste with which many of the faithful decide to put an end to the obligation they assumed and to take on another ... Young people who are baptized should be encouraged to understand that the Sacrament of Marriage can enrich their prospects of love and that they can be sustained by the grace of Christ in the Sacrament and by the possibility of participating fully in the life of the Church (RelatioSynodi, n 26).*

Pope Francis added that there is also obsession with the idea of free time and the strong belief associated with “to do what I like without control” among some adults, which is worrying. These attitudes are the reason for many broken marriages. He said *It is also worth noting that breakups*

often occur among older adults who seek a kind of “independence” and reject the ideal of growing old together, looking after and supporting one another (n 39). The Synod Fathers are of the view that, in this case, however, individualism and living only for one’s self are a real danger. The challenge for the Church is to assist couples in their emotive maturation and affective development through fostering dialogue, virtue and trust in the merciful love of God. The full commitment required in marriage can be a strong antidote to the temptation of a selfish individualism (RelatioSynodi, n 9).

The Pope also raised the concern about those who for the sake of sustainable jobs keep postponing marriage. The Synod Fathers had observed that a number of adults are pushing marriage aside while living together until they get a well-paid job. They do this while awaiting more security in life of a steady job and steady income (*RelatioSynodi*, n 42). They also noted that in some cultures there is a continual increase in the number of those who live together for a long period before requesting the celebration of marriage in Church. Living together is often a choice based on a general attitude opposed to anything institutional or definitive. In other cultures like ours the pressure for young people to have expensive weddings has also contributed to the situation of many living together for many years without the celebration of marriage. The Pope calls on all Christians to be modest in the celebration of weddings.

There is also the increasing number of divorce cases in the Church today, and this is happening all over the world. Divorce and separations cause a lot of pain to families. This point was made earlier by Pope St. John Paul II who said, *various reasons can unfortunately lead to the often irreparable breakdown of valid marriages. These include mutual lack of understanding and the inability to enter into interpersonal relationships. Obviously, separation must be considered as a last resort, after all other reasonable attempts at reconciliation have proved vain.* Loneliness and other difficulties are often the lot of separated spouses, especially when they are the innocent parties (*FamiliarisConsortio*, n 83.)

The Synod Fathers have also identified other factors that affect marriage and family life. As indicated in the Post Synodal Exhortation, many families are in distress because of lack of parental responsibilities, poverty, stress of work, societal pressure, single parenting, the effects of death on the family, problems associated with child upbringing among others. The Synod Fathers observed that many parents are weighed down with the responsibilities of work which keeps

them away from home and reduced the quality of time they spend with their children. Pope Francis observed that *workdays are long and oftentimes made more burdensome by extended periods away from home. This situation does not help family members to gather together or parents to be with their children in such a way as to nurture their relationships each day* (n 44).

The Pope further observed that a great number of children are born outside of wedlock. Some too as a result of divorce or separation they have to move and live with one of the parents many of whom subsequently grow up with just one of their parents or in a blended or reconstituted family (n 45). Many of such children are denied the love of one of the biological parents. The Pope said *the family is entrusted to a man, a woman and their children, so that they may become a communion of persons in the image of the union of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Begetting and raising children, for its part, mirrors God's creative work. The family is called to join in daily prayer, to read the word of God and to share in Eucharistic communion, and thus to grow in love and become ever more fully a temple in which the Spirit dwells* (n 29). The absence of this weakens the family bonds.

Another situation that the Pope talks about, points to lack of commitment and the irresponsible behaviour of some towards their families. We are aware of some of our men who even abandoning their matrimonial homes and responsibilities, go to live with other women leaving their wives and the children to suffer. The Pope reiterates the important role of the father in the house, *particularly with regard to the protection and support of their wives and children... Many men are conscious of the importance of their role in the family and live their masculinity accordingly. The absence of a father gravely affects family life and the upbringing of children and their integration into society. This absence, which may be physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual, deprives children of a suitable father figure* (n 55). The Pope observed, for example, the speed with which people move from one affective relationship to another. This situation is worrying for the Pope where people can easily exit a relationship just like that. They believe, along the lines of social networks, that love can be connected or disconnected at the whim of the consumer, and the relationship quickly “blocked”.” (n 39).

The Fathers of the Synod also drew attention to the situation of some women in the families. They observed that many women still suffer abuses in their homes. In addition to some unacceptable practices against women, some are still subjected to shameful ill-treatment,

domestic violence and various forms of enslavement. The verbal, physical, and sexual violence that women endure in some marriages contradicts the very nature of the conjugal union.

The third part of the *RelatioFinalis* of the extraordinary synod, touches on the significant role the family plays in *missio ad gentes*. It refers to the vocation of the family. God invites families to initiate themselves into his life, to proclaim and communicate it to others. Therefore the mission of the family, according to Pope Francis, always reaches out in the service of our brothers and sisters. Each family is called to share in the mission of the Church and reach out to others in love and service. Therefore the family has the greatest responsibility to teach their children how to love by showing them love themselves. By virtue of the baptism they have received, every single member of the People of God becomes a missionary (cf. *EvangeliiGaudium*, n 120). The current trends in the world today call for an intensive involvement of families in the evangelizing mission of the Church.

According to Pope Francis, the Word of God becomes essential in these situations. He said with conviction that, *In and among families, the Gospel message should always resound; the core of that message, the kerygma, is what is most beautiful, most excellent, most appealing and at the same time most necessary. Indeed, nothing is more solid, profound, secure, meaningful and wise than that message. In effect, 'all Christian formation consists of entering more deeply into the kerygma* (n 53). He goes further to say that the doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage should not be viewed as a “yoke” to be *imposed on humanity, but as a “gift” granted to those who are joined in marriage* (n 62). For Pope Francis, the love of God which always accompanies our human journey heals and transforms us through his grace.

The central message of the Pope is found in chapters 4 and 5. Here the Pope speaks about love in marriage and the fruitfulness of love. He speaks about the joy of love that is experienced when couples commit themselves to each other (unitive dimension) and when a new life is welcome (procreative dimension of love). The Pope knows that when people treat each other with love, their union becomes a blessing to them and their children.

Therefore love in marriage should take into consideration the way members of the family are treated. He says where in a family the weakness of one person is used by the other to treat that person with contempt is not the Christian way of loving. He regrets that at times the supposedly mature believers within the family become unbearably arrogant and rude towards those that are

less knowledgeable about the faith. He said *to love is also to be gentle and thoughtful It indicates that love is not rude or impolite; it is not harsh. Its actions, words and gestures are pleasing and not abrasive or rigid. Love abhors making others suffer* (n 99). This should not be the case because love is not arrogant or rude, it does not rejoice at the weakness of the other, rather love embraces the other as he or she is. He said, *our first reaction when we are annoyed should be one of heartfelt blessing, asking God to bless, free and heal that person* (n 104). We should also be patient with one another but this does not mean letting ourselves be constantly mistreated, tolerating physical aggression or allowing other people to use us (n 92).

The Pope also observed that many marriages have broken because of the spirit of unforgiveness. Once we allow ill will to take root in our hearts, it leads to deep resentment and unforgiveness. But love also means forgiveness. To love is to forgive: *the opposite of resentment is forgiveness, which is rooted in a positive attitude that seeks to understand other people's weaknesses and to excuse them. As Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk23:34)* (n 105). *If we accept that God's love is unconditional, that the Father's love cannot be bought or sold, then we will become capable of showing boundless love and forgiving others even if they have wronged us* (n 108).

Love is also nourished by sacrifice and when we make sacrifices for those we love, the love becomes strong and the family will continue to be strong and capable of sharing this love. We should always desire forgiveness and reconciliation when we have been offended or let down by others. Family communion, according to Pope Francis, can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice. It requires a generous openness of each and all to understanding, to forbearance, to pardon, to reconciliation (n 106). Many have harbored things in their heart leading to unresolved conflicts and divorce. The situation whereby one member of the family is not ready to forgive the one who offends, the joy of being members of the family cannot be guaranteed. The Pope invites all to pray to God over our own limitations and past histories that we may accept ourselves, learn how to live with others and even to forgive ourselves, in order to have this same attitude towards others.

The Fruitfulness of Love

According to *Amoris Laetitia* conjugal love always gives life and does not end with the couple. *The family is the setting in which a new life is not only born but also welcomed as a gift of God.*

Each new life “allows us to appreciate the utterly gratuitous dimension of love, which never ceases to amaze us (n 166).

Children are a living reflection of the love of the couple, *a permanent sign of their conjugal unity and a living and inseparable synthesis of their being a father and a mother (n 165).* He emphasized the fact that children are a gift from God but where this is not forthcoming couples can still love each other perfectly. Parents should therefore love their children by giving them good education in the Christian faith. Parents should be more vigilant around their children. This call is more urgent now that in our own country we are experiencing kidnapping cases. Parents have the responsibility to guide the children. They should be interested to know where and with whom their children move. This also implies monitoring and limiting them in the use of the social media as well.

Pope Francis also speaks with concern for couples who are unable to have children which can be a cause of real pain and suffering for many. It is important to understand that even in such situations, marriage still retains its character of commitment and indissolubility. Motherhood should not be understood solely as a biological reality, it is also expressed in diverse ways. The Pope encouraged those who wish to have children but cannot have their own to adopt a child because adoption is also a very generous way to become parents (ns 178-179).

On the issue of the transmission of the faith and the values, the Pope said mothers play the most important role in this regard. He said mothers are the strongest antidote to the spread of self-centred individualism. They are those who take charge and can transmit good values to their children because the children spend most of the time with their mothers in the infancy. He said it is mothers who testify to the beauty of life. He places a high premium on mothers by stating that *a society without mothers would be dehumanized, for mothers are always, even in the worst of times, witnesses to tenderness, dedication and moral strength (n 174).* Parents should also know that each one of the children is unique and irreplaceable and that we do not love them because they are beautiful, intelligent, or look or think as we do, or embody our dreams but because they are children (n 170). Mothers are important players in building strong families.

Accompanying, Discerning and integrating, the Way to go

The Pope is proposing to the whole Christian community to take interest in the situation of the weak families, accompany them, discern with them what God wants for them in their real situations and help them to integrate. This is how every family will be positioned for the mission of evangelization.

We could discuss here briefly the cases of merely civil marriage, cohabitation, divorced and remarried etc. In all these situations, the Pope cautions us not to condemn any one forever. Rather, we are to pour out the balm of God's mercy on all who ask for it with a sincere heart. (n 296). Again He says "when such unions attain a particular stability, legally recognized, are characterized by deep affection and responsibility for their offspring, and demonstrate an ability to overcome trials, they can provide occasions for pastoral care with a view to the eventual celebration of the sacrament of marriage"(n.293) All the baptized, but especially those entrusted with the pastoral ministry are to engage in this process of pastoral discernment.

To do this Pope Francis calls for conversion of heart on the part of all of us, pastors and the lay faithful alike. This is where all of us and you as Marshallans have a great deal of responsibility and role to play. According to the Pope many people feel that the Church does not get that much involved in their situations. We are, all of us, to do something to support marriages to be strong in order to make their rightful contributions to the society by raising children in the fear of God. Each member of the community is to make an effort to strengthen marriages, to help married couples overcome their problems, to assist them in the work of raising children and, in general, to encourage the stability of the marriage bond as a sure way of placing families in their right places to function well (n 53). For the Pope, the way to go is conversion of heart.

In his view, conversion requires a change of heart toward the conditions of others. We ourselves have to experience mercy and forgiveness before we can be truly converted. We need the act of Mercy in our resolve to help the healing and integrating of persons of wounded families and those of irregular (ns 291-292; *FamiliarisConsortio*, ns 77-85). Mercy is the nature of God which is at the heart of the Gospel. Jesus demonstrated this in the Gospel of John with the story of the woman caught in adultery and brought before Jesus. Pope Francis in *EvangeliiGaudium* said being Church means being people of God whose fatherly love extends to all and embraces all (cf. EG 114). Therefore, pastors should let the Church always be a place of mercy and hope, where everyone is welcomed, loved and forgiven.

Let us listen once more to Pope Francis in the following quote: *But I sincerely believe that Jesus wants a Church attentive to the goodness which the Holy Spirit sows in the midst of human weakness, a Mother who, while clearly expressing her objective teaching, “always does what good she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street”. The Church’s pastors, in proposing to the faithful the full ideal of the Gospel and the Church’s teaching, must also help them to treat the weak with compassion, avoiding aggravation or unduly harsh or hasty judgements* (n 308).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I want to reiterate the call of the Synod Fathers and Pope Francis to you my dear Marshallan brothers and sisters that our attitude ought to be one of humble understanding, desire to accompany, to discern together, to show mercy and to integrate. We have to create the necessary space for others to also play. The pace of the accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting a closeness and compassion which, at the same time, heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life (*EvangeliiGaudium*, 169). The Church will have to initiate everyone, priests, religious and laity into this art of accompaniment. This art teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. *Ex* 3:5). We must show the desire to accompany each and every family so that they can discover a better way to overcome the difficulties which they encounter on their journey and intend build strong Christian families for evangelization.

