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Globalization and African Catholicism: Towards a New Era of Evangelization

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Abstract: *This paper argues that evangelization takes place within the context of globalization, the phenomenon that integrates the economic, cultural, social, political and religious dimensions of human existence towards improved standard of living for humanity. While acknowledging the potential dangers of globalization, especially the expanding income disparity, marginalization, secularization, consumerism, the tendency towards monoculturalism and imperialism, the author advocates daily personal encounter with the person of Jesus as the springboard of Christian spirituality. This paper concentrates on the impact of globalization on African Catholicism's appropriation of Pope Francis's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* for a new evangelization and recommends important changes in African Catholicism's way of being Church.*

Key Words: Globalization, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Inculturation, African Catholicism, *Ecclesia in Africa*, *Africae Munus*

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) is the watershed document for the reforms of Pope Francis,¹ a blueprint for evangelization.² It aims at renewal of Christian faith and life through a daily personal encounter with Jesus Christ.³ The transformation it envisions is to be achieved through a careful distinction of the hierarchy of the truths of the Christian faith in order to remove the incidentals and accretions accumulated through history that burden church dogma and lead to misconceptions of the true doctrine of the Christian faith.⁴ Instead of concentrating on protecting the image of the church (protecting the status quo), it calls for renewal of the church itself in order to usher in a new era of evangelization.⁵ Thus it adopts a “missionary option” that is capable of transforming every aspect of the life of the Church for evangelization of the world instead of a Church that seeks her self-preservation.⁶ It departs from the church against the world rhetoric to offer a Church that seeks to engage cultures by understanding the signs of the times.

¹ Pope Francis, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium* (henceforth EG), n.1 available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.pdf.

² Joan Frawley Desmond, “*Evangelii Gaudium*: Pope Francis’ Blueprint for Evangelization,” *National Catholic Register* 12/03/2013 <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/evangelii-gaudium-pope-francis-blueprint-for-evangelization/>.

³ EG n.3.

⁴ Ibid. nn.34 & 36.

⁵ Ibid. n.26.

⁶ Ibid. n.27.

Specifically EG engages the contemporary society in an open-minded, compassionate, tolerant and cautious manner emphasizing the mission of mercy at the heart of the Gospel yet hoping for the transformation of the society by the same Gospel. It attributes the enormous changes taking place in the world to the multifaceted forces set in motion by industrialization and attendant information technology that has shrunk the globe into a village: globalization. EG states:

This epochal change has been set in motion by the enormous qualitative, quantitative, rapid and cumulative advances occurring in the sciences and in technology, and by their instant application in different areas of nature and of life. We are in an age of knowledge and information, which has led to new and often anonymous kinds of power.⁷

While acknowledging some of its benefits, EG blames economic globalization for the greed, consumerism and individualism that is characteristic of contemporary societies. For this reason, EG out rightly rejects these vehemently: *“No to economics of exclusion;”*⁸ *“No to the new idolatry of money;”*⁹ *“No to a financial system which rules rather than serves;”*¹⁰ and *“No to the inequality which spawns violence.”*¹¹

Economic theories such as the trickle-down theories of Neoliberal capitalism, with little regard for ethics, not only perpetuate exclusion, but enthrone inequality, engender injustice. They are harbingers of greed consequent upon the idolatry of money and consumerism, gnawing at the heart of societies’ ethos, subjugating the human person, and turning human beings into objects at the whims and caprices of the strong, the powerful and the mighty privileged few. Under its watch, “a globalization of indifference has developed.”¹² “Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded.”¹³ Other aspects of societal life are marginalized and corrupted as well. The environment is degraded due to over exploitation; the use of fossil fuel increases the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere exponentially with little thought as to the consequences for the survival of other generations of humankind. The activities of transnational corporations and financial institutions challenge the sovereignty of most nation states as they can easily upturn the economic fortunes of a country by moving their capital overnight.

The forthrightly assertive yet pastoral tone of EG and its outright condemnation of the idolatry of money and consumerism is a calculated response to the centuries of war of the West against Christianity. Since the Enlightenment through modernity and post-modernity, by which the West considers itself “post-Christian,” the West has deliberately undermined Christianity as a potent force in the public sphere. Their arsenals of warfare are ideological: various forms of modern philosophy (secularism, pluralism, relativism and

⁷ Ibid. n.52.

⁸ Ibid. n.53.

⁹ Ibid. n.55.

¹⁰ Ibid. n.57.

¹¹ Ibid. n.59. (each of these citations italicized in the original)

¹² Ibid. n.54.

