

PROCEEDINGS OF THE
THIRD AFRICAN NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS



*Responding to the New Evangelization:
The African Catholic Family,
A Gift to the Church in America*



Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
August 2016

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A MESSAGE FROM

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson

Bishop of Yakima, Chairman, USCCB Subcommittee on
Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers



To the Participants of the Third African National Eucharistic Congress:

On the occasion of the Third African National Eucharistic Congress, I would like to welcome you and offer you my blessing as you gather today in Washington DC.

The USCCB Secretariat of Cultural Diversity, the National Association of African Catholics in the U.S. and the African Conference of Catholic Clergy and Religious in the U.S., are convening this third African National Eucharistic Congress (ANEC) to effectively respond to a pressing pastoral concern.

The Church in the United States is experiencing profound demographic shifts. For this reason, fulfilling the mission of the Church has much to do with finding effective ways to proclaim the gospel and offer its pastoral care in the context of an adequate cultural setting for such a diverse people. Although the Church has already taken key steps in order to make African Catholics feel welcomed, there is still much work to do in order for us to be truly effective at instilling in African Catholics a sense of belonging after they have arrived in the U.S. For this reason, we need the participation and leadership of today's African Catholics to help the Church in the United States to better serve this community.

As the Vatican Council has proclaimed, the Eucharist is the source and summit of the life of the Church. Therefore, this Eucharistic Congress will be an extraordinary event to highlight this truth and to encourage us to grow in our Catholic faith and share Christ's love with people around us. This will be truly an opportunity for grace—the grace to commit ever more deeply in our Catholic faith and to be active leaders and stewards of the Catholic Church in the United States.

I thank God for the gift of your culture and the witness of your faith in Christ. I also thank you for your devotion and joy in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Finally, I pray that all who participate in this Congress will be renewed and be drawn more deeply to live the mystery of the Eucharistic.

May our Lord bless all the participants and all our African Catholics, you are truly, a gift to the Church in America.

May God's blessings be upon you!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Joseph J. Tyson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima
Chairman, Sub-Committee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers



A MESSAGE FROM

Mar Munoz-Visoso

Executive Director of the Secretariat
of Cultural Diversity in the Church

Dear Participants of the Third African National Eucharist Congress:

Congratulations for being part of this one of a kind Eucharistic Congress, which theme is “Responding to the New Evangelization: The African Catholic Family, a gift to the Church in America”. This Eucharistic Congress is a powerful witness to the world of our faith in the Eucharist and the redeeming power of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

On behalf of the staff of the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church, I welcome you as you gather to provide an environment for spiritual and social support to African Catholics in the United States and to foster ongoing dialogue on solidarity between the Church in Africa and the Church in the United States. Linking the African Conference on Catholic Clergy and Religious with the African National Eucharistic Congress is a reflection of the Church’s profound appreciation of the African apostolic ministry and the Eucharistic mystery. Your time and efforts at this conference are of great benefit both to you and all of those whom you serve. Your collaboration with the Office of the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Travelers & Refugees of the USCCB bears witness to the effort of all involved to make this congress a significant contribution to the ongoing effective pastoral care of Africans. At the same time, I am delighted to offer a word of welcome to all who are participating in this third African National Eucharistic Congress.

According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), the African Catholic population has grown by 238 percent since 1980. This makes African Catholics the fastest Catholic growing population in the world. CARA has also shown that there at least 35 dioceses in the United States with more than 1,000 African Catholics in a new study conducted by request of USCCB’s Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers. For this reason, I believe this Eucharistic Congress is taking place at a critical time for both Africans and the Catholic Church in the United States.

I would like to invite you to embrace this Eucharistic Congress as an opportunity to fulfill the call to a new evangelization by finding new effective pathways to proclaim the gospel and offer pastoral care to African Catholics today. I also want to thank Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ, Assistant Director of Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers, Mrs. Yolanda Taylor-Burwell, Mr. David Corrales, MS. Margaret Marzec and the planning committee members who have worked so diligently to prepare for this important Eucharistic Congress. Finally, I would like to thank the Solidarity Fund for the Church in Africa, of the Office of National Collections of USCCB, which made possible the participation of Cardinal Monsengwo, Archbishop of Kinshasa of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Africa is a continent of hope – and it is my hope that the Eucharistic Congress will bear great pastoral and spiritual fruit in the lives and ministries of all the participants.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Mar Munoz-Visoso".

Mar Munoz-Visoso
Executive Director of the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church

A MESSAGE FROM

Sr. Joanna Okereke, FHCJ

Assistant Director,
Cultural Diversity in the Church/USCCB



Dear Participants of the Third African National Eucharistic Congress:

On behalf of the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church/Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants Refugees and Travelers, it is truly a joy to welcome you to the Third African National Eucharistic Congress. I wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to His Eminence, Laurent Cardinal Pasinya of the Archdiocese of Kinshasa, Congo, Bishop Shelton Fabre, Bishop of Houma-Thibodaux, and Bishop Joseph Perry of the Archdiocese of Chicago for their presence inspiration. I wish to express our gratitude to Maria Munoz-Visoso, Executive Director Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church, and my colleagues at the USCCB – Mrs. Yolanda Taylor-Bruwell, Mr. David Corrales and Margaret Marzec for their support towards the Congress. In a special way, I would like to thank Fr. Henry Atem and all the priests, religious men and women. I thank Mr. Ntal Alimasi, Dr. Seikor Bundu and all participants. May I also express my special appreciation to Mrs. Sally Stovell the Chair of the third African National Eucharistic Congress and the planning theme members for their contributions, selfless sacrifices and hard work towards the success of the Congress. For all those who tirelessly worked and contributed for the success of the Congress. I ask God to bless and reward you.

In October 2004-2005, St. John Paul II, declared ‘The Year of Eucharist’ to be celebrated by the Universal Church. In response to this invitation, The Migration and Refugee Service (MRS) Office for Care of Migrants and Refugees (PCMR) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, called on Africans from different dioceses to celebrate an ‘African Eucharist Congress’. The African Catholics in the United States held the first African National Eucharistic Congress in 2006, celebrating the “Mystery of Faith: The Bread of Life.” In collaboration with the USCCB Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church, the African Catholics gathered again for the second time in 2012 to celebrate and to reflect on “The Eucharist as Our Nourishment: A Catalyst for Unity, Justice and Peace for African Catholics as New Migrants in the United States.” This time a collaborative effort between the National Association of African Catholics in the United States and African Conference of Catholic Clergy and Religious in the United States made possible the celebration of the third African National Eucharistic Congress reflecting on “The African Catholic Family, a Gift to the Church in America” . This is an opportunity for African Catholics to praise God for His grace—the grace to commit ever more deeply to the Catholic faith and ultimately contribute to the welfare of the Catholic Church here in the United States.

This historic African National Eucharistic Congress ANEC) which highlighted the gifts, contributions, challenges and evangelization opportunities of African immigrant families in the United States, is a thanksgiving to the Almighty God for the privilege for Africans to celebrate their faith, and presence in the United States Catholic Church. This Congress is an occasion for African Catholics to come together to share in the vitality and richness of the African spiritual heritage, identify and celebrate the gifts that they bring to the American Church. This is an opportunity to come together to share in the vitality and richness of the African spiritual heritage, identify and celebrate the gifts that they bring to the American Church, which they can bring back to their dioceses and share in their various homes and ministries in the Church. Indeed this is a timely period to appreciate the gift of faith, to deepen our relationship with God and strengthen our commitment to sharing our faith and our cultural values with others, intensifying the celebration of the faith in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist. According to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), there are currently more than 2 million Africans in the United States today. However, systematic studies on pastoral care of African Catholics in the United States such as the one conducted by Rev. Aniedi Okure, OP and late Dr. Dean Hoge of the Life Cycle Institute of

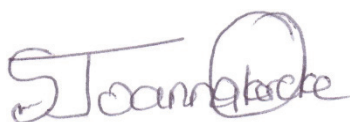
the Catholic University of America show that there still many dioceses in the United States that are still not providing pastoral care to African Catholics. They have also provided two main reasons why this is happening. The first one is because many communities are still not organizing themselves and raising awareness within their own parishes and dioceses that there is in fact an unmet pastoral need among African Catholics. And the second one is that some dioceses do not have enough resources to provide for such evident pastoral need. This Eucharistic Congress has been organized in a way that these and many other pastoral and social concerns can be addressed during these few days.

It is now our time to make sure that this Eucharistic Congress becomes a powerful platform for addressing such critical and current social and pastoral issues of African Catholics in the United States. This Eucharistic Congress must become the catalyst to identify new collaboration opportunities and new effective and strategic pathways to foster African leadership in the Church. It is also a time to reflect on how we can be visible, how we can strengthen our relationships and how we can be united, for united we stand, divided we fall. May this wonderful opportunity help us to proclaim our faith, experience mutual support, and renew our life of faith in the Eucharistic Jesus.

As African priests, men and women religious and lay faithful are engaged in various ministries that assist and care for faithful from diverse nations. I truly believe that we are a gift to the Church of the United States. As we gather together as members of one family to engage in the spiritual exercise in the African way of worship. I exhort all of us to utilize what we will receive during this Third African National Eucharistic Congress so that our faith may be strengthened and our lives be transformed. I urge you to prayerfully meditate, reflect and share with all of us new ways to promote higher stewardship, more participation, effective leadership, and zealous and well-formed African Catholic missionary disciples for all Gods people in the United States. I invite you to use this opportunity to work together to make sure the Church in the United States effectively proclaims the gospel also in the spiritual peripheries of many African Catholics today. Let us work together these few days to find better methods of raising awareness in our own dioceses, parishes and communities about the need for a I pray that we may rediscover the gift of the Eucharist as the source and summit of our Christian life. I pray that all Catholics may rediscover the gift of the Eucharist as the source and summit of our Christian life. May this wonderful opportunity help us to proclaim our faith, experience mutual support, and renew our life of faith in the Eucharistic Jesus.

The African National Eucharistic Congress is open to all. I sincerely invite all of us during this Congress to participate in the Eucharist actively, fruitfully and with awareness to gain deeper understanding and appreciation for Christ's presence in the Eucharist and the relevance to forgive and to extend love to all God's people beginning from those living around us. In this sense, we contemplate Christ present in the Eucharist and filled with love and energy, we reach out to the poor and the needy of our communities. May we draw from the Eucharist a renewed commitment to be witnesses of Christ in society, through our mission and ministries. May we draw from the Eucharist a renewed commitment to be witnesses of Christ in society, through our mission and ministries. Once again, thank you for coming; your presence here is an expression of your faith and of your desire to transmit this Catholic faith to your children as they grow in this diverse culture. May God bless this third African National Eucharistic Congress and all the participants! And may our Lady of Africa intercede for all of us. Amen.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Sr. Joanna Okereke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ
Assistant Director,
Cultural Diversity in the Church/USCCB

A MESSAGE FROM

Rev. Fr. Henry Alem
ACCCRUS President



Dear friends, it is with deep joy and profound honor that I welcome you, once again, to this annual gathering of African clergy and religious in the United States. For the seventeenth time, we come together to pray, to relax and to enjoy the fellowship and company of each other.

I begin by thanking God Almighty, from whom all blessings flow. It is only through the protection of His providential hand that each of us is able to be here. Indeed, as we celebrate daily the mystery of our Lord's passion, death and resurrection at Mass, we introduce the preface with this powerful profession of faith; it is right and just, our duty and salvation always and everywhere to give you thanks. Today and every day, our gratitude is animated by these sacred words through which we recall that to give thanks to God is both an act of justice and a human obligation which lead to eternal salvation.

Our convention this year is special because for the third time, we come together with our lay African brothers and sisters to once more turn our gaze upon the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. This African National Eucharistic Congress is the product of the hard work of many selfless men and women who, throughout the year, have poured themselves out in loving service to our community. With sincere sentiments of gratitude, I salute all the members of the steering committee of ANEC through the chair lady, Mrs. Sally Stovall and the Co-chair, Fr. Alphonsus Enelichi, in conjunction with the chair persons of the different committees and their members. I also recognize, on behalf of ACCCRUS the diligence and hard work of Mr. Ntal Alimasi, the National President of the National Association of African Catholics in the United States (NAACUS). In the same vein, I thank Sr. Joanna Okereke, Assistant Director at the Secretariat for Cultural Diversity in the Church, whose enthusiasm is evident in every phone call she makes, every conversation she carries and every instruction she dashes out. Sister, you do represent us well at the USCCB and we thank you. Of equal merit are the many men and women, clergy and lay faithful, here in the Washington D.C., area, who have spent themselves tirelessly to ensure that this Eucharistic Congress is a success. The list is long and so it won't be fair to call names but your dedication will never go unrewarded.

I will be remiss if I did not extend our deep and sincere appreciation to the presenters and facilitators at the Congress especially Bishop Shelton Fabre, Bishop of Houma-Thibodaux, in Louisiana who will deliver the Keynote address. Bishop Fabre is a dear friend to our conference and we are grateful for his friendship and support. In the same token, we are grateful to His Eminence, Laurent Cardinal Pasinya of the Archdiocese of Kinshasa, Congo and Bishop Joseph Perry of the Archdiocese of Chicago who will be celebrating masses for us this weekend. May God bless them.

Of direct impact to our conference is the retirement of Bishop Rutilio del Riego as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers. Bishop Rutilio served in this capacity for six years and for those years, we can testify that he was indeed an attentive mentor, a loving father and a most cherished friend to our conference. His presence at our conventions was often a gentle reassurance of our connection to the US Bishops' Conference and the broader American church. We sincerely thank him for his generous service to ACCCRUS and assure him of our prayers and best wishes. I take this opportunity also to welcome Bishop Joseph Tyson, the new Chairman of the Subcommittee. With open hearts and generous spirits, we pledge our prayers and support to Bishop Tyson as he takes on this new role. Though he cannot be with us today, he promised to attend our future gatherings. May God's Holy Spirit guide him in his new task.

My dear friends, today, we turn another leaf in the memoirs of our conference as we embrace the task of electing new leaders to run our affairs for the next three years. As I have often stated, I am deeply grateful for the confidence

and trust you bestowed upon me by asking me to serve in the highest office of our organization. The successes we have garnered so far are due to your love and support but in great measure to the collaborative efforts of the men and women of our Executive Council. They are: Fathers Alphonsus Enelichi, Las Nwoga, Mike Ume, Canice Nwizu, James Aboyi and Sisters Ogechi Offurum, Maria Rukwishuro and Joanna Okereke. I thank them most sincerely for their unwavering graciousness as they worked tirelessly for the success of the great cause entrusted to us. Though we are divided by vast lands, we were always united by a common purpose. I pray that each of you will enjoy a daily portion of God's manifold benevolence.

While it might be needless to recount the successes we have been able to accomplish together, it is important that I enumerate some of the areas which I truly believe still need our attention and dedication. Top on the list is the establishment of a permanent secretariat. We have tried a few options among them was the possibility of partnering with the National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) in Baltimore to no avail. The process of establishing this secretariat is impeded by a lack of the funds necessary and a reasonable location. It is important that we do recognize that the absence of a permanent secretariat threatens the buoyancy and future that an organization of this caliber ought to enjoy.

There is also the recurring question of visibility especially at the level of the Episcopal Conference. Though we enjoy a steady connection to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) through the Sub-committee on Pastoral Care for Migrants, Refugees and Travelers, we need more inclusion and visibility in the life of the church here in America.

We need to strengthen our local chapters. The lifeblood of an organization of this magnitude and expanse is the fluidity and activity of the different chapters. With vibrant and active local chapters, the entire organization will certainly thrive to meet the goals intended.

Our working relationship with the National Association of African Catholics in the United States (NAACUS) has to be strengthened. Planning this Eucharistic Congress provided a unique avenue for us to work together. However, we need to broaden our alliances with them since we share more than just a common faith; we also share our culture together and a stronger alliance has the potential of helping both organizations tremendously.

It is my hope that before we conclude our deliberations, we are able to pave a specific vision and endorse concrete steps on how to start dealing with these challenges.

I cannot conclude without remembering with great affection and sadness Fr. Callist Nyambo, one of the greatest sons of Africa who served here in the church in America and was a dedicated member of this conference. We remember, with great fondness, the different moments he stood up to address us. His calm and soothing voice was always a call to retreat to peace and harmony. Unfortunately, the cold hands of death snatch him away from us in wintery January and our conference will never be the same without him. We pray that God unites his soul to the celestial company of the men and women who enjoy everlasting bliss.

Finally, I thank you for making the sacrifice to be here for the Congress. Our theme this year is: "Responding to the New Evangelization: The African Catholic Family, A Gift to the Church in America." This conversation on the pastoral care of African families, which we started last year in Boston, continues to be at the forefront of our pastoral endeavors. Yes, the African family is a gift to the church in America. We are grateful to the many African families residing here in the United States who continue to bear the charter of our Catholic faith amid monumental cultural and social challenges. As we come together to pray around our Eucharistic Lord, may his sacrifice invigorate and enliven us so that we can strive to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Without further ado, I welcome you to Washington D.C. and I formally declare our 2016 convention open.



Fr. Henry Atem,
ACCCRUS President

A MESSAGE FROM

Mr. Ntal Alimasi

NAACUS President



Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Welcome to our Third African National Eucharistic Congress in the USA!

As for the first and second, this Congress is intended to be a “powerful witness to the world of our faith in the Eucharist.” We will it an African celebration! A strong expression of our Catholicity and unity in diversity as a Church.

The theme, “Responding to the New Evangelization: The African Catholic Family, A Gift to the Church in America,” is both a statement of thanksgiving to God’s grace and a call to action in our communities, parishes, and dioceses. I pray that as we beseech the Lord to confirm our faith and belief in His divine presence in the Holy Eucharist, we each and all devote a moment of our personal reflections on a simple question: How will I leave here?

The Congress is open to all Africans, their families, and our brothers and sisters from other ethnic groups and nationalities. Let us take this opportunity to pray in unity, solidify and ground our spirituality in the Church, celebrate our faith, and join in the journey of evangelization.

It includes time for prayer, Eucharistic adoration, education, enlightening and inspiring workshops, fellowship interaction, collaboration and networking, leadership for the emerging youth, and Youth workshops and essay competition awards.

Heartfelt thanks to all who have joined with us in the Steering Committee, in the different committee teams both local and national, at the USCCB, and different dioceses, parishes and communities! Our heartfelt thanks as well for all your prayers and invaluable contributions to the success of this, our Congress!

I pray we all encounter Christ this weekend, meet him in the Eucharist, and upon our departure from this Congress,

I hope we leave as The Body of Christ, radiating divine love and compassion, and ready and willing to be shared in the world.

Peace, Love and Blessings!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ntal Alimasi' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ntal Alimasi
President, NAACUS



A MESSAGE FROM

Mrs. Sally N. Stovall

Chairperson ANEC 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On behalf of the African National Eucharistic Congress Steering Committee, I'd like to personally welcome each of you to the Third African National Eucharistic Congress (ANEC). It's always an exciting time every five years when all African Catholics in the United States gather together to celebrate our Catholic faith in the Eucharist and to meet our brothers and sisters. This event is the main national gathering of all African Catholics in the United States and for us to join together and strengthen our Catholic identity. As the number of African Catholics in the United States continues to grow, I urge you to be motivated about ANEC and to help us to continue to spread the word about this event.

I would like to give you an idea of what you can expect and what we hope to achieve over the next few days. The Congress will include time for Prayer, Educational sessions, Workshops, Youth workshop and Essay competition, Eucharistic adoration, Rosary procession, Networking and an African Gala celebration. The theme for 2016 Congress is: "Responding to the New Evangelization: The African Catholic Family, a gift to the Church in America." You will have the opportunity to hear from our keynote speaker, Most Rev. Shelton J. Fabre, the Bishop of Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, His Eminence, Laurent Cardinal Monsengwo, the Archbishop of Kinshasa as a Speaker and Mass celebrant, and the Most Rev. Joseph Perry, the Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago will preside over the closing Eucharistic celebration.

I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the ANEC Steering committee members, our Volunteers, Sponsors, Donors, Vendors, the DC metropolitan communities, my family, the African Catholic Ministry of Indianapolis, and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. A special thank you goes to Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ and the USCCB staffs for their leadership and support throughout this journey. I truly enjoyed working with you all on this event.

In concluding, I'd like to thank each of you for attending this Congress and bringing your expertise to the gathering. You, as leaders of your various communities, have the vision, knowledge, and the experience to help us pave our way into the future. You are truly our greatest asset today and tomorrow, and we could not accomplish what we do without your support and leadership. Throughout this Congress, I ask you to stay engaged, and help us shape the future of ANEC. My personal respect and thanks goes out to all of you.

Sally N. Stovall
2016 ANEC Chairperson



Prayer for the African National Eucharistic Congress

Lord Jesus Christ, on the eve of your sacred passion, you instituted the Holy Eucharist as the sacrament of your Body and Blood. We invoke your divine presence among us as we gather for the African National Eucharistic Congress.

Lord Jesus, you willed that your mystical body, the church in every nation, culture, language and people be fed, nourished and sustained by the sacrament of your Body and Blood, our sacrament of unity. Draw us together by our faith in you as Africans from various national, cultural and ethnic backgrounds to worship and adore you. Lord Jesus, we beseech you to inflame our hearts with love for you. Confirm our faith and belief in your divine presence in the Holy Eucharist. Nourish our body and soul; sustain us in our life and mission; transform us and make us instruments of justice and peace. May we celebrate this precious gift of unity with joy; renew our spirit and draw us closer to you to bear witness to the gospel. May we radiate your divine love and compassion; help us to amend our lives and become authentic witnesses of your gospel, dedicated to the Eucharist. Grant that we may be found worthy to share in the eternal banquet of heaven with all the saints, where you live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, forever and ever.
Amen.

African National Eucharistic Congress Anthem

Sweet Sacrament divine, hid in thine earthly home; lo! round thy lowly shrine, with suppliant hearts we come; Jesus, to thee our voice we raise In songs of love and heartfelt praise sweet Sacrament divine.

Sweet Sacrament of peace, dear home of every heart, where restless yearnings cease, and sorrows all depart. there in thine ear, all trustfully, we tell our tale of misery, sweet Sacrament of peace.