I thank you.

MOST REV. MATTHEW KWASI GYAMFI



Photo Source: Graphic Online

15th – 16th July, 2021

**OUR CALL TO FRATERNITY AND SOCIAL FRIENDSHIP IN VIEW OF
FRATELLI TUTTI: THE MARSHALLAN**

By

Most Rev. Matthew Kwasi Gyamfi
Bishop of Sunyani

Abstract

In his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis passionately calls on all mankind to return to a life of fraternity and friendship. For the Pope, a more humane trajectory for the world is for all peoples, nations and institutions to see and relate to each other as the biblical Good Samaritan did for the Jew who had been assaulted by thieves and lying injured on the wayside.

This presentation relates the encyclical to the socio-political and ecclesial context of Ghana and the Ghanaian and discusses how the encyclical could be brought to bear on the Ghanaian situation. Further, the paper exhorts all Lay Faithful, especially the Marshallan, whose duty it is to evangelise the temporal world, to be familiar with the social doctrines of the Church, including *Fratelli Tutti*. The Lay Faithful, including the Marshallan, are expected to use the social teachings as guides to ordering the Ghanaian society and the Church in Ghana according to God's will as expressed in *Fratelli Tutti*. Selected topics in Church and in Politics are discussed to demonstrate how the social doctrines could be applied by the Laity/Marshallan to do politics of service. When the Marshallan, and indeed all Lay Faithful, have studied the social doctrines of Church, they will be armed to take up their proper roles of evangelising not only the temporal order but also provide for the material and financial needs of the Church.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Supreme Knight, Sir Knight Bro. Charles L. L. Cobb, Members of the Supreme Council, the Grand Lady, Most Respected Lady Sister Dame Agatha Akua Bonney, Members of the Grand Court, Past Supreme Knights and Grand Ladies, Regional Grand Knights and Noble Ladies, Grand Knights and Noble Ladies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am happy to welcome you to Sunyani Diocese and to Sunyani Capital of the Bono Region. I understand this is one of the few times the Marshall-Moreau-Murat Memorial Lectures are held outside the national capital with the attendance of representative Marshallans. All the same, the marvels of modern technology have made it virtually possible for all Marshallans world-wide to be present. Please permit me to express my gratitude to you for inviting me and giving me the honour to lead you in the 2021 Marshall-Moreau-Murat Memorial Lectures. We should all be grateful to these great missionaries for we cannot talk of the Catholic Church in Ghana without reference to these three great pioneering missionaries.

During my seminary days, many years ago, we read about Sir James Marshall, his letters and efforts to bring Catholicism to present day Ghana. The closest I had come in contact with his physical person was during a trip I made to London in 2005. In London, I had the opportunity to celebrate mass, in Sir James Marshall's Parish, for the Marshallans and the Ghanaian Catholic Community in the outskirts of London. Close to the parish church was the parish cemetery. And in one of the graves, a rather simple, grave rested the remains of Sir James Marshall. As we surrounded the grave to say prayers for the repose of his soul it dawned on me what a great missionary he had been. A lay person, a civil servant, and not a priest or religious, who had worked perseveringly to get priests to start the Church in Ghana. It dawned on me that the work of evangelisation is a collaborative effort of priests and laity. The latter is more effective in the temporal order and the former in spiritual realm. I wondered whether I and indeed many Ghanaians, would ever have been Christians, and benefited from the education, health and many other services that accompanied the Church. Without his pioneering work, I might not have been a priest. No speech, no word, no voice is heard yet their span goes forth through all the earth (Ps. 18). I felt the emotional and spiritual connection to the great Missionary, Sir James Marshall, and prayed God and asked Sir James Marshall to intercede for me so I may get a share of his missionary spirit. Now that you have honoured me to give these addresses in his honour, may my mouth utter the right words as Sir James would have said and written it.

These lectures are for the dual purpose of presenting to the Marshallan, the Social Teachings of the Church, as tools and guidelines for evangelising the Church and the temporal order in the Ghanaian society. It aims also to present *Fratelli Tutti*, the latest of the Pope's social teaching, as fuel and a reawakening of the Marshallan's missionary zeal for duty and service to the Church

and society. It is my expectation that the lecture would imbue you with similar zeal, passion and enthusiasm that Sir James Marshall, Rev. Frs. Auguste Moreau and Eugene Murat had for planting and growing the Church in Ghana. At the end, the Marshallan would no longer do business as usual but would have a better appreciation of the material and spiritual context of evangelization. Such awareness should push and pull the Marshallan out of our current comfortable and complacent Jerusalem of the sacristy and liturgical worship into the risky missionary territory of the 'Rome and Roman Empire' and beyond to literally grow the Church physically and spiritually as Knights of the Church do. It was not only Peter and Paul, the apostles and the many lay people and Knights of the New Testament and mediaeval times who heroically planted and lived the faith in church and society. In our era, we have Sir James Marshal, Frs. Moreau and Murat and many of you and more.

For these purposes, the lecture has two main parts: the first is an overview and a summary of the encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. In the second part, there is a discussion on how the Marshallan may positively affect and infect the Church and Ghanaian society using the Social Teachings of the Church, especially the *Fratelli Tutti*, as a guide. The Church calls on you to be apostles of the social encyclicals, including *Fratelli Tutti*, to bring its teachings to bear on the Church and on society where you are the priests.

1.1 Context of Fratelli Tutti

The theme for this year's lectures is "*The Call to Fraternity and Social Friendship in view of Fratelli Tutti: The Marshallan*". The chosen theme is an adaptation of Pope Francis' letter or encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* in which he passionately calls on all mankind, including the Marshallan, to come back to a life of universal brotherhood. *Fratelli Tutti* is an Italian phrase which means "brothers all"; *We are all brothers and sisters; we are all neighbours*. The encyclical takes its name from one of the Admonitions of St. Francis of Assisi to the Friars of the religious congregation he had founded. In the 25th Admonition, St Francis urges the Friars to cultivate the type of love that goes beyond the barriers of geography and distance. Francis declares blessed all those who love their brethren "*as much when he is far away from him as when he is with him*" (FT 1). The Holy Father, therefore, invites all people to commit to promoting *Fraternity* and *Social Friendship*. He calls on all people of goodwill, including the Marshallan, to realize that fraternity and social friendship are the practical ways to build a better, more just and peaceful

world. For Catholics, the project of building a peaceful world should be executed using the right application of Gospel values some of which are Unity, Charity, Fraternity and Service, values which make up the motto of the Marshallan.

In a way the encyclical is a sequel to the Pope's encyclical "*Laudato Si*" of 2015. In *Laudato Si* the Holy Father, denounces as evil, any human activity that destroys the Earth, which is Our Common Home. Instead, the Pope proposed, in *Laudato Si*, the promotion of an integral ecology as an instrument for the expression of love and respect for all, among all and for all creation. While *Laudato Si* is about maintaining and repairing the common home that God prepared for us, in *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis teaches how we can live happily, and sustainably share the resources in our common home as true brothers and sisters would do. Applying the moral teachings of the Church to the social and economic challenges of the current day, the Holy Father presents to us for consideration and implementation a set of teachings which is an existential intervention in world affairs and an attempt to change the current trajectory of human relations in our country and world as a whole.

In our Church, country and world today, by advertence or inadvertence, we seem to grow more and more insensitive towards our brothers and sisters. It appears we are living up to the unwholesome maxim "everybody for him/herself and God for us all." Quietly but steadily, we seem to be guided no longer by law and love but by the maxim of the jungle, survival of the fittest. Our world today is characterised by wars, forced migration, the threat of nuclear war, economic exploitation of poor nations by the rich nations through the established but unjust economic systems that make it difficult for poor nations to get out of their poverty. Unplanned migrations resulting from poverty end up in deaths of our youth on seas and on the desert. There is terrorism in the name of religion and human trafficking and slavery are current. In Ghana, we live with tribal and ethnic strife.

In Africa and Ghana, everyday we hear of murder and kidnapping. Broken families and children without homes are all too common these days. Workers steal and collapse their employers' company and employers underpay workers. We kill helpless, defenceless unborn children and justify it. Some politicians, chiefs and some leaders cheat the poor of their land and livelihood and they think it is normal. Even in our church, we are afraid to trust anybody. Society is fiercely divided over same-sex marriage. Political parties see each other as mortal enemies and while

some individuals are too rich, others are dying in abject poverty. Our political and judicial systems serve the interests of only few while the majority look on helplessly. There is a monstrous rape of the environment for the benefit of a few but we all suffer the consequences of their acts. While there has been scientific and medical progress, it appears that the world is imperceptibly but certainly creeping back into the jungle where might is right, and abuse of the rights of the weak, human trafficking, prostitution, and lies that hurt and destroys are permitted if they help me. But what is more worrying, is that we, including Christians are beginning to accept these hurting relationships as the norm. We have dulled our sensitivity to the sufferings and cry of the other person. Where are the Christians, Catholics, Marshallans, and the Good Samaritans? What happened to the greatest command, Love of God and neighbour? This jungle state of affairs in our world, country and communities is what has occasioned the encyclical *FRATELLI TUTTI*. In this letter to the world and to each of us, the Pope draws our attention to the dangerous trajectory we have leaned towards. He invites all people of good will to pause, seriously reflect and consider reversing our current trajectory. We need to re-establish a brotherhood of love for neighbour, and care for one another as we journey together as children of one Father—God. The Theme you have chosen however gives hope. It suggests that Marshallans, as soldiers of the Church would want to respond actively to the Pope’s call to renew a brotherhood of love for neighbour and care for one another as Jesus commands us. What does the Pope teach in *Fratelli Tutti*?

1.2 An Overview of Fratelli Tutti

In eight chapters, Pope Francis calls all humanity to recognise and live out our common fraternity. The Holy Father reminds us that “*no one can live life in isolation*” (FT 8) - *Unity and Charity*. For this reason, he believes the time is ripe for all humanity to dream, then as a single human family in which we are brothers and sisters all (FT 8) - *Fraternity and Service*. In the first chapter of *Fratelli Tutti* entitled “**Dark Clouds Over a Closed World,**” Pope Francis discusses the many distortions in our contemporary world. These sad distortions blind us from seeing one another as brothers and sisters. Included in the distortions that the Pope identifies in our world today are: the loss of a historical consciousness, the throwaway culture (consumerism), the stalled expansion of human rights, fear of immigrants, and the superficiality of digital connection that can lead to aggression and politicisation. The Holy Father, thus, indicates that concepts such

as democracy, freedom, and justice have been and/or are being manipulated and deformed by the powerful to satisfy their interest. These have led to the loss of meaning in our social community and history. Many people also demonstrate selfishness and indifference toward the common good while the market logic is based on profit and the culture of waste. Unemployment, racism and poverty are global issues that need to be properly addressed according to Pope Francis. Meanwhile, the disparity of rights and its aberrations such as slavery, human trafficking, women subjugated and forced to abort and organ trafficking should neither be downplayed nor overlooked (FT 10-24).

According to Pope Francis these are global problems that call for global actions. They could be handled or overcome only through our collective efforts. In order to achieve this, the “culture of walls” must end and pave way for a culture of loving openness to all people (FT 27-28). In the final analysis, Pope Francis calls on us to deepen the sense that we are a global community; we are all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all. We, therefore, must realise that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together (FT 32).

The second chapter is what I consider to be the apex and climax of the encyclical. Here, the Holy Father extensively discusses the biblical story of the Good Samaritan under the title “**A Stranger on the Road.**” In an indifferent world that pays little or no attention to the suffering, the Pope calls on us to act like **the Good Samaritan** who though an archenemy of the Jew, yet became a true neighbor to the enemy and stranger on the road. The Pope urges us to reflect on and embark on a journey of accepting and uprooting prejudices and personal interests, to dissolve historic and cultural barriers be they familial, tribal, race, religion etc., especially if these differences make us look down on others. Such exercise, as costly as it may be, should result in our acceptance of all as made in the image of God and therefore our neighbors. As neighbors, we are members of a single family. It is therefore our collective responsibility and opportunity to create a world that includes all, and integrates and lifts up those who are suffering or have fallen (FT 77). We are to see Christ especially in the face of every excluded person (FT 85).

Chapter three is titled “**Envisaging and Engendering an open world.**” In it the Holy Father exhorts us to go “outside” the self in order to find “*a fuller existence in another*” (FT 88). We should be able to place ourselves in the other persons’ position and feel what they feel to understand them better and act accordingly towards them. According to the Pope “*all of us*

believers need to recognise that love takes the first place: love must never be put at risk, and the greatest danger lies in failing to love” (FT 92). Instead, universal love and recognition of the inherent dignity of every individual are reliable means to ensure that every person has sufficient opportunities for integral development (FT 118). We should note also that *“if one person lacks what is necessary to live with dignity, it is because another person is detaining it”* (FT 119). In consequence, the Pope teaches that the right to live with dignity cannot and should not be denied to anyone. Since rights have no borders, no one can remain excluded, regardless of where they are born. He goes further to state that every country (town, village) also belongs to foreigners. The goods of the territory should therefore not be denied to those who are in need and come from another place (FT 120-121).