¹³ Ibid. n.53.

modernism); global civilizing forces (liberal democracy, advanced science and technology, and capitalism); and restoration of neo-paganism.¹⁴ These enthrone the cult of the superman over against the Christian God presumably rendered impotent by the secularizing forces of superabundance, giving rise to rampant materialism and consumerism. EG rejects these Western gods and allied forms of contemporary atheism, which obstruct the Christian faith and impede the new evangelization. Western pursuit of freedom through capitalism, the institution of human rights without a moral order, becomes nothing but entrenchment of excessive individualism and enthronement of the Darwinian survival of the fittest. The casualty is the human person neglected and replaced by the love of profit and money. EG rhetorically asserts:

How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape. Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded.¹⁵

Thus, EG's engagement with cultures begins by rejecting the globalizing forces that militate against integral development and positive understanding of pluralism by divergent relativizing forces that seek to reduce the human person to a thing, a mere dispensable object.

Africa's history is tied to the forces of the enlightenment, subsequent industrialization, and consequent globalization, especially the free market economy by which Africa's economy is configured to the global economy even though she remains an unequal partner in world trade. Similarly, because African Catholicism emerges, benefits and suffers from globalization, we will appropriate the message of EG from the perspective of its criticism of globalization, its emphasis on the Church of the poor, and its holistic spirituality towards integral development. We will equally be cognizant of the two African Synods' exhortations: *Ecclesia in Africa* (1994) and *Africae Munus* (2011) in the light of the continuity of their major themes with the reforms of EG. The key question we will address is how EG's proposed reforms can engender a deepening of the Christian faith in Africa by fostering Christian renewal characterized by a life of love brought about by an unending personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

AFRICAN CATHOLICISM PRODUCT OF RELIGIOUS GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is the foremost phenomenon that has cut across disciplines and national boundaries with lasting impacts and attendant consequences on the human person and societies. Generally understood as the economic, political and cultural integration of nations worldwide, globalization brings to the fore the fact of human interdependence and the worldwide scope of interpersonal relationship. Powered by advances in science and

¹⁴ Yusufu Turaki, "African Christianity in Global and Religious Conflict," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31/2 (2007): 127-139 at 128.

¹⁵ EG n.53.

information technology, especially the worldwide web, globalization through the activities of transnational corporations affects all aspects of human life. Not only does commercial entrepreneurship hold the key to society, the logic of capitalism seems determined to hinge human happiness as well as political, social and cultural changes, on the accumulation of capital. Yet globalization is multifaceted and is beyond merely economic growth. As a complex process that has recorded tremendous success in its stated aims of improving the human condition, through creating opportunities for the exercise of human freedom by the production of goods and services in a free-market economy, globalization raises serious moral issues of concern to human and social sciences, especially in the area of social justice.

Some social justice matters worthy of note include the following. First, competitive free-market economy presupposes a level playing ground for free and fair trade which does not exist for the low income countries of the world excluded from capital, from currency and from decision-making power. Second, economic, political and cultural integration touted by globalization is not followed with easy migration of people across borders. Stiff immigration laws and reforms that exclude instead of including fellow human beings contradict the integration at the heart of globalization. Third, the emergence of worldwide terrorism abusing the info-technological advances of globalization engenders human insecurity on a global scale thus resurrecting the moral dilemma surrounding just war, dialogue, and respect for fundamental human rights. Fourth, the mechanistic laws underlying globalization leads to the objectification of the human person, thus giving rise to a culture in which the core values derive from consumption.

The Church's interest in globalization arises in response to the issues of concern raised above: global inequality expressed in the widening gap between the rich and the poor;¹⁶ preference of material goods over human beings¹⁷ manifest in exploitation of migrant workers and depersonalization of migrants;¹⁸ environmental degradation on account of an unsustainable quest for economic growth;¹⁹ increasing global insecurity engendered on the one hand by geopolitical inequality and injustice and on the other hand a reaction against worldwide materialism and consumerism.²⁰ These and many more issues affect the dignity of the human person created in the image and likeness of God. Human beings are stewards of God's creation and ought to benefit from as well as protect the environment.