Sweet Sacrament of rest, ark from the ocean's roar, within thy shelter blest soon may we reach the shore; save us, for still the tempest raves, save, lest we sink beneath the waves: sweet Sacrament of rest.

Sweet Sacrament divine, earth's light and jubilee, in thy far depths doth shine the Godhead's majesty; sweet light, so shine on us, we pray that earthly joys may fade away: sweet Sacrament divine.

Meet the ANEC Speakers



Workshop: Zaire Rite by Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya

His Eminence Laurent Cardinal Monsengwo, is the Archbishop of Kinshasa. (Congo-Kinshasa). He was consecrated a Bishop on May 4, 1980 and a Cardinal in 2010. He is a Member of Council of Cardinals to assist in the governance of the Universal Church and to reform the Roman Curia.



Keynote Address - The African Catholic Family, a gift to the Church in America by Bishop Shelton J. Fabre

Bishop Shelton J. Fabre was ordained a priest on August 5, 1989. He was appointed Bishop of Houma-Thibodaux on September 23, 2013, and installed on October 30, 2013. Bishop Fabre is currently Chair of the Sub-committee for African-American Catholics, and a member of the Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).



Session: "DO NOT QUENCH THE SPIRIT: Care of Self and the Greatest Commandment by Dr. C. Vanessa White

Dr. C. Vanessa White is Assistant Professor of Spirituality and Ministry, Director of the Certificate in Pastoral Studies as well as the Director of the Augustus Tolton Pastoral Ministry Program at Catholic Theological Union



Adult Presentation: Living within two Cultures: An Existential Challenge for African Families in the United States by Deacon Michael Neba

Michael Neba, PhD is a married deacon of the Archdiocese of Chicago, who with his wife Florence, and four boys, have adopted "...we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:14) as their family mantra. He is the USA Official Representative of the Archdiocese of Bamenda, Cameroon. Neba is the Director of Information Systems in the City of Chicago's Information Security Office.



Adult Breakout Session Facilitator - Dr. Veronica Ufoegbune

Dr. Veronica Ufoegbune is Executive Director of Early Care and Education at University of Berkeley, Adjunct Faculty at California State University East Bay, Instructor/Examiner Berlitz Languages, Board Member; United Nations Association East-Bay, Chair; Alameda County Early Care-Education Planning Council, Former President, Anioma USA Tribal Inc. National Chair of Anioma USA Youth Group.



Adult Breakout Session (B) Facilitator - Rev. Aniedi Okure, OP, PhD

Dominican Father Aniedi Okure is the Executive Director of Africa Faith & Justice Network (AFJN), and serves as the Vicar Provincial of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph the Worker for North America and the Caribbean. He is also a Fellow at The Catholic University of America (CUA) Institute for Policy Research (IPR) and an Instructor at Loyola Marymount University Institute for Religion and Spirituality's Cultural Orientation for International Ministers (COPIM) program.



Youths and Young Adult Presentation: Youths and Young Adults as Agents of Evangelization by Rev. Fr. Anthony Appiah

Rev. Anthony Appiah is a priest of the Archdiocese of Kumasi, Ghana and was ordained in 1992. Currently Fr. Appiah is the US coordinator of missions for Kumasi Archdiocese and the spiritual Director of the Ghana Catholic Community in the Arlington Diocese.



Youths and Young Adult Presentation: Youths and Young Adults as Agents of Evangelization by Dr. Nkolika Izuchi

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Closing Mass: Celebrant and Homilist - Most Reverend Joseph Perry

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LITURGY INCULTURATED IN THE CONGO

By Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya
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Introduction

Inculturation of the liturgy or the Liturgy inculturated: two expressions to indicate the same subject, the same effort. This is not the most suitable place, but I would like, at the beginning of my contribution, to point out what should be the basis of every effort in order to inculturate the liturgy, wherever one is in the world. It is well known that the Second Vatican Council defined the liturgy as, the «exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ»¹: «The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows»², as it is known that the liturgy should penetrate the lives of individual believers, so that «they may hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by their faith»³. In order to actively enter into the life of the faithful, the liturgy must somehow become part of the culture of the people; hence the need for inculturation of the liturgy, so that people do not only listen to the wonders of God in their own languages, but can also pray to God with his own voice⁴.

About the adaptations introduced in the Congo (formerly Zaire) in the liturgy Mass with Roman Missal for the dioceses of Zaire (Missel Romain pour les diocèses du Zaïre), the path taken has made up and developed what was called for by Vatican II: «The Church, when faith or the common good is not at stake, does not impose even in the liturgy, a rigid uniformity; on the contrary, it respects and fosters the qualities and spiritual talents of the various races and peoples. Everything then that in the costume of peoples is not bound up with superstitions and errors, the church looks at it with sympathy and, if possible, preserves it as intact, and sometimes it even admits in the liturgy, provided they harmonize with its true and authentic spirit»⁵.

1 SC 7

2 Id. 10

3 Id. 10

4 Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CULTU DIVINO ET DISCIPLINA SACRAMENTORUM, *Liturgie en Afrique et Madagascar*, Actes du Congrès pour la promotion de la liturgie, Kumasi, Ghana, 4-9 juillet 2006, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2009, p. 37

5 SC 37

According to the norm of December 1969, the Permanent Committee of the Bishops of the Congo entrusted to the Bishops' Committee on Evangelization, the task of drawing up a draft rite of the Mass that could take into account some of the characteristic elements of the religious tradition of the Congolese people. This project was then brought to the attention of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In 1974, the Congregation for Divine Worship gave permission to experiment on a national level, the scheme of the Mass so elaborated. Finally, «the Zairian rite of the celebration of the Eucharist» (Rite zaïrois de la célébration Eucharistique), with the definitive title of The Roman Missal for the dioceses of Zaire (Le Missel Romain pour les diocèses du Zaïre), already communicated to the Episcopal Conference of Zaire by the Congregation for Divine Worship in 1987, was approved 30th of April 1988 by the Congregation for Divine Worship; the «African» elements introduced in the Eucharistic celebration (cf. Letter Prot. N. 1520/85), were deemed to satisfy, in general lines, the provisions of Vatican II⁶.

In this short article, I will, in particular, focus just on the specific elements of the Missel Romain pour les diocèses du Zaïre, highlighting the special bond between the traditional elements used and the Liturgy strictly speaking. I will refer constantly to the Supplement to the Roman Missal for the dioceses of Zaire (Supplément au Missel Romain pour les diocèses du Zaïre), which gives a clear and complete explanation of these new elements. I will briefly talk about the other sectors of the liturgy, also based on my personal pastoral experience in my home country, in order to propose an overview of the liturgy in the Congo to those who are approaching this subject for the first time, while offering the opportunity to those who are already familiar with the Congolese rite, to evaluate and compare the progress made in the light of recent documents of the Magisterium of the Church

6 Cf. CONFERENCE EPISCOPALE DU ZAIRE, *Présentation de la liturgie de la Messe. Supplément au Missel Romain pour les Diocèses du Zaïre*, Ed. du Secrétariat Général, Kinshasa/Gombe, 1989, pp.8-9.

These subjects are covered in this order: 1. Particular Calendar of the Dioceses of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; 2. Local Languages and translation of liturgical texts; 3. the Eucharistic celebration; 4. Other Sacraments and sacramentals. the rite of the priestly Ordination; 5. Music and sacred art; Finally, some final considerations. Remember that while for what concerns the Eucharistic celebration, we have at our disposal the “*Missel Romain pour les diocèses*” du Zaïre, as regards to the other sacraments and sacramentals things are still in the state of experience.

Finally, two technical notes: the first concerns the indistinct use that I will do of the term «African» and «Congolese». In fact, there are several similarities between the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa, so sometimes it is limiting to circumscribe to a territory or a population some cultural issues that cross national boundaries.

Secondly, the references to liturgical adaptations concern almost exclusively the Congo, while not lacking in some cases the reference to the experiences of other countries.

1. Particular Calendar

In reference to the Liturgical Calendar, one must take into account the fact that the local government in 1975, as he had banned the use of Christian names given to people and also to institutions and public buildings (hospitals, schools ...), forbade the celebration of Christian feasts during the week (except for Christmas) : consequently, the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, after the approval of the Holy See, has moved all the movable feasts of the universal calendar to the nearest Sunday. In Local Calendar, are mentioned with the liturgical rank of feast the two Congolese Blessed: Blessed Marie Clémentine Anuarite Nengapeta, martyr (1st December) and Blessed Isidore Bakanja (12th August), patron of the Congolese laity. In addition to the Virgin Mary and other saints of the General Roman Calendar, the cult of the Ugandan Martyrs is also widespread. One of them, Kizito, with Anuarite, is the reference point in the formation and Christian growth of children (Kizito is the reference model for boys and Anuarite for girls).

As part of the «Zaïrianisation» or return of the country to its «authenticity», it was also imposed on the population to hire a traditional African name. Given that the habit was to baptize children with Christian names, the question of the name was raised. For this reason, it began the use of the names of relatives, or to translate

into local languages some Christian names or simply to use of African theophoric names. It recalls that the names in African culture are particularly important as they indicate or determine in some way the person in society. The name is chosen for example depending on the circumstances of the birth, or the twins have their own names.

The initiative has not had much success also for the fact that, few years later, the law was abolished. The current trend is to baptize children with names such as «Grâce à Dieu», «Gloire à Dieu», etc., a trend that seems quite an influence of evangelical churches.

2. Local Languages and translation of liturgical texts

As regards to the languages used in the liturgy, alongside French which is the official language of the country, in the liturgy main used languages are Kikongo, Lingala, Swahili and Tshiluba which are the four national languages of the country. However, other languages are also officially accepted as Bemba, Yaka and so on. The Bible has been almost entirely translated into the four main languages: it was a major step forward to the inculturation of the liturgy, as emphasized by the Instruction *Varietates legitimæ* : «The translation of the Bible, or at least of the biblical texts used in the liturgy, is the first necessary time of a liturgical inculturation»⁷. In this regard, one must recognize the challenging and admirable work done by the first missionaries: they committed themselves to translate not only in the 4 national languages but also in other languages, the liturgical texts, the different books of the Bible, the Catechism of the Church, the prayers and hymns, and so on.

3. The celebration of the Eucharist

The *Missel Romain pour les diocèses du Zaïre* (MRDZ) gave the opportunity to the African Christian community, specifically the Congolese, to bring their culture to the Catholic liturgical tradition: in fact, it has been drawn up taking into account a three-fold fidelity: to faith and to the apostolic tradition, to the intimate nature of the Catholic liturgy, to religious traditions and to African culture and Congolese heritage.

In general, the pattern of the Eucharistic celebration is not very different from that of the *Missale Romanum*: introductory rite, the Liturgy of the Word, Eucharistic

⁷ CONGREGAZIONE PER IL CULTO DIVINO E LA DISCIPLINA DEI SACRAMENTI, *La liturgia romana e l'inculturazione*, IV Istruzione per una corretta applicazione della costituzione Conciliare sulla Sacra Liturgia (nn. 37 – 40), Tipografia Vaticana, Roma 1994, n. 28.

Liturgy and the rite of conclusion. The major variants are: La «Mise en présence de Dieu» (Standing at the presence of God), with the invocation of the Ancestors of upright heart («invocation ancêtres au coeur droit») together with the Saints; the penitential rite and the exchange of peace, placed after the homily (or I think when provided by the rubrics) and before the Prayer of the Faithful.

3.1. The invocation of the Ancestors «droit au coeur» (of the upright heart) together with the Saints in the opening rites of the Holy Mass. Becoming aware of his poverty at the beginning of the celebration, the congregation invokes the intercession of God's friends who are the Saints and the ancestors of upright heart. Thus there is the communion between the earthly Church and the heavenly community⁸.

It should be noted in this context that the term «Ancestors» does not refer generally to all deceased but only to those who have lived in an exemplary way, promoting unity and harmony of the group, inspiring respect for the elderly, loyalty to traditional customs. In short, those who have supported everything that refers to the promotion of the authentic life. For this reason, they are regarded as the true protectors and intermediaries between God and the living, between the earthly world and the hereafter⁹. The ancestors therefore play a very important role in the life of the African family; the family has no meaning without the link with the ancestors that become models and cohesion instruments among community members. The link with the Ancestors does not constitute a closure in particularism, on the contrary it inspires openness, hospitality and attention to the foreigner. So reverence to ancestors cannot be considered as an obstacle to the reception of the gospel message, but on the contrary can be seen as a preparation and a base for its acceptance. This is what John Paul II says in *Ecclesia in Africa*: «In African culture and tradition the role of the family is everywhere held to be fundamental. Open to this sense of the family, of love and respect for life, the African loves children, who are joyfully welcomed as gifts of God. *“The sons and daughters of Africa love life.* It is precisely this love for life that leads them to give such great importance to the veneration of their ancestors. They believe intuitively that the dead continue to live and remain in communion with them. Is this not in some way a

preparation for belief in the Communion of the Saints?»¹⁰. The Ancestor worship, one might say, paraphrasing Benedict XVI, finds its answer in the communion of saints, in purgatory. The saints are not only the canonized, they are all our dead. And so, in the Body of Christ is accomplished what the cult of the ancestors implied¹¹. The Incarnation of the Word, the birth of the Son of God as a descendant of David's lineage can only confirm the importance of the family or of the human genealogy in the perspective of the economy of salvation. We are adopted sons of God because we are part of one human family. God who can, from the stones, raise up children to Abraham¹² has formed his people and his adopted sons only by the sons of men, born in a place, a culture and of a certain people. One could say that the concept of Church-Family of God, one of the great and happy insight of the African Synod of 1994, confirms in a way what is proposed in the Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaire, which introduces the veneration of ancestors of the upright heart, as pillars of life and family cohesion. This veneration of ancestors can also be considered as an important element of inter-religious dialogue in Africa.

The invocation of saints and ancestors is followed by the singing of the Gloria, when the rubrics permit, or by another song of praise, because the encounter with God is always the occasion of joy and celebration.

3.2. The penitential rite (structured according to the «african palaver»), follows the homily, or the Creed, and is in its turn followed by the ritual of the peace exchange. This change in the structure of the Eucharistic celebration has its basis in the fact that only after listening to the Word of God, and enlightened by this, the faithful can recognize his condition of being a sinner, and then ask for forgiveness to the Creator of his failures. Once the forgiveness is received (fountain of real peace), reconciled with God and with our brothers, the Christian can give it and exchange it with his brother and then offer his pleas, but also his gift to the Lord¹³.

The characteristic features of Congolese culture, introduced by the Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaire, are:

3.3. The announcer role, who reminds the assembly some moments of the celebration, calling for silence or

8 Cf. CONFERENCE EPISCOPALE DU ZAIRE, *Présentation de la Liturgie de la Messe. Supplément au Missel Romain pour les Diocèses du Zaïre*, Ed. du Secrétariat Général, Kinshasa/Gombe, 1989, n. 36

9 Cf. E.P. NGWEMBE, *La piété envers les ancêtres dans la religion africaine* in «Telema» 82 (2/1995), 53-60; L. BOKA DI MPASI, *Les ancêtres médiateurs* in «Telema» (82) 2/1995), 61-70.

10 GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 43

11 Cf. BENOÎT XVI, *Benoît XVI en Afrique. Voyage apostolique au Cameroun et en Angola 17-23 mars 2009*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana – Ed. Parole et Silence, 2009, p. 11

12 Cf. Mt 3, 9

13 Cf. Mt 5, 24

active participation. This recalls what happens in local meetings.

3.4. The use of certain rhythmic movements by both the celebrant and ministers (for example, during the singing of the Gloria), as well as by the faithful (for example, during the offertory procession). The use of the rhythmic movements in the liturgy was a very significant step for Africans. Dance is an intrinsic reality in the African nature, it accompanies him from birth to death, and emerges in all dimensions and in all circumstances of his life: birth of a child, especially in some areas of the twins, circumcision (in places where initiation is practiced), the marriage, the rites of passage, the rites in time of crisis (floods, blindness, disease) and death itself. Next to all this, there is of course, the dance for fun, understood as one of many aspects of the «dance-life», because to have fun is a «moment» of life and not «the» man's life; life is not reduced to fact of having fun¹⁴. For this reason it was inconceivable to exclude the rhythmic movement from the liturgy. The problem was therefore to find the rhythmic movements adapted to the liturgy, not to exclude them from it. In fact, it is not a particular dance that was introduced in the liturgy, but dance as a symbol of harmony in life, a sign of communion and hope¹⁵. Having introduced in the liturgy dance, rhythmic movement, meant therefore for the Congolese believer, and for the African Christian in general, that he has appropriated his identity. The rhythmic movements, therefore, have been introduced not only because they express the aspect of joy (of the feast) in the liturgy, but because they express the profound nature of being African.

3.5. The faithful raise their hands during the prayers of the priest and the Lord's Prayer (Pater Noster). The priest, in introducing the prayer, explicitly invites the faithful to raise their hands with the formula: «With the hands up, let us pray.» It is the way to express the involvement of the body and of the spirit in the prayer, and also the adhesion of the faithful, who make their own the prayer not only with the final amen, but even with this gesture.

3.6. Before each reading, the reader, asked for and obtained the blessing by the celebrant: this indicates a deep respect for the Word of God, to announce it one must be in some way «sent.» In addition, readers use,

as a sign of respect and decorum, a particular type of clothing (tunic) which sets them apart.

3.7. Listening to the Gospel and the homily sitting, with a conclusion by the formula like «who does have ears to hear!», followed by the response of the people : «May he Listen.» The faithful remain seated while listening to the Liturgy of the Word, because in the traditional Congolese culture, is the attitude that expresses the respect and the disposition to listen. However, the Gospel is distinct from the other readings as it is enthroned by a procession and incensing; it is accepted standing (up-standing), as well as at the end of its proclamation, the final acclamation is made standing.

4. Other Sacraments and the sacramentals

To our knowledge, there is currently no inculturated rite that refers to the other sacraments. There is not therefore an official point of reference on which to base ourselves an objective discourse. Nevertheless, allow me to mention some elements about the Anointing of the Sick, to death, to the religious profession and also to music and sacred art.

4.1. *Ordo unctionis infirmorum eorumque pastoralis Curae* (Anointing Ritual and pastoral care of the sick)

It is a very important topic. The fundamental aspiration of man in general, and of an African in particular, to life, to physical well-being, to what makes the person capable of being in harmony with himself, others and creation, makes it clear that the field of disease is not to be underestimated in the context of liturgical inculturation.

The title reads as follows is more faithful to the Latin ritual (which includes the pastoral care of the sick) and allows us to say something in the context of the African liturgy for the fact that the rite of the anointing of the sick is not subject to many changes, while the field of initiatives on the pastoral care of the sick, is broader.

The disease in African traditional culture is experienced as a punishment, a punishment for a crime of the sick person himself, one of his family or group. Often, traditional healers, who cured the diseases with herbs or other natural elements, were also soothsayers: trying to eradicate the true source of evil, which they considered to be in transgression, rupture of social harmony, before healing the physical illness. So they tried to find out the person who had caused the illness or the fact that had helped to break the equilibrium and social harmony. It was, ordinarily, the lack of respect for the

14 J.-P. KWAMBAMBA, *Liturgia e inculturazione in Africa: il modello congolese dell'inculturazione della Celebrazione eucaristica* "Credere Oggi" 152 (2006) 117

15 Cf. L. BOKA DI MPASI, *Libération de l'expression corporelle en liturgie africaine*, « Concilium » 152 (1980) 71-80

ancestors and costumes of the founding of the social order. In any case, the fault had to be repaired before physical healing. For this reason, the rites of reconciliation, intended to restore peace and harmony, have an important role. Of course, the family plays a particular role in everything.

In many Christians, today still, the idea of disease as a punishment and a tendency to find a culprit prevails. An effort was made by the local Church, even through apostolic movements (such as the Charismatic Renewal, the Legio Mariae, etc.), which gave importance to the time of reception, listening and accompaniment of the sick. In places where the ecclesial communities are active, the attention of the Christian community besides the natural family is a very fruitful journey.

First of all, the effort to make is to welcome the person who suffers without blaming its possible superstition: to change the mentality is not always easy and requires a long way. Secondly, it is necessary that there are signs that express a contact with the divine and provide safety: for example, the holy water, salt, medals, etc.; or symbolic gestures such as washing their hands in the same bowl, expressing the sense of reconciliation.

It is important, however, not to fall into syncretism: to avoid this, it is good to remember the line between Christian faith and traditional practices. This is not always easy, and often the faithful live this separation in a traumatic way.

4.2. Death and mourning

A very important aspect in African culture is related to the vision of death: I do not want to dwell on this subject, but simply to point out the positive change that occurred at the level of the local culture with the advent of Christianity.

Death is part of the mystery of life: in African culture, it is seen as a moment of transition, and does not match the end of existence. As a result the ritual associated with death tended to ensure the deceased a quiet start, making sure he was reconciled with the community and with the ancestors, towards which he headed his journey. For this reason, the funeral rite is still strongly felt today, even in large cities, and Christian communities, especially those of the base, try to permeate the traditional sensibility related to the funeral rite with the hope linked to Christian eschatology, especially through the use of appropriate Christian songs and by listening and meditating on the Word of God. It is now fairly widespread in the Congo, for some time,

the use of the liturgical celebration of the deceased on the 40th day after his death. This custom is gaining momentum both in Christian and non-Christians circles, and is linked to the evangelization which took place in the Congo in the last century: in fact, the number 40 is often used in the Bible as a symbolic number linked to purification. The memory of the deceased the 40th day after his death, includes some events related to the authentic Congolese tradition and culminate to the Eucharistic celebration for Christians. Even in non-Christian circles, this practice has taken root, but does not provide for the celebration of the Mass, but it remains an important time for social gathering and celebration. It is a remarkable change in the Congolese society when compared to the traditional mourning that sometimes could last years: Often widows had to wear a certain type of dress during all the time of mourning. Very important is the attention given to the relatives of the deceased, who are accompanied, in the months following the death of their loved one, by the whole Christian community, which takes care of all.