Titled **“A Heart Open to the Whole World,”** the fourth chapter focuses on the plight of national and international migrants, in today’s world. It encourages us to have a positive attitude towards migrants and treat them humanely and as brothers and sisters. The Pope wants us to see migration and migrants as an opportunity for us to care for these our brothers and sisters. Migrants are Jesus in disguise. In them we see and meet Jesus. In them we take Jesus home as a stranger, feed Jesus in a stranger, clothe Jesus in the naked, and help Jesus who needs job and a home (Mat 25). These migrants, fleeing from problems of life such as worsening economic situations, war, persecution, natural disasters, and unscrupulous trafficking and those ripped from their communities of origin, are to be welcomed, protected, supported and integrated. This embrace of the stranger/migrant is possible if we cultivate *“a heart opened to the whole world”*. While the Pope advises the youth and all to avoid unnecessary migration, he proposes that if the migrants do come, we should remember to respect their rights to seek a better life. The Pope seeks a *“...global governance, and an international collaboration for migration which implements long-term planning, going beyond single emergencies, on behalf of the supportive development of all peoples* (FT 129-132).

Chapter five of *Fratelli Tutti* is titled **“A Better Kind of Politics”**. In this Chapter the Pope discusses the expected role of politics and governments that makes them relevant and servants of the people they represent. The Pope recognises that some of our current political systems are in the main seeking the good of their people. He however, urges States and nations to move from good to better ways of political engagement at the local, regional, national, and international

levels, and work to promote the common good at all levels (FT 160). For the Holy Father, a better politics is the one that protects work, promotes solidarity and subsidiarity and finds solution to all that attacks fundamental human rights, including weapons and drugs; sexual exploitation; slave labor; terrorism and organized crime. It is collaborative engagement among national governments that can end human trafficking, which the Pope calls “a source of shame for humanity.” Such collaboration also can bring an end to hunger, for food is an inalienable human right (FT 188-189). Politics, according to the Holy Father should center on human dignity and not be made subject to finance. He asks the United Nations to promote “the force of law” rather than “the law of force” in nations (FT 173-175). When our politics and national governments promote and safeguard the interest of their citizens by the force of law then will our common good be promoted, poverty eradicated and human rights protected. Politics is at the service of peace and a means to charity. He recommends Catholics/Marshallans to enter politics and use it to evangelise the temporal world.

Chapter Six is dedicated to a discussion of “**Dialogue and Friendship in Society.**” According to the Pope, authentic dialogue builds a thriving society. “Dialogue” is approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understanding one another to find a common ground. Dialogue thus becomes an appropriate means to encounter and help one another (FT 198). Such cooperation between the different social, political, cultural, and religious groups requires intentional, constructive and respectful conversation built around the pursuit of justice and universal truth. All dialogue must be devoid of manipulation and should not depend solely on media information. All agents in such a dialogue must be ready to give and to receive while remaining open to the truth (FT 199). In this way each person learns something from the other and no one is useless and no one is expendable (FT 215). The Pope invites us to recover “*kindness*,” because it is an attitude that seems to be disappearing from our societies. To the Pope *kindness* is a miracle, it is a star “shining in the midst of darkness” and frees us from the cruelty, the anxiety, the frantic flurry of activity prevailing in our world today (FT 222, 224).

In the penultimate chapter, Chapter seven, the Pope expresses the need for peacemakers who forge new “**Paths of Renewed Encounter**”. He outlines some ways to move forward towards lasting peace and discusses the need for humanity to walk on paths of peace to heal open wounds in our society; these peacemakers also work boldly and creatively to initiate processes of healing

and renewed encounter (FT 225). Every “peace process requires enduring commitment” just as true peace must be based on truth, along with justice and mercy (FT 227). The path to peace does not mean making society uniform, but making people work together, side by side, pursuing goals that benefit everyone.

The Holy Father further highlights the importance of reconciliation and its association with forgiveness in peace building. While forgiveness is important in Christianity, the Pope says “it does not mean forgetting the harm done. Memory is very important” (FT).

To make meaning of processes of peace building, the Pope encourages us to learn from the South African Bishops who have observed that *“true reconciliation is achieved proactively, ‘by forming a new society, a society based on service to others, rather than the desire to dominate; a society based on sharing what one has with others, rather than the selfish scramble by each for as much wealth as possible; a society in which the value of being together as human beings is ultimately more important than any lesser group, whether it be family, nation, race or culture”* (FT 229). Similarly, we may benefit from the teaching of Bishops of South Korea who held that *“true peace can be achieved only when we strive for justice through dialogue, pursuing reconciliation and mutual development”* (FT 229). The Holy Father teaches that war and death penalty are false answers that do not resolve the problems and so should not be used as solutions to problems. They are not authentic paths to justice and peace (FT 255).

In the final chapter, Pope Francis discusses the roles that different religions of the world play or can play in fostering universal fraternity. Pope Francis acknowledges that to the extent a religion has respect for each human person as creature called to be a child of God, the religion contributes significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society (FT 271). Believers of such religions would know that their witness to God benefits our societies. For this reason, any religion that makes *“the effort to seek God with a sincere heart, provided it is never sullied by ideological or self-serving aims, helps us recognise one another as travelling companions, truly brothers and sisters”* (FT 274). Such religions should seek greater collaboration among themselves and their followers to build fraternity and defend justice in society.

In concluding the overview of *Fratelli Tutti*, I wish to invite you to a deeper reflection on the message of *Fratelli Tutti*. Find time to read it at your own convenience and let the Holy Father’s call to universal fraternity resound repeatedly in your mind and heart. Let what we read and hear

be translated into action in our country, towns and villages, communities, relationship, businesses, families, marriages and personal lives, all out of love for Christ. It is my hope that you would all become true brothers and sisters of all. May God inspire this dream in each one of you.

2.0 THE GOOD SAMARITAN — AFFIRMATION OF OUR UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD AND SISTERHOOD AS A SINGLE HUMAN FAMILY

Universal Brotherhood of Mankind is the belief, feeling, and hope that all should regard and treat one another as brothers and sisters.⁶⁶ The first issue to be considered is our openness to God, our Creator and Father. Without openness to the Father of all, there will be no solid and stable reasons for an appeal to fraternity (FT 272). We must willingly accept that we are all children of one Father and so possess an innate vocation to recognize and accept one another as brothers and sisters. Jesus prayed that all may be one (John 17:21). As children of God, we are here to complement one another's work and not to compete with one another. We are meant to cooperate and collaborate but not to destroy or take advantage of the other person's conditions. God has entrusted the other person into our care whether he/she is far or near. We owe it as a natural duty to help the other person. To fail to do what God created you for and intended for you is to fail to be human.

After killing his brother Abel, God questioned Cain, "where is your brother?" Theologically, God meant he had placed Abel into the care of his brother; to support him and not to destroy or compete with him. "The actual murder is described very sparsely for its horror is obvious, but the aftermath is given great attention. God expresses concern for the brother, and Cain's cynical reply is immediately rejected. God demands that we indeed be our brothers' keepers – under pain of being cursed."⁶⁷

Faced with poverty, scarce resources, long distances, differences of language, culture and religion, and the time of the crusades, St. Francis still visited Sultan Malik el-Kamil, in Egypt, a Moslem (FT 3). St Francis thus demonstrated his closeness and fraternal relationship with Sultan Malik el-Kamil. I believe it is with a similar understanding of universal brotherhood/sisterhood that Sir James Marshall, though a British, requested missionaries for the Gold Coast at the Office

⁶⁶ The Oxford Dictionary

⁶⁷William R. Farmer (Editor), *International Bible Commentary*, Theological Publications, Bangalore, p.417

of the Propagation of Faith, a petition which led to the arrival of Frs. Auguste Moreau and Eugene Murat (French) at Elmina to embark on missionary work among Africans.

In writing *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis felt encouraged by his meeting with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi; here they both declared “*God has created all human beings equal in rights; duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters*” (FT 5).

It is in the same spirit of universal brotherhood/sisterhood that Pope Francis embarked on an Apostolic Journey to Iraq from 5th to 8th March, 2021. This journey was to demonstrate to the world that we are all brothers and sisters; religion should not divide us. God is love, therefore, those who belong to God must live in love (cf. 1 John 4:8). Authentic love welcomes everyone even though it comes with hardships and dangers.

Our duty is to spread the love of God (1John 4:16). Only the man who approaches others, not to draw them into his own life, but to help them become ever more fully themselves, can truly be called father (FT 4).

2.1 The Parable of the Good Samaritan

To help us better understand and appreciate our call to Fraternity that the above examples demonstrate, Pope Francis uses a familiar biblical story in *Fratelli Tutti* to bring home his message. I believe this biblical parable and chapter in *Fratelli Tutti* is the summary and core of the entire encyclical. I would like to re-propose it in this lecture for our consideration and further reflection.

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a

Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:25-37, NRSV).

In essence this parable teaches us who a true neighbor is and how we can be neighbors to everyone. In the several persons who passed by the assaulted man, we rediscover ourselves in how we treat others in our world, Church, societies and communities. The Priest and Levite, were people holding important social positions yet lacking in real concern for the common good and the other person. The assaulted man was not worth their time, not even the care to call for others to come and help him if they could personally help the victim. In general, this is what is happening in our world today and we do not seem to realise it because we are used to it as the norm. The Pope would want to re-ignite the conscience of the world and the conscience of the Marshallan by inviting us to learn from and to be the one person who would always stop for the human person in need, approach him/her and care for him/her personally and provide for his/her needs. The Samaritan did not give only his material resources to help the man, he gave him also his time, a resource that we of this era tend to guard with extreme jealousy. He would want us to note further that the Samaritan like the other passersby also had his own plans for the day, he also had his own needs and commitments and desire. He probably had to reach his destination that day on time for whatever occasioned the trip. Yet he was able to put all these aside when he was confronted by someone in real need. He asks "*which of the characters in the parable do you identify with? The question, blunt as it is, is direct and incisive (FT 64)*". Which of these characters, do Marshallans resemble? Which of these characters do our society, community and world today resemble? Do we even care and do we want to care?

We need to acknowledge that in our families, societies, and country, we are constantly tempted to ignore others and look down on others. We tend to exploit other peoples' unfortunate

conditions to our own advantage. We are in a hurry like the passersby in search of personal desires and wants regardless of the impact these interests would have on other persons.

The Pope would want us to “...admit that for all the progress we have made, we are still illiterate when it comes to accompanying, caring for and supporting the frail and vulnerable members of our societies and country. We have become accustomed to looking the other way” (FT 66). Someone is assaulted on the street and we look the other way, a car knocks someone and we hurry quickly away. We desire to avoid inconveniences to ourselves. All these signal an approach to life that is creeping imperceptibly but certainly into our society. A society that seeks prosperity but turns its back on the suffering is an unhealthy society (FT. 64). The Marshallan needs to reverse the trend.

Further, the parable proposes to us the decision we need to make to build our broken society. In the light of the in humane treatment of some by others, we need to make a fundamental decision to be the Good Samaritan in our communities and in the Church. Any other choice will make us either one of the armed robbers or one of those who walked by and did not show any compassion for the man suffering on the roadside. The Pope says the Parable shows how our society, community, church and nation can be rebuilt by men and women who empathise with the vulnerable and see all as brothers and sisters without any discrimination.

The parable of the Good Samaritan brings out an essential and often forgotten aspect of our common humanity. We should feel indignant and challenged to emerge from our comfort zones and to be changed by our contact with human suffering (FT67). The Parable also evokes the interior struggle that each one of us undergoes as we steadily rediscover our true selves through our relationships with our brothers and sisters. Every day we meet the suffering. The decision we make to include or exclude those lying wounded along the roadside serves as a measure for judging all economic, political, social and religious undertakings for in all these activities we choose whether to be Good Samaritans or indifferent spectators (FT 69). Each of us has some of the wounded man and some characteristics of the passersby and some amount of the Good Samaritan in us. Let me do some analysis of the different characters to help you decide who you are in the common brotherhood sisterhood story.

a. *The Good Samaritan*

Once he is confronted with a wounded man (Jew), the traditional and historical hatred between Jew and Samaritan disappears. In the interaction two kinds of persons emerge: those who help and those who pass by looking the other way. This is the challenge we face every day in our families, communities in the Church and in the country and the world. We should face it that in similar moments of crises, decisions become urgent. What have you been deciding in such situations? It could be said that, here and now, anyone who is neither a robber nor a passerby is either injured himself or bearing an injured person on his shoulders (FT70).

b. The Robbers

These are those who cause the harm to us or to others. They will always be there but they should not be our focus. That is why Jesus describes only the consequences of their actions in the parable and did not focus on those who have chosen to be evil. In our world and country and society today, there are these dark shadows of neglect and violence in the petty interest of power, gain and division. How do we respond to those who cause societal harm? We need to correct the harm the violent have inflicted, instead of focusing on the violent and corrupt persons. The Pope asks: *will we abandon the injured man and run to take refuge from the violence, or we will waste time pursuing the thieves? Will the wounded man end up being the justification for irreconcilable divisions, our cruel indifference and ethnic conflicts? Answering these questions will surprisingly reveal how to react when confronted with the evil deeds of other persons.*

c. The Passers-by.