Christianity is a globalizing force. Since its emergence as an institution within the Roman Empire, Christianity has been intertwined with globalization. Although the events were not as far-reaching as the present day globalization, the founding of the Greco-Roman civilization in the four centuries immediately before and its consolidation in the four centuries immediately after the advent of Christianity is to some extent, a globalizing

¹⁶ EG n.53; John Paul II *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, nn.13-14; *Centesimus Annus* n.33

¹⁷ *Ibid.* n.55; Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* n.25-27

¹⁸ See John Coleman, "Pope Francis on the Dignity of Labor," *America: The National Catholic Review* Nov 20 2013 available at <http://americamagazine.org/content/all-things/pope-francis-dignity-labor>; See also John Paul II *Laborem Exercens* nn.5-7.

¹⁹ EG n.56.

²⁰ *Ibid.* n.59.

phenomenon. This is true of the Hellenization, the Romanization and finally the Christianization of the Mediterranean basin.²¹ Christianity equally became a globalizing force within the context of the Roman power with the conversion of the Roman emperor Constantine the Great in 313 AD. Under this Roman emperor the Nicene Council formulated the Christological doctrine of Jesus as of the same substance as the Father. Under this Roman emperor the Nicene Council formulated the Christological doctrine of Jesus (*homoousia*) as of the same substance as the Father. Thus, Christianity spread by leaps and bounds within the Roman Empire through the declarations of the emperors. Western Christianity equally spread through the exercise of hard power that resulted in the fusion of the sacred and political power in the leader of the Christian faith as a representative of Christ on earth. The Spanish conquest of native lands and peoples through the Pradao Treaty (1493) by which the Church (Pope Alexander VI) granted Christian emperors of Spain and Portugal legal rights over these lands to establish Christian holy empires is a clear example of the form of globalization through hard power. According to Joerg Rieger, the theological justification of this was guided by “particular images of God as heavenly monarch who, through the Roman Catholic Church, endorsed the earthly monarchies of the Spaniards and Portuguese both at home and abroad, and by a particular sense of mission.”²²

African Christianity and Catholicism are tied to Western Christianity. With the extinction of the North African Christianity with roots to early Palestinian Christianity (except Egyptian Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity that managed to survive) in the 7th century and destruction of the Nubian Church by Islam in the 16th century, Christianity in modern Africa is the product of the 15th to 21st century’s Western missionary enterprise. Through a combination of the strategy of using the structures of colonial governments with zeal to spread the Christian faith, amidst risks to their lives by the Western Christian missionaries,²³ as well as the witness of African converts who not only endured various persecutions including martyrdom but also spread the Christian faith to fellow Africans by word of mouth, millions of people especially in sub-Saharan Africa are converting to Christianity. The 2013 Report of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity confirms the growth of Christianity and Catholicism in Africa thus:

In 1910, only 9% of Africa’s population was Christian, and 80% of Christians lived in just four countries: Ethiopia, South Africa, Egypt, and Madagascar. By 1970 Africa’s Christian percentage had risen to 38.7%, many of whom were converts from ethnoreligions in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2010 the Christian percentage was 48.3%, and by 2020 it is expected to reach 49.3%. Roman Catholics form the largest bloc of Christians in Africa. Between 1970 and 2010 their numbers increased from 44.9 million (12.2% of the population) to 197.0 million (17.3%). In 2010 the Catholic share of church members (34.2%) was lower than in 1970 (38.3%). However, projections for 2020 show an increase to 35.2%. Independents [i.e. Independent African Churches] have seen their share of the total population and church members decrease recently,

²¹ Max Stackhouse, *God and Globalization: Vol. 4. Civilization and Grace (Theology for the 21st Century)* (New York: Continuum, 2007) xv.

²² Joerg Rieger, *Globalization and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010) 11.

²³ Pope Benedict XVI in *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus* (n.164) commends the efforts of the Christian missionaries “who, over the course of several centuries, sacrificed their lives to bring the Good News to their brothers and sisters in Africa.”

although they are still higher in 2010 than in 1970. The Orthodox share of both has declined steadily since 1970, a trend that is predicted to continue.²⁴

The western missionary enterprise in Africa was successful according to the statistics above. African reception of the Gospel and evangelization among themselves continues the missionary enterprise as Christianity spreads after the attainment of political independence by African countries in quick succession immediately after the World War II. This massive conversion contradicts the expectation of some people who assumed Christianity in Africa and the global South is merely tied to colonialism.²⁵ The conversion of more people after colonialism²⁶ indicates that Africans accepted the Christian faith not out of fear of the colonial masters but willingly because Christianity correlates to traditional African religion and culture.²⁷ Scholars of globalization and world Christianity prognosticate the relocation of Christianity to the global South will bring about another cultural transformation akin to the influence of Greek culture on early Christianity.²⁸ For Jenkins, Africa, Asia and Latin America are the face of the next Christendom²⁹ and the New Christianity must take cognizance of cultural plurality as the Christianity in the global South reads the Bible with different hermeneutic keys.³⁰