4.3. The Rite of Religious Profession

Among local elements introduced in the rite of religious profession, we remember the intervention of parents (both natural and adoptive - or godfathers in the absence of parents) who bless the candidate imploring upon him the blessing of the Lord in view of a fruitful work, of a flourishing consecrated life. Often the words are accompanied by some symbolic gestures: the offer of a plant (often a palm tree, but also rice or cassava), of a working tool (often an agricultural tool), or some other object that illustrates the prayer implored.

For the Congolese people, the palm tree has a high symbolic value, because every single part of it is used: for example, from it is drawn the palm oil, the wine, the fiber to manufacture a variety of household objects. Therefore, in the Congolese collective imaginary, palm is a symbol of abundance, prosperity, fertility, but also of life. Significant that the branch of the palm tree is also associated with mourning: to announce the death of someone, a palm branch is carried around or put in a place. The gift of the palm to the candidate for the priesthood, expresses the hope that he can make the best use of the gifts received and that his service to the Church might be fruitful.

In addition, the delivery of some signs of their tribal leaders, may cause some ambiguity because it is endangering the role of consecrated as a servant or disciple. The signs of the tribal leaders, such as the stick, can mean the task of a religious (consecrated person) as

a guide in charge of protecting or watching over his brothers, but when exaggerated, the insistence on these items can also create a misunderstanding about the identity of the consecrated person. We must therefore look for those signs that highlight the aspect of the head (the leader), favoring more service than the power.

For the time of the novitiate or even of training in the seminary, there are those who also think to take the example of the traditional rite of initiation. While the rites of female religious profession are instead inspired by the ritual of traditional marriage; there is also a tendency in both cases to be inspired, mainly for the Christian initiation (catechumenate) or the novitiate, by the traditional initiation rites. The introduction of these elements involves, however, some objective difficulties because traditions vary from region to region, from country to city, so in some cases it may be discriminating introducing them in final form. For example, in the rite of religious profession, which often gather in a religious family young people from different regions or countries, it is not always easy to find specific gestures that are shared and understood by all. This may adversely affect the sense of belonging to the same religious family, or to the Catholic Church¹⁶.

As for the traditional initiation elements that we might take for the novitiate or seminary formation, what we must inculcate to novices as seminarians is the profound meaning of this initiation. It corresponded, in traditional African culture and particularly Congolese, to a separation time («desert») in which they had to learn the values of their culture in relation to life: the sense of responsibility, loyalty, honesty, respect for the elderly as depository of wisdom. It was a real school of life according to the responsibilities and future assignments¹⁷.

«The great traditional African initiation values are called discretion, strength, temperance and education, patience and obedience, respect for the elderly and the customs, the sense of the common good and sharing, sense of community and the sacred, humility and solidarity, sense honor and respect for women, horror of the lie that destroys human communities, mortification, self-control, courage and discipline, respect for

life and sense of transcendent mystery, learning the mystical language and the thirst of knowledge, sense of prayer, etc.»¹⁸

These are the elements to be recorded in the field of Christian initiation: the task is then to find a compromise in order to transform the traditional elements incorporating them in Christian initiation. It is being understood that in any true and lasting process of inculturation there must be discernment, sobriety and «sensus Ecclesiae», a deep knowledge of theology and Christian liturgy and the local culture. For this inculturation cannot be the work of an isolated person but of the Church as an ecclesial community.

5. Music and Sacred Art

5.1. Sacred Art

In reference to the liturgical art, there are no great innovations, although there are already many local artists who have made themselves well-known with their of artistic productions: crucifixes, nativity scenes, various statues, etc. (You can sometimes see on the walls of churches works inspired by traditional African art and culture representatives of the individual episodes of the Via Crucis (way of the Cross), the Holy Family, the episodes of the Gospel and the life of the Saints). This is certainly positive initiatives to be promoted, either by encouraging individual indigenous artists to develop their talents, or by encouraging the use of local materials. In this regard it should be noted that it is possible to create works of art not only dignified but also precious by using local materials. Some religious institutes, such as the Daughters of the Divine Master, as well as some priests, have already taken action in this regard, supporting local artists. In this work of making the connection between popular traditional art or modern Congolese and liturgy, one must be careful not to impose on indigenous artists a feeling that is not theirs, rather than trying to direct their talents in a Christian sense.

5.2. Sacred music

Sacred music is definitely one of the most fertile fields of the liturgy in the Congo, since the Second Vatican Council has allowed the use of the local language.

16 Cf. O. LAURENT, *Inculturer la profession religieuse ou inculturer la vie religieuse*, « Pentecôte d'Afrique » 47 (2002) 60-71

17 Cf. J. NGONDEB SECK, *Comment concilier les exigences chrétiennes avec nos réalités culturelles Nègro-africaines?* « Civilisation noire et Eglise catholique. Colloque d'Abidjan. 12-17 septembre 1977 », Editions Présence Africaines et Nouvelles Editions Africaines, Paris-Dakar, Abidjan, 1978, 256

18 J. NGONDEB SECK, *Comment concilier les exigences chrétiennes avec nos réalités culturelles négro-africaines?* In « Civilisation noire et Eglise catholique. Colloque d'Abidjan. 12-17 septembre 1977 », Editions Présence Africaine et Nouvelles Editions Africaines, Paris – Dakar, Abidjan, 1978, 256

Initially, the liturgical songs were written by clerics: seminarians, indigenous priests, European missionaries, who lived, on one side, deeply immersed in the musical and artistic heritage of the Church and, on the other, were very also close to the local culture. The songs composed by them, when it came to not only translate traditional melodies into the local language, are a real harmonious synthesis of the tradition of the church and the local cultural genius. There are so Congolese tunes for the Easter Proclamation, the Passion of the Lord, the «Te Deum», l'«Adoro Te Devote», the «Veni Creator Spiritus», the «Pange lingua gloriosi» or simply for the Ordinary of mass, which can be considered masterpieces in the field of sacred music.

The liturgical songs have also had a wide circulation, going beyond the clerical sphere. The spread of local-language song can be seen as positive for evangelization: the singing is experienced, even by the lay faithful, who are among the composers, as a sign of belonging to the church, expression of the adhesion of faith in Christ.

The song, in fact, is a privileged instrument for the transmission of the faith: just remember that the bishop Ambrose of Milan used it to spread the faith and to fight Arianism.

The spread of the liturgical song is also explained by the fact that the song is inherent in African culture: by the cultural tradition that is mainly oral, and the still high rate of illiteracy, the song can play the role of main transmitter of faith in Christ and the teaching of the Magisterium.

The danger may come from the fact that often those that make up the melodies and texts of liturgical songs, do not have a solid theological formation. The problem of their contents does not arise so much when they are taken from the Bible or directly from the liturgy. Otherwise Orthodoxy is not always guaranteed.

Another difficulty can arise when the melody prevails over the text: it is very tempting to give priority to the rhythm, the speed, the sense of joy, on the text and fill in all the moments of silence provided by the celebration with songs. This danger is also related to the presence of ecclesial movements and Pentecostal movements. As a consequence, and since the widespread use of liturgical song, is the difficulty of the competent authority to exercise real control over this area. It is hoped in this way to have a better connection, a fruitful and careful collaboration between the national committee and the diocesan liturgical commissions.

Another important element in this field is the use of instruments: almost all the Congolese traditional music instruments were introduced and accepted in the liturgy (drum, gong, xylophone, Kora). Since they are also used in everyday life, it takes a lot of discernment to avoid that their use can arouse confusion: other are the instruments reserved for divine worship and other instruments that are meant to brighten everyday life. For this reason, there is a need for a liturgical formation, even elementary, on the part of those who, though animated by a good will, approach the liturgical field and want to put their talents at service of the Church.

Final considerations

The work of inculturation is complex and delicate, so says the Constitution on the Liturgy: «Because liturgical laws often involve special difficulties with respect to adaptation, particularly in mission lands, men who are experts in these matters must be employed to formulate them»¹⁹. Good faith or good will are not enough, it requires a good knowledge of theology and the liturgical laws, and even of the local culture. This is why it is urgent to draw special attention to the training of priests, religious and lay people engaged in pastoral care, both in the theological disciplines²⁰, and in those materials that promote a better understanding of traditional African culture: for example, the study of local languages, literature, sociology, anthropology. People thus formed will be attentive to the initiatives of the faithful, to find out their needs in the field of liturgy, and will be able to find suitable answers, which in a way respect the local genius and are also in accordance with the Christian faith. What must be avoided are the improvisations, because when trying to solve an immediate problem, create others in the long run. This is why the work of inculturation must involve an interdisciplinary commission. Of course the research work and of proposals has to be done under the competent authority. The most important purpose, that we must always keep in mind in this work, is not the pursuit of specific elements to be introduced in the liturgy, but to do so that the celebration might be an opportunity for the person and the community to get in touch with the mystery celebrated, letting themselves be transformed by the mystery and become its witnesses.

SUMMARY:

¹⁹ SC 40.

²⁰ Cf. F. ARINZE, *Promotion of the sacred Liturgy in a Catholic University* in "The Church in Africa in Service to reconciliation, Justice and Peace. In the light of the second Special assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops". The Proceedings of the 10th Interdisciplinary Theological Session (2008), The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, 2008, pp. 369-378.

The work of inculturation aims to help local people to celebrate the mysteries of the Lord in their own language, with their own nature. The great work, fruit of inculturation of the liturgy in the Congo, that is the Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaire, has successfully achieved this goal.

Since the celebration of the paschal mystery is the center of the Church's life, and since it is for most of the faithful a unique opportunity to approach the Word of God and to receive a Christian teaching, the choice to start here the work of inculturation was also necessary as well as very acute. The most important thing to assess, is not so much the new features, but the fruits that these changes have produced in the faithful: in more than 20 years after the publication of the Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaire, the initiative proves fruitful today because it allowed Africans to get closer to the divine mysteries with their cultural genius. To realize this, just look at the Congolese people participate in the celebration of Mass.

The Roman Missal for the Dioceses of Zaire, like all human initiatives, can be improved; So far, however, it is a fundamental point of reference for the inculturation of the other sacraments. There is no way to deny the complexity of the work of inculturation: this applies to all cultural areas but perhaps especially for Africa and the Congo. On the one hand, the great diversity of languages and their large number, on the other, the insufficient number of qualified personnel, especially in ancient languages or in the theological disciplines make this work difficult. Moreover, one cannot overlook the training of the personnel, as its qualification is also the fundamental condition for the elaboration

of a work lasting and for an authentic inculturation. Insisting on the qualification of the personnel, does not mean to diminish the importance of the insights of the simple faithful who, however, who must be oriented by qualified people and by the competent authority on the subject. We can recall the special significance taken by the missionary impulse of the Church in the early Christian community of Antioch; initially a «marginal» community, but fruitful in signs of the times perceived by Paul and Barnabas, interpreted and directed in the right way by the founding Community of Jerusalem.

As for the other sacraments (marriage) and sacramentals (blessings) experiences are underway: there are scattered initiatives that have not yet official recognition. A common and significant element is perhaps the involvement of the family, especially parents, in the celebration of the sacraments. This constitutes a very fruitful point and confirms in a certain way, the concept of the Church as God's family. In this context, it also reveals the importance of the introduction of ancestor veneration in the liturgy.

There are also other areas of life that need themselves of a real and effective inculturation, so that all life is imbued with faith in Christ. This is an ongoing mission of the Church in the context of the Congo and of Africa: we need a qualified staff that is able to assume fully both the theology of the church, the laws of the liturgy, as well as the local culture. Just so these people will be able to express the aspirations and inspirations of the people in conformity with the liturgy of the Church, and under the guidance of the hierarchy.



APPROVAL FOR ZAIRIAN RITE WAS A LONG TIME COMING, SAYS CONGOLESE CARDINAL



By Mark Pattison • Catholic News Service • Posted August 10, 2016

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In 1969, four years after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, the bishops of the Democratic Republic of the Congo petitioned the Vatican for permission to use a new rite that spoke to the needs of Catholics in the sub-Saharan African nation.

Nineteen years and two popes later, that permission was granted. By 1988, though, the country's name had been changed to Zaire, so the liturgical rite became known as the Zairian rite.

Less than a decade later, the country was renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo, better known simply as Congo. The name of the rite remains, though, said Congolese Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya of Kinshasa, which is the capital of the country.

The biggest changes from the Roman rite known to most Catholics in the West to the Zairian rite are slight changes in order. The penitential rite follows the homily, and is followed by the sign of peace.

"We cannot ask for forgiveness until we have heard the word of God," Cardinal Monsengwo said in his Aug. 5 address during the Aug. 5-7 Third African National Eucharistic Congress, held in Washington. "We have to know the teaching of the church first."

The placement of the greeting of peace, he said, harks back to the biblical injunction that, if you are at odds with your brother, you must reconcile with him before bringing your gifts to the altar.

The Mass also features a moderator, an important element in Congolese culture. It also features the invocation of ancestors, which has long been part of African practices. In addition, dancing is common in Masses using the rite. Liturgical dance is far less frequent in the West, and often viewed as an oddity, if not with outright suspicion.

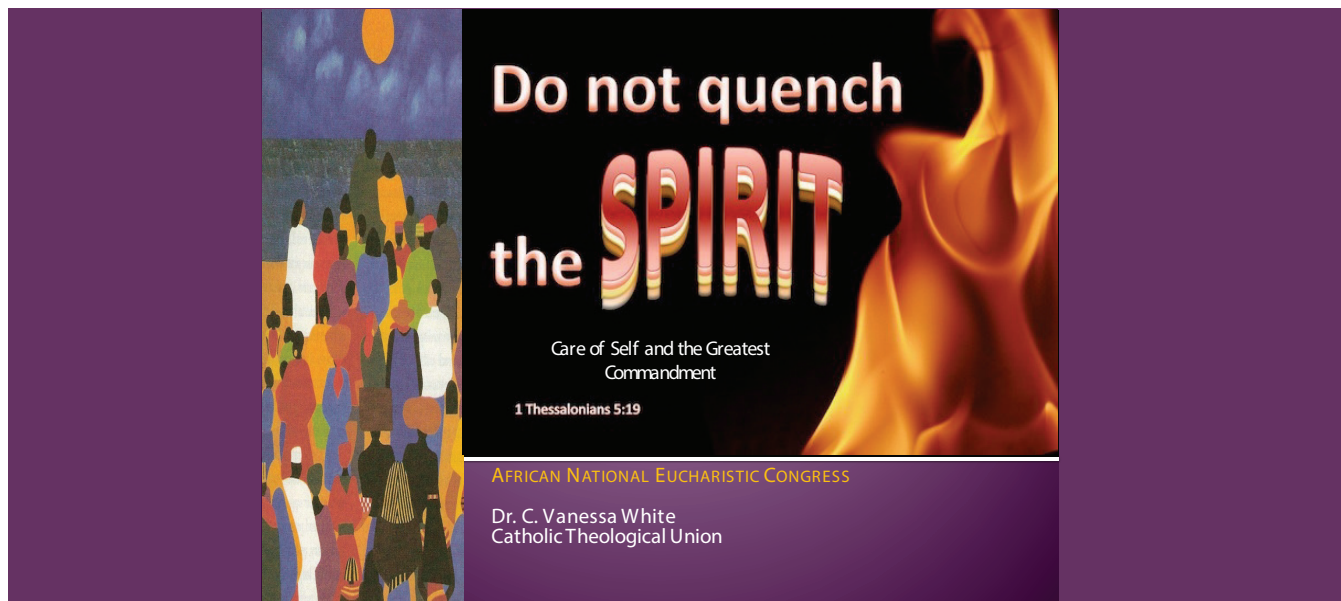
The rite was cited in 1989, a year after its approval, by then-Father George Stallings, a priest of the Archdiocese of Washington, as justification for the creation of an African-American rite for black Catholics in the United States. During liturgies he performed before his split with the Roman Catholic Church, Father Stallings — now an archbishop in the church he founded, the African-American Catholic Congregation — incorporated calling on the intercession of ancestors, but none of the other elements of the Zairian rite.

The Zairian rite was not used in any of the Masses celebrated during the Congress, held at The Catholic University of America. The rite is approved for use only for Masses in the dioceses of Congo.

Cardinal Monsengwo was hailed as one of the last living clergy to have helped develop the rite and then advocate for its adoption by the Vatican.

Work on the rite had begun in 1961, before Vatican II had begun. Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, adopted in 1963, called for liturgical adaptation.

The Zairian rite is one of two rites particular to Africa; the Ge'ez rite has been approved for use for Catholics in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

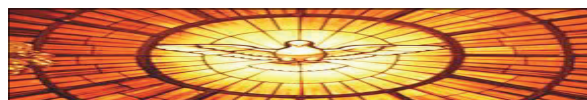


Today we will take some time to reflect on the practice of Care of Self and the Greatest Commandment. I take this time to thank Sr. Joanna, ACCRUS and NACCUS for the invitation to speak on a matter that is of vital importance to our communities. But let's take a moment and I ask for you to think of some Good News. It may be good news that has taken place within the last week, good news that you have experienced, good news that you have encountered. Let's take a moment to reflect on this and then let us share with one another.

GOOD NEWS



As we have taken this time to share this news, we are reminded that it is the Spirit of the Living God that gives us the resources and helps us to recognize all that is good around us. Let us together take this moment of prayer to be reminded of the Holy Spirit. Let us be mindful that we remain in the Holy Presence of God as we sing and as we proclaim today's scripture from Thessalonians.



Spirit of the Living God
Fall Fresh on Me
Spirit of the Living God
Fall Fresh on Me
MELT ME, MOLD ME, FILL ME, USE ME
Spirit of the Living God,
Fall Fresh on Me

- Rejoice always.
- Pray without ceasing.
- In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.
- ***Do not quench the Spirit.***
1 THESSALONIANS 5: 16-19

For me, the health of our communities is of vital importance. I am amazed, that in the thirty years that I have been involved in fulltime ministry in the

Church, how often I have encountered people who are stressed out, burnt out and even laid out. Today I feel I must share truth with you about our health and wellbeing. This poem by African American poet, Mari Evans eloquently addresses our my urgency in sharing with you this concern about health and wholeness as well as the with words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Speak the truth to the people
Talk sense to the people
Free them with reason
Free them with honesty
Free them with Love and Courage and Care for
their being...
Speak the truth to the people
To identify the enemy is to free the mind
Free the mind of the people
Speak to the mind of the people
Speak the Truth
Mari Evans

Our lives begin to end the day we are silent
about things that matter.
Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

So how do I speak the truth to you this day. I know that I cannot remain silent when so many of our brothers and sisters are in such poor health and wellbeing. As a practical theologian who is rooted in spirituality, I must begin with sharing a bit of my own story and its implications to the spiritual journey. So I begin with sharing with you my own journey, being Harried to being Healthy and Whole.

THE JOURNEY FROM HARRIED to WHOLENESS

I live a very busy life as a professor of Spirituality and Ministry as well as a retreat leader, lecturer, theologian and minister. This busyness has had an impact on my health.

MY LIFE OF BUSY

- Assistant Professor of Spirituality and Ministry – CTU
- Director of the Certificate in Pastoral Studies
- Director of Tolton Program – CTU
- Summer Faculty/Coordinator Spiritual Formation – Xavier University Institute for Black Catholic Studies
- Adjunct Faculty for African American Ministries – Loyola Marymount
- Past Convener/President of Black Catholic Theological Symposium
- Administrative Team – Black Catholic Theology Consultation – CTSA
- Adult Faith/Ministry Formation – St. Irenaeus
- Lector – St. Irenaeus
- Presider – once a month Communion Service at St. Irenaeus
- Theology on Tap Presenter
- Lecturer/Workshop & Retreat Facilitator – Nationally and Locally
- Advisor for USCCB Subcommittee on Ecclesial Service and Ministry
- Daughter/Sister/Aunt/Family Member
- Book Reviewer (St. Anthony Messenger/College Theological Society)
- Author – (US Catholic, CNN.org, book: Songs of Our Hearts and Meditations of Our Souls, New Theology Review)

Six years ago, I was “harried” – in other words I was not attentive to my health which impacted my ability to be the minister that God was calling me to be. My busyness not only impacted my physical health but my emotional, psychological, social and spiritual health. I found myself tired, challenged in my ability to sleep and focus, and on the verge of a complete physical breakdown.

THEN and NOW – C. Vanessa White

2010

- 40 heavier – overweight
- High blood pressure
- Borderline Diabetic
- High Cholesterol
- Difficulty Sleeping
- Depression/Anxiety
- Problems Focusing
- Tired
- Etc. Etc.

2016

- 40 lbs lighter
- Normal Blood Pressure
- Normal Glucose Range
- Normal Cholesterol
- Wake up Rested
- Care of inner life challenges
- Ability to focus
- Energy
- Etc. Etc.

All this time, I also tried to keep this life of unhealth hidden but as I have learned, this is not what God intended for me. Also the words of this Ethiopian proverb shines a light on my past dilemma.

- The one who conceals his [her] illness cannot hope to be cured.

■ Ethiopian Proverb

Spirituality is Self Implicating

- Story
- Truth
- Transformation

I am a professor of spirituality, and spirituality is about experience and how one experiences God, Self and Others. It is about telling your story, speaking the truth and being open to transformation. It is about being open to the Spirit of God.

THE WAYS THAT I DID NOT QUENCH THE SPIRIT

- Saying YES to everything
- People Pleaser
- Worried about disappointing others
- Keeping Busy – Not Listening – Not being Still
- Thinking I was in charge!!

As I shared earlier, it is about not quenching the Spirit. But as I reflect on my journey and also observe the journey of others, I find we many times block the Spirit. As ministers, we sometimes say YES to many projects, we try to please everyone in everything, we are worried about disappointing others if we say no or cannot accomplish what they ask and we also try to remain busy, (so as not to really hear what God is asking of us). As persons raised in the Western World many of us also like to be in charge.

INNATE VIOLENCE

ACTIVISM AND OVERWORK

There is a pervasion form of contemporary violence and that is activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, the most common form of its innate violence.



Thomas Merton quoted in *Sabbath: Finding Refreshment, Renewal and Rest in Our Daily Lives*. By Wayne Muller. Introduction.

