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Chux Cornelius Okochi

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The Rhetoric of Collaborative Ministry:

A Perspective on Ministry Based on Augustine's Rhetorical Theory

with Particular Reference to Abakaliki Diocese

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the

Department of Communication and Rhetorical Studies

McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In Partial fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By Chux Cornelius Okochi

July 21, 2006

ABSTRACT

The concern of the Catholic Church in this century and the immediate past centuries has been how the faithful will effectively internalize and role-play the Gospel in their life. The implication of this concern for the Catholic Church is rooted in the inter-cultural and counter-cultural encounter between Christianity and any of the cultures in question, and at this point the African Culture in Abakaliki diocese. To negotiate a complexity of this magnitude, one cannot ignore its rhetorical ripples around the individual, culture, Church family and the society at large.

The Christian culture must be translated to the language the people being evangelized must understand. The Gospel will have to take an incarnate nature among the people in order for them to role-play it in their life. Therefore, the significance of Augustine's rhetorical theory in addressing a complexity of this kind is invaluable as a theoretical basis to launch a process of action. Augustine strongly upholds the role of *caritas* (love) which demands communication and eventually becomes the source whereby we can overcome ambiguities in situations that are rhetorical in nature. Within the African context such ambiguities are resonate in the development of Catholic Christian ministry in a way that will more aggressively assimilate and adapt to the African (Abakaliki diocesan) society.

It must be acknowledged that the African society is already family and community oriented, where the role of the individual is paramount. These existing roles are forms of service to the community and may qualify for a ministry if interpreted in religious terms. Therefore how can collaborative ministry allow the birth of new ministries while addressing the needs of the Catholic Christian communities in Africa?

The significance of collaborative ministry as recommended by the fathers during African Synod for the African Catholic Church, derives from the biblical sense of ministry indicative of Christ's mandate to his followers, to go out to the whole world and proclaim the gospel (*Holy Bible*, Mk 16: 15); while assuring them "I am with you always, until the close of the age" (*Holy Bible*, Mt 28: 20). There is no exclusion in ministry.

PREFACE

“With the sowing of the Gospel seed, they triggered off also general human development through education and training crafts, in a good network of schools they established, through social services and medical care in hospitals and mobile clinics” (Okoro 13). The seed sown by the missionaries has germinated but it is suppose to grow and bear more fruits. The responsibility of the Catholic Christians of this century is to further this human development by witnessing to the Gospel and engineering the Word of God to the language meaningful to the society being evangelized. My life as a Catholic has been geared towards making the Word more meaningful wherever I find myself. It punctuated my studies, even as a graduate student.

As a student in the Emmaus School of Evangelization at Isele-Uku diocese in 1990, I decided that I will use any available tool to engineer the Word of God to an available audience and even create an audience within the context of the available toolbox. The opportunity of gathering more tools came during my masters program in theology in Duquesne University, Pittsburgh PA. The courses in ministry helped open my horizon towards the concept of collaboration and I have always wondered how it could be applied in Abakaliki diocese. Eventually, with the extraordinary direction and supervision of Dr. Richard H. Thames, I was able to translate collaborative ministry into rhetorical terms with concrete application within the diocese of Abakaliki through this dissertation. I am deeply indebted and grateful to all the people and institutions that made this research possible.

First and foremost, I am thankful to God for the strength and determination that enabled me to complete this work. I am grateful to Dr. Richard H. Thames, my

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CHAPTER ONE

THE RHETORIC OF COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY:

A PERSPECTIVE ON MINISTRY BASED ON

AUGUSTINE'S RHETORICAL THEORY

WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO ABAKALIKI DIOCESE

INTRODUCTION

The necessity for collaborative ministry in the church, most especially, within the African context has been a recurrent issue in the ecclesiastical circle. The clarion call to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth is becoming more urgent in our society today as the Church tries to make this message culturally homogeneous in the African milieu. The great mandate of Christ to his followers is to go out to the whole world and proclaim the gospel (*Holy Bible*, Mk 16: 15). As a mandate addressed to every Christian, Jesus promises “I am with you always, until the close of the age” (*Holy Bible*, Mt 28: 20). This promise by Jesus implies that there is no exclusion in ministry. The “I am with you always” of Jesus pledges His undying collaboration with humanity in order to achieve the ultimate goal of the gospel. Therefore, the Church states during the Second Vatican Council in the *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* that at a time when new questions are being put and when grave errors aiming at undermining religion, the moral order and human society itself are insidious, the Council earnestly exhorts the laity to take a more active part, each according to his talents and knowledge and in fidelity to the mind of the

Church, in the explanation and defense of Christian principles and in the correct application of them to the problems of our times (Vatican Council, “Apostolicam” n6).