AFRICAN CATHOLICISM THROUGH THE LENS OF THE FIRST AND SECOND SYNOD FOR AFRICA

Commenting on the strength of African Christianity and the direction the universal Church expects her to take, Pope St. John Paul II in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (EIA) expresses the need for the local churches in Africa to hold onto their own traditions within the communion of the Church.³¹ Pope Paul VI equally expressed this clearly during his first pastoral visit to Africa:

The expression, that is, the language and mode of manifesting this one Faith may be manifold, hence it may be original, suited to the tongue, the style, the character, the

²⁴ Center for the Study of Global Christianity, "Christianity in its Global Context, 1970–2020: Society, Religion, and Mission" (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, June 2013) 22. Available at <http://www.gordonconwell.com/netcommunity/CSGCResources/ChristianityinitsGlobalContext.pdf>

²⁵ Donald M Lewis (ed.), *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004) 2

²⁶ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003) 41.

²⁷ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995) claims that Christianity is the renewal of African traditional religion not an import from overseas.

²⁸ Susan VanZanten, "Imagining Globalization as a Christian Literary Critic," Michael W. Goheen and Erin G. Glanville, ed., *The Gospel and Globalization: Exploring the Religious Roots of a Globalized World* (Vancouver, B.C., Regent Publishing Company, 2009) 333.

²⁹ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). See also Musa W. Dube, Andrew M. Mbuvi and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, ed., *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012).

³⁰ Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Reading the Bible in the Global South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³¹ Pope John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* n.11 http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa_en.html

genius and the culture of the one who professes this one Faith. From this point of view, a certain pluralism is not only legitimate, but desirable.³²

Considering its importance for appropriation of the faith, one is not surprised at the inclusion of inculturation as one of the important themes of *EIA*. As scholars of Christianity in the Non-Western world know, one of the mistakes of Christian missionaries was not taking the cultures of the people they were evangelizing seriously because they were blindfolded by the Eurocentric form of Christianity under the tutelage of Christendom.³³ Thus while inculturation had been in the life of the Church, its practice was stunted by a classicist mindset that views Christian faith from one cultural perspective. Uniformist (universalistic) ecclesiology suspicious of the independence of local churches is exported to sub-Saharan Africa with dire consequences on the autonomy of the local churches in the one universal Church. This has accounted for the total dependence of the African Church on the Roman Church.³⁴

Inculturation of Christian faith enables Africans to maintain their cultural identity in the midst of tendencies towards monoculturalism as a result of globalization. Using inculturation, *EIA* takes the Church as God's family as its guiding idea of evangelization in Africa.³⁵ The intended aim of Church as family of God is healing in relation to Africa's politics, economy, and culture as well as in its socio-religious and spiritual dimension. The weakness of this foundational ecclesiological category lies not in its interpretation and possible application to the life of African Church whose understanding of the family often does not exceed kinship by blood. This is reflected in the Rwandan 1994 genocide when a predominantly Catholic country butchered each other and exterminated 800,000 of its own people within one month. One thus wonders whether the Church-as-Family is actually the panacea to ethnic discrimination?

Even though *EIA* drums support for inculturation as an imperative for evangelization, its strategy for balanced inculturation (compatibility and communion) remains stuck to the age-old fear of the universal church losing control of the local church. Perpetuating the phobia, *Africae Munus* warns the bishops of Africa against undue allegiance to African cultures to the detriment of the tradition of the Church:

Bishops should be vigilant over this need for inculturation, respecting the norms established by the Church. By discerning which cultural elements and traditions are contrary to the Gospel, they will be able to separate the good seed from the weeds (cf. Mt 13:26). While remaining true to itself, in total fidelity to the Gospel message and the Church's tradition, Christianity will thus adopt the face of the countless cultures and

³² Paul VI, "Eucharistic Celebration at the Conclusion of the Symposium Organized by the Bishops of Africa," n.2 available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/homilies/1969/documents/hf_p-vi_hom_19690731_en.html. See also *Evangelii Nuntiandi* n.20 on the distinctness of Gospel and culture and the imperative of Gospel not being incompatible with culture of each people.

³³ Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004) 34 reports the perception in Africa of "excessive imposition on Africa of Western Christian values at the expense of good African values." Philip Jenkins mentions such influences as the adoption of Gothic architecture as Christian church architecture even when it is "quite inappropriate for the local climate and environment." Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* 128.