Thomas Merton states, *There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence and that is activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form of its innate violence.*

To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence.

The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.

Life in the Spirit.

St. Paul

But we are called to live Life in the Spirit as St. Paul shares with us

DIVIDED LIFE

Parker Palmer in A Hidden Wholeness, Jossey-Bass, 2004

FAMILY

CHURCH

WORK/
SCHOOL

???

Because of our current busyness, we live divided lives of family, church, work and other commitments and responsibilities. Often we do not give quality time to most of these.



God has set before us choices and the choices we have made have not always been life giving.

Again, I come back to the verse – “Do NOT Quench the Spirit”

■ Do Not Quench the SPIRIT

■ 1Thessalonians 5:19

Rather – Choose Life, as Jesus invites us.

Jesus said:

Choose LIFE

How are we experiencing and choosing life?

But in this current times, how do we choose life, how do we know that we are choosing life?

HOW???



It is through returning to Spiritual Practices that we are given the tools and the roadmap for living a life that is spiritually and physically healthy and whole.

PRACTICES

Spiritual practices are related to one another. Just take a moment to think of the practice of saying the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary. Think of the practice of repetition, which can lead to centering the mind and relaxing the body. We put those two practices together and we have the practice of praying the Holy Rosary. This practice as well as other spiritual practices make a space for God's active presence. Practices if done over a period of time are also transformative and lead to a

new way of life. Think of the practice of adoration, the practice of attending daily mass. These practices are related to one another, they allow for God's presence to be revealed to the one who prays and transform the person to lead a new way of life.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES: Interrelated

- All practices are related.
- Make a space for God's active presence.
- Transformative
- Lead you to a new way of life.



Dorothy C. Bass, And Craig Dystra "Times of Yearning, Practices of Faith" in *Practicing Our Faith*, Ed. Dorothy C. 2nd edition, 1997, 2005.

Let's take a moment and think about our attitude towards practices. Remember Jesus's commandment to us to Love. We are called to love God, our neighbor as ourselves.

JESUS SAID

Mark 12:30 - 31

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.

The second is this


Love your neighbor as yourself.

There is no commandment greater than these.

LOVE

At times we forget about loving ourselves. Spiritual practices are rooted in the commandment of Love and help us to be attentive to not only loving God and our neighbor but taking the time to love ourselves. Taking the time to rest our bodies, nurture our minds and renew our spirits.

■ SPIRITUAL PRACTICES ARE ROOTED IN THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT OF LOVING GOD, NEIGHBOR and SELF.



SPIRITUAL - WHOLENESS – LOVING PRACTICES FOR BUSY MINISTERS

■ HONORING THE BODY

■ SABBATH TIME

■ ENJOYMENT OF LIFE: Top 10 List

■ ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

LOVING PRACTICES FOR BUSY CHRISTIANS

GO BACK TO THE TEXT!!


16Rejoice always.

17Pray without ceasing. 18In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus

19^a *Do not quench the Spirit.*

The spiritual practices that I invite you to consider and to practice will be transformative to your life of ministry and service. These practices have their foundation in the greatest commandment of love and each practice is rooted in scripture. They are Honoring the Body, Taking Sabbath Time, Enjoyment of Life and Having an Attitude of Gratitude. So let us begin!

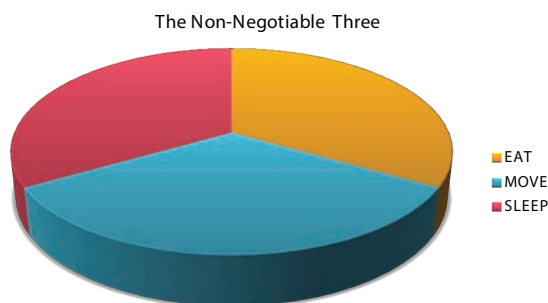
HONOR THE BODY



YOU ARE A TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
1Cor. 6:19

As scripture states that we are a Temple of the Holy Spirit. We would be appalled if we treated our Church sanctuaries the way we treated our bodies. If we just threw anything into it, if we did not keep it clean and we allowed it to become broken and in disrepair. But that is the way we treat our bodies. If this body is not in the best condition, how can we expect to be able to do the work that God calls us to do? How are we to be able to truly hear the voice of God if we are tired, distracted, rundown, frazzled and frayed?

3 ASPECTS TO HONORING BODY



We must be attentive to the three non-negotiables of honoring the body which are eating/drinking the right foods for nourishment and hydrations, moving our bodies for flexibility and strength/endurance; and getting enough sleep – for rest and restoration.

SABBATH TIME



Remember the Sabbath Day and Keep it Holy. Exodus 20:8

Another spiritual practice is taking Sabbath. I have found that many ministers, many Christians do not take Sabbath time. If you do not take time for Sabbath you are in fact stating that you are “greater than God” who took Sabbath as it is stated in our Holy Scriptures. Sabbath time as practiced by our Jewish brothers and sisters is about renewal, restoration and rest. We must take this time to renew our relationships, renew our bodies, minds and spirits. We must rest our wearied bodies and we must take the time to restore ourselves to be the persons God is inviting us to be. Try just beginning by taking a Sabbath morning, afternoon or evening. Remember if you are a priest or one who

ministers on Sunday, then that day may not be your Sabbath day because you are working. You must take another time of rest. Let me say that making Sabbath time a part of my weekly practice has been the most transformative in my life. Sabbath time is a time of renewing relationships with God, yourself and others. Try it!!

“A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” Proverbs 17:22



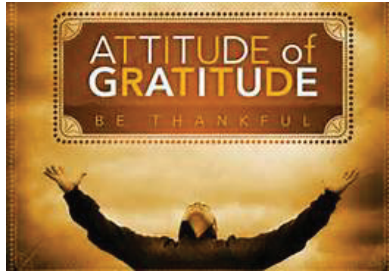
Become a person of joy. Become one who enjoys life. The spiritual practice of enjoyment of life will transform your being, your ministry and your relationship with others. It will help to prevent burnout. I learned this practice year ago, when I was working in the intensive care unit of a hospital. I encourage you to make a TOP TEN list of things that you enjoy and at least once of week, to do one of those things. My current Top Ten list follows. If you do not do that which you enjoy, it will begin to impact your ministry and you will become what I call a “sour saint.”

ENJOYMENT OF LIFE: My Top Ten

1. Trying Something New
2. Swinging on a swing
3. ACTIVITY - Bike Riding/Walking in Nature
4. Going to a movie with friend/family
5. Sunday Soups/Sabbath Salads
6. Playing Competitive games
7. Reading a book for pure enjoyment
8. Dancing – Fun Music
9. Spending Fun Time with Friend/Family
10. Pamper the Body – Massage, Bubble Bath, etc.

"A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 17:22

An Attitude of Gratitude



In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Finally, have an attitude of gratitude. If one is not grateful, one cannot truly experience the grace of God. Take time in the morning to thank God and also in the evening to remember at least two moments when you experienced God's grace. I have found that what you focus on is what you give power to, and if you focus on what is lacking in your life, if you focus on the negativity, you give power to that to impact your life. If you focus instead on the goodness, the grace and are thankful for even the little moments, it will transform your way of being. An added bonus, I have found is that in the evening if you focus on the gratitude and grace while lying in bed before going to sleep, it will help to give you a better night's rest. So try it!

What is the one thing that you are going to do?



So, what is the one thing you will commit to trying to do before this day ends?

GO FORTH!



So, let us go forth and celebrate Eucharist together

PROFESSOR OFFERS STEPS FOR MINISTERS TO AVOID BURNOUT

By Mark Pattison • Catholic News Service • Posted August 9, 2016



WASHINGTON (CNS) — C. Vanessa White, who has an extensive and impressive resume, knows all about burn-out.

“For the past 10 years, I have been focused on the health of our community,” White said in an Aug. 5 presentation in Washington during the Aug. 5-7 African National Eucharistic Congress, rattling off such issues as obesity, diabetes, cancer and high blood pressure. (See a related video.)

But in the case of White, an assistant professor of spirituality and ministry at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, and a retreat master who has been in full-time ministry for half of her 60 years, it was a case of do as I say, not as I do. As White freely admitted to her audience, just six years ago she was 40 pounds overweight, had a blood pressure reading of 160/90, had high cholesterol, was borderline diabetic, had trouble sleeping and had bouts of depression and anxiety.

“I was busy, busy, busy, busy, busy,” she said. “I didn’t have time to cook. I ate a lot of junk food. Popeye’s was my best friend.” White also took to wearing loose-fitting clothes to hide her increasing girth.

Today, though, she’s shed those 40 pounds, her blood pressure is back to normal — as are her blood glucose and cholesterol levels — she wakes up rested and has regained her ability to focus. Now, “I do ministry as a happy person, a joyful person,” White said, and no longer as somebody who is “wore out, laid out and flat out.”

“I’m still busy, busy, busy, busy, busy,” White said during her talk at the congress, held at The Catholic University of America, Washington. But the difference this time was “I decided I had to take care of myself,” she added.

It was not easy, and she encountered some false starts along the way, slipping into old, familiar — and bad — habits. One of those habits was saying yes to every request that came along. “I’m in ministry, right?” White remarked. “You say no to something, and you think you’re a bad person.”

It took a retreat for White to get back on track, she said in her talk, “Do Not Quench the Spirit: Care of Self and the Greatest Commandment.”

White said the element in the Jesus’ greatest commandment about “loving yourself” is “the part we forget about.”

“Jesus was very responsible and took care of himself,” she added. “He knew when to go away.”

She detailed four “loving practices” for reversing burnout and getting back on track: healing the body, enjoyment of life, sabbath time and what White called “an attitude of gratitude.” Best of yet, she said, each of the practices is biblically based.

In terms of healing the body, White said movement was one key, along with both eating and sleeping right. “I hate exercise,” she declared, but she pushed up a sleeve of her dress to reveal a Fitbit activity tracker on her wrist, saying she aims to walk 10,000 steps a day. “Begin treating the body like a temple of the Holy Spirit,” she said.

Enjoyment of life does not seem to come naturally for everybody, according to White: “We don’t need any sour saints,” she noted, recalling the verse in Proverbs 17 that says, “A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” She urged her audience to “do one thing. That one thing will be transformative.” Spirituality, she noted, “is about transformation.”

For people in ministry, finding sabbath time can be the hardest thing to do, White said. “Look for a day. Look for an afternoon,” she added. “The Jews thought that if you didn’t take sabbath, you were making yourself better than God, because he took sabbath” after the Creation.

Each person has an understanding of what it takes to have an attitude of gratitude, but for White, it starts for her by thinking of God as a “PAL — praising, asking, listening.” She said the late singer Whitney Houston was frequently heard praising God and asking God, “but I don’t think she did much listening.”

RESPONDING TO THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

The African Catholic Family: A Gift to the Church in America

Third African National Eucharistic Congress

Washington, D.C.

August 6, 2016

Most Reverend Shetlon J. Fabre, Bishop of Houma Thibodaux

Chair, USCCB Subcommittee for African-Americans

I am honored to have been invited to be a part of this Third African National Eucharistic Congress whose theme is: *“Responding to the New Evangelization: The African Catholic Family: A Gift to the Church in America”*. We gather here as a great group of Catholic Christian witnesses - lay faithful, clergy and religious - to undertake what is necessarily a spiritual exercise of reflecting on how the Eucharist can compel the average African Catholic Family to enrich and enliven the Catholic Church and the people of America. I would like to approach the task entrusted to me in this keynote address from the following perspectives: I. *Faith and its Relationship to the Eucharist*; II. *The Mission of the New Evangelization*; and finally III. *Listing Some of the Specific Gifts that the African Catholic Family brings to the Catholic Church in America*.

I. FAITH AND THE EUCHARIST

The richness of our Catholic Faith is reflected in many diverse ways throughout the world, this global village, in which we now live. Advances in technology and transportation connect us in ways we never imagined. One of the core tenants that also unites us as disciples of Jesus Christ is our certainty in the faith-filled reality of the Eucharist. In this context, this Eucharistic Congress becomes a very special and profound event where we acknowledge and celebrate the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ among us in the Eucharist. Though we always strive to worthily receive the Eucharist, we know that at its very heart our faith in the Eucharist will always remain a gift that roots itself in the mystery of the Love that exists between Jesus Christ and His Church, the Church of Christ of which we are all a part. As Catholic Christians, we know that the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist is the highest form of praise and worship that we offer to God. In declaring this reality, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, *“The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical*

ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1324) A Eucharistic Congress is first and foremost a graced moment for the participants to be strengthened in their own personal faith relationship with our Eucharistic Lord, and secondly, a Eucharistic Congress is also an opportunity to witness to others about the love and saving presence of Jesus Christ that comes to us in the Eucharist. Therefore, we are able to understand the important dynamic that while a Eucharistic Congress invites us first to strengthen our own faith, it also subsequently and necessarily sends us forth as missionary disciples to serve and to strengthen the faith of others. If our focus on and worthy reception of the Eucharist does not drive us to be missionary disciples for the Lord, in essence to wash the feet of others in service (John 13:14), then we have probably sadly fallen into some form of self-serving religion, and are dangerously close to offering hollow worship and empty lip service to God while our hearts, minds and actions are far away from him. (Matthew 15:8) The full reality of our faith in the Eucharist, and therefore in and through this Eucharistic Congress, will send us forth as missionary disciples to serve the needs of others. Therefore, faith in the Eucharist becomes the very grace that allows African Catholic families and indeed all of our families to enter into the Mission of the New Evangelization.

II. THE EUCHARIST AND THE MISSION OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

This knowledge that the Eucharist always propels us forth as disciples of the Lord who are sent forth into the world on mission is appropriately reflected in your choice to focus this Eucharistic Congress on the Mission of the New Evangelization. Please allow me at this point to share a few thoughts about the New Evangelization. You know very well the twofold unders-

tanding of the New Evangelization: *a.) first, the New Evangelization as a response to those who live in the modern world and its secularized/relativist culture to nurture and strengthen our own faith, and b.) second, the New Evangelization as an outreach to baptized Catholics who have become distant from the practice of their faith.* To examine these two aims of the New Evangelization from the perspective of the Eucharist can be a very fruitful endeavor. At the very center of the Eucharist is the person of Jesus Christ, who through his Eucharistic presence enters into a profound relationship with those who worthily receive his Real Presence. To each and every person in our world who is struggling in a secularized and relativistic culture, the New Evangelization issues a clarion call of the mission to strengthen our faith and to be reminded of the importance of our faith in the living God, the importance of relationship with him, and adhering to his will and desire with regard to the manner in which we as human persons created by Him are called to live our lives and respond to the many challenging situations that we face today. If we do not heed this call of the New Evangelization to be in relationship to the living God, then we face falling into the temptation to venture off like lost sheep and give ourselves over to the false gods that in so many ways present themselves and tempt each of us in these times. We need only recall today those across our world who serve the false gods of racial and cultural division and anger, of unbridled prosperity and comfort, of relentless violence and vengeance, or of darkness and death. In some ways equally as bad as the temptation to follow and give ourselves over to these false gods is the temptation to an even more prevalent situation which is active in our world today. This is the temptation to not serve other false gods because by our words and actions, whether we recognize it or not, we have in essence declared ourselves to be gods (Ezekiel 28:2) as we live only from the selfish center of satisfying our own desires, needs, and self-centered interests. In stark contrast to these tendencies and temptations, as I stated earlier, at the very heart of the New Evangelization and the Eucharist is to be found a mysterious and wonderful gift, the self-gift of Jesus Christ offered to the Father, and offered also to you and me. The Mission of the New Evangelization as seen through the gift of the Eucharist reminds and encourages us not to give ourselves over to the false gods so prevalent today in secular society, but to give ourselves over to accomplishing the will of the living God, who loves and nurtures us. This Eucharist Congress that focuses on the Mission of the

New Evangelization encourages us to overcome the self-centered and selfish tendencies that are presented before us today; to humbly recognize that while I am good, I am not a god, and that my words and actions should be rooted in the living God, who gifts himself to me in the Eucharist and sends me forth in mission to proclaim his love and presence in the world to others.

While we ourselves struggle to overcome all of the temptations of a secularist culture today, we recognize that there are many people, even many Catholics, who have been overwhelmed by the many secular and other tendencies that have captured their attention and loyalty at this time in history. The second call of the New Evangelization is paramount for African Catholic families here in the United States. After strengthening your resolve to be faithful to the Lord, then African Catholic families are sent on the mission to evangelize those who are no longer practicing the faith or have lost faith completely. Let me clearly say that even though we as missionary disciples of the Lord will never be perfect, and never have claimed to be perfect in our efforts to be faithful, the very fact that African Catholic Families and other Catholic families here in the United States are trying to the best of their ability to grow in faithfulness to the Lord is validation enough to enter into the mission of evangelizing. When we enter into the mission to evangelize none of us do so as saints, but rather as sinners. We are all sinners in relationship to the living God who forgives us and invites others through us to know the life and healing that comes from him. From our own brokenness and imperfection, we share with others the relationship that is ours with Jesus Christ, a relationship that is founded on our desire to accomplish God's will and to trust in our relationship with Him. Our efforts, even though imperfect, are rooted in our desire to do the will of God. Thomas Merton recognized this by way of the famous prayer that he wrote which states, "*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to*

face my perils alone.” There are many African Catholic Families and other Catholic families here in the U.S. whose desire to please God surely pleases God, and it is this desire that you share with those who have lost their way in their faith relationship. By its very nature, the Eucharist sends all of us forth as broken and yet redeemed disciples to evangelize a world that does not readily recognize its woundedness and that is drowning in its own self-indulgence.

III. THE NEW EVANGELIZATION AND THE GIFTS THAT THE AFRICAN CATHOLIC FAMILY BRINGS TO THE CHURCH IN AMERICA

Having shared with you the graces that rise from our Faith in the Eucharist, and our call to the Mission of the New Evangelization, I wish now to turn to the specific task of addressing the topic of the *“African Catholic Family - A Gift to the Church in the America”*. It is my hope that these reflections will further expound upon some of the realities that I have already mentioned concerning life in the modern world today. As we turn our focus specifically now to the United States and to the countries of Africa, I would first like to recognize and to share a few thoughts about the divide between Developed Countries and Developing Countries. While we rejoice in the benefits and comforts of modernization as realized and experienced in the developed world today, we must acknowledge that in some instances it has come at a great cost, one of which is the ongoing loss and erosion of faith. The United States epitomizes modernity with both its positive aspects and the challenges that come from it. A country which at its very birth espoused and established freedom with regard to faith and religious practice, the United States now often finds itself involved on many levels in at best a debate, and at worst an outright conflict, with regard to continuing to allow religious freedom to have a place in a pluralistic society with an ever increasing secular approach to life, community and citizenship. In this debate or conflict, faith and religious freedom continue to be challenged in a growing tide of prejudice or apathy toward religion and religious faith, growing and unchecked individualism, uncommitted agnosticism and atheism. An increasing number of Americans now find themselves adhering to all these and more unfortunate aspects of what, according to prevailing thought, it means to be a Developed country. Along with other Developed countries of the world, it is my opinion that the United States is at pres-

ent struggling with the dynamic that St. Pope John Paul II addressed when he stated, *“Man can attempt to build a world without God, but it will soon turn against him”*. (1984 Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: Reconciliation and Penance, #18) The question perhaps for us here in the United States, and I believe for many other Developed countries, is precisely what Pope St. John Paul II indicated: *Are we attempting to build a world for ourselves without God? And if so, have we allowed efforts to progress so far that this world is now beginning to turn against us?*

On the other hand, in contrast to the Developed World, countries of the Developing World, while lagging behind in what is understood as modernization, continue to be bastions of faith. Africa certainly manifests this in a very unique way. Catholic Relief services estimates that the Catholic population in Africa since the 1980’s has grown 238% and is approaching 200 million. The growing vibrancy of the faith and witness to gospel values on the continent of Africa is evident to all. Even while embracing all that is understood as the road to modernity, Africa currently still professes and practices a lively faith and trust in the living God and all that God offers to us.

During his recent Apostolic visit to the United States, Pope Francis acknowledged and applauded the immigrant history of the United States, recognizing that this nation has largely been built by immigrants. The United States continues to be enriched and strengthened in so many ways by immigrants. In the context of the United States and all the challenges that I have stated regarding faith and religious practice, I believe that you, the members of the African family living here in the United States, can be and should be agents here in this country of the New Evangelization in responding to the modern world and its secularized/relativist culture and assisting the Church here in the United States in reaching out to baptized Catholics who have become distant from the practice of their faith.

Because of the faith which they bring with them as they arrive here, African Catholic Families are truly a gift to the Church in the United States. In his opening address on arrival in Nairobi, Kenya for the 43rd International Eucharistic Congress (August 11-18, 1985) Pope John Paul II said: *“The Church in Africa is entering a new era, an era in which she will be called increasingly to reach out generously beyond her national and continental*

frontiers and to place her resources and gifts at the service of the universal Church. What you have received as a gift you now wish to give as a gift” (#2, emphasis mine). It is important that African Catholic families know and recognize that they are a gift to the Church in America. As one of the Bishops of the United States, I therefore reiterate these words of St. Pope John Paul II, and I beg and challenge you to continue to place yourselves and your gifts at the service to the Church here.

The values and gifts of the African culture and people have been recognized and acknowledged by the Church, and it is these values that are a gift to the Church in America. I would like to draw from the “**Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation – Ecclesia in Africa (The Church in Africa)**” by St. Pope John Paul II. This document states that while many countries on the African continent are economically poor and a part of the developing world, Africa is nonetheless “. . . endowed with a wealth of cultural values and priceless human qualities which it can offer to the Churches and to humanity as a whole”. (EA #42) Further, in this document, and probably more-so than in any other, are highlighted the wonderful values and gifts of the African culture. I would like to state several of the values mentioned in the document and share how these are a gift that African Catholic families bring to the efforts of the Church in the United States to continue to reach out to the culture and people in the United States of America.