On applying the story of the Good Samaritan to our everyday relationship with others, the Pope would want us to take a closer look at the passers-by. We may want to ask ourselves what makes the passers-by look the other way when they had seen the suffering of the wounded man. Why have Ghanaians developed the attitude of indifference or insensitivity towards the suffering who we can help? Whether innocently or not, whether the result of disdain or mere distraction, the nervous indifference of the priest and the Levite is growing in our world and in our societies and is resulting in the growing gulf between us and the world around us. There are many ways we pass by a safe distance from those we can help. We retreat inwards, ignore others, or are indifferent to their plight. Sometimes we show contempt for the poor and people of different ethnicity. Often times the poor are beyond the scope of our interest (FT74).

Another surprising observation about the passersby is that they were religious - a priest and a Levite. Their status suggests to us very powerfully that like them our belief in God and the worship of God, our participation in the liturgy and ceremonies are not enough to ensure that we are actually living in a way pleasing to God. Thus, a Marshallan may be untrue to everything that his/her faith demands of him, and yet think s/he is close to God and better than others. The Church teaches that the authentic openness to God is practicing the faith that helps our brothers and sisters. When challenging Christians, St Chrysostom is quoted as telling them: “Do you wish to honour the Saviour? Do not despise him when he is naked. Do not honour him in Church with silk vestments while outside he is naked and numb with cold”. Indeed, like the Samaritan, the non-Jew, those who claim to be unbelievers, sometimes put God’s will into practice better than believers (FT74).

According to the Pope the robbers and the passersby are bedfellows. For there is a certain interplay between those who manipulate and cheat society, and those who while claiming to be detached and impartial critics, live off the system and its benefits. There is a sad hypocrisy, according to the Pope, when the impunity of crime, the use of institutions for personal or corporate gains, and other evils apparently impossible to eradicate, are accompanied by a relentless criticism of everything, and a constant sowing of suspicion that results in mistrust and confusion. The complaint that everything is broken in our country is answered by the claim that “it cannot be fixed, or what can I do? This feeds into despair and disillusionment. This has been the attitude of many in authority and leadership positions. They manipulate resources and dim the initiative and potentials of people to keep them in cyclical poverty and mental slavery (FT.75).

d. The Wounded Man

In our society, we may sometimes be the wounded person by the roadside. We may feel like him sometimes. We sometimes are hurt as he was, and feel helpless as he was. All these because the institutions that are supposed to take care of us, helpless from neglect and lack of resources, simply serve the interest of only a few. Under the guise of being politically correct or ideologically fashionable, we look at those who suffer without touching them (FT76). We televise live pictures of them and only speak about them with apparent tolerance.

The Pope however advises us that each day offers a new opportunity, and a new possibility. In consequences we should not expect everything from those who govern us, for that would be childish. Instead, we have the space we need for co-responsibility in creating and putting into place new processes and changes. Let us take active part in renewing and supporting our troubled society. Like the chance traveler in the parable, we need only have a pure and simple desire to be a people, a community constant and tireless in effort to include, integrate and lift up the fallen.

We very often find ourselves succumbing to the mentality of the violent, the blindly ambitious, those who spread mistrust and lies. Others view politics or the economy as an arena for their own power plays. But for our part, let us foster what is good and place ourselves at its service (F.T 78)

The Pope encourages us not serve alone as individuals. Indeed, the Samaritan worked with others. He discovered an innkeeper who would care for the man. We too are called to unite as a family that is stronger than the sum of small individual members to renounce the pettiness and resentment of useless infighting and constant confrontation. Let us also stop feeling sorry for ourselves and acknowledge our crimes, our apathy, our lies. Reparation and reconciliation will give us new life and set us all free (FT 78).

Very importantly, the Pope observed that the Samaritan who helped the wounded man did not expect anything in return. Rather, on his way back he was ready to pay any extra expenses the inn keeper might have acquired. His effort to assist another person gave him great satisfaction in life and before his God (FT 79).

It is unfortunate that unlike the Good Samaritan, even now there are those who appear to use their faith to defend forms of violent nationalism, xenophobia and contempt, and mistreatment of those who are different. Faith, and the humanism it inspires, must maintain critical sense in the face of these tendencies, and prompt an immediate response whenever they rear their ugly head.

Pope Francis writes *“Love also impels us towards universal communion. No one can mature or find fulfillment by withdrawing from others. By its very nature, love calls for growth in openness and the ability to accept others as part of a continuing adventure that makes every periphery converge in a greater sense of mutual belonging. As Jesus told us: ‘You are all brothers’ (Matthew 23:8)”* (FT 95). It is this love that moved the Good Samaritan to help his suffering

brother. From the parable, we note that whenever we come across people who need help and whose help is within our reach, mostly there are two obvious choices for us. The first is to be moved to offer our help and the second is to be indifferent. The Gospel says that the **GOOD SAMARITAN** was moved to help the stranger. I believe that he realized he was a human being like him. It is only in recognition and appreciation of our universal brotherhood/sisterhood that we can be moved to help in such a situation. The Good Samaritan saw in the wounded man, a brother, a fellow creature of God who needed assistance. So, he was moved to help. Consider the following details: he saw him; he was moved with pity; he went to him; he poured oil on his wounds and bandaged them; he put him on his own animal; he brought him to the inn; he took care of him; he gave out two denarii the next day; he was ready to pay more. As Marshallans, if you truly want to help others, then you must be ready to suffer; take risk; give out resources; spend time with them; and even lose money. You are called to do these or similar ones in order to be Good Samaritans to those in need and be truly their brothers and sisters.

Mt 25:35 I was hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, a stranger, in trouble, in prison a stranger and you welcome me. Saint Paul would say “rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15).

Gen. 42:21ff: Then they (Joseph’s brothers) said to one another, “in truth we are guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the distress of his soul, when he besought us and we would not listen; therefore, is this distress come upon us”

The LayFaithful/Marshallan, is required to be a good Samaritan in the social order. For this purpose, the Church provides you with her social teachings as guide. These social doctrines of the church, including *Fratelli Tutti* help us to respond to the complex evolving society in which we are sent to evangelise. These teachings are the fruits of the Church’s reflections on socio-political realities including recommendations on how the Christian can bring the gospel to bear on these realities. I present these teachings in the next lecture to guide the Marshallan in their duty to evangelise temporal order. *Fratelli Tutti* can be lived in the context of the social doctrines of the church.

DAY TWO

3.0 SOCIAL FRIENDSHIP AND PEACE AND SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH – THE MARSHALLAN

In this lecture, I present the main themes of Catholic Social Teaching, discuss how the Holy Father picks up the doctrines in *Fratelli Tutti* and re-proposes them to guide us in our quest to promote social friendship and social peace in the temporal order.

Pope Francis calls on us to promote social friendship and social peace in his latest encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. A careful study of the letter, suggests that the pathway to social friendship and social peace is our ability to adhere to principles of Catholic Social Doctrine. In the course of her history, and particularly for over hundred years now, the Catholic Church has developed, held on to and used her Social teachings as an instrument for addressing the gospel to society (cf. *CentisimusAnnus*, 54). In *the Social teachings*, the Pope's address critical contemporary cultural and social issues in the light of the Gospel in order to help the Church, especially the lay faithful, fulfill their mission of transforming the temporal order and ordering it according to God's will (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 31). The clergy preach in the Church building. It is your duty to bring the gospel message to bear on politics, family, businesses, health, education etc. The Social teachings are guidelines on how to effectively preach the gospel in the world, to be salt and light in the world.

Lay Faithful/Marshallans/Catholics, must be familiar with the Social Teaching of the Church to be able to apply them sufficiently to serve the Church's mission of transforming the world. Morris Pezel (1998), an assistant professor of systematic theology at St. Meinrad School of Theology, Indiana) affirms that many Catholics do not adequately understand that the Social Teaching of the Church is an essential part of Catholic faith. Ignorance of such necessary teachings weakens our capacity to evangelise the temporal order.

3.1 Catholic Social Doctrine

The *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)* has grouped Catholic Social Teaching under seven main themes:

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person: The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. This belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching. In our society, human life

is under direct attack from abortion and euthanasia., *human slavery, human trafficking, taking bribes under whatever holy name and circumstances.* The value of human life is being threatened by cloning, embryonic stem cell research, and the use of the death penalty. The intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks is always wrong. Catholic teaching also calls on us to work to avoid war. Nations must protect the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.⁶⁸

2. *Call to Family, Community, and Participation:* From this theme, we learn that “the person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society -- in economics and politics, in law and policy -- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.”⁶⁹

3. *Rights and Responsibilities:* The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities--to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.⁷⁰

4. *Option for the Poor and Vulnerable:* A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.⁷¹

5. *The Dignity of Work and the Right of Workers:* The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing

⁶⁸ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching: Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* (No. 5-281), 2005.

⁶⁹ USCCB, *Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*, 2005

⁷⁰ USCCB, *Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*, 2005

⁷¹ USCCB, *Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*, 2005

participation in God's creation. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected--the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organization and joining of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.⁷²

6. *Solidarity*: We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Pope Paul VI taught that if you want peace, work for justice. The Gospel calls us to be peacemakers (cf. Matthew 5:9). Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.⁷³

7. *Care for God's Creation*: We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.⁷⁴

These themes of Catholic Social Doctrine are the foundation of all other Social Teachings of the Church, including *Fratelli Tutti*. They serve as a guide, especially for the Laity and the Marshallese whose duty it is to evangelize the temporal world, ordering it according to God's will.

4.0 FRATELLI TUTTI AND EVANGELIZATION, THE ROLE OF THE MARSHALLESE

A question often asked is what is the role of the Laity/Marshallese in Evangelization in the Catholic Church. The Church was founded to spread the Kingdom of Christ over all the earth for the glory of God the Father, to make all men partakers in redemption and salvation and through them to establish the right relationship of the entire world to Christ (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 2). Jesus formed and commissioned his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all. Consequently, the Church exists to evangelize and we, priests, religious and Laity, are the Church. Evangelization is not the preserve of the clergy and religious in the Church. Rather, having been incorporated into the Church through baptism, all the people of God participate by divine mandate and in their

⁷² USCCB, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, 2005

⁷³ USCCB, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, 2005

⁷⁴ USCCB, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, 2005

own way in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They are called, each according to his or her particular condition, to exercise the mission which God entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world (cf. Canon 204 §1).

In the Church, there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. It is the Lay People who begin most of the communities. They then invite the priest to administer the sacraments and to proclaim the word to them. As lay people, Marshallans are called to exercise your apostolate by working towards the evangelisation and sanctification of people everywhere. This apostolate is exercised too when the laity endeavor to have the Gospel Spirit permeate and improve the temporal order, going about it in a way that bears clear witness of Christ and helps forward the salvation of men (all human beings). Some temporal areas are discussed below.

4.1 Politics, a tool for Charity and Evangelization—the Marshallan

The Marshallan/Laity can evangelise politics and use politics as a tool to evangelise the social order in line with Fratelli Tutti. When a number of people commit themselves to leading a people to better their lives, we call it politics. *Politics is at the service of peace* if it finds expression in the recognition of the gifts and abilities of each individual. For the Christian/Marshallan, charity and human virtues are the basis of politics that is at the service of human rights and peace. Politics of today, however, reduce persons to isolated individuals so they are easily manipulated by powers pursuing spurious interests. Good politics, on the other hand, will seek ways of building communities at every level of social life. A better politics is geared towards the eradication of social vices such as social exclusion; the marketing of organs, tissues, weapons and drugs; sexual exploitation; slave labor; terrorism and organized crime (FT 188-189). A better politics protects human rights and makes recourse to negotiation, mediation and arbitration (FT 173-175). A better politics has a better plan for refugees and migrants. Any effort along these lines becomes a noble exercise of charity.

According to the Pope there are two types of charity in politics: elicited and commanded love. Elicited love proceeds directly from the virtue of charity and it is directed towards individuals. Commanded love, on the other hand are those acts of charity that spur people to create more sound institutions, more just regulations, and more supportive structures. (FT 182, 186) It is an indispensable act of love to strive to organise and structure society so that one's neighbor will not find himself in poverty. It is an act of charity to work to change the social conditions that

cause people to suffer and to be poor. Thus, if someone helps an elderly person to cross a river, that is a fine act of charity. The politician on the other hand, builds a bridge, and that too is an act of charity. While one person can help another by providing something to eat, the Politician creates a job for that other person, and thus practices a lofty form of charity that ennoble his or her political activity (FT 186).