³⁴ Eugene E. Uzukwu, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996) 58.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 63.

peoples among whom it has found a welcome and taken root. The Church will then become an icon of the future which the Spirit of God is preparing for us, an icon to which Africa has a contribution of her own to make. In this process of inculturation, it is important not to forget the equally essential task of evangelizing the world of contemporary African culture.³⁶

Inserting this caution only weakens the pursuit of the process of inculturation in African church. One would have supposed the image of Church as family would imply Christianity in Africa would be distinct in expression and formulation from the Western Christianity.

However, the Church's struggle with inculturation is understandable since the pluralistic view of culture is fairly recent in the Catholic Church, appearing for the first time in a papal document in 1944. As Aylward Shorter observes:

For nearly sixteen centuries, from the late Roman times until our own, a monocultural view of the world held sway among bishops, theologians and thinkers in the Catholic Church. It was a view not unlike the restricted 'highbrow' view of culture ... but it applied to the entire human race. Culture, during these centuries, was a single, universal, normative concept.³⁷

Perhaps for this reason, most inculturation in Africa has been theoretical, expressed in unending debate among theologians and a few shallow cosmetic changes in liturgical garments and minor liturgical rites.³⁸

In spite of its challenges, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of the Second African Synod (2009), *Africae Munus* (AM) praises African Catholicism as a "spiritual 'lung' for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope, on account of the extraordinary human and spiritual riches of its children, its variegated cultures, its soil and sub-soil of abundant resources."³⁹ Affirming the ecclesiological image of Church as family, AM links the challenges facing Africa (some traumatic) to external forces of globalization.⁴⁰ It mentions specifically the hegemony of the world system by which the minority appropriates the resources of the earth to the detriment of the many thrown into poverty.⁴¹ It calls upon the Church in Africa to serve as sentinel and hold their political leadership to task to promote good governance and curb corruption and embezzlement of public funds.⁴² For the new evangelization, AM exhorts the Church in Africa to bear

³⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus*, (henceforth AM), n.37. Available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus_en.html.

³⁷ Aylward Shorter, *Toward A Theology of Inculturation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006) 18.

³⁸ For instance, J. Obi Oguejiofor observed: "The problem with inculturation today is the gap between theory and practice." J. Obi Oguejiofor, "Prologomena to an Authentic African Christian Theology," *The Nigerian Journal of Theology*, 11:1, (1997) 7. Another theologian, John E. Anyanwu further notes: "There is far too much talk about 'Africanization,' 'Incarnation,' 'Indigenization,' 'Inculturation' of the Church in Africa, but so far, too little about the opportunities or common place situations are hardly used." John Anyanwu, "Challenges and Prospects of Inculturation and Catechesis in the Third Millennium," Patrick Chibuko and Simeon Eboh (ed.), *Inculturation in the Third Millennium* (Port Harcourt: CIWA Press, 1999) 108.

³⁹ AM n.13.

⁴⁰ Ibid. n.9.

⁴¹ Ibid. n.24.

⁴² Ibid. nn.23, 76.

witness by being at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace⁴³ especially by rekindling the personal encounter with the person of Jesus Christ.⁴⁴

While recognizing the anthropological crisis and the painful memory of the traumatic events that shape African history, AM falls short of its treatment of globalization. Although it emphasizes the need to resist the temptation to regard globalization as the only lens to look at reality,⁴⁵ it fails to mention directly the negative impact of neoliberal capitalism on African economies, the lop-sidedness of world trade that marginalize Africans, and the attendant poverty in Africa. For a synod dedicated to the theme of reconciliation, justice and peace, speaking of global justice for Africa in ambiguous terms of justice obliging us to give each one his due is not enough.⁴⁶ It fails to condemn in strong terms the hegemony of economic globalization that perpetuates poverty, penury, and want for the majority of humankind in favour of the minority few countries in the global North. The terms of Africa's configuration into the global economy leaves her perpetually poor: her resources are left to the whims and caprices of multinationals and financial speculators. Africans simply have no bargaining power to decide how much they get for what they produce. This is because "emphasis on trade liberalization, economic deregulation, and the retrenchment of the state simply lay open the resources and economies of African countries for the picking by the powerful multinationals and financial speculators."⁴⁷

THE AFRICAN CHURCH AND THE UNIVERSAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