1. ***An Inherently Religious People:*** “Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and of a spiritual world.” (EA#42)

Reflecting on this gift from the perspective of the Eucharist, this inherent disposition is fertile ground for Eucharistic devotions which are said to flourish in Africa. Stories and accounts of the devotion to the Eucharist by the people of Africa abound; from the sacrifices of walking long distances to celebrate Eucharist to reverent adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in public Eucharistic processions. My dear brothers and sisters, do not let this inherent religious sense which lead you to wonderful experiences of being caught up in the mystery of the Eucharist be eclipsed or overshadowed by American culture. In contrast, you should seek to inspire and evangelize the American culture with this sense of the sacred, with this experience of mystery and of the existence of God and the presence of spiritual realities. Do not put

your lamp under a bushel basket! (Matthew 5:15) Do not allow the sometimes overwhelming shadow of the profane and secular to eclipse the light that shines from you with regard to your sense of the sacred and respect for spiritual realities. Do not allow the excessive temptations of the world ‘that can be seen with the eye’ to stunt or inhibit your great respect for the presence and reality of the world that you ‘see only with the eyes of faith’.

2. ***Recognition of Sin and its Effects*** “The reality of sin and its individual and social forms is very much present in the consciousness of these peoples, as is also the need for rites of purification and expiation.” (EA #42)

Here in the U.S. as we grapple with individualism and the satisfaction of our own unbridled and unrestricted fulfillment of desire, your recognition of the reality and presence of sin is an important gift that you bring with you here to the Church your new homeland. One cannot begin to overcome sin in its many manifestations of personal sin and social sin until one is willing to even acknowledge that sin exists and is an ongoing reality in our lives. I remember my mother, who turned 88 last month, once looked at me after an experience in our lives when she thought shame and remorse, in essence a recognition of sin, should have been present and stated with great exasperation, “No one is ashamed anymore”. There no longer exists in the aftermath of the actions of many people feelings of shame or remorse in their heart for what has been freely undertaken by that individual. In my own reflection, one can say spiritually that the shame that Adam and Eve felt after understanding they had sinned before God is very often no longer a feeling that arises in the hearts of many individuals in this country. In many instances, we can see in the actions of individuals a surrender again to the temptation presented by the serpent in the garden that we can ‘be like God’ (Genesis 3:5), but there is often no feelings of guilt, remorse or shame when it is clear that we have sinned. Rather than acknowledging sin and our distance from God, we would rather continue to allow the world without God that we have built to wreak havoc in our lives. The first stage to being forgiven for our sins is to recognize that we have sinned, to feel sorry for what we have done, to be ashamed of ourselves, and to open ourselves to the process of healing and forgiveness, of which the Sacrament of Reconciliation is a vital part. When one does not believe that one sins, one dismisses the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The gift of remorse, the gift of recognizing sin and seeking ways to purify our

hearts and actions of it, are another gift that the African Catholic Family brings to the efforts of the Church in this country.

3. ***Importance of Family:*** “In African culture and tradition the role of the family is everywhere held to be fundamental. Open to this sense of the family, of love and respect for life, the African loves children, who are joyfully welcomed as gifts of God. (EA #43)

Families are the foundation and bedrock for any and every society, community or nation, and also indeed of the Church. Where there are strong families, there is an inner strength and resilience that is fostered and found in each member of such a family. Strong families enable individuals to face, withstand and overcome life's trials and challenges. There are many things today that attack the sanctity of family life. Marriage, as ordained by God, is on the decline as more and more couples simply live together and chose not to enter into the commitment that is the Sacrament of Marriage. Freedom to do what I want to do, and when I want to do it, is seen as fundamental – as opposed to entering into a commitment of life and love that manifests its reality in the life that is produced by the love shared in the Sacrament of Marriage. And if couples do enter into marriage, in many instances rather than welcoming children as gifts of God, very often children are viewed as a financial stumbling block that prevent or delay married couples from grasping at and amassing all the material things that are understood to be aspects of the ‘good life’. It is my understanding that there is an old African proverb which states, “If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go with others”. My dear brothers and sisters, your authentic witness to the value of family life and to the gift that children are in the midst of the American people strengthens these efforts undertaken by the Church here in the United States and is a powerful witness to the sanctity and importance of the family and the many graces and blessings that family adds to our cities, nation and world.

4. ***Respect for the Dignity of Human Life*** The sons and daughters of Africa love life. It is precisely this love for life that leads them to give such great importance to the veneration of ancestors. The peoples of Africa respect the life which is conceived and born. They rejoice in this life. They reject the idea that it can be destroyed, even when the so-called ‘progressive civilizations’ would like to lead them in this direction. Africans show their respect for human life until its

natural end, and keep elderly parents and relatives within the family. (EA #43)

“With age comes wisdom.” This is an adage that for centuries grounded our respect for elderly family members. However, today many are more of the opinion that with age comes burdens. While there are many reasons that in our culture very often elderly parents and relatives do not live within the family, in many instances we have lost sight that though this may be the reality this is not at all the ideal. The ideal is what is recognized as a gift by African people – keeping elderly parents and relatives as much as possible within the family. Very often our elders are viewed as a burden, and sometimes even more tragically, our elderly view themselves as a burden rather than as a gift of wisdom to the family. I remember reading somewhere in past years a statement that was in essence the following. “Only in the United States is it considered good and desirable to live alone.” Many of our elderly live alone. The focus of the statement was that in other countries of the world, to live alone is considered a tragedy, and in keeping with this understanding in homes many generations are present, and the wise elders assist in passing on their life experience and wisdom to the youth and young adults that will follow in their footsteps in life. In the African culture, elders are not practically or financially considered as burdens, but rather as connections to the past that provide hope for the future. It is because of this lack of respect for human life in its final stages here in this country that the practices of euthanasia, assisted suicide, elderly abuse and all the many other ways that elderly are disregarded are found in our culture, but are not part of the African mindset or experience. My dear brothers and sisters, as St. Pope John Paul indicated, do not let progressive societies cause you to abandon this important aspect of your lived experience and culture. Bring to the ongoing efforts of the Church in this country this great respect for life, this great respect for our elders.

5. ***Solidarity and Community Life:*** “African cultures have an acute sense of solidarity and community life. In Africa it is unthinkable to celebrate a feast without the participation of the whole village. Indeed, community life in African societies expresses the extended family.” (EA #43)

You are all familiar with the sad fact that today many people live in close proximity with one another and yet feelings of loneliness and isolation thrive more than ever. The phenomenon of people living in the same neighbor-

hood without knowing their next door neighbor is also a sad reality in the United States today. On the contrary, the opposite is a reality in most African communities. I therefore challenge you to infect your neighborhoods with that sense and experience of solidarity and community life.

As I draw to a close, I wish to draw a quote from the Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization, *Evangelii Nuntiandi (On Evangelization in the Modern World)*, that I think is very relevant to this challenge to you to be a part of the New Evangelization and to offer the gifts of your Catholic faith to the Church in America. Pope Paul VI famously wrote, "*Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses*". (EN #41) There are two places to which I would like to draw your attention because in these two areas you can make a great and significant impact as you witness to others about the love and saving presence of the Lord. These two areas are: 1.) *the neighborhoods in which you live and work*; and 2.) *your Church community*. In your neighborhoods and in the workplace, do not be shy in living out and manifesting your authentic African cultures and values that are rooted in faith. The good that you manifest will impact others as they see the light of Jesus Christ shining in you. Seize every opportunity to joyfully serve as a missionary disciple and to witness appropriately to your faith. As you live out the gifts and values stated previously, it will naturally draw the attention and curiosity of your neighbors and coworkers, and this will be a wonderful opportunity to witness and to evangelize. Your great hope in the Lord will shine brightly, and you will put into practice what is stated in First Peter 3:15: "*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect*". In your church parish and faith community, get involved!! Avoid the temptation to be 'lost' in the pew. We are all very much aware that in the African liturgical context and church community, no one is an uninvolved bystander. Seek opportunities to share aspects of your faith life and practice with your parish community.

I have stated in this presentation only some

of the gifts that you hold and bring with you to enrich the Church in America and to our culture and society. However, I will not shy away from recognizing the tendency that many sons and daughters of African, and from other countries as well, come to America and surrender completely to the culture here, thereby letting go of the wonderful values from their native cultures and countries. Sadly there are those who come from Africa and end up abandoning their rich and faith filled cultures, traditions and practices. They have instead embraced wholeheartedly the growing secular culture. Your challenge in arriving here is to strive wisely to integrate into the culture of America, but not totally to assimilate and surrender to all of the spiritual challenges. Embrace and integrate the many goods offered by this country, and there are indeed many good things here in this country, but also recognize and offer the goods that you bring with you from afar. Again St. Pope John Paul II said it best when he stated, "*It is my ardent hope and prayer that Africa will always preserve this priceless cultural heritage and never succumb to the temptation to individualism, which is so alien to its best traditions*". (EA #43) My dear brothers and sisters, do not give in to individualism, or to any of the other negative "-isms" such as materialism, racism, pessimism, agnosticism, and atheism that have sadly become for many a normative part of our fabric of life. Keep for yourselves the wonderful culture and beneficial gifts of the African fabric of life as you assimilate into the culture and all that is good here in the United States. This African fabric of life is exemplified and witnessed in the beautiful garments that you wear from your native land. Their rich vibrancy, intricacy and interwoven patterns are indicative of the wealth of the gifts that you bring. Just as do your wonderful vesture and clothing, the values of the African fabric of life lift our hopes and strengthen our faith. Just as the Eucharist is meant to be shared, so may you always be willing to let your faith in the Eucharist thrust you into the daily mission of evangelizing in the context of your unique gifts as African Catholic families at home, at work and in your church communities. I firmly believe that the African Catholic families' Faith, Mission and Gifts will continue to bless, enrich the Church in America and our country as well.

Thank you, and God bless you!

AFRICAN CATHOLICS URGED TO HOLD TIGHT TO FAITH



News Aug 9 2016 - 4:14pm | Rhina Guidos - Catholic News Service



African Catholics gather for an Aug. 6 Mass during the Third African National Eucharistic Congress at The Catholic University of America in Washington. (CNS photo/Rhina Guidos)

The African family, with its reverence of elders, sense of solidarity and community, and adherence to religious traditions has great gifts that need to be shared, a Louisiana bishop said Aug. 6 in addressing a group of about 300 Catholics who hail from the continent. Bishop Shelton J. Fabre of Houma-Thibodaux urged those gathered for his keynote address at the Third African National Eucharistic Congress in Washington to hold tight the values from their native homelands, especially values rooted in faith.

«Keep for yourselves the wonderful culture and the beneficial gifts of the African fabric of life,» he said.

The African fabric of life, he added, «is exemplified and witnessed in the beautiful garments that you wear from your native lands.»

Instead of colors, the fabric of the African Catholic family is one made up of treating elders as valuable receptacles of wisdom and knowledge, not as burdens, of seeing children and family, not as obstacles to success, but as gifts that can help a person withstand life's trials, and is enhanced with a «lively faith» that can be seen in

people's religious practices, said Bishop Fabre, who also is chairman of the U.S. bishops' Subcommittee on African-American Affairs. These, he said, «are the wealth of the gifts that you bring.»

But the U.S. church also needs to help the African Catholic family as it settles into a new life in a new home, said Colette Kuegah, of Omaha, Nebraska. She explained to the bishop that her son «left the church» and switched to a different faith in the U.S. even as the family was firm in its Catholic faith in its native Togo. The church needs better outreach, she told Catholic News Service, adding that some younger people feel as if no one cares whether they're in church or notices when they leave.

One of the reasons for the gathering tailored to African Catholics, said Sister Joanna Okereke, assistant director for cultural diversity in the church at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is to help African Catholic churchgoers connect, find a sense of community and collectively recognize their gifts of religiosity, family and joy, she said.

Some of that perspective can get lost, said Bishop Fabre, in a new land that, while rich in material comfort, is also rich in individualism, secularism and relativism that can erode faith.

«I will not shy away from recognizing the tendency that many sons and daughters of Africa -- from other countries as well -- come to America and surrender completely to the culture here, thereby letting go of the wonderful values from their native countries,» he said. «Sadly, there are those who come from Africa and end up abandoning their rich faith-filled cultures, traditions and practices.»

Instead of embracing the secular culture, «your challenge in arriving here is to strive wisely to integrate

the culture of America but not totally to assimilate and surrender all spiritual challenges,» he told the crowd.

He added: «Embrace and integrate the many goods offered by this country, and there are indeed many good things here in the United states, but also recognize and offer the good you bring with you from afar.»

But immigrants and their families abandoning faith-rooted values is a concern, said Sister Okereke, who is a member of the Congregation of Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus. For the first time, the gathering offered a session for young people to discuss their challenges and views of being Catholic in a climate different than their parents'.

«It's a concern that many are leaving the church,» said Sister Okereke, adding that providing a community, such as the one offered by the gathering could help them see and affirm their spiritual riches. The gathering offered a Mass in French, filled with music heard during services in some African countries and celebrated by Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya of Kinshasa, Congo.

Forming a sense of community for African Catholic should also be embraced at the diocesan level, Sister Okereke said, so that they and their families feel valued at the parish level.

Bishop Fabre said that by focusing on the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, African Catholic families can be part of new evangelization by not giving in to the «false gods» of comfort, prosperity and as well as the different «isms,» including individualism, materialism, pessimism, agnosticism, and atheism.

«The gift of the Eucharist reminds and challenges us not give ourselves over the false gods so prevalent today ... but to give ourselves to the living and true God, who loves and nurtures us,» he said.

He added that the African Catholic family also can heed the second call of the new evangelization, which is to extend an invitation to Catholics who no longer practice their faith.

«While we ourselves struggle to overcome all the temptations of a secularist culture today,» he said, «we recognize that there are many people, even many Catholics who have been overwhelmed by the many secular and other tendencies that have captured their attention and their loyalty at this time in history.»

With their gifts imported from an area of the world that is a «bastion of faith,» African Catholic families can take up the mission to evangelize, Bishop Fabre said.

As members of the African Catholic family, «you can be and must be agents here in this country of the new evangelization,» he said. Evangelizing is not about proselytizing, he said, but about maintaining practices they know well -- valuing the extended family, especially elders, remaining involved in parishes and showing their communities some of the African solidarity so prevalent in their homelands.

«In your neighborhoods and workplaces, do not shy away from living out and manifesting your authentic African culture and values that are rooted in faith,» Bishop Fabre said. «The good that you manifest will impact others as they see the light of Jesus Christ shining over you. Seize every opportunity to joyfully serve as a missionary disciple, strengthened by the Eucharist.»



LIVING WITHIN TWO CULTURES: AN EXISTENTIAL CHALLENGE FOR AFRICAN FAMILIES IN THE UNITED STATES.

By: Deacon Michael Neba

Third African Eucharistic National Congress * August 3-5, 2016
Catholic University of America Pryzbyla University Center



Dear Participants of the Third African Eucharistic Congress

My sincere and hearty gratitude to the organizers of the Congress for the invitation to come and reflect with you on the topic: Living within Two cultures: An existential challenge for African Families in the United States. In reading through the topic three words catch my attention: culture, challenge and families. These words are central to our reflection with focus on: an overview of the African Family and its characteristics; how the African Family got to the United States, the cultures it brought, the challenges it face and how to live with these challenges.

It is a common understanding that the beliefs, values, customs, arts, manifestations of human intellectual achievements of a particular society, or group constitute its culture. As such, the culture of even a single group can be complex.

Africa is a vast continent with more than fifty countries each with a multitude of ethnicities and cultures. An attempt to speak of "an African Culture" in this context is a gross underestimation of the magnitude of the cultures therein and the challenges faced by those who have relocated from their cultural bases. This discussion, as such, focuses on the least common denominators drawn from the experience of fellow Africans I have encountered, my own cultural background and over twenty five years of living in the United States and dealing with cross sections of immigrants from the African continent in academic, social and pastoral spheres.

How many African families are in the United States? The exact number is not known, but the number of African immigrants in the United States gives us an idea. According to a 2014 release from the U.S. Census

Bureau, The number of foreign-born population from Africa grew from 80,000 in 1970 to 1.6 million between 2008 and 2012. There were 1.8 million African immigrants living in the United States in 2013 compared to 881,000 in 2000. African immigrants in 2013 constituted 4.4% of the immigrant population, compared to 0.8% in 1970.

Why the Family is of Attention

It is a universally accepted fact that the family is the basic cell of society. Take away the family, and you have taken away associations, organizations, etc. It follows that the stability and state of being of any society presupposes a stable and well functioning family. Taken to a higher step, the family, we must recognize and be conscious of, is the Church of God. Its members are God created with some unique characteristics.

A characteristic of the African Family

St John Paul II writing in *Ecclesia in Africa* speaks of the African Family as one "of love and respect for life", one that joyfully welcomes children as a "gifts of God". Further he notes: "The sons and daughters of Africa love life. It is precisely this love for life that leads them to give such great importance to the veneration of their ancestors...Africans show their respect for human life until its natural end, and keep the elderly parents and relatives with them. Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and a spiritual world".ⁱ

Love of life is central to the African's existence. Life is welcomed and celebrated throughout the human lifecycle. New life in particular is a constant expectation especially from newly wedded couples. This welcome of life is particularly manifested in the care and respect that is given to a pregnant woman and the preparations to welcome the new baby. It reaches its climax at the birth of the baby when members of the family gather to share

the boiled plantains in oil, palm wine from the gourds and dancing in what in Cameroon is known as the born-house (house of birth).

There is respect for human, and community life inclusive of extended families. The extended family as known in the west is non-existent. Siblings growing up in the same house or compound are not aware of the biological boundaries between them. I know of relatives in my family young, old and age-mates without knowing what the exact relationships are. Particularly the old ones, I do not know their names other than Papa or Mama. The Father of my mother's sisters' cousin is part of my immediate family. Everyone is papa, mama, or my son, my daughter. And so the song goes:

*In Africa we do not have cousins,
In Africa we do not have uncles,
in Africa we do not have nephews,
that is African Culture.*

*The Father of my mother is my papa,
the sister of my brother's wife is my sister,
Even my grandson, is my son;
that is African culture.*

The African family is sustained by its communal life featuring symbiotic and synergic relationships. People do things together and work in groups. For example, a group of women may agree on working together thus: work on one person's farm this week, then the other the following week until all have had a turn. Through such life persons, who otherwise could not afford a roof over their head, have owned a home. There are the "njangies" [Define Njangi with examples] that serve a multitude of roles {financial institutions, lending/clearing house, etc.}. Communal life and activities are insurance and investment schemes. Those who contribute to it, draw the benefits. Those who do not are looked upon as misfits and when the occasion arises in which they need assistance the community opens its records (there is a community "book keeping") to see what and where they have contributed to pay back accordingly. People do to others what has been done to them. Not to belong to a community or be a part of its activities has its consequences. The story is told of the man who never participated in nor contributed to a major corporal work of mercy – burying the dead. [for men it means taking part in the making of the coffin, digging the grave, and

burying the body. He claimed it was a taboo for him to see a dead body. When his son died the village left the corpse to him alone since they too could not see any corpse. It would be one day later before they came to assist in burying the body for the sake of the mother.

The foregone, not exhaustive, together with music, language, style of dancing, meal preparations, etc. values and beliefs are what the African Family has brought into the United States. And in their coming have met a culture that is not theirs - a culture that is different from theirs and not understood, a culture they must live in, and with it. Will they abandon one culture for the other or embrace both? And what does that mean? Abandonment of either cultures is not an option. Acknowledging and embracing both cultures is an obligated option.

Some Existential Challenges of the African Family

An African family on the same dining table has two cultural meals. Parents are eating stock fish and fufu, while the children are feasting on a burger and French fries. A parent asks for a piece of roasted plantain for dessert, the grandson has a piece of cake on the plate. A child is disciplined by the parents; a social worker drives in following a 911 call for child abuse.

The African child who establishes eye contact with an elderly person, especially in conversation, is rebuked for being too bold. "He looked at me in the eye and spoke without blinking". In fact such a child is seen as one who has the potential or is developing a skill to become a rogue. The same child fails to establish eye contact in school because his parents of African culture though him so, is seen as one who is not telling the truth.

Parents are struggling to raise children born and growing in an American culture with African cultural values and concepts. My sister-in-law (my wife's sister – strictly speaking African tradition is called my wife). So, my wife's children came to the house to visit. I told my sons, your sisters were around. The oldest boy looked at me, and immediately responded: "our cousins you mean?" – their mom is our aunt. In my growing up in Cameroon, you dare not make such a distinction.

The difference between "Whiteman time" and "Blackman time". [expand] The African is invited to a non African function or event, on Friday at 6 pm. They

arrive and are seated before 6 pm. Invited by a fellow African they show up at 9pm - African time. And the list goes on. The African attends an American fund raising event in the afternoon, eats finger food and drinks a glass punch, writes a check and leaves satisfied. The same African attends an African fundraising event late in the weird hours of the night, eats and caries away an abundance of food, drinks to the fullest, may or may not write a check to equal the amount consumed and leaves very satisfied.

Consequences of living within two cultures

African parents are losing control over their children. Children cannot take simple instructions and when asked the parents quickly come to their defense, that is how the child is – *No! that is not how the child is - that is not how you were, when you were a child.*

Parents are not experiencing the joy of parenthood as their children are being raised or baby sat by their grandparents who have been relocated for that sole purpose.

Fundamental cultural values and traditions have been abandoned, minimized or are gradually dying away. One that readily comes to mind is story telling. In my childhood years, I longed for and always looked forward to the evening when we will sit around the fire with burning flames and glowing coal under the pot waiting for the family meal. During that time we will tell stories or listen to stories aimed at keeping us awake until the meal was ready. There was at least one new story each night; for the most part the stories were repeated in a variety of ways, either by the same person or a child who had joined the group from another household or the neighborhood. Tribal stories narrating the history of the village and its kinsmen built courage in the young as they grow. As children we enjoyed the characters of the stories on their face value. But these stores were loaded with moral lessons and principles most of which one lives by today. Much was learnt, much was handed down. Story-telling, a regular feature of the family evening meal has been replaced by whatever are the happenings on television, YouTube, iPods, etc. prompting this appeal:

Story telling is part of our culture. We must always recount to our children, the history of our ancestors. For that is part of culture.ii

Some African Families are so excited with the U.S. culture to the point where they have given it. Some members after living in the U.S. for a few years have “forgotten” their mother tongue. The culture is gradually eroding. Such erosion while occurring here is rapidly being translocated into African backyards through various “African Channels”. Allowed to go unchecked, with the rapid number of African immigrants and the accelerated birth rate, the U.S. born Africans will have nothing to hold on (give it another twenty years if the trend is not reversed). We must be careful - a people whose culture in not maintained and sustained will soon run out of culture.