To be a better Politician takes strength and tenderness, effort and generosity in the midst of a functionalistic and privatised mindset that inexorably leads to a throwaway culture. It involves taking responsibility for the present with its situations of anguish, and being capable of bestowing dignity upon it. It does everything to protect the status and dignity of the human person. Politicians, guided by *Fratelli Tutti*, are doers, builders with ambitious goals, possessed of a broad, and realistic and pragmatic gaze that looks beyond their own borders. Their biggest concern should not be about a drop in the polls, but about finding effective solutions to the phenomenon of social and economic exclusion with its baneful consequences. Talking about debate in politics, the Church teaches that disagreements may well give rise to conflicts, but uniformity proves stifling and leads to cultural decay. May we not be content with being enclosed in one fragment of reality (FT 191).

Politics is a means of serving society. It is something more noble than posturing, marketing and media spin. The painful questions the politician must ask now and at the end are: How much love did I put in my work? What did I do for the progress of the people? What mark did I leave on the life of society? What good did I create? How much social Peace did I sow? What good did I achieve in the position that was entrusted to me?

I encourage all Catholics and for that matter all Marshallans to make conscious efforts to be familiar, also, with these fundamental questions. They are the pivot around which all Catholic Social Doctrines are hinged. A better understanding of these and their right application would enable you to walk on the path of promoting social friendship and social peace.

Pope Francis in his message for the World Day of Peace, 2019, recalls the beatitudes of the Politician, proposed by Vietnamese Cardinal Francois-Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan who died in 2002:⁷⁵ You may call them the Beatitudes of the Catholic Politician or Marshallan;

⁷⁵ Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Celebration of World Day of Peace, 2019, no. 3, p. 5.

- Blessed be the Catholic Politician with a lofty sense and deep understanding of his role.
- Blessed be the Catholic Politician who personally exemplifies credibility.
- Blessed be the Catholic Politician who works for the common good and not his or her own interest.
- Blessed be the Catholic Politician who remains consistent.
- Blessed be the Catholic Politician who works for unity.
- Blessed be the Catholic Politician who works to accomplish radical change.
- Blessed be the Catholic Politician who is capable of listening.
- Blessed be the Catholic Politician who is without fear.
- Blessed be the Catholic Politician who is not tribalistic (this is an addition).

You may add more to these. To apply it to yourself as a Marshellan, you may replace Catholic Politician with Marshellan and see how it reads.

In *Fratelli Tutti*, the Pope appeals to Marshellan/Laity for a renewed appreciation of practice of politics as a lofty vocation worth considering for it is one of the highest forms of charity, in as much as it seeks the common good (FT 180). The common good also called charity is the synthesis of the entire Law and Prophets (Mt. 22: 36-40). This charity finds expression not only in close intimate relationships but also in macro-relationships: social, economic and political. Get involved in Politics to sanitise it of the corruption, and other abuses of your brothers and sisters. Defend the rights and dignity of your brothers and sisters. It is not enough to criticise the actors there and not get actively involved to better the situation. Politics is your domain; it is reserved for you Knights and all Lay faithful. In this area, knights and lay faithful are the priests, a people set apart. It is here that you pontificate and teach true brotherhood and sisterhood by your lives of love and service for the neighbour. Speaking and serving our neighbour is difficult, costly and inconvenient as Amos the prophet and the Good Samaritan undoubtedly experienced. But St. Francis who wanted peace embraced all the odds and challenges to achieve peace.

4.2 Growth and support for Church evangelization, the Marshellan

As part of evangelisation, the Marshellan needs to educate, lead and encourage fellow Lay faithful into a more vibrant missionary Laity of the kind of Sir James Marshall. It is you who carry the Church. You are the ones to finance the Church. With other Lay faithful, you contribute

to build Churches in the cities and villages, you now have to pay the tuition for the training of your priests and seminarians and many more.

If *Fratelli Tutti* requires us to help our neighbours in Church and society, then *Fratelli Tutti* calls on the Marshallan, first and foremost, to build the body of Christ, the Church. Many of you individually and collectively are already building the Church, each proportionate to the talents and blessings they have received from the Lord. Many of you have built strong catholic families, the domestic church. Some have started and do host Small Christian Communities in your homes. Some of you have put up Church buildings in the villages, you visit and donate to orphanages, seminaries and priests etc. All of these as part of evangelisation. Congratulations!

At the same time, make the further effort to place the Church first. The Church should come first before the Society; the church, your parish, Diocese is the body of Christ. Your Society is only a part of the body of Christ. In *Fratelli Tutti* it is implied that, loving the society more than the Church, is against the spirit of *Fratelli Tutti*. At some point you are to forego the interest of your Society as the Good Samaritan did. The church is suffering and needs sustained assistance as the wounded man received. In your hierarchy of values, you place the Church first and the society second as Sir James Marshall also did. We have observed the unfortunate phenomenon where members feel more responsible, financially and resource-wise, towards their societies than towards their Diocese, parishes and outstations. Church gives birth to the societies. The Church is the mother to the Marshallan Society. The Church is your church not a church of the clergy. The church is the faith of all of us. Thus, even if some clergy want to exclude you from playing your recognised role, you should resist such attempts of exclusion and infringement on your rights. Unfortunately, many conveniently accept such exclusion because it exonerates them from their responsibilities towards the Church. They comfortably say the Bishop, the Priest, the pastoral council did not get us involved, make the clergy responsible for their nonparticipation in the evangelisation activities of the church. But you should not allow the priest or anyone to prevent you from the God-given responsibility to serve and build and grow the Church as Jesus has instructed you and as the Church has directed. The financial and material remittances from Rome, America and Europe have dried up. The Churches which used to help us are themselves in crisis of faith and are saddled with other challenges. They even need our help. The Church in Ghana has to accept the hard reality that we need to plan and fund our evangelization

programmes ourselves. It is no longer possible to plan and grow the Church in Ghana on other peoples generosity. The clergy and Bishops need to formally make this state of the Church in Ghana known to the Laity, unpleasant as it is. And the Laity including the Marshallan have no option but to face the reality hard as it is and strategise to grow their Church in Ghana. It is time for the Laity/Marshallan to have a well-articulated means to support the Church's evangelization activities.

It is you, the Lay faithful, including the Marshallans who have to take control of the material needs of the Church and contribute to put up church buildings, schools and hospitals, to provide the upkeep of your priests and Seminarians. Your duty includes but not limited to the provision of all things material that the Diocese and the Parishes need for evangelisation especially in villages, communities and at outskirts of towns where the church needs to be. While the Faithful are gifted with the material means to evangelise, the clergy are blessed with spiritual leadership. Together both effectively promote the work of evangelisation to all corners of the country. The Church in Ghana is capable when the Marshallans lead the rest of the Faithful to evangelise in the exigencies of our time. If, without any foreign assistance the Church of Pentecost, which is numerically and materially smaller than the Catholic Church, are able to build churches in almost all the towns villages and in every community in the country, I believe, without any shred of doubt that the Catholic Lay Faithful can build many more such buildings, not only in all outstations but indeed in every corner of our towns and cities where the people are crying for places of worship.

There are other myriad ways, big and small, the Marshallan, if s/he so chooses, to promote evangelisation. Think of what impact we can make on evangelisation if the Marshallan could patronise our only national weekly; the Catholic Standard. And not only that to also and regularly buy extra copies for the youth in the parishes, especially for the parishes and stations in the remote rural areas. A copy does not cost much but imagine the immeasurable impact it will have on the youth and the Church in the rural area by way of evangelisation. That will be an act of love of neighbour and evangelisation in light of *Fratelli Tutti*.

Make your professional expertise freely available to your church as part of your contribution towards evangelisation, especially in areas where you know the church is struggling to pay you

for your services. In these and many ways you express your brotherliness/sisterliness to the body of Christ and to your sisters and brothers in the church.

It is important that you write, as you do, in support or in defense of what the Bishops say on political and social issues. Guided by the Social Teachings of the Church, the Marshallans as soldiers of the Church are expected to declare their own views on social and political matters, including education, health, family, the LGBTQ+ question etc. You do not have to wait for the bishops to write on matters that belong in your domain. As an example, the Bishops expect the Knights/Laity to declare a stand on the LGBTQ+ in line with the Social Teachings of the Church. As parents you know the sexual orientation of your children better. The education on this should not be left to some NGOs to enter schools directly and indirectly to teach your children what these different sexual orientations are. Whatever is in the temporal realm is for you to comment. You have the qualified men and women to do just these so what have you been waiting for? The Lord did not give us the spirit of cowardice.

In Matthew, Jesus tells all his disciples these words “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:13-16, NRSV).

The characteristic of the lay apostolate is a life led in the midst of the world and of the secular affairs. You, Marshallans, are called by God to make of your apostolate, through the rigor of your Christian spirit, a leaven in the world. You are called to work for the glory of God through the coming of his kingdom and for the communication of eternal life to all men, that they may know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Hence, it is the obligation of all Christ’s faithful to work to bring all men of the whole world, regardless of their origin, race, color, religion or geographical location, to hear and accept the divine message of salvation (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 3; cf. John 17:3).

To this end and to fulfill same in this contemporary and complex world, Holy Mother, the Church, has called on all her members, which includes you, my dear Marshallans, to engage actively in New Evangelisation.

4.3 The New Evangelization and the Marshallan

The Marshallan is called upon to evangelise not only the temporal world but self, family and others. The New Evangelisation calls each one of us to deepen our faith, believe in the Gospel message and go forth to proclaim the Gospel. The focus of the New Evangelisation calls all Catholics to be evangelised and then go forth to evangelize.

A way to understand the new evangelisation is to break it down into three parts: know the Faith, live the Faith, and share the Faith. It calls for a new manner of proclaiming the Gospel, especially for those who live in the present-day situation which is affected by growing trends of secularisation, taking place to a great extent in countries with a Christian tradition. *“Building upon the vision of Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II called the Church to a ‘New Evangelisation’ – ‘New in Ardour, Methods, and Expression.’”*⁷⁶ The New Evangelisation calls each Marshallan to deepen his/her faith, believe in the Gospel message and go forth to proclaim the Gospel in his/her family business, place of work etc. We need to find new forms of evangelisation to reach out to those who never experienced Jesus and those whose faith has drifted. The New Evangelisation invites all Catholics and in effect all Marshallans to be evangelised and then go forth to evangelise. In a special way, Pope Benedict XVI called for the re-proposing of the Gospel "to those regions awaiting the first evangelisation and to those regions where the roots of Christianity are deep but who have experienced a serious crisis of faith due to secularisation.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, permit me in this regard to draw your attention to the three main themes under which the New Evangelisation operates.

- First, it operates under the traditional understanding of missionary activity where it is directed *ad gentes*, that is, “to the peoples,” to those regions and parts of societies where Christ and the Gospel are not yet known or where the Church has not yet taken root. The mission *ad gentes* is

⁷⁶Pezel, Morris. *Ecclesiology: The Church as Communion and Mission*, 2002, p.79

“the exemplary model” for all the Church’s missionary activity but it does not exhaust what we need to do.⁷⁷

- In addition to the above, there is also the need for continuing evangelisation of already existing Christian communities, so that the Gospel may have an even deeper influence in the lives of practising Christians.⁷⁸

- Third, there is a need for re-evangelisation of persons and entire groups of peoples and regions who have received the Gospel but who have lost a living sense of the faith and no longer consider themselves members of the Church. The need to address the phenomenon of “de-Christianisation” is a particularly new feature of the new evangelisation (RM, # 33).

The last two censuses suggest that the Catholic share of the national population had dropped from about 16% in 2000 to 13.1% in 2010. This is a matter of great concern for all. Those already within the church should strengthen our faith to reduce the hemorrhage of members from the church as new evangelisation recommends. Secondly, we all need to embark on aggressive evangelisation to win new members by establishing the small Christian Communities, Church in new settlements and suburbs of the cities etc. If the first lay people could start the church in most settlements, say in Sunyani Diocese, then we should all recover our missionary spirit again and grow the church. It is hard to understand why and when the Lay Faithful, including the Marshallan became comfortable with the idea that it is the priests’ duty to start new churches. No, it is the duty of the Lay Faithful to assemble. Then they invite the priest to administer the sacraments.