The unity of the Church as the People of God made explicit in *Lumen Gentium* n.23 emphasizes the unity of the local churches with Petrine Primacy, such that local churches are united with the universal church in exercise of the ministry of communion manifest in the celebration of the sacraments. The relationship between the local and the universal church can then be understood in terms of reciprocity of the universal church existing in the local churches and the local churches existing in the universal church. Joseph A. Komonchak shares this "mutual interiority or reciprocity"⁴⁸ of the local church and the universal church existing within one another and argues against any attempt "to set them over-and-against one another as if they were distinct" and then create the problem of how to relate them.⁴⁹ He explains:

The universal church is the communion of the local churches; it does not result from, it is their reciprocal reception of one another as all the beneficiaries of Christ's word and grace. What is realized locally is what is realized universally. What is called the

⁴³ Ibid. nn.163, 174.

⁴⁴ Ibid. n. 165.

⁴⁵ Ibid. n.87.

⁴⁶ Ibid. n.24.

⁴⁷ Simeon Ilesanmi, "Leave No Poor Behind: Globalization and the Imperative of Socio-Economic and Development Rights from an African Perspective," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 32/1 (2004): 71-92, at 79

⁴⁸ Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Theology of the Local Church: State of the Question," William Cenkner, ed., *The Multicultural Church: A New Landscape in U.S. Theologies* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996) 42.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

universal church is the common and universal consciousness among all Christians and among all particular churches.⁵⁰

Komonchak's interpretation accords with EG's understanding of the local church's relationship to the universal church.

Each particular Church, as a portion of the Catholic Church under the leadership of its bishop, is likewise called to missionary conversion. It is the primary subject of evangelization, since it is the concrete manifestation of the one Church in one specific place, and in it "the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative." It is the Church incarnate in a certain place, equipped with all the means of salvation bestowed by Christ, but with local features.⁵¹

Pope Francis endorses this conciliar ecclesiology and pledges to restore autonomy of the local churches so as to foster the new evangelization. "It is not advisable for the Pope to take the place of local Bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory. In this sense, I am conscious of the need to promote a sound 'decentralization.'"⁵²

The Church in Africa has therefore to be conscious of its self-identity as a unique autonomous local Church in the one Church of Christ vested with powers in view of its unique witness of Jesus Christ to incarnate the faith it has received from Christ to its way of life. The future of the African Church depends on such autonomy, which the Church in Africa has but so far has been afraid to exercise because of the influence of the uniformist ecclesiology prevalent during the course of the European missionary enterprise. Such ecclesiology stifles creativity, stalls the process of inculturation, prevents the Church from being authentically African and increases double allegiance of Africans to the Christian faith and their traditional religions. It prevents African Catholicism from paying attention to its history and so to what they can potentially contribute to the universal Church.

EG places much premium on evangelization of cultures in order to inculturate the Gospel.⁵³ It interprets culture as constitutive of the People of God, the body of Christ, the Church. It defines culture as unique to people in the light of their history and patterns of life. It states: "It [culture] has to do with the lifestyle of a given society, the specific way in which its members relate to one another, to other creatures and to God. Understood in this way, culture embraces the totality of a people's life."⁵⁴ EG not only prioritizes inculturation as essential for evangelization, it is convinced of the preeminent place of cultural pluralism in the Christian faith.⁵⁵ It understands evangelization as inculturation.⁵⁶

EG removes the major obstacle to inculturation by asserting that cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity.⁵⁷ In other words, even though a particular culture may have

⁵⁰ Ibid. 43.

⁵¹ EG n.30.

⁵² Ibid. n.16.

⁵³ EG nn.69–75

⁵⁴ Ibid. n.115.

⁵⁵ Ibid. n.116.

⁵⁶ Ibid. n.122.

⁵⁷ Ibid. n.117.

participated in missionary activities, their culture is not the culture of the Church. The Gospel is transcultural and multiplicity of cultural expressions of the Christian faith is a blessing and enrichment for the Church. Since evangelization is inculturation, African Catholicism must boldly pursue the inculturation of the Gospel in the light of the culture of their people. This may appear to be preposterous since inculturation theology has been the most popular form of theology in many sub-Saharan countries.⁵⁸ In spite of this, the process of inculturation has been bottlenecked with bureaucracy and enmeshed in the intricacy of discernment and communion with the universal Church. As Peter Schineller notes concerning Nigeria, where he has worked as the Mission Superior of the Jesuits of Nigeria and Ghana, "The question remains, however, of *how* to judge whether a particular move or development is truly Christian and truly African, and *who*, which individual or which body, will make this judgment."⁵⁹ The process of inculturation must go beyond the artificial use of local instruments like drums, the use of vernacular, substituting gourds for chalices, and liturgical vestments made with local textiles, etc. What really needs to be Africanized is the mentality of the Church in Africa to improve people's self-identity, to accept themselves as they are, to be proud of their cultures, their thoughts, philosophy and to adopt structures suited to African way of life.⁶⁰