We cannot dismiss the idea or the reality that the African Family in the U.S. is here to stay. We may pretend that we are going back to our African countries, but the reality is, we are in a “*nyongo*” or “*come, no go*” situation. There are many who came thirty plus years ago, with the intent of going back. More came; and have come after them with the same intent. They are still here and still saying or hoping they will go. The very thought or hope of “going home” seems to be the fuel to bring in more siblings. These individuals are bringing to birth new generations that may never step foot on the African soil; generations that cannot excuse themselves from being African, with the African blood running in them.

What can be done to address the Challenges of the African Family living within two cultures? Any attempt to answer this question must first take into consideration how the African Families, with varying objectives, single, engaged or married (with or without children), through various routes over time got here. I can quickly think of four (4) categories of African immigrants in the U.S. I call them generations.

1. The I-20 Generation: They came in through the 1970 to 1988/89 purposely to go to school and return to their home countries. Most of them stayed, for varying reasons, and acquired U.S. citizenship by way of a green card (primarily) through marriage to a U.S. citizen and the DV Lottery when it was first introduced.

2. The Lottery Generation – The process of bring immigrants into the U.S. through a lottery process was first introduced in 1986 and called the NP-5 program in 1987. It was called various names over time until 1996 when it became known as the DV Lottery. The motive for this generation – pursuit of

the American Dream – people looking for greener pastures. The lottery then, was not as highly screened or specialized and selective as it is today. The application process was simple – mail a post card addressed to the DV Lottery Center and a return address on the upper left corner of the post card. Persons already living in the United States “played” for their relatives in African home lands.

3. The Asylum Generation - persons fleeing from political persecution from their home governments. The early ‘90s saw a lot of political upheavals in the African continent. Many took advantage of or exploited the situation as it is said in a Cameroon proverb (it is better to fish when the waters are muddy).

4. The Baby Sitter Generation - mostly mothers (and papas) who have come in to provide childcare to their children’s children motivated by the expensive nature of child day care. Young girls and boys are also being recruited to play the role of babysitter. These elderly people, are having a hard time adjusting to the environment; old monkeys being “forced” to learn the ways of two or more generations younger than them - trying to get use to the reality of staying in a house with a toilet facility across the room, using a microwave instead of their traditional fire place in the kitchen often detached from the main house.

What next?

The African Family and all its associated cultural, traditional and social gatherings or institutions must in bold strokes define the African culture, make known its existence, its values and contributions to the U.S. society. It must explore new avenues to integrate or blend with the U.S. culture.

Where is the African family in the United States? What is its cultural contribution to the U.S. society? There is a rich, but unexplored part of the African culture within the context of the U.S. habitat.

African Theologians: the time has come for them to research and bring to light the theology of the African Family as God’s Church (in light of its culture) in a multicultural environment.

African sociologists and anthropologists - academicians, especially in humanities and arts, social sciences should embark on writing class room text and curriculums as these are rich avenues to integrate the African Culture

into the U.S. Culture. Some progress and attempts have been made at the individual levels. A more coordinated approach as a group is needed and encouraged.

As African individuals and communities who have lived and experience both cultures for over decades, do we have communities and or programs that are set up to readily orientate and integrate the new immigrants coming in or is it still the everyman for himself, God for us all - survival of the fittest?

The New African Culture

Some African cultures do not lend themselves to the U.S. situation. The same goes for some U.S. cultures that do not address African needs. Hence, the idea of the “New African Culture”. The New African Culture calls for an extraction and blending of the best of both cultures (in all aspects of the definition of culture). This can be done at the level of the family, communities, organizations, cultural and social groups, and institutions. The New African Culture must be formulated in a manner that is “in contrast with the Gospel of Jesus Christiii”. Pope Francis in the Joy of the Gospel has called for “new ways of relating to God, to others and to the world around us, and inspiring essential values.”iv Can the African Family, the Church of God consider and embrace the concept of the New African Culture as one new way to embrace and spread the Gospel?

Conclusion

Echoing the prayerful words of the Pope St John Paul II: It is my ardent hope and prayer that Africa will always preserve this priceless cultural heritage and never succumb to the temptation to individualism, which is so alien to its best traditionsv. I say it is my prayerful hope that the participants of the Third Eucharistic Congress, reflecting on this message will continue this discussion beyond the walls of this congress hall, in an effort to find new ways to embrace and transform the challenges of living within two cultures into opportunities for the African Family to building and living within multi-cultures. In your deliberations, may you be blessed always in all ways, through the intercession of the Holy Family. Amen.

In your deliberations, may you be blessed always in all ways, through the intercession of the Holy Family. Amen.

(i Positive Values of African Culture (#42-43)

ii Achingale Henry Asong, The Mamfe Youth Choir International, 1981

iii Challenges from urban cultures in The Joy of the Gospel, #73

iv Ibid, #74 v Ecclesia in Africa # 43)



REPORT ON ADULT BREAKOUT SESSION BY DR. MRS. VERONICA UFOEBUNE

What we heard (from the speaker) and what actions can we take

- It is important that we teach our children and for us to live by example of that life
- Begin to educate the (young) parents about our culture
- Important to take children home to visit
- Parents are the first teacher
- Need to educate (children) early
- Los Angeles, CA- they have a 2-week boot camp on Igbo culture (a Catholic program)
- Explore present programs and make applicable to other communities
- Ways to help young women
- Learn to accept ourselves; being proud
- Identity
- Family trees
- Go home and talk to aunts, uncles, etc.
- Develop timelines
- Speak your language to your children
- Teach African languages
- use of technology (language apps) to reach children and all who want to learn the African languages and culture
- Create school and college curriculum for teaching African languages
- NAACUS/ACCCRUS leadership to help communities with African families
- (We have an oral tradition) need to write it down (culture, history, etc.)
- Parents feel inferior – need to encourage
- Pass leadership to our children
- Help them (our children) understand what their names mean
- Educate on all different (African) cultures

What is Culture?

- Culture= Beliefs, Values, Customs, Arts, Human Intellectual of People, Society, Individuals
- Universally Accepted= Family is the cell of any society.
- Stability of Any State= Stable -> Critical, Well-Functioning Family= Nucleus

Family= God's Church, Not Political

- St. John Paul the #2nd Loves & Respects Life, Joyfully welcomes as Gift of God
- Africa recognizes the Sacredness of God, Respect of Community Life, Extended Family acknowledged understood, Respected
- We have no lines of cousins.
- We are all mothers, fathers, sons, daughters- not necessarily draw lines, make distractions with cousins, grandchildren, etc.
- Respect & welcome for all lives- both old & new.
- We welcome the news with family, village and all jubilation.
- Jubilation involves sharing palm wine, kola nut, other meals.
- Homelessness -> Not, Village comes together to build a new "Hut"- Communal Life
- Death= We Cry Together = Family & Community comes together & support.
- Non-participation into community life.
- The way we said "Hello," & "Here it is."

The new world here places us in a position to Abandon our ways...Should we?= No, Embrace both= Yes Creates new challenges- Tension like:

- Fufu, Stockfish vs. Hamburger for Meal
- Roasted Plantain vs. Cake for Dessert
- Came for Discipline..here come CPS social service
 1. American Fundraising event{ Afternoon: African-American fundraising, eats finger foods, drinks punch, writes a check, very satisfied.
 2. African Fundraising event: Everyone arrives late- Africans arrive late to African fundraising, eats, drinks good, consumes the food well, takes "takeaway" after the party- may or may not leave check, good drinking, leaves satisfied.
- In Africa-an African youth, sees an elder, makes way on the path to allow elder to pass.
- The elder grabs child's hand & takes to principal's office & says here is your "son."
- (You Cannot Do That Here in America!)

Africans are fast losing our culture. We won't be here with our children in the future.... What culture do we want them to inherit? Continuously, our cultures are either abandoned or minimized.

RECOMMENDATIONS/thoughts:

- **Storytelling** needs to be used to tell our history, our trip here to the U.S., etc. to our children.
- We used to look forward to the story-time from the elders.
- Animal characters- Had morals, values we're living today.
- Story-time have been replaced by iPods, cell phone texting, Facebook, laptops, TV, etc.
- We may be right next to them but do not know who or what the child is communicating about.
- We put our culture aside and embracing wholly what is here.
- ***The African family is here to stay.***
- A percentage of our future generations here may never step foot on the African soil. We owe passing to them.

WE USED TO COME TO AMERICA and we now have Africans here for various reasons:

- Original goal was to come to US with our student visa to go to school and return to Africa after schooling.
- We are no longer leaving after school.
- We are staying and having children here.

Others:

- The DV lottery generation.
- The Asylum generation- political upheaval leads to their flight from home-from Africa.
- The African family immigrant types:
- The Babysitter Generation----> The economic resolution----> The mothers who come here to live with their children to support "Omugwor"
- Stay on for grandchildren to alleviate the cost of daycare.
- Africans: Live in a web of walls.

What to do?

Solve the equation with multiple variables.

- Begin with one variable.
- First, we have multiple educators.....Brain Drain= Best of African brains live in the USA.
- Put our info into curriculum to make it to the schools.
- The African family is the church of God.
- Community programs must set up outfits to receive new arrivals to orientate them- or is do we forget where we came from and adopt the

mantra of “Everyone for itself, God for us all?”

- No- we need to share our experience of how we settled
- Share the news with our next generation.
- We need to pray and teach them how to pray.

We need to preserve our priceless culture.

- We must sustain communal living-Indeed it takes a village-we Africans know what it means in its actuality.

We must not succumb to “individualism.”

- God of Africa & our ancestors & saints intercede for a good life.
- Adults must live the example.
- Curriculum on cultural education.
- Names- loss in modified culture & value. (Ex: Mekas vs. Emeka)
- We must share our meaningful African names in its entirety.
- We must teach our children the true meaning of their names and family name
- Parents are the First teachers of children.
- We need to educate them from an early age.
- **Take the children home to visit home.**
- **RESPECT** is our culture & teach them daily.
- **Teach our children our GREETINGS!**

Take advantage of Youth Summer Camp:

- Los Angeles Catholic Community has a program where the children go every Summer to a 2 week boot camp on culture, and learn the Igbo language and idioms.
- Form teams as children find it cool to learn their culture in a community of their friends.
- They learn together and learn as well that they have something in common and they network.
- Forum to help parents
- Forum to help with learning our culture correctly
- Forum to teach them to accept who they are so they are
- we must accept too to be successful at properly teaching our children. (Ex: Igbos, not Ibos.)
- Teach others who you are-not accept what they say you are.
- Teach the African Identity, Storytelling, Family Trees

DEVELOP and use Language Apps

- Teach them where they are from and who they are.
- Learning- Write down our culture.
- Generation A- they had a hard life most of their life at home
- Due to the suffering at home, it created inferiority complex in those Africans who had a hard life at home.
- Generation - Need to be encouraged to let it go and share the African values-it is the best because African values are their values-must be cherished.

African life is important.

- A great piece to Google and buy to read is; “Bridging the Gap” -By Dr. Nicki
- Parents must keep supreme their relationship with God”.
- Children need to create strong relationship with God,
- Children need to know the Bible; They need Evangelism- Define: Who God is, What is the Catholic theme?
- Parents must read the Bible with their.
- Mass can be a “chore,” a “task” for the children of we do not ensure that mass is properly translated or we teach them the indigenous African language used to officiate the mass so the children can follow along.
- Make mass enjoyable & an experience to look forward to.
- Teach your children the native language so they understand the mass.
- Parents enjoy the mass as a result of the music, the culture they know, children need to know too-teach them.

REPORT ON ADULT BREAKOUT SESSION BY REV. FR. ANIEDI OKURE, OP

Challenges Facing African Families in the US

The main points centered on cultural conflicts between children and parents, expectations between husband and wife, all of which translate into tensions in home. The lack of the extended family support imposes in undue burden in raising children. Beside, the lack of role models for children makes it even harder especially that

role models seem to be defined in terms of how much money one makes. Issues of visibility within society and in the church contribute to some Catholics seeking welcoming faith communities elsewhere. This is compounded by race issues that make many Africans feel unwelcomed in the American society and even in their faith communities.

In regard to cultural conflict, many participants point to the expectations of the men in the home; that many of our brothers hardly participate in attending to the needs of the children at home and very rarely help in the household chores. In such instances, the woman is overworked and feels a sense of powerlessness and abandonment. Our African men tend to forget that the woman's profession has equally demanding engagements, sometimes more than the husband. Yet there many still fall back to expectations of the woman to do the household chores.

Parents want their children to attend Mass in their parents' African language and children prefer Mass in English – as this is the language of their everyday use. Some children do not want to be identified with an ethnic oriented church and this is a cause of anxiety to many parents. Some parents are not well grounded in their faith so teaching that to their children is difficult.

Some parents want their children, especially daughters to marry people from the same ethnic group as their parents, hanging unduly to parochialism and ethnicity. This also brings conflict as many children prefer to marry "people they love" regardless of ethnic origin. In this regard, children complain about parents not listening to them and acting like military commanders enforcing their (parents) cultural norms.

Some parents are ashamed of their home culture, and try to "shield" their children of their heritage. This seems to be the case of those who come out of conflict and war torn societies.

In general, many parents feel they have lost grasp of

their children, and are not able to bring them up in the right way. They feel their children are sucked up in the American way and shun the ways of their parents. This creates a great tension between parents and children.

There are also tensions surrounding identity. While African-born parents want their children to claim their parents' national and cultural heritage, some of the children do not want to identify with the culture and nationality of their parents. They prefer their American legal heritage.

On the whole it was observed that there is a high incidence of separation, divorce and domestic violence that is not found at the same rate in the home countries of the African born. Worse still are cases of spousal murders, more specifically, husbands killing their wives due to misunderstanding in the homes. This issue needs urgent attention and pastoral response.

Due perhaps to cultural stereotypes, many do not seek help – professional help – for their children, and for themselves in case of repeated spousal conflict. In the long run, the situation gets worse, resulting in irreparable damage to the family. It was also noted that the men are more resistant to seeking professional help.

Suggestions

Realizing that the family is the basic of any society, and in our context, the domestic church, we need to teach our children the basics of the Christian faith and the best of African values beginning at an early age. In this vein, we should explore ways of bringing the best of African values to be taught in American schools.

Parents should be careful not to bring conflict between them to the attention of children. Parents need to listen to children, tell their own story, and have discussion about the web of cultures within the American society. This can minimize the conflict between parents and their America-born or American-raised children. There is need to organize a sustained and systematic

program within local communities for the orientation of newly arrived African-born members, especially members with children. Orientation is particularly needed for those whose national language is not English (Francophone and Lusophone immigrants).

There is need to follow up on these issues such that there is a sustained and structures engagement of the challenges that African immigrant families face in the United States.



YOUTHS AND ADULTS AS AGENTS OF EVANGELIZATION

by Rev. Fr. Anthony Appiah



His Eminence, Donald Cardinal Wuerl, Archbishop of Washington, Most Rev. Rutilio, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers, Most Rev. Shelton J. Fabre, Bishop of the Diocese of Houma Thibodaux, Louisiana and chairman, Subcommittee on African American affair, Most Rev. Joseph Perry, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, Archbishop of Kinshasha. Mario Munoz-Visoso, Director; Cultural Diversity of the American Catholic Bishop's Conference, and her Assistant, Sr. Joanna, My Dear Brother Priests and Sisters of the African Conference of Catholic Clergy and Religious in the United States, My dear People of God, all other protocol duly observed, I feel very honored for the invitation to be part of this Eucharistic Congress and to be given a part to play in sharing some thoughts with you at this Eucharistic Congress.

The Topic for our reflection is; "*Youths and Adults as Agents of Evangelization*". Evangelization has become an issue of great concern for the church in our times. It is my wish that at the end of this encounter, each one of us will be burning with fire and zeal to renew our commitment to discipleship, in other words, becoming Intentional Disciples of Christ.

To achieve this, I would like to employ the use of scripture, which fundamentally is the source of our faith. I would also be investigating this topic by the use of some church documents on Evangelization. I would additionally be considering **the four (4) Poles of Evangelization**, namely;

1. **The task**
2. **The message**
3. **The goal**
4. **The agents**

We will finally be looking at some underlying problems and difficulties hindering our effort to evangelization. Then, some suggestions as to the way forward, having in mind African Catholics in America, will be put across.

WHAT IS EVANGELIZATION?

The mission of the church is based on four pillars, They are; **Kerygma** (The ministry of Preaching and Teaching), **Leiturgia** (The Ministry of Prayer), **Koinonia** (The Ministry of Communion) and **Diakonia** (Ministry of Service).

Among these four pillars of the church, *Kerygma*; proclamation of the word of God takes the primary place and importance and from which the other three flow. True and authentic worship, community living and service to society and the world at large must come from a proper understanding of and living the Gospel of Christ.

The word *evangelion* occurs first on the lips of Jesus; "Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and, saying; '*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel*'" (Mk 1:14-15). In both Matthean and Lukan accounts of Jesus's inaugural sermon at Nazareth, Jesus summarizes his mission as "to proclaim the gospel to (literally, evangelize) **the poor**" (Matt 4:23, LK 4:18). Evangelizing means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself. At its essence are the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ and the response of a person in faith, which are both works of the Spirit of God.

Evangelization must always be directly connected to the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed.

The first evangelization and its subsequent ones were embarked upon by the Apostles, the Church Fathers and those brave Catholics who have gone before us. Luke, in Acts of the Apostles gave an account of the begin-

ning of the first evangelization in graphical terms. Luke told us of the electric effects that graced Jerusalem that day when Peter stood up to address the crowd after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The effect was so massive that, those who had come from Africa, Asia, and the Mediterranean regions, all heard Peter in their native tongues. (cf. Acts 2:1ff) And from there, started the first evangelization.

The Word Evangelization in the context of American History

The word evangelization was almost not talked about in the history of the Catholics in America. In history, before the first shot was fired in the American Revolution, provisions banning Catholics from holding political office existed in most colonial charters. Likewise, for a time, both the colonies of Massachusetts and Virginia forbade Catholics from settling within their territorial boundaries. In other places, Catholic schools, the sacraments, and the Holy Mass itself were banned. In his book, *“Evangelizing Catholics”*, Scott Hahn wrote;

“Later in the nineteenth century, a series of anti-Catholic potboilers, like the utterly false but best-selling Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery in Montreal*, inflamed hostility against Catholic immigrants. Vandals destroyed parish property, politicians lobbied to exclude Catholics from the Western territories, and mobs burned at least one convent in Massachusetts to the ground.” The result, as Avery Cardinal Dulles described, is what we see today; that “attempting to be modest and self-critical, Catholics often fail to proclaim their faith with confidence, if at all.”

Among Catholics then, religion was seen as a private matter.

In our times, the idea of the New Evangelization has created a whole new wave in the Catholic world, because for some of our contemporary day Catholics, the word evangelization is more in tune with the Protestant and Evangelical Churches.

WHAT IS THE NEW EVANGELIZATION?

Before I attempt to define, or rather describe, the new evangelization, I should indicate what it is not. New evangelization does not consist of a ‘new gospel’ or Message, since the Gospel is always one and the same through history. The truth of the gospel does not change.

Neither does it involve removing from the Gospel whatever seems difficult for the modern mentality to accept... Nor is the new evangelization merely a new formulation of an old message. Although new forms of expression are needed, they do not themselves constitute a new evangelization.

The New evangelization has as its point of departure the certitude that in Christ there are “inexhaustible riches” (Eph 3:8) which no culture nor era can exhaust. These riches are, first of all, **Christ Himself, his person, because he himself is our salvation.** There is a distinction between “*primary evangelization*” directed towards those who have never heard the gospel before, and “*pastoral care*” directed towards those who were living as believers but also perhaps needing a deeper conversion, and “*New Evangelization*” directed towards those from traditionally Christian cultural backgrounds ‘where entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the church, and live a life far removed from Christ and the gospel (RM 33)

Scott Hahn, in his book; *“Evangelizing Catholics. A mission manual for new evangelization”* declared;

“The New Evangelization isn’t just about shipping off missionaries to foreign shores or sending mendicant preachers to proclaim the Gospel to Pagans. Nor is evangelization strictly in the sense that many Protestants conceive of evangelization – sharing the Good News with an unbeliever, getting him to confess his faith in Christ, and then moving to the next unbeliever.” He continues that, “Rather, the new evangelization is the work of the whole church – lay, ordained, and the consecrated. It’s about friends, family, and co-workers reaching out to one another and proclaiming the truth of Christ using all available means – conversation, personal witness, media and the vast array of intellectual and spiritual riches the church has built up in her two-thousand-year history. It is about simple act of kindness, simple challenges issued in love, simple question asked with sincerity. More fundamentally, it is more for the baptized than the unbaptized. It is for those who have been adequately catechized but all too adequately secularized, and it’s for those who have been de-Christianized in the very process of being sacramentalized’

The New Evangelization challenges each of us to deepen our faith, believe in the Gospel message and go forth to proclaim the Gospel. The focus of the New Evangelization calls all Catholics to be evangelized and then go forth to evangelize. In a special way, the New Evangelization is focused on 're-proposing' the Gospel to those who have experienced a crisis of faith. Pope Benedict XVI called for the re-proposing of the Gospel "to those regions awaiting the first evangelization and to those regions where the roots of Christianity are deep but who have experienced a serious crisis of faith due to secularization."

The New Evangelization invites each Catholic to renew their relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church. To bring it home, the new evangelization focuses on African Catholics in the US who for some reasons are alienated from the Church through the influence of the American cultures and the influence of Pentecostalism with the excuse that the Mass is boring, and who don't seem to belong to the parish communities. You and I know the number of good African Catholics who travel abroad to join other Protestant or Pentecostal Churches, or even decide not to attend any church. These lapsed Catholics must be our focus in discussing new evangelization.