4.4 The Transmission of the Christian Faith in the Light of Fratelli Tutti

Brothers and Sisters, the Church has never ceased to evangelise from its very beginning. Obviously, the Church would never have grown beyond its initial numbers had the first disciples, (especially the 12 Apostles, you may call them 12 Marshallans), not witnessed to and proclaimed the gospel. These “Early Apostles” obeyed Jesus’ command “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,

⁷⁷ Morris. Ecclesiology: The Church as Communion and Mission, p.79

⁷⁸Pezel, Morris. Ecclesiology: The Church as Communion and Mission, 2001, p.79

teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you to do, and behold, I am with you always until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). In the Acts of the Apostles and some other books of the New Testament, we read about how Peter, Paul and other early believers proclaimed the Good News which led to the conversion of many people including gentiles to the Christian faith (cf. Acts 10). Paul’s approach to evangelisation is what Pope Francis invites us to emulate; evangelisation that goes beyond the barriers of religion, color, race or place. Such an unadulterated faith was proclaimed through the Ancient Period, through the Medieval Times, to the Renaissance period and finally to our contemporary world. Without them, we ourselves would not have heard the message. At the same time, there is something “new” about the recent emphasis on evangelisation. The goal of evangelisation is the transmission of faith. This task belongs to all of us and the Holy Spirit empowers us. Similarly, you and I need to know that the purpose of the New Evangelisation is the transmission of the Christian faith.

In order to transmit the faith effectively and efficiently, the Marshallan would have to discern the signs of the times. The mission of the Church has not changed but there have been many social changes which must be met with enthusiasm and courage.

Fratelli Tutti opens our eyes to these social changes and realities and offers us new ways of reaching out in love to all people including the poor, the destitute, migrants, refugees, orphans, widows, victims of war, persecution and injustice. In this respect, the New Evangelisation includes being open to all manner of persons.

During his appearance to his disciples after his resurrection, Jesus himself commissioned his disciples in these words “...*all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you...*” (cf. Matthew 28:18-20). Note that Jesus sent his disciples to *all nations and all peoples*.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell on all who were in the upper room and all who were gathered heard the disciples in their native languages (cf. Acts 2). This reveals how God desires to reach out to *all peoples*.

The New Evangelisation is a call to each person to deepen his or her own faith, have confidence in the Gospel, and possess a willingness to share the Gospel. We live our faith - and proclaim the

Gospel - when we make ourselves channels for God's love, working to transform human suffering and build societies that prioritise human dignity and solidarity, care for creation, the common good, and promote justice and peace.

4.5 The Marshallan and Fratelli Tutti

Finally, my Brothers and Sisters of the Knighthood of Sir James Marshall, *Fratelli Tutti* is an encyclical for all humanity but it appears to be an encyclical for the Marshallan. Its message and spirit reflect the fundamental principles of your society—Unity, Charity, Fraternity and Service. Providentially, all your core values are discussed by the Holy Father. I hope that this social encyclical would renew your understanding about fraternity, charity (love), service and unity around which your society operates. However, *Fratelli Tutti* urges you to practise these values beyond the confines of Marshallans. Marshallans must live as brothers and sisters more than ever. Marshallans must live in true love than before. Marshallans must be promoters of unity at all levels of society. Keep your history intact; focus on your mission and vision; have a pastoral plan, continue to support, even more, other agents of evangelization like bishops, priests and religious; promote the youth apostolate and promote fraternal relationship with other groups and societies within the Church and let your lives reflect the gospel values and as explained in *Fratelli Tutti*.

In view of *Fratelli Tutti*, all Marshallans should regard every human being as a brother or sister whose life and dignity must be respected and upheld. The Marshallan must become a promoter of justice, peace and fraternity. The Marshallan must embrace all human beings; he must be a unifier and render all people equal. The Marshallan must work for the common good and engage in negotiation, mediation and arbitration where necessary.

In view of *Fratelli Tutti*, the Marshallan should never incite, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, nor must he incite violence or the shedding of blood. The Marshallan must see it as a divine duty to help the poor, the destitute, the marginalised, the weak, those who live in fear, orphans, widows, refugees, those exiled from their homes and countries, victims of war, persecution and injustice, and those most in need in society.

In the light of *Fratelli Tutti*, the Marshallan must work for the eradication of policies of extremism and division, death penalty, unplanned migration, human trafficking, poverty,

marketing of organs, weapons and drugs, hunger, sexual exploitation, slave labour, terrorism and organized crime. The Marshallan must open his heart to all; engage in good politics and promote a better kind of politics; adopt a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; and reciprocal understanding as the method and standard.

Finally, in the light of *Fratelli Tutti*, I encourage all Marshallans to serve the educational, material, social and spiritual needs of the Church and of those in need. As a way of evangelisation, you might want to sponsor or support the building of schools, health facilities, chapels for deprived communities and use same as means of evangelisation. Relative to similar Societies, such as the Knights of Columbus, of the Church in Europe and America, you are young but we are encouraged that you are doing most of what they are doing and we know you are laying the foundations to do even more. The Marshallan is and should be *a Good Samaritan to the Diocese, parish and outstation that is in need*.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the Holy Father, in this encyclical invites us to dream together as a single family born of one Father. He believes that by traveling and building together as one people in the same boat, each would be able to achieve our goal since no one is saved in isolation. He encourages each one of us to bring the richness of his/her beliefs and convictions and make his /her voice heard. It is by these that we can build the world together as brothers and sisters.

Pope Francis writes “it is my desire that, in this our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity. Fraternity between all men and women” (FT 8).

Let us then pray to God, the Father of all, to increase our awareness of our universal brotherhood/sisterhood or fraternity to be able to fulfill this dream. May Mary, our Mother intercede for us to be able to work towards human fraternity that embraces all human beings, unites all and renders all equal.

On this note, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to your leaders, the organisers of 2021 Marshall Moreau Murat Memorial Lectures, and indeed all of you for inviting me to share my thoughts with you. I believe that these Lectures have been moments of discovery and reflection.

It is my hope that they would bear the desired fruits in each one of you. I humbly invite all of you to pray the **Pope's prayer to the Creator in *Fratelli Tutti*** with me; It summarises the message in *Fratelli Tutti*;

Lord, Father of our human family, you created all human beings equal in dignity: pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter, dialogue, justice and peace. Move us to create healthier societies and a more dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war. May our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the earth. May we recognise the goodness and beauty that you have sown in each of us, and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects, and shared dreams. Amen.

Thank you

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MOST REV. EMMANUEL KOFI FIANU, SVD



Photo Source: National Peace Council

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THE QUEST OF A CHRISTIAN FOR SPIRITUALITY – SOME PATHWAYS FOR CATHOLICS AND MARSHALLANS IN PARTICULAR

By

Most Rev. Emmanuel Kofi Fianu, SVD
Bishop of Ho

1. INTRODUCTION

St. Augustine of Hippo in his “*Confessions*” had this to say about God: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” The life story of this saint of Africa summarises what is the quest of many human beings and in particular a Christian for spirituality. Humanity, by nature has a strong desire for communion with the divine.

The life story of St. Augustine elucidates this quest. He was a notoriously rebellious Catholic teenager whose mother St. Monica was a devout Catholic. Due to his rebellious character, he grew up to be an atheist. In his quest for spirituality, he joined an exotic Eastern cult, and ran away from his mother, St. Monica. Augustine became a brilliant and renowned teacher of rhetoric. He founded a school of rhetoric in Rome in 383. Dissatisfied with the city of Rome he moved to Milan, Italy, which at that time was the administrative capital of the Western Roman Empire.

While in Milan, Augustine happened to hear the preaching of the bishop of Milan, Ambrose, who baptized him at the Easter vigil of AD 386. Aided by the unyielding prayers of the mother, St. Monica, the moment of true conversion came in 387 when he was in a garden one day and heard a child chanting, “Take up and read! Take up and read!” Feeling a divine push, Augustine opened a Bible and read from Paul’s Letter to the Romans an exhortation to abandon licentiousness and follow Christ.

Augustine was suddenly confronted with his sin and need for redemption; up until this point he had struggled particularly with sexual sin and sensuality. Augustine remarked that after reading the passage: “I had no desire, no need, to read further. In the instant that sentence ended, it was as if a peaceful light shone in my heart and all the darkness of doubt vanished.”

St. Augustine ultimately renounced his secular career and put away his mistress. He became first a monk, then a priest, then the bishop of Hippo, a small town on the North African Coast. In the man St. Augustine of Hippo, we discover what is a true quest for Christian spirituality.

By definition, a quest is a long or arduous search for something. It can be defined as a journey toward a specific mission or a goal. When we say an activity is arduous, we mean it is involving or requiring strenuous effort; difficult and tiring. The history of St. Augustine of Hippo really demonstrates this search.

The example of St. Augustine of Hippo is only one of such quest for spirituality by human persons. Many more such stories abound, thus affirming that the arduous search for communion with the divine is a constant reality.

With this background, our theme for this year's Marshall Moreau Murat Memorial Lectures seems to suggest your desire to discover pathways that would lead you to discover true Christian spirituality not only as Catholics but particularly as Marshallans. Such desire could have been motivated by comments that in Ghana we claim to have many Christians but our faith does not seem to impact our everyday life as citizens. There seems to be a wide gap between our profession of faith and our way of living. In other words, our faith does not reflect in the way we live. Some of us seem to be Christians on Sunday and something else on weekdays. What we read in the Scriptures. What we hear in church does not influence the way we live. It is good that Marshallans have a quest for Christians spirituality and are searching for pathways to live out your Christian spirituality.

In order to offer some pathways, I must first put all of us on the same wavelength about what we mean by Christian spirituality. How can we define spirituality? What is Christian spirituality?

Spirituality in general involves the recognition of a feeling or sense or belief that there is something greater than oneself, something more to being human than sensory or physical experience, and that the greater whole of which we are part is cosmic or divine in nature. Using again the words of St. Augustine of Hippo that "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you" we can say that our heart is restless until it rests in the one who is greater than ourselves. This is the one we call God and in Christianity we refer to as Abba, Father.

Our search together in these lectures would lead us to first talk about Christian spirituality. We would then study a biblical example of the quest for God and finally a suggestion of some pathways to Christian spirituality as Catholics and particularly as Marshallans.

2. CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Christian spirituality is the serious response of the human person to the revelation of God's love in Christ. Jesus came into this world to reveal to us the true face of the Father, the one who is at the origin of creation and the one in whom our heart ultimately finds rest. Christian spirituality consists in the loving knowledge and service of God and one's fellow human beings in the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church. Thus, we can affirm that Christian spirituality is lived in the Christian community.

Christian spirituality has its genesis in the acceptance of God's word in faith. It is thus the beginning of a faith journey. It manifests itself in the expression and development of the love of God in prayer and action. It is important to note here an emphasis on prayer and action since it is the two together that offer the appropriate manifestation of authentic Christian spirituality. St. James admonishes Christians to blend faith and works in James2:14-17.

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷ So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

St. Benedict spoke of “*ora et labora*” (prayer and work) which he initially intended as an internal rule for the monks of his own monastery of Montecassino in Italy but it has become the motto of the Benedictine order and also of Christian spirituality.

Authentic Christian spirituality is therefore the life of the human person with God lived out in concrete action. God offers this relationship gratuitously; he extends a hand of friendship to humanity in Jesus Christ who is a historical person, the Jesus of Nazareth. This new life in Christ is at the same time interpersonal; trans-historical and supernatural or transcendent, that is, nothing less than the life of the Holy Spirit. As Paul says in Gal 2:19-20

“¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; ²⁰ and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me”.

Based on this definition of Christian spirituality, we identify three distinguishing features, namely, the interpersonal, the historical and the transcendent or supernatural aspects of Christian spirituality.

(i) Interpersonal Life

Christian spirituality begins with the encounter with God who comes to humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. This encounter is not a mere psychological construction but an ontological experience founded on the real, objective and superconscious union with God in grace. In this experience, God calls in love and is answered in faith by the human person. It is an awareness and conviction that God is a person, that he is real and his love is real, and that when this love is freely accepted it makes the one who accepts it a friend of God, sharing in God’s own life.

Christian spirituality seen from this perspective is essentially a person-to-person contact between God who speaks to man in his Word and man who responds to the Word in loving faith. It is a dialogue with God in love. This dialogue is not to be perceived in the form of contemplation alone and avoiding those who share in his life. In other words, this dialogue is both contemplation and action. In John 1:14 we read: “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth”. This means that there is no love of God without a genuine, personal love of neighbour, for as John says in 1John 4:20 “If anyone says he loves God and hates his brother, he is a liar”.

(ii) Historical Nature

Christianity is first and foremost a person, Jesus Christ, before it is a philosophy or a theology. Christianity is the saving deeds of Jesus Christ, especially his paschal mystery, death and

resurrection. Peter affirms this in the house of Cornelius in Caesarea in Acts 10:34-43 when he said:

³⁴ ... “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

It is by union with Jesus Christ through faith and the Sacraments that the Christian undergoes the transforming influence of grace and achieves perfect friendship with God. Thus, it can be affirmed that Christian spirituality is the living of the mystery of Christ who is a historical person, thus making Christianity a historical religion.

As part of the process of achieving perfect friendship with God, the human person is renewed and integrated into the new creation by the power of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, we can speak of the Christian spiritual life as a Trinitarian life. A Christian’s knowledge, love and service of God are incarnations of the Trinitarian life he shares. St. John of God in his book “*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*” says that the perfect love of God by the human person produces perfect likeness, in the sense that the one who lives in the mystery of Christ produces a perfect likeness with Jesus. Thus, perfect love makes one know and love not only like the Beloved but as one who is united with Christ.