GLOBALIZATION: A MIXED BLESSING FOR AFRICAN CATHOLICISM

Globalization affects African Catholicism positively and negatively. As an agent of economic, political, cultural, social and religious integration, globalization brings Catholics across the globe together through its highly efficient communication network, especially through the worldwide web and social media. Dioceses, parishes, institutions, men and women religious congregations, pious devotional associations, etc. in Africa are linked with their counterparts in the world through various Internet services. In a sort of reverse missionary activity, many African clergy and religious are working in various churches in parts of Europe and North America. This cross-pollination of ideas, theologies, interactions and influences has contributed immensely to the growth of African Catholicism and survival of many parishes in Europe and North America facing acute shortage of priests for the celebration of the sacraments.

The negative consequences of globalization on African Catholicism are many but we limit ourselves to two most devastating ones. In the first place, Africa is falling victim to the consumerist culture made possible by the increased exporting of goods and the activities of transnational corporations in Africa. The desire to acquire foreign made goods not only adversely affects African economies, it leads to violent criminal activities like kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, prostitution, human trafficking, etc. This social malaise affects Christian spirituality as many Catholics fall prey to the various prosperity preachers and are swindled in the mad quest for material wealth. Corruption in government orchestrates endemic poverty, which pushes people to extreme measures in search for solutions. Some Catholics leave the faith due to excessive taxation by the Church

⁵⁸ See Peter C. Phan, "Method in Liberation Theologies," *Theological Studies* 61/1 (2000): 40–63 at 41.

⁵⁹ Peter Schineller, "Inculturation and the Issue of Syncretism: What is the Real Issue?" Justin Ukpong et al., (Ed). *Evangelization in Africa in the Third Millennium: Challenges and Prospects*, (Port Harcourt: CIWA Press, 1992) 56. (Emphasis in the original).

⁶⁰ Seth Adom-Oware, "CIWA and Inculturation: A Critical Evaluation," Patrick Chibuko and Simeon Eboh (ed.) *Inculturation in the Third Millennium* (Port Harcourt: CIWA Press, 1999) 92.

to maintain diocesan institutions, the clergy and their relatives. Secondly, because Christianity is interpreted as coterminous with modernity and the West, many people who think the West is morally bankrupt because of the Enlightenment and globalization declare war on African Christianity because they see it as a symbol of Western civilization. The statistics indicating the growth of Christianity in Africa becomes a curse as militant Islam considers African Christians as extensions of the West and therefore as easy targets in the ideological war against modernity and globalization. The various jihadi groups and international militant Islamic terrorists' organizations operating in Africa seek to obliterate Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa, as was the case in North Africa and Asia centuries ago. Philip Jenkins's words are worth recalling in this regard: "The deeply rooted Christianity of Africa and Asia did not simply fade away through lack of zeal, or theological confusion: it was crushed, in a welter of warfare and persecution."⁶¹ African Catholicism and Christianity as a whole suffer various forms of persecutions, violence and loss of lives and property as a result of the marauding self-proclaimed Islamists who aim at Islamizing and establishing Islamic caliphates across Africa.

TOWARDS A FULL THEOLOGICAL REALITY OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA

The foundational ecclesiological category of the Church-as-Family in Africa, if well understood and inculcated, will be able to overcome its weaknesses. But for this to be achieved religious actors must embark on aggressive education of the conscience of Africans to broaden their concept of the family away from the limitedness of the traditional concept of family tied to kinship blood. The blood of the waters of baptism and even the blood of the universal brotherhood and sisterhood in one God configures humanity together as members of one family. Such an ecclesiological category will bring to its fullness the reality of the Church in Africa sharing the values of her African peoples, participating in the Eucharistic sacrifice and practically suffering with African peoples. Such a concept imbibed into the socio-political, cultural and religious life of African peoples will fructify in African peoples becoming their brothers' keepers, pursuing policies for the good of the African peoples, working together to enhance their standard of living by caring for their common wealth. It will also potentially strengthen Africa Catholicism's independence to pursue its evangelizing efforts with the Christian faith deepened in all facets of African life. Africa will become a land of plenty where her rich natural resources will be tapped for the benefit of her peoples.