Whether the New Evangelization will work remains to be seen, but at least it seems to have the church's finger on a real problem.

Urgency of the new evangelization

The work of evangelization has become urgent for us as youth and adults, because of the great mandate of the Lord (cf. Matt. 28:19). The Lord said; "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." We must evangelize because the Lord Jesus commanded us to do so. He gave the Church the unending task of evangelizing as a restless power, to stir and to stimulate all its actions until all nations have heard his Good News and until every person has become his disciple.

Ralph Martins in his book, "The Urgency of the New Evangelization: Answering the call" makes this point very clear;

"There has been a long tendency in Catholicism for the laity to take a relatively passive role and expect the leaders to serve them. Sometimes, leaders have

fallen into the habit of relating as well. But scripture indicates, and common sense reveals, there is no way that the mission of the church can succeed without the baptized Catholic taking an active role"

The New Evangelization is urgent because, the collapse of Christian society is being experienced in the Catholic Church as a "wake-up call" to the need for a renewal of fervor, both for holiness and evangelization, rooted in the continuing reality of Pentecost. There is a collapse of Christian culture, which as weak and ambiguous as it was in some ways has profoundly affected the beliefs and actions of baptized Catholics.

In the United States, there are now 22 million ex-Catholics, big enough to be the largest religious denomination in the country. The church drops four members for every one member it gains, and if it were not for Hispanic immigrants it would have been declining for decades. Yet the Catholic Church in America also holds on to almost 70 percent of its members into adulthood, a higher retention rate than any other Christian denomination.

It is sobering to see the radical decline in the practice of the faith in traditionally strong Catholic areas of North America. Raph Martin gives some statistics showing decline in the Catholic faith.

	2000	2010
Infant Baptisms	16,294	9,544
42.4% decrease		
Adult Baptisms	1,442	704
51.2% decrease		
Full Communion with the church	1,713	960
43.6% decrease		
Catholic Marriages	3,641	1,649
45.3% decrease		
Interfaith marriages	1,657	783
52.7% decrease		
Funerals	10,461	9,496
9.2% decrease		
Parishes	313	273
12.8% decrease		

NB: These statistics shows a drop in Large Mid-western dioceses for the last ten Years. The situation is also seen as the same with other dioceses

What these statistics indicate among other things are that there is something like an institutional collapse

going on, evidenced by vast numbers of schools closing; parishes merging, clustering, and closing; and the multiple assignments that many young priests now are asked to manage. Besides the institutional collapse, there is evidence of a widespread repudiation of the teaching of Christ and the Church by vast numbers of Catholics. Even those who attend Mass regularly often embody a set of beliefs that are closer to secular elites than the teaching of Christ.

Another disturbing scenario is the accelerated falling away of our youth as they go to middle schools and colleges. When the discussion turns on confirmation, majority of the confirmed youth are seldom seen in Church again. The sacrament that is supposed to express and effect deeper, conscious commitment to being witnesses to the faith seems in many cases to result in directly the opposite. For many Youth and their parents, confirmation seems to be a “ritual” that completes the list of what “good Catholics are supposed to do, and therefore no further religious education or even Church attendance seems necessary. As declared by Pope Benedict XVI at the 2008 World Youth Day;

“The new evangelization should aim at helping younger generation to rediscover the true face of God, who is Love.”

Another area of great concern is Western culture fueling the destruction of Christianity and inadvertently promoting Secularism. For example, in our American society, prayer is not said in public places, Religious symbols are banned from public place. Christians of today seem to be afraid and when it comes to issues of church and state, we tend to give in to the state or pay more allegiance to the state.

1. THE TASK OF EVANGELIZATION

Luke 24:44-49

Jesus gave a directive with two distinct elements: The Command “**to Wait**” and The command “**to Go**”

The Apostles’ mission doesn’t begin immediately. After assigning the Apostles the momentous task of being his witnesses “to all nations”, Jesus’ first instruction is to wait:

“*Stay in the city until you are clothed with the power from on high*” (Luke 24:49).

He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father,” namely, that they would be “*baptized with the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 1:4-5)

Paradoxically the first imperative of the Christian mission is to **wait** for empowerment from on high. The promise of the Divine empowerment is fulfilled at Pentecost when the disciples were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4).

The Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit is, as Luke presents it, the absolute prerequisite for carrying out the Church’s daunting mission.

Although, Pentecost is a unique, once and for all event, renewed outpourings of the Spirit occur on numerous occasions. Even the Jerusalem church needs a new filling with the spirit to face new challenges (Acts 4:31). The implication is that the Holy Spirit plays a pivotal role in the project of the New evangelization. All must wait on the Holy Spirit for inspiration and direction.

The second imperative of the new evangelization is to “**go**”. This implies a movement towards.

This notion of going is to the lost sheep. Jesus uses the word ‘**Lost**’ (*apololos*, Literally “**perished**”, **destroyed**”) that is for those who have not yet repented Luke 19:10 We are to go to the world, where there is a “**presumption of Universal salvation**” that is not grounded in scriptures, which has seeped into some theology and the mentality of some Catholics. This presumption is the way the devil employs to snatch people away from God.

The problem we have with the task given to the Church is that after twenty centuries of Christianity, the culture and habits of the Church today are largely directed towards maintenance rather than mission, toward ministering to those inside the Church rather than seeking those outside it. Where is our mandate to be fishers of men? We seem to be always mending our nets instead of casting into the deep. The New Evangelization challenges us to move to engage others anew with the message of Christ.

2. THE MESSAGE OF EVANGELIZATION

The message of evangelization hinges on the proclamation of the **Kerygma**. Preaching of the Word of God.

The anointed preaching of the kerygma has an intrinsic power to awaken faith in the hearers. “*So faith comes*

from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Roms 10:17).

It is about the Church’s joyful exclamation, “Jesus is Lord” (**Rom 10:9; 2Corinth. 4:5**)

Our Youth of today are yearning for the word of God. The big question is what are we preaching to the Youth today? I had the opportunity to listen to a homily of some of us priests. They were talking about their vacations, their trips and sometimes one gets the feeling that the priest preaches about himself instead of the word of God. What are we feeding our young people with? Are they words that touch the hearts of people or dry bones in a soup that do not taste well? Ralph Martin observed;

“For the New Evangelization to succeed, ministers of the word and as much as possible all the faithful, need to be able to proclaim the Kerygma in a concise and convincing way.”

The church’s experience for many centuries has been that of catechizing members who were baptized as infants in social settings that fostered Christian Faith. Today those environments have largely disappeared, and many baptized Catholics’ like most non-Christians have never heard the gospel proclaimed or made a deliberate choice to follow Christ as his disciple. As St. Pope John Paul II candidly observed;

“Many Catholics have been baptized and catechized without having ever been evangelized – that is, without having heard the gospel in a way that led them to personal encounter with Jesus Christ and joyful surrender of their lives to him”

Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, *“the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel”* Mk 1:14-15. From the beginning, the gospel was not mere information but a proclamation in power that demanded a personal response of faith and repentance. What then actually is the gospel message that Christians are called to live and proclaim?

In Jesus’s ministry the essential content of the gospel is that in Him, God has come to save his people and establish his victorious reign over earth. His healing ministry confirmed the truth of his message.

We are to announce the infinite, unconditional love, and

personal love for every human being.

We are to announce the good news of Christ’s birth, his death and his saving acts.

Taking on our death as Savior, Jesus was raised to life. In Christ, all can come to know that God has taken on our human nature and leading us to new life to overcome the sin, the coldness, the indifference, the despair, and the doubt of our lives. In him, and him alone, is the promise of resurrection and new life.

3. THE GOAL OF EVANGELIZATION

Mathew’s gospel makes it very clear the goal of evangelization; “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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (**Matthew 28:19-20**)

Three elements may be distinguished here

First, it is not sufficient to make converts or church members, but **disciples**. According to Matthew, disciples are those whose identity is founded in their relationship with Jesus and who make him the absolute priority of their lives (**Matthew 8:19-23, 10:37-39; 16:24-26**). They share in the mission of Christ, his authority, his self-denial, his persecution, and his rewards (**Matt 10; 19:29-30**)

Second, is that we are baptized in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit – into a profound relationship with the persons of the Trinity.

Third, Jesus says that his disciples must be taught to observe all that he taught the Twelve. Catechesis about Christian living must follow conversion. There must be a radical new way of life that conforms to the teaching of Christ.

4. AGENTS OF EVANGELIZATION.

All baptized are agents of God’s message. But the Holy Spirit is the primary agent and source of evangelization. The reason for Christ asking the disciples to “wait” was to receive the outpouring of the spirit.

In his Apostolic Letter “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*” Pope Paul VI emphasized that evangelization and mission work aren’t just one of many activities the Church does; they’re at the very heart of who the Church is. The Church can’t be Church without evangelization and that is why in the American Church of today we need the youth and the adults to serve as agents of the New Evangelization to bring our Catholic brothers and sisters back to the

church. Pope Paul VI indicates that, evangelism is not an option for individuals. It's part of the essence of who we are as Catholics. By virtue of our baptism, we are called to become agents of the gospel so we should not make the call to be agents of the New Evangelization sound as if is an elite club of some few people who are deemed worthy to spread the faith. I want to encourage our youth and adults who are listening to me today, to be part of the drive to bring our lapsed brothers and sisters back to the Church. In some places in the world, Catholic Churches are being closed down and why should that be the case? Can't we fill the Churches back? It is your work, it is my work. It is our duty as Disciples of Christ

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit

The CCC No. 736, says, "By power of the Spirit, God's children can bear much fruit. He, who has grafted us unto the true vine will make us bear "the fruit of the Spirit, Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-denial (Gal 5:22-23)

We live by the Spirit, the more we renounce ourselves, the more we "walk by the Spirit." (Gal 5: 25; Matt 16:24-26)

The Church of our time really does need a new Pentecost. It had been the cry of our previous Popes. The popes have strongly emphasized the need that the church and each one of us has to experience today the work of the spirit as described in Acts of the Apostles.

Pope Paul VI

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, he identified a lack of fervor that "comes from within" and is "manifested in fatigue, disenchantment, compromise, lack of interest and above all lack of joy and hope"

as a major obstacle to evangelization. He identifies the Holy Spirit as the source of spiritual odor and points out the difference in the disciple before and after the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He said the Holy Spirit is the Principal agent of Evangelization. It is He who impels each individual to proclaim the gospel...

St. Pope John Paul II

Pope John Paul II also affirmed the call of Paul VI, by emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in energizing the mission of the church. According to him, it was the experience at Pentecost that enabled the disciples to become "Witnesses" and "Prophets." At the historic meeting with ecclesial movements and new communities at

the Vatican, in 1998, His Holiness, John Paul II called out to all Christians; "Open up yourselves docilely to the gifts of the Spirit. Accept gracefully and obediently the charisms which the spirit never cease to bestow on us."

Pope Benedict XVI has not only called for a "renewed Pentecost" but has called for a "culture of Pentecost" to be established in the church. At the World Youth day in 2008, he invited the youth and indeed the whole church towards this renewal. He mentioned among other things; "Today I would like to extend this invitation to everyone: Let us rediscover, dear brothers and sisters, the beauty of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. He called on all of us to be aware of our baptism and confirmation, as source of Grace that are present."

All the agents of evangelization need Baptism in the Holy Spirit, if the work of evangelization is to be successful.

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and *Catechesis Tradendae*, the church identifies agents of both Evangelization and catechesis as, the Bishops, Priests, Catechists, the ecclesial community, parents, the family, the youth, and every baptized, but for the purpose of our gathering, we are limiting ourselves to the Youth and adults as the agents.

The Youth.

Who are these youth? And who are these adults. It feels like it is everybody but permit me to dwell a little bit more on who these young people are.

One cannot give clear-cut definition, as various ideas have been expressed on who the youth are. Many have tried to define youth using age limits. For others, the stage of youth has to do with the state of mind.

The New Oxford dictionary of English defines the youth as the period between childhood and adult age. It is a state or quality of being young, especially as associated with vigor or freshness. Youth is also seen as a stage of developmental growth, which covers the period of childhood and adulthood. It is from the onset of puberty and extends to an age bracket that can roughly be identified as: Pre-adolescence (9-13 yrs), adolescence (14 – 19 yrs), early adulthood (19 – 25 yrs) and end at the threshold of adulthood."

St. Pope John Paul II in his apostolic letter on the international Youth Year describes youth as a special treasure that a person experiences at the particular period of his

or her life. He said, the period of youth is a time of a particular intense discovery of the Human “I” and of the properties and capacities connected with it. Youth is also the time of psychological development: the growth of all the energies through which normal human individuality is built up. Youth, then, is a time for new contacts, new companionships and friendships in a circle wider than the family alone.

To bring it home to our African communities in the US and for the purpose of this congress, we shall be looking at the catholic youth, who were born in Africa and were brought to the US and are loosing touch with themselves as Africans and at the same time not finding their foot in the American cultures; they are the ones we lose everyday. We are looking at the African born American, who live typical American life and culture but continue to live with African parents who try to instill in them some African values; they find our liturgy long and noisy; We lose some of these. There are also some within these two categories who continue to profess the catholic faith.

These youth are beset with numerous problems; from education, peer pressure, rapid social change, influence from the electronic and print media, unhappy home due to separation and divorce. Notwithstanding these problems facing them they have a mandate to be evangelizers of their own youth.

At the World Youth Day in Denver, St. Pope John Paul II, told the Youth;

“Each one of you must have the courage to go and spread the Good news among young people your own age who will then take the church and society into the next century.” He said, the New Evangelization is their special task, a mission entrusted in a singular way to their generation.

SOME UNDERLYING PROBLEMS

I would like to address some concerns which to me become set backs to the growth of African Catholic Communities in the US and even elsewhere outside the corridors of Africa and by extension stifling the effort of evangelization and the reason why we loose most of our Catholics.

Cultural Identity

There is the problem of cultural assimilation and acceptance particularly with the category of the young people

I just talked about. We are looking at the terrain or the environment to evangelize. The African begins to live two cultures; the cherished African values of family and as opposed to Western or American culture that are materialistic and where the promotion of the individual seems to replace the cherished values of community living.

This problem of cultural identity becomes worse when it comes to dealing with our young people. Even back home in Africa, our children are already living the American or the Western Cultures, long before they set foot on the American soil. The reason is very simple. The parents are here working hard, leaving the kids in the care of grandparents. They send money, sophisticated phones and other electronic gadgets. They are put in the best of schools in Africa where fees are paid in dollars. They refuse to speak the local language even back home. What do you think happens to a child like this when he/she comes gets to America? Many of these African Youth are not able to find a balance between the two cultures. They are neither fully Americans nor fully Africans. Some get into crisis because they realize that the situation as they perceived back home is not as they found it. Some parents are most of the time not at home. They continue to live their own lives, leading them to crisis, copying life of materialism and individualism.

Sometimes Africans are seen as coming from one country. If the interest and enthusiasm attached to the Spanish apostolate is given equally to the African communities, believe you me; we shall begin to know the number of African Catholics and their impact to the American Church. It is my feeling that there should be a dialogue with the African Church and her hierarchy. We cannot bundle all Africans together, because there are differences among us in terms of Culture and language. We have French, English and Portuguese Speaking Africans besides the many local dialects.

My presupposition might not make a good logic but I guess they make some sense.

Establishing African Catholic Communities

There is the Difficulty of establishing African Catholic Communities due to the nature of the Church's bureaucracy. The presumption is that a Catholic is a Catholic everywhere, so why not attend any Church that is close by. The peculiar African Liturgy and way of worship attract other African Catholics to join them. When that

opportunity is not there, that becomes a factor to losing most of our members. Other African Pentecostals and Protestants establish their churches so easily and they get most of our Catholic brethren into their fold. Unlike the African Catholics, we are sometimes at the mercy of a particular pastor who is either interested or not in an African community, in his parish.

The office of Multicultural diversity of The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is an indication of the Church's interest and openness to allow other different Catholic cultures to grow but on the ground and in dealing with particular Arch/dioceses and with individual priests the story is different.

In dioceses where there are Multicultural offices, there is always room for growth of a particular African Catholic community to meet the needs of the African, and the opposite is also the case where there is no such office. I can boldly talk about my Host Diocese, Arlington diocese, Archdiocese of Washington, New York, Brooklyn and elsewhere, just to mention a few. I have had experiences with other dioceses, where the African communities are finding it difficult to grow because one priest or the other becomes a stumbling block. So in effect, sometimes the survival or the otherwise of the African Catholic Faith depends on the generosity of a Pastor or how receptive a diocese can be to the establishment of an African Community.

THE WAY FORWARD

How can the youth and the adult become true agents or messengers of New Evangelization?

Youth Formation

The Youth can be true agents of Evangelization; become evangelizers of their own peers, when they are well grounded in the faith. It is a common saying that "catch them young"; "teach the child the way he/she should go and when he/she grows he will never depart from it. (Proverbs 22:6)

Pope Benedict declared to the youth in 2008 World Youth day; "The main task for us all is that of a new evangelization aimed at helping younger generation to rediscover the true face of God, who is love."

They can be true agents when the church takes a critical look at their formation.

Great preparation and formation must be in place for

one who receives the mantle as an agent of evangelization. One of the prerequisites of an agent of the new evangelization has to be sound understanding and familiarity with the Word of God and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Programs have to be designed to help in the formation of these agents of the new evangelization.

Family Catechesis.

The depth of the faith of the Youth will in so many measures depend on the faith of the parents.

The family has an important role to play in building up the faith of their children. If the parents themselves are not true and authentic Christians, how would the children grow up in faith. The religious and faith formation of the children must have equal importance as their social and academic formation. The family must have altars at home where the family gathers to pray daily. If the parents are True Disciples of Christ, trust me the children would also be. There should be vibrant domestic churches where people are prepared to be evangelizers.

Witnessing with our lives

There is a *Latin* adage that goes, you cannot give what you do not have (*Nemo dat quod non habet*), so by inference, I will like to think that, no one can evangelize another when s/he himself is not a believer. While truth is very powerful and can change the hearts of many, modern man is very skeptical of the truth and is even more skeptical of those who preach the truth and do not live it out. On the other hand, those who live wedded to the truth and clearly show it in their actions are much more persuasive. The modern world simply will not listen to moralizing hypocrites, but they will listen to Christians who practice what they preach.

The world is in need of witnesses, disciples who live by what they preach. Pope Paul VI puts it most eloquently,

"Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." St. Peter expressed this well when he held up the example of a reverent and chaste life that wins over even without a word those who refuse to obey the word. It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus- the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity."

Being an Intentional disciple of Christ

I will like to create the awareness for all agents of the New Evangelizations that it is important for one to be a strong believer before one invites another to believe in what he/she preaches. I don't ask for agents to be perfect Christians before they become agents but, the evangelizer should be convinced of the message he/she is spreading/preaching to others. It should not be the case that, one works as a professional advertisement agent, who may not believe or use the product he/she is promoting but since it is his/her work he/she goes out to convince others to accept it. The Youth and adult must be Intentional Disciples of Christ first, then, they can share Christ with others. Bishop Loverde's pastoral letter on the New Evangelization; *"Go Forth with hearts on Fire"*, calls on all Catholics to be that intentional disciple. First, to learn about your faith and be re-evangelized and two, to share that faith you so cherish with others; to bring them also to Christ.

There have been numerous pastoral letters by almost all the bishops of America, calling each member of their Arch/dioceses to become those intentional disciples. Let us search for them and read them alongside with our bibles. We will be the most fruitful or effective evangelists. A very effective and consistent way to spread the Gospel is to do person-to-person contact. It could be done at your workplace, at some social gathering. Be bold to talk about Christ to your friends and your co-workers.

The new evangelization is holistic

The agents of the new evangelization should note that the new evangelization is not only targeted at individuals

but also to whole cultures. It encompasses an attempt to bring modern cultures into contact with Jesus Christ and to afford them a conversion to the Gospel message. This is a bold enterprise. It entails much more than merely preaching the gospel to individuals, though this is an ever-present task. To address whole cultures, where the influences of modern, secular societies are so much in evidence, the church must embrace new means of communication and modern methods of promoting social interaction in a way that can transform society itself, making it more the ideal human community it is called to be. Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI might serve as an example. In late 2012 he started posting "tweets" on Twitter, short 140-character messages that reach out to communications-savvy people around the world, especially the young.

CONCLUSION

The new evangelization envisions an entire process of Christianization whereby people engage the risen Lord to such a degree that their whole lives change. The real question will be whether or not Catholics, and perhaps other Christians as well, are truly willing to put their faith in action in accordance with this kind of vision. This involves serious reflection on the transmission of the faith from one generation to the next.

The new evangelization was recognized as not just a program for the moment but a way of looking at the future of the Church and seeing all of us engaged in inviting, first ourselves to a renewal of the faith and then all those around us into the joyful acceptance of life in the Risen Christ. Thank you for your kind attention.



YOUTHS AND YOUNG ADULT PRESENTATION

by Dr. Nkolika Izuchi



Why we need young adults and youth to evangelize

- With one of the themes of the 3rd African National Eucharistic Congress being centered around Youth & Evangelization, there are few things I felt are important for us as an African Catholic community to look at, address, and build on
- Earlier Bishop and others had pointed out how important and valuable the family unit was to us as Africans and I couldn't agree more. So now I am going to go a little deeper and talk about some of the things that SPECIFICALLY youths and young adults need to evangelize but even more important stay connected with the Catholic faith.
- The first thing would be to build their own personal relationship with God in order to spread the gospel to others. Now you ask yourself how can a young child in America facing temptations and the ways of the world do that? Well I will first say that that desire to know God the way HE wants you to know Him has to come from the child. As Bishop mentioned earlier, parents have to be the primary teachers of the faith, not only by reading the bible with your children but also by setting the example with your own actions. Now notice I didn't say by asking your children «Have you read your Bible?» It's so important that you read with them daily if not several times throughout the week.
- These days we are faced with secular battles that many of our parents did not have to face growing up in Africa so we can't turn a blind eye to that fact but actually face those issues head on so that our youth will know how to handle these issues in a Christian way and not succumb to what everyone else their age are doing.
- So how do we stay connected to our youth and

keep them connected to the Catholic faith?