(iii) Transcendent or Supernatural Quality

In Christian spirituality, every human person is to be renewed and integrated into the new creation by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul says in 2Cor 5:17 that “if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” In Gal 6:15 he says: “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything!” It is evident that for Paul the emphasis is on a new creation but despite the emphasis on a new creation, we must keep in mind that no created form exhausts or adequately expresses the life of the Spirit.

The transforming action of God in the created is ongoing. This is the incarnational aspect of salvation history. The life of grace that God bestows on the created or the human person is a supernatural relationship that places the person beyond any of its particular expressions. This is the eschatological aspect that will be fully realised in the *Parousia*. John says in 1John

3:2: “Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is”.

Christian spiritual life, as I already stated above, is Trinitarian life. It is essentially supernatural so it is beyond any creature’s abilities or demands. It is a spiritual life of knowledge and love that belongs to God’s own level of existence. Because the spiritual life is God’s life, its entire expression in man falls short of the divine reality, even though these individual acts are the workings of the Spirit. There is no perfect correlation between grace and human behaviour or grace and human experience.

The encounter between God and the human person produces a life of grace in the human person. Scripture expresses this life of grace in diverse ways:

2Peter 1:4 and Gal 2:20 define it as a participation in divine life.

Rom 8:14–16.23 describes it as sonship.

John 15:14–15 calls it friendship.

Rom 8:9; Eph 1.13 define it as possession by the Spirit and

John 14:23; 1John 4:12–13; 1Cor 3:16 describe it as the indwelling of God.

In effect, all these ways of describing the life of grace go to say the same thing, which is God’s indwelling in the Christian. Just as the transcendent God was truly in Jesus Christ, reconciling the world to himself (2Cor 5:19), he is equally in the world of human persons through the mediation of the presence of Christ.

True Christian spiritual life is attained when the Christian attains God, while remaining himself with his own knowledge and love, his own intimacy and conscious friendship with God. The Christian attains this when he is lost, transformed and identified with God, without losing his own identity. St. John of the Cross, in his book “*The Ascent of Mount Carmel*”, attributes the transformation to love. He says that perfect love produces perfect likeness; it produces identification in the intentional order.

With growth in sanctity, there is a deepening, an interiorization of one’s human activity. In this, we see that the spiritual person who lives a life of grace is not detached from the world in the sense of having nothing to do with the world but rather carries out his human activity in a denial of self and perfect likeness of the indwelling God. It is a communion with God and the world together(1Cor 10:31).

The ultimate goal toward which all Christian spiritual activity tends is transformation. It is the soul of all Christian life. It corresponds to the Christian’s “heart”. This is concretely expressed in multiple and varied ways in Christian spirituality. For example, we can speak of prayer and action, penance and apostolate, internal and external acts, liturgical and non-liturgical functions. These various ways have been structured into various forms of Christian spirituality or “mysticisms”. We can therefore speak of a spirituality or mysticism of prayer, of action, of suffering, etc. Even within these forms or schools, we have different varieties because ultimately spirituality is a personalized and particularised relationship. In the face of these diversities, we

have to conclude that each Christian is a witness to his all-holy Master, but no witness, not even all the witnesses together, can fully express him.

Manuals of spirituality in the past tended to reduce Christian spiritual life to prayer and self-denial. The liturgy and the apostolate, especially action in the temporal order were insufficiently integrated in Christian spirituality. The apostolate was considered a distracting duty or a necessary evil. This led to the erroneous perception that contemplatives had nothing to do with the world but in actual fact, contemplatives are very involved in the world by their action behind the closed walls of the monastery.

In contemporary Christian spirituality, the apostolate is not conceived as leaving God at all. There is, instead, a growing literature on the spirituality of action, of involvement in the world, of responsibility for the tasks of humanity. This modern stress, which is inspired by the realism of the Incarnation and the needs of the times, takes as its point of departure the community rather than the individual, the liturgy rather than private prayer, holiness "in" as well as "not of" this world. These are valid additions that do not deny the necessity of prayer and self-denial. In effect, both action and contemplation are necessary according to one's vocation.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we have to affirm that Christian spirituality is complex, because it is both human and supernatural. It is the highest activity of man, the life of his spirit, but it is rooted in his historical existence. While the spiritual life is his own vital activity, it is above and beyond him, because it is supernatural.

Christian spirituality cannot be reduced to one simple category, because it is life and especially because it is the life of God lived by men and women in the Body of Christ. Each individual must discover the best way to live out the indwelling of God while at the same time living and acting in the world. Christian spirituality is contemplation and action, internal and external acts, liturgical and non-liturgical functions.

DAY TWO

4. SOME PATHWAYS TO AUTHENTIC SPIRITUALITY FOR CATHOLICS

Having established what is Christian spirituality in the first part of our talk, we now propose some pathways for Catholics in our quest for spirituality. From our previous presentation, we established that Christian spirituality is an encounter between God and the human person which produces the grace of life manifested in contemplation and action. The call to action in Christian spirituality entreats us to relate what we contemplate to what we do in concrete everyday life.

A sound Christian spirituality should integrate contemplation and action. What we read in the Scriptures; what we celebrate in the liturgy should reflect in our actions; in what we do in everyday life. We cannot be Sunday Christians and something else during the week. In order to achieve this, I propose some pathways that are available to us as Catholics. In this presentation, I do not intend to invent the wheels. I only want to propose some gentle reminders because in the

over two thousand year history of the Church pathways to spirituality have been found and used. We will try to rediscover some that may have fallen into disuse, re-appreciate and update them for our use. We need to pick up the challenge of Vatican II for *anaggiornamento*, that is, the challenge to be perpetually open to the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit, bringing about the conversion, transformation of persons and structures for a new cosmic order.

Concerning the last part of the theme, which is “Marshallans in particular”, I would like to make particular reference to the second and fifth pathways that I propose in this talk. I believe without laying much emphasis on particularities, you may have to develop further what I suggest in these two pathway.

I propose in this talk six pathways in the quest for a Christian spirituality.

(i) *Pathway of continuous learning.*

Before the mystery of God and his Church, we are all, perpetual students with the one Teacher in heaven, Jesus Christ. We all need the humility to be continuous learners, ever open to deeper dimensions of divine self-revelation. A major challenge with many Christians today is minimalism; being content with the barest minimum one can do to pass as a Christian. For example, some people find the Catholic Church too demanding so they prefer to go where Christianity sounds less demanding. But, if we read the Scriptures carefully and study the teachings of the Church, we have to conclude that minimalism has no place in the Church.

Unfortunately, we have some uncommitted Catholics who have no time for catechesis, workshops/seminars, recollections, etc. so this fact eludes them. The knowledge of God that some of these people have is just but the basics and they do little to progress from there. They are proud to attend Mass on Sundays and to pay their monthly dues but nothing more.

Such minimalist Catholics need to read the Scriptures and discuss good Catholic writings in order to know more about the God of mystery. They need to put the little faith knowledge they have into practice and gain practical experience of what it means to believe in God. Above all, they need to be amazed by the graciousness of God. They have not yet discovered the hidden treasure that the Kingdom of God is. Until they come to that discovery and are intrigued by the treasure they hold in earthenware vessels or clay jars (2 Cor 4:7), it is difficult for them to dream of selling all they have and giving it away for the sake of the Kingdom (Luke 18:22; Matt 19:21-24).

Continuous learners when assisted by the Christian community, welcome opportunities to know and love more God and the Church, seeking to become the best versions of themselves or dynamic Catholics. A dynamic Catholic has a regulated prayer pattern, is committed to continuous learning, is very generous with his/her time, talent and treasure, and is committed to sharing the beauty of the Christian faith with others.

The Church as a whole must be prepared to make Catholic learning materials easily available so that the faithful can obtain the knowledge they need. Today, thanks to the Internet, most Catholic learning materials are available online. We must be willing to use the mass communication

media including the internet, TV and radio to disseminate Catholic contents and not limit ourselves to the catechism hours and the sermons during Mass.

(ii) *Pathway of attentive listening and adequately responding*

Related to the pathway of continuous learning is the pathway of attentive listening and adequately responding. One needs a disciple's ear to hear well the teaching of the Master. According to the theological anthropology of Karl Rahner, the human person is fundamentally capable of receiving divine self-communication. As mentioned yesterday, the human person finds its fulfilment in its openness to transcendence, to the endless horizon of the divine. Although this capability is a divine gift, it needs careful training and exercise for maximum result.

St. John of the Cross reminds us that God speaks eternally one Word, which Word he speaks in silence and it is in silence we perceive it. This is corroborated by the author of the book entitled "The Hermitage Within". He says that not all are called to be hermits, but no one seeking holiness can attain it without the hermitage within. All this emphasizes the need to cultivate that inner silence that enables one to hear and respond appropriately to God.

Unfortunately, our world has become so noisy and full of myriads of distractions that one is hardly receptive of the divine communication. Managing exterior noise is much easier than the interior noise, those disordered thoughts and emotions in us craving for attention. Modern man seems to be so much in love with noise that one is right to qualify him as a constant fugitive, constantly escaping from having to confront himself and come to necessary contemplation. The escape from self is ultimately escape from God enthroned in the interior castle of the human person as St. Theresa of Avila puts it. Many are they who have given up regular personal and communal prayer life, meditation, adoration, examination of conscience and the sacrament of reconciliation, avenues to work on the interior noise of disordered thoughts and desires.

The devil's preferred means to bring down many of the children of God is by constantly distracting the children of God. He knows he will not be taken seriously if he would just say directly that there is no God. So he allows people to claim they believe in God while he distracts them so much that they hardly succeed to perceive the voice of God and respond adequately for any lively relationship to ensue. Indeed, in some parts of our contemporary world sin is denied as a human reality and with it the need for redemption. Fortunately, that denial does not quench the thirst of the human heart for transcendence.

The ancient monastic practice of *Lectio divina* needs to be repackaged for the contemporary Catholic for spiritual development. Efforts in this direction have already been made thanks to the Biblical Pastoral Ministry of the Church. What we need to do now is to disseminate or teach all and sundry the use of *Lectio divina* in everyday life.

Lectio divina is spiritual reading and prayerful reflection on the Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church or other good Catholic spiritual writings. It consists of prayerful reading of a text and meditation, constant recalling of the text read as prayerful contemplation. All this serves as stimulus to personal prayer and action. The desired goal of doing *Lectio divina* is a thorough assimilation and living of sacred truth.

Lectio divina has the goal of self-transformation, which is the transformation of the entire character of the person: the way of thinking, feeling, acting, reacting and relating to others. *Lectio divina* is more reading with the heart than with the mind as preparation for contemplation, a non-conceptual, thought-free state of being in God.

There is great interest in meditation today, but in some cases this is used only as a technique of psycho-somatic self-improvement and self-enhancement (e.g. reduction of stress and acquisition of certain powers), influenced by Buddhistic Yoga. We need to revive interest in Christian meditation.

Can the Marshallan fraternity adopt the practice of *Lectio divina* as part of your spiritual heritage? It will offer you the opportunity to encounter the word of God and the ways to concretize this word in your daily lives.

(iii) *Pathway of self-mortification as the way to self-fulfilment*

When we hear of mortification or self-mortification, we immediately think of self-inflicted pain or humiliation that may lead to embarrassment or chagrin. In Christian theology, however, we define self-mortification as the deliberate restraint or control placed on one's natural impulses in order to make them increasingly subject to sanctification through obedience to reason illumined by faith. The tendency of our natural impulse ordinarily leads to sin so we are invited to "put sin to death" by self-mortification. The common forms of Christian mortification that are practiced to this day include fasting, abstinence, as well as pious kneeling.

The motivation for self-mortification is to be found in the admonition of Jesus in Luke 9:23-26

²³ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. ²⁵ What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves? ²⁶ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

To this, we must add what Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:5-8

⁵ "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above [or anew].'⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

In this exhortation, Jesus made it clear that one had to be born of the Spirit to be able to perceive spiritual realities. As human beings, we recognise that we are composite beings with material, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs. Our secularising world constantly tempts us to seek to satisfy the physical and psychosomatic needs, and we are so caught up in our engagement with the world that we lose consciousness of our need for God. But, any clinging unto the creaturely

without due regard for the creator is disordered and an abuse of the creaturely. We are to use the created order only in as much as it helps us come to knowledge and adoration of the creator.

In sin, there is an existential bonding to the material world, leading to the clouding up of the original life with God. Man gets attracted to the beauty of the material world and fails to use it to foster relationship with God who invites us to an encounter of love with himself in grace. This failure results in the forgetfulness of that original union with God. But the divine hunger in man, not satisfied by anything creaturely, makes a breakthrough and man experiences sooner or later dissatisfaction, non-fulfilment, and so seeks that which is more than what meets the eye, what is perceivable through the five senses and the rational sense.