Globalization is the context of being Church and being Christian and Catholic. In spite of its challenges, its inevitability implies we must find ways of making the best of its strengths and significant contributions to humanity. Globalization will only truly serve humanity if it becomes a process of inclusion of the rich and the poor alike. Globalization with inclusion can be realized by a conscious effort at solidarity. And the principle of solidarity affirms that the more individuals are defenseless within a given society, the more they require the care and concern of others. The challenge of the African Church therefore, should be how African peoples could benefit from globalization and still avoid the inherent dangers of monoculturalism, technologism, consumerism, profiteering and moral decrepitude. I suggest the following:

⁶¹ Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History of Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2008) 100.

- First, as religion, African Catholicism must come to grips with the reality of globalization and be able to understand its internal dynamics, especially economic globalization. The socio-economic condition of African today is created as a consequence of the Breton Wood agreement amidst other factors.⁶² It should be able to speak out in clear condemnation of structural adjustment programs without a human face that has kept many African peoples perpetually poor and malnourished. Christians and other religionists perpetuate capital outflow from the continent. The Church must not allow herself to be caught up in sharing in the booty of the few African technocrats who are beneficiaries of the system that hold other Africans down in poverty and want. If she does she will be caged.
- Second, African Catholicism has to understand the dynamics of the market-oriented economy before involving itself in it. It must not become an agent that corrodes the cultural traditions of Africa in preference for Eurocentric culture camouflaging as Christianity. Therefore it must open its eyes to the effects of globalization and be ready through Christian tradition to preserve the cultural values of African peoples.
- Third, in a pluralistic society like many countries of Africa with multiple heritages, the African Church must pay close attention to dialogue; and be able to unite together with other religions to a common cause for the good of the continent. The divide and rule attitude that pits the local churches of Africa against each other and other religions does not help in bettering the socio-economic life of the people. It only gives the elite the opportunity to distract the people by playing religious politics while looting the treasury and disregarding infrastructural development.
- Fourth, the African Church does not seem to have caught on to the reality of ecological devastation in spite of erosion and other disasters like drought, famine arising from insufficient rain etc. At times she embarks on development projects without due regard to the environment. There are not many documents from any of the regional bodies on ecology, not to speak of developing an ecological spirituality.
- Fifth, in the aspect of peace and conflict resolution it is very clear Africa is embroiled in ethnic, political and religious violence. At times the Church's attitude helps in polarizing the people and ethnically some of its languages are potentially violent and often results in violent actions. Absence of dialogue with the other two important religions in Africa has often resulted in violent conflicts between the African Church, traditional religion and Islam.

⁶² The Bretton Woods agreement was signed in 1944 in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, United States. It established the rules, institutions and procedure of world monetary system. It set up such international financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), which today is part of the World Bank Group. For criticism of these international financial institutions and their impact on the world poor, see: Richard Peet, *The Unholy Trinity* (London: Zed Books, 2003); Susan George and Fabrizio Sabelli, *Faith and Culture: The World Bank's Secular Empire* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1994).

CONCLUSION

EG's call for a new evangelization within the context of globalization, as the sign of the times, must be anchored in the fervent daily unceasing encounter with the person of Jesus as the fount of Christian spirituality. For this reason, African theologians must devote time into developing an African Christology to guide the popular devotions of people. Since according to John Paul II, "globalization, a priori, is neither good nor bad. It will be what people make of it," we must make use of its resources in preaching the good news. At the same time, we must participate in concerted effort to humanize globalization through solidarity and by anchoring every economic system in the Jesus economy of care with compassion for the poor, the weak and the marginalized.

Evangelization is inculturation. Therefore, the ongoing spread of the Christian faith must be in the light of the cultures of African peoples in order to overcome the often-startling strangeness of Christianity to African peoples. African Christian spirituality can only be meaningful and genuine when it is correlated to the traditional African religious spirituality underlying cultural and religious moral norms of Africans. This way African Catholicism will cease being perceived as the Church of the wealthy and the comfortable, people like to identify with but shun in moments of trials and difficulties of life.

EG's call for a new evangelization is an opportunity for consolidating and deepening the Christian faith in Africa. In order to foster the new evangelization in this regard, African Catholicism's way of being Church must change from its highly clericalized hierarchical uniformist ecclesiology to the Vatican II way of being Church as the People of God. EG's exhortation for a pastorally minded Church is an imperative that African Catholicism must heed in order to win back those who have left the Church; to keep their Christian communities together and to bring in more converts to the Christian faith.

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