Youths are more likely to be perceptive to other youths and young adults: so we need to keep them engaged in ways they can enjoy and in turn that desire to know God and stay in the faith will follow.

- Youth will determine the fate of the Catholic Church to come: THE WHOLE WORLD IS WATCHING- we have to know that people are watching what we do, how we treat others. There is a worldly saying of What Happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. Well we as African Catholics have to remember that we are not of the world so, what happens in Church doesn't only stay in church. We should be living for God every single day. And so parents have to make sure that Monday through Saturday their children are being spiritually fed: teach them the meaning of prayer, teach them how to pray. I know as a child, for a long time the only prayers I would ever say to God was Our Lord's Prayer and Hail Mary. A child's prayer life shouldn't only be that...God wants more for His children and He wants more for us as an African Catholic community.
- We have to make sure that African Catholic Youth are setting the bar and standard & that begins with us in our individual Catholic communities and our homes.
- I also believe that our wonderful priests and sisters can help our youth stay connected by doing things within the church that youth can relate to: I know earlier one uncle mentioned that their church still wanted mass done in Igbo but how many youth these days understand Igbo? If you have a child that doesn't not understand anything that is going during mass, how do we expect them to want to continue to attend mass?
- I think within our individual communities, it is

vital that we take a step back and ask a couple of questions: #1 What do our youth need from us to stay connected? And #2 How do we make sure it happens? For instance if their friends want to go to a party and at that party they being doing things that are not of the Catholic Christian faith we need to have an alternative for them so they don't fall into temptation. Someone once said that God never promised we wouldn't face difficulties in life but He promises

that He will never leave us or fore sake us. And so in today's world our youth face more and more battles against the ways of the world then some our parents.

- Our African culture is so rich and beautiful and so it is our responsibility to pass that down to our youth, not by force but by doing everything we can to make them desire that loving relationship with God that He wants for us more than we may even want for ourselves.



HOMILY

by Most Rev. Joseph Perry, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago



Welcome to the closing Eucharist of our 3rd *African National Eucharistic Congress* where we have reflected on the gift of family life in our African and Catholic traditions and now come to the table of the Lord for the sustenance we need to carry forth the witness of the Christian family so needed in these times. It is our hope that married couples and families can feel the warmth of support and friendship these days by the sheer numbers of participating bishops, priests, deacons and religious and lay faithful attending this Congress.

Welcome to the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, an emblem of American Catholicism beginning with its foundation in 1919 and still a work in progress. If you are a new visitor to the Shrine do spend some time this weekend visiting its many chapels and porticoes celebrating the richness of peoples who came to America from distant lands and settled here with their Catholic faith and their dreams.

Indeed, one of the Basilica's many chapels is the Mother of Africa Chapel dedicated in 1997, a gift of African American Catholics, that commemorates the long saga of African Americans. History tells us that blacks first appeared on these shores in the early 1500s. Black peoples did not come here looking for a better life. Nor did they come here for education, a good job and the good life. They were dragged here in chains having been bartered or sold or kidnapped or captured, destined for uncompensated labor, shameful treatment and ripped of their dignity, their names and their religions. Entering the chapel you will step on the sketch of a slave-ship indicating its tight holes where Africans were stored like sardines in a can; any number of whom never survived the foul voyage across the Atlantic.

Please do visit the Mother of Africa Chapel and marvel at its artistic rendition and simplicity. Perhaps you will shed a tear or two about the history of our ancestors, as African Americans continue to do.

For our visitors joining us just for mass this morning, The African National Eucharistic Congress was an initiative of the Committee for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in response to the call of Pope John Paul II to African Catholics to celebrate the Year of the Eucharist and develop deep faith roots within the context of African religious and cultural values. Ever since then this Congress has been celebrated every five years following the first one in 2006.

Special greetings this morning to his Eminence, Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, the Archbishop of Kinshasha – the Democratic Republic of Congo, Reverend Fathers, religious sisters and brothers present, visitors from the continent of Africa with us, African American Catholics, brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers and children and young people worshipping with us this morning.

We are privileged to have with us this morning as well, several ambassadorial officers: the Ambassador of Zimbabwe, Ammon Mutembwa and family, the Ambassador of the Congo, Dr. Francois Balumuene and the Ambassador of Uganda, Ms. Oliver Wonekha. Thank you for your worshipping with us.

This is the 19th Sunday of the year. We are assigned Luke's gospel, chapter 12.

So, imagine it for a moment. You are stuck in traffic. You are tired after a long day of work. You just want to get home, put on some comfortable shoes, have supper, watch TV and unwind. But, an endless line of tail lights stands between you and your oasis called home. When you finally inch to the front of the line of traffic and you ease past the men working on a road construction project, are you tempted to offer a friendly wave, roll down the window and thank them for helping make the roads safer and more efficient? Or, are you tempted to make

another kind of hand gesture, honk your horn loudly and swear at the men for choosing rush hour to do road work?

Or, how about a family member who asks you to pick them up at 7.30 in the morning. Kind relative that you are you arrange your day around the appointment thinking the relative might be annoyed if you are late picking them up. So, you arrive early – 7.15. And you wait, happily at first, of course. When 7.30 comes around your good mood turns to anxiety. When the clock reads 7.45 your patience sours to irritation. With every minute thereafter your blood pressure rises. You text your relative but receive no reply. Then, you feel anger rising inside you. Then, suddenly at 8.15 your relative comes strolling out of their house oblivious to your agony of the last hour. What will you do? What will be your first words? In a society with computers, cell phones, Smart Phones and iPads, Twitter and Facebook servicing us within seconds our patience-quotient diminishes.\

Waiting is the incubator of patience. Waiting can sharpen the sense of expectation. Waiting can humble us and rid us of the mistaken notion that we are in charge of the world and that all things should wait on me and meet my expectations. What greater school for patience is there than family life.

Being the oldest of six children in my family with three girls following me in sibling order, I remember being most impatient whenever we went anywhere as a family, to church or wherever. It always appeared that the women in the household, mother and my three sisters always had to go back to the bathroom mirror just as we were leaving out the door. It used to grate me to no end. For I was always a stickler for being on time.

Jesus calls upon us to develop the gifts concealed within waiting in the parable of our Gospel lesson this Sunday (Luke 12, 32-38). And, like all parables Jesus told, the parable story contains a surprise.

Waiting is not drudgery if the goal of the wait is deemed important. In the parable, the servants are urged to wait upon their master's return from a wedding. Weddings in the Middle East can last for days so the master's return is hard to pinpoint with accuracy. But, it is the master, after all, for whom they wait.

The sense of this parable is that the master is benevolent. He is beloved by his servants. They wait for this master of the house not in fear but in hope.

In the bible verses just before this particular narrative, Jesus tells us all, "do not be afraid little flock for the Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." The God upon whom we wait is not coming with vengeance and anger. He comes with gifts and blessing. It is much easier to long for the coming of a smiling God than to dread the coming of an angry God. Our lives should be so ordered that the God we meet on our last day is a smiling God.

Be that as it may, waiting is hard work no matter the circumstances. And waiting will produce patience and sharpen anticipation when we recall our love for the one upon whom we wait.

Waiting empties the hands and reminds us that we are not in control. The lack of control is the more difficult part of waiting for most of us. We stare, for example, at a door marked "surgery" for hours in a waiting room waiting on a word from the green-masked and muted doctors on the other side regarding the welfare of a loved one. We wait in the airport for a flight delayed. We wait on hold listening to the voice recording urging us to "stay on the line your call is very important to us, your call will be handled in the order in which it was received."

What we are most impatient about is the not-knowing, the imposition on our time, the lack of power we have in these situations. But, at the end of waiting there can be a surprise.

When the master returns from the wedding he is so pleased with the servants that he stuns them by a reversal of roles. This master seats his servants at the big table and with a servant's apron on he serves and waits on the servants! Imagine this scene. Imagine the surprise, even the confusion among the servants seated at table. Imagine also the joy, the laughter, as all of them are caught up in the hilarity of the moment. The master has returned, sure, but he has returned in a good mood.

Don't miss the detail here. Jesus describes a benevolent Father in heaven.

So, this is the hope of us all who wait upon the fulfillment of God's kingdom. And, as we wait we just might

learn that the point of life is not learning how to be master of our fate but in learning how to be a servant to one another and to our God – waiting on one another.

As members of families we wait on each other. We wait for signs and emblems of affection from each other. We wait on personal growth to take place in a spouse or a child. We wait for change for the better in attitude and demeanor of one or the other. We wait hoping that our love for our children will incite new things for them and for family. We wait for signs of grace and prayer to enliven our families with the joy of God's kingdom. We wait for governments and societies to turn their attention to the needs of families.

Church is where Christian families can feel at home and find here the tools with which to emulate the household of God in their domestic situations. It is truly inspiring to see families move among us, families coming to church with their children, families recreating together, families eating together, families praying together. The church relishes the love between spouses and their children and looks to you families for that modeling we need to be the larger family of God.

Yet the times are indeed challenging. We bemoan the inability of young people to see value in marriage and family life, and in that order. Young people witness the stress and strains and tragedies of their families of origin and fear taking on marriage and family life as a vocation. Societal pressures, erratic economics and popular distractions make it none too easy to provide for children leaving today's young generation skeptical about this foundational institution of civilization – marriage and children.

Even for the church, without children being brought to the baptismal font, the same children enrolled in our schools, the same children from whom vocations to priesthood and religious life are gleaned, the same children from whom new families are spawned taking on the Christian lifestyle, the growth of the church is threatened. Who and what we are as church presumes the family.

In face of present crises, we naturally look to the church for the affirmations, the support and encouragement needed to integrate the vocation of marriage and family life within authentic discipleship in Christ. Here in this

house, at this Eucharistic table, our families are nourished for the tasks of Christian witness and the strengthening of the bonds of unity and love in our households.

Distributing Holy Communion at Mass, I am happy seeing, here and there, husbands and wives stand side by side to receive the Eucharist together. These couples believe the Holy Eucharist solidifies family unity. These couples believe that while material food replenishes the body and serves an important role in social life, the Holy Eucharist nourishes the soul and is the most excellent means to be united with God while acknowledging the Lord Christ as the inspiration of their marriages and head of their households.

The World Meeting of Families held recently in Philadelphia with the Holy Father and the synod of Bishops following, you notice were not so focused on naïve notions about family so much as they were focused on the burdens of family life, the exploration of how the church can best minister to some crushing social realities. These gatherings of the faithful and of our shepherds carried instead a theme of accompaniment, walking with all who are burdened by life's conundrums and political contradictions, while offering light, inspiration, companionship to families and advancing advocacy with the local powers who could well lift the burdens and proffer greater incentives to help families raise and educate and provide for their children and offset a cultural mindset that sees children as economic disadvantages instead of as gifts.

We speak of church family and parish family, alluding to the larger family of our membership in Jesus Christ. We fondly refer to one another as brother and sister, and we believe this. For our families are none other than preparation for God's family celebrated in the kingdom. In the meantime, all things here must be set in order to prepare for that kingdom reality.

Some people you notice don't like surprises of any kind: surprise gifts, surprise visits or surprise parties. They want life to be predictable. But, what would the world be without surprises? There would be no novelty. There would be no mercy. There would be no signs of affection. The possibility of surprise is what keeps life freshly open to new and better things.

Today's parable contains two surprises – one is the un-

expected return of the master from a wedding feast and the second is the master serving his obedient servants dinner when he returns home. We who are wide-awake to God's surprising arrivals will find that God serves our needs with the heart of a Father toward his household.

The most worthwhile and solemn kind of waiting is the kind that has as its support our love and devotion for one another. The most powerful kind of waiting is our vigil for the redemption of someone who means the world to us – like Monica praying for the conversion of her son, Augustine.

I am reminded of a story about a mother waiting for her daughter:

Following the divorce, the teenage daughter became increasingly rebellious. It culminated one night when the mother received a telephone call asking her to come and pick up her daughter from the police station. She had been arrested for shop-lifting.

Mother and daughter said nothing to each other all the way home that night; not until the next morning, in the kitchen, when mother broke the silence by handing her daughter a small gift-wrapped box with a decorative ribbon tied to it. The daughter took it and quipped back to her mother, "Cute, mom, what's this for?" "Open it ... read the card," the mother insisted.

Inside the box was found a rock. The daughter opened the envelope first with a frown on her face and took to reading the card. By this time tears started to trickle

down her face. On the card the mother had written the following:

"This rock could be a million years old, I have no way of knowing. But that's how long it will take before I give up on you." Then, mother and daughter embraced.

It was a merciful gesture from mother to daughter for any number of infractions and heartaches, in this true story. It's the stuff of families. Similarly, we are fortunate to have a God who waits on us, who never gives up on us; a God whose love is endless and whose forgiveness is eternal; a God who always seeks us out and offers new beginnings, second chances and clean slates. We spend our whole lives trying to digest this God of patience and understanding, a God who waits on us to arrive!

God loves us with the perseverance of a loving mother or loving father, loving us completely and unquestionably without limit or condition. The love of God is there for us even in our darkest days when our despair and feeling of alienation from God and others is most acute; or when we are angriest at God and the things of God. All God asks of us in return is to try and love and be patient with one another, and forgive one another as God loves and forgives and waits on us.

We are awaiting the return of the Master who is already a long time away.

Thank you for your witness of faithful marital love and family life.

2016 Washington DC – Shrine of the Immaculate Conception
Bishop Joseph N. Perry



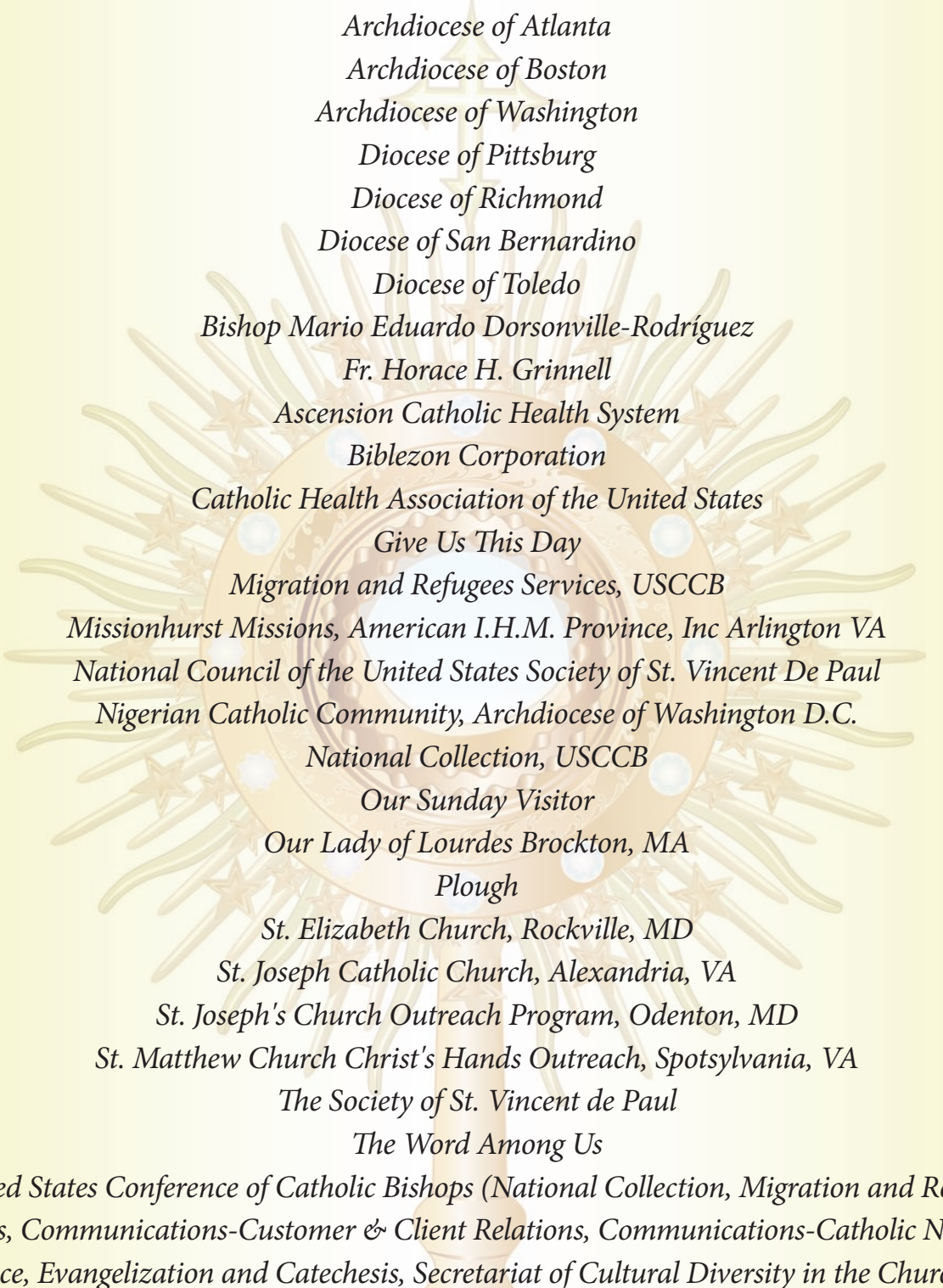
Acknowledgments

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We would like to express our sincere thanks to the following communities and individuals who contributed their time and talents:

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PARTICIPANTS' EVALUATION/FEEDBACK REPORT

Introduction:

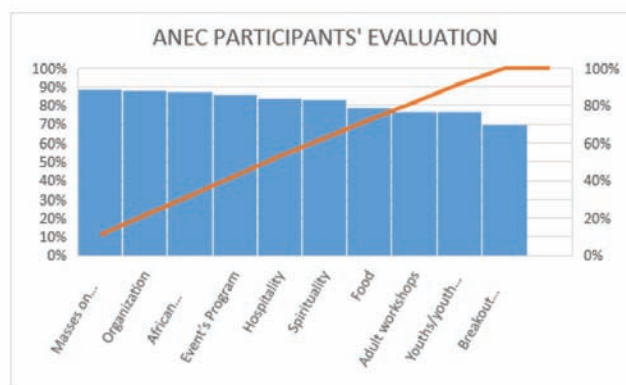
On August 3-7, 2016, once again, African Catholics gathered for the Third National Eucharistic Congress in Washington DC. The theme for this third encounter is: "Responding to the New Evangelization: The African Catholic Family is a Gift to the Church in America". The Third Eucharistic Congress was a time of praise, fellowship, encounter, enlightenment, inspiration and enrichment. It was a time to listen, learn and share with each other. The Congress was a great opportunity for Africans to come together for mutual support, social renewal and for spiritual enrichment in the African way of worship. The time included liturgies; Eucharistic adoration; social; workshops for adults, young adults, and youths; breakout and dialogue sessions; an essay competition award; praise and worship session; prayers, an African celebration. The speakers conveyed to participants a message of faith, hope and a prayer. The homilies focused on empowering and encouraging new migrants from Africa to recognize that they are a gift to themselves and to the Church and to participate fully in the life of the Church. The presentation given on and the Eucharistic celebration according to Zairean Liturgical Rite by Cardinal Laurent Musengwuo Pasinya, the Archbishop of Kinshasa, was very informative and added a new dimension and flavor to the entire Eucharistic Congress.

This evaluation/feedback and report summarizes the participants' assessment of the Eucharistic Congress. On a scale of 1 – 5, where 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = very good and 5 = Excellent. The forms were completed by forty eight participants.

Overall Rating:

The feedback reveals that the participants rated the Event's Program by 86%; Hospitality by 84%; Adult workshops by 77%; Breakout session by 70%; Youths/youth adult workshop by 77%; Masses on Friday/Saturday/Sunday by 89%; Spirituality by 83%; Organization by 88%; Food by 79%; African celebration by 87%. This shows that the respondents were satisfied. Many of the respondents stated that it was a joy to attend the Congress, insights and knowledge were gained. The participants were very satisfied with the Congress. Overall, respondents felt

that the Congress were excellent with 88% rating but there is need for improvement. It is important to note that collaboration, unity, overcoming fear, and working together made the Congress very successful.



Participants' Feedback:

- The Congress was well attended
- There were opportunities to network
- Presentations were informative and enriching
- The Congress was motivating/encouraging to help participants live their Catholic faith.
- The participants were happy that all Africans worked together to portray the unity of African Continent
- The collaborative initiative and effort between African Clergy, Religious and the Laity added great value to the Congress
- Rosary Procession was excellent, spirit-filled and very inspiring
- Participants emphasized the importance of Africans coming together through the Eucharistic Congress, to share in the vitality and richness of African Heritage, to strengthen and foster African unity and participation in the Church here in the USA
- There is need to keep the momentum going by participation in periodic tele conferences, by encouraging zonal African celebrations, by maintaining the collaborative relationship between the African Clergy, Religious and the

Laity, different chapters etc, before the next five years until the next Congress scheduled in August, 2021.

- People were delighted in the performance of the combined choir, which added African beauty to the entire celebration.

Suggestions from the participants include:

- Need for dialog with the Bishops to encourage Ethnic Ministries in the Dioceses
- Need more time for the breakouts/group dialogue
- Need to improve on the logistic for example, transportation, accommodations. Having food service on site, would have helped
- There need to update website to enhance wider publicity and prompt registration

- Encourage greater participation and involvement of youths and young adults as our future leaders in the planning of the Congress.

The African presence in the Church in the United States is a great blessing, bringing lively faith and cultural gifts that enrich the Christian life. Over 700 African Catholics, clergy, religious, lay faithful from several States throughout the United States, Canada and Africa participated in the Congress, while Over 1,500 participated in the Eucharistic celebration. It was a time of prayers, enrichment, and fellowship. We look forward to the next Eucharistic Congress with great excitement and hope. God bless African Catholics. May the Lord give us the grace to live the mystery of the Eucharist ever more deeply, in such a way that the world may be renewed in Christ's love. The goal was achieved and the mission accomplished even though the challenge of the New Evangelization continues.

**For more information on the Third African National Eucharistic Congress, (ANEC)
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