Mortification is the process of disengaging from the material and rational world in order to encounter the God beyond the sensory world or dying to the world and the self in order to be fully alive in God. This requires a number of spiritual exercises including silence-keeping, especially interior silence, fasting and abstinence. The ultimate purpose of mortification is the attainment of the holy indifference to the self-will that the divine will may have its way in one's life so that one becomes so transformed that one attains a more appropriate view of and attitude towards the material world.

Our contemporary world, with its consumeristic attitude and a culture of comfort, makes mortification more and more difficult. But no one is a disciple of the Lord without self-denial, the way of the cross. St. Teresa of Avila observed that many Christians so over-feed themselves with the chaff of this world that they become heavy turkeys incapable of flying as doves that they are called to be. Expressed in simple terms, the over-attachment to the things of the world makes one not to become a spiritual being capable of flying like the Holy Spirit but a monster in the world.

In the consumer society in which we live today, the consumer gets consumed and becomes a slave to the technology he is supposed to consume. Self-mortification is truly the way to self-realisation so that the self is appreciated as having an intrinsic value independent of what the self possesses, be they degrees, wealth or whatever. So an asceticism commensurate with the state and condition of every Christian is necessary for them to ready themselves for God's grace to fill and use them. Is the modern day Catholic ready to deny himself/herself of the pleasures of our consumeristic society in order to embrace self-mortification through the practice of interior silence, fasting and abstinence?

(iv) *Pathway of Popular Devotions*

The conviction of the Fathers of the Church is *lex orandi lex credendi*, "the law of praying is the law of believing". Faith is expressed in prayer and life style; in contemplation and action. Besides the prayer life of the Church in the administration of the sacraments and the liturgy, the Church also teaches and promotes popular devotions. Catholic devotions are particular customs, rituals, and practices of worship of God or honour of the saints that are in addition to the liturgy of the Catholic Church. It is important to emphasize that these popular devotions do not replace the sacraments or the official liturgy of the Church but add substance to them. These devotions are manifestations of our profound love of God, rooted in worship and service to his Holy Name.

As Catholics, these devotions manifest our readiness to give honour and glory to God, whether in public or private prayer.

Catholic popular devotions have various forms, ranging from formalized, multi-day prayers such as novenas or tridiums, to activities that do not involve any prayers, such as Eucharistic adoration outside Mass and the wearing of scapulars. Common examples of Catholic popular devotions include the Rosary, the Stations of the Cross, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the various scapulars, novenas to various saints, pilgrimages and devotions to the Blessed Sacrament, and the veneration of saintly images.

Vatican II in the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 13 states:

“Popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly commended, provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church, above all when they are ordered by the Apostolic See.

Devotions proper to individual Churches also have a special dignity if they are undertaken by mandate of the bishops according to customs or books lawfully approved.

But these devotions should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some fashion derived from it, and lead the people to it, since, in fact, the liturgy by its very nature far surpasses any of them”.

Unfortunately, in the Church in Ghana, influenced by Pentecostalism and lack of adequate instruction, popular devotions seem to be dying in many of our parishes. There is the urgent need to offer the faithful the necessary instruction about Catholic popular devotions as a means to satisfying the quest of a Catholic for Christian spirituality. These devotions should not be seen as outmoded or irrelevant to the contemporary Catholic. They remain forms of Christian spirituality that can enhance our encounter with God and bring us closer as a community in prayer.

(v) *Pathway of Catholic Social Action*

The *Azione Cattolica* or the Catholic Action Movement began as an Italian lay political arm of popes in the early part of the twentieth century. Through the active encouragement of Pope Pius XI, it grew from a Catholic political pressure group to a worldwide movement that aimed to bring Christian witness to bear on the secular world through a spirituality that is related to life in the world.

For Pope Pius XI, the Catholic Action Movement was the participation of the laity in the work of the hierarchy. When the Belgian parish priest, Joseph Cardijn formed the Young Christian Workers (YCW) with young miners, Pope Pius XI strongly endorsed it as an authentic form of Catholic Action. The Young Christian Students Movement (YCS) was organised in Paris as the student counterpart of the workers movement. These movements, known as specialised Catholic Action, spread quickly around the world with the blessing of successive popes. In the late 1940s the Christian Family Movement was born in Chicago, USA. These movements offer us a wide spectrum for Catholic influence in social life – workers, students and family.

The spirituality of specialised Catholic Action was one that saw the world as the arena of the layperson's mission, focusing on institutional change, that is, working to transform structures of sin into structures of grace. This spirituality defines the identity of the Christian as being in the world, but not of the world. Vatican II affirms that the layperson by virtue of baptism is mandated to bear witness to the gospel of Christ in his specific state and condition of life.

The spirituality of Catholic Action may be termed "grassroot" spirituality, but it is spirituality at work. Can we imagine the transformation of our Ghanaian society when all Catholic teachers come together to transform our schools with the gospel of Christ? Can we imagine what will happen if all Catholic medical personnel come together to transform the medical world with the gospel of Christ? Can we imagine what will happen to our country if all Catholic parliamentarians, irrespective of their political affiliations come together to transform our country with the gospel of Christ?

This form of spirituality can be and must be adopted by all lay movements and societies like yours that are called to live out their faith in the world and transform human society with the gospel of Christ. This should be the primary apostolate of all lay faithful. If it is not working, we should not be surprised that Christian presence is not felt in the particular environment in which Christians live and work. The Christian should be the yeast that leavens slowly but steadily all aspects of the society, transforming it into a Christian society by the values it upholds.

The methodology of the Catholic Action movement is "see, judge, act, reflect and act again". It demands that members see and judge reality with the eyes of faith and take the most appropriate action possible. After that, one takes time to reflect upon the action to see whether the reality is transformed into a Christian reality or not. If not, a more appropriate action than the first is sought, until the structure of evil is transformed.

Looking at the Church in Ghana today, we have to acknowledge a decline in Catholic Action movements. These movements, unfortunately, lack the needed animation and of course, a body without the soul is only but a carcass. Where not much attention is paid to the spirituality of these action-oriented movements or fraternities, they end up being full of activism without the Christian spirit, making one wonder what is Christian about them. We end up not finding any distinguishing features of these groups when compared with social or secular groups and non-governmental organizations.

It is necessary that priests and religious provide the needed animation and education, working as the leaven among the laity, empowering the laity to function as leaven wherever they are. The devotions and good works of these movements should be showcased in the mass media for people to learn from them. The loud outcry today to let the Catholic social teachings be widely known and have a direct impact on society at all levels is what the spirituality of Catholic Action has always sought to respond to. Can we make that a reality today through the initiative and action of the Marshallan fraternity?

At the heart of the Church's social teachings is the concern for justice as an expression of charity. Vatican II in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) 66 states that: "If the demands of justice and equity are to be satisfied vigorous efforts

must be made... to remove as quickly as possible the immense economic inequalities which now exist.” Catholic Action Movement seeks to make this vigorous effort needed for justice in society and many Catholics who are seeking spiritual homes will be at home in this movement.

(vi) *The Pathway of Synodality*

Vatican II proposes for the Church of our days a spirituality of communion, communion at depth, communion of heaven and earth, communion of those inside and those outside the physical confinement of the Church, communion of ordained and laity. The Church as an assembly of the new people of God remains so through this spirituality of communion.

For Pope St John Paul II, a spirituality that most fosters the commitment to the greatest commandment to love is the spirituality of communion that must guide the Church in the Third Millennium. All pathways of spirituality converge at the pathway of synodality. Synodality is being together on the way to salvation; to God. All humanity, and indeed all creation, consciously or unconsciously is on the way to renewal in Christ Jesus. The pathway of synodality demands that every baptised person live out the baptismal commitment of being sent into the world to give a testimony about God.

The sense of mission is what gives passion to one’s life. It remains an uphill task to get especially our laity develop this sense of being on divine mission in this world, It is a consciousness of all that we are baptized and sent to transform the temporal order including the political and economic structures affecting our day to day living. There has to be a whole school, a whole formation programme from cradle to grave on synodality for all manner of persons. Particularly in an ever more individualistic society like our own, promoting synodality is counter-current and counter-cultural. But it is worth the effort to start training in synodality right in the family and the small Christian community.

People must be so formed to have a sense of belonging to the Christian community that the Church becomes the natural ambience in which to live, such that immediately one is distant momentarily from the Christian community one feels suffocated like fish outside water. The reality today is that some Christians feel suffocated in the community and look for more welcoming and enabling religious communities to live in. They find the Christian community to be a talent killer, sometimes insensitive to the felt needs of the members.

Terms like *koinonia*, [fellowship] *agape*[love], etc, have become beautiful theological jargons, but empty of content in the day to day life of many ordinary Christians. Strenuous efforts have to be made to promote fellowship, fellow-feeling in our Church communities. A parishioner’s house is consumed by fire, making him lose everything in the house, and all that the community leader does is to direct him to the parish priest. The admonition of James in 2:14-17 should

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet

you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷ So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

The time when the ordained or lay consecrated alone are thought of as the missionary is gone. Today, we have to remember that we are all baptised and sent, and not only ordained and sent. There is joy in fulfilling one's God given mission and the whole Christian community needs to find this mission, tackle it strategically and ultimately share in the joy of Christ when he cries out: It is accomplished (John 19:30).

In the light of synodality, team work is to be promoted at all levels with co-discernment, co-responsibility, collaboration, *koinonia* and *agape* standing out as core values.

5. CONCLUSION

The quest for spirituality remains a perennial yearning of all humanity. There is so much yearning in the human heart for God as the principle of life that our hearts are not at rest until they rest in God. In these two lectures, we tried to explain what is Christian spirituality, taking a clue from the words of St. Augustine of Hippo in his "*Confessions*": You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you".

We have affirmed that it is only when we experience the encounter of love with God that we can fulfil our strong desire for communion with the divine. We acknowledge that our search for communion with the divine as Christians or Catholics is interpersonal. It is a relationship between us and God who calls us in love and awaits our response in faith. This dialogue with God is both contemplation and action exemplified in a historical person, Jesus of Nazareth who calls us to a transcendent life in the Spirit.

As an aid to our quest, we proposed some pathways for this journey towards the attainment of our goal of communion with God. These pathways include the attitude of continuous learning, exercises in listening and responding, self-mortification, popular devotions, social action and synodality. These pathways are not exhaustive but have the capacity to rid the human heart of that which is not of God and to expand the heart to face the Heart of God spacious enough for all. It is hoped that these pathways and many others will help us in our search of spirituality by which to live and find rest in God.

APPENDIX

LIST OF MARSHALL MOREAU MURAT MEMORIAL LECTURES DELIVERED (1989-2023)⁷⁹

No.	TOPIC	DELIVERED BY	DATE
1.	Evangelization in the Year 2000	Most Rev. Peter Akwasi Sarpong	May 1989
2.	The Dignity and Development of the Human Person	Most Rev. John Kodwo Amissah	May 1991
3.	The Social Teachings of the Catholic Church	Most Rev. Peter Doreku Dery	1993
4.	Male and Female He Created Them	Most Rev. Charles Palmer Buckle	May 1995
5.	Christianity in Ghana at the Threshold of the Third Millennium - Prospects and Challenges	Most Rev. Joseph Osei Bonsu	May 1997
6.	Current Challenges in Ghanaian Catholicism	Very Rev. Msgnr. Jonathan T.A. Ankrah	May 1999
7.	Castles, Churches and a Divided Christianity	Most Rev. Peter Appiah Turkson	May 2001
8.	The Catholic Church in Africa in Search of Growth and Stability	Most Rev. Francis A.K. Lodonu	May 2003
9.	Harnessing Resources for Sustainable Development of a Self Reliant Church in Ghana	Sir Dr. Donkoh Fordwor	April 2005
10.	Women and the Growth of the Catholic Church	Very Rev. Msgnr. Seth Osei	May 2007
11.	Christian Religion, Chieftaincy and National Orientation	Justice S.A. Brobbey	April 2010
12.	The Role of the Church in the Promotion of Good Governance, Justice and Peace	Rev. Msgr. Dr. Stephen Ntim	May 2012

⁷⁹ Compiled by Historical Research and Beatification Committee(HRBC).

13.	A Christian and a Citizen in Church-State Relations	Cardinal Peter Appiah Turkson	August 2014
14.	Working on Our Christian Identity as a Means of Transmitting the Faith	Most Rev. John Bonaventure Kwofie	Nov. 2016
15	Responding to the Amoris Laetitia with Love in the Family – The Marshallan	Most Rev. Philip Naameh	July 2019
16.	The Call to Fraternity and Social Friendship in View of Fraternity and Social Friendship in View of Fratelli Tutti – The Marshallan	Most Rev. Matthew Gyamfi	July 2021
17.	The Quest of a Christian for Spirituality – Some Pathways for Catholics and Marshallans in Particular	Most Rev. Emmanuel Fianu, SVD	June 2023