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was an effort to launch a new wave of evangelization that incorporates the gifts of the entire Church, the “Body of Christ or the People of God.” John Paul II in “Christifideles Laici” (1988) outlines the role of the laity in the work of evangelization. The African Synod (1994) took the call of the Vatican II Council and those of John Paul II further to a concrete point in the African continent and to the role of the African in evangelization. In a quest to fulfill this responsibility, the Diocese of Abakaliki, during its Catholic Centenary celebration within the whole Onitsha ecclesiastical province (1885–1985) and the Silver Jubilee celebration (1973–1998) tried to demonstrate and re-echo the importance of collaborative ministry in order to yield a fruitful harvest within the kingdom of God here on earth, the Church.

A collaborative ministry that is culturally homogeneous cannot but be an effective rhetorical tool in mobilizing all Christ’s faithful in Africa toward the mission of the Church in our society. In other words, we are dealing with a ministry that will be first and foremost Christian and yet indigenous. We ought to acknowledge that everything is subordinate to Christ because through him (the Word) God created everything in heaven and on earth, the seen and unseen things (*Holy Bible*, Col. 1: 15-23; Philippians 2: 5-11). The content of Christianity must be effectively integrated into the ministry while assuming the cultural traits and methods of the African society. This integration is necessary in order to assume a collaborative ministry that will be all embracing and yet specific to the needs of the people. It would clearly answer the call made by John Paul II to the Church in Africa to respond to the ‘signs of the time’ in order to renew the

Christian communities within their continent (John Paul, "Ecclesia" n6). The fathers of the Africa Synod noted that the thirst for God is deeply felt by the peoples of Africa, and therefore, in order not to disappoint them, the members of the Church must first of all deepen their faith. The fathers further state that

Indeed, precisely because she evangelizes, the Church must begin by being evangelized herself. She needs to meet the challenges raised by this theme of the Church which is evangelized by constant conversion and renewal, in order to evangelize the world with credibility ("Ecclesia" n47).

The evangelization of the world with credibility demands that certain cultural idiosyncrasies should not be ignored, if meaning is to be conveyed in a collaborative manner. Abakaliki and its environs are culturally rich and are very attached to these cultures because meaning and life is totally embedded within the community of persons.

The Catholic Church in Africa must overcome the mistakes of the early missionaries and involve the laity in the renewal of the Church within its continent. Faith-filled laypersons as individuals in society (being part of the universe) have a role in the interpretation of the signs of the time. According to Murphy, Augustine "believes that each man is an individual learner, placed in the universe by a God who has given him, as an individual, the means by which he may learn about the universe, and therefore about God, and therefore about the role in the universe which God intends him to play" (Murphy 287). In other words, our learning enables us to play a role in the universe (natural signs), focusing on the socio-cultural environment in which we find ourselves (conventional signs). To undertake role-play (ministry) presupposes discerning God's

plan, and “since all men learn whatever it is that God wishes them to learn in the universe through signs both natural and conventional, man’s use of his own man-made conventional signs is of the utmost importance to Augustine. The proper use of conventional signs can prompt a fellow man to find his way to God, or can sidetrack him into error and disbelief and ultimately into sin, which is leading him away from God” (Murphy 290). It is the responsibility of the Church in Africa to renew the message of the gospel within its socio-cultural environment. The church can do it effectively by understanding and using the conventional signs within its environment in order to correctly communicate the message of the gospel. Collaborative ministry, I will argue here, must be conceptualized and drawn along the lines of the rhetorical theory of Augustine. Augustine has been at the thin-line between philosophy and theology, and most recently, a catalyst for most linguistic and semiotic scholars like Ferdinand de Saussure, Steven Mailloux, and Jacques Derrida.

According to James J. Murphy, “Augustine argues that human beings need to know the nature of signs in order to understand the language of the Bible, and then need to understand rhetoric in order to explain the Christian message - i.e. teach it- to others. Thus his fourth book is devoted to extolling the value of rhetoric. Since every Christian is obligated to spread Christ’s message (e.g. *Holy Bible*, Matthew 18: 20), rhetoric becomes an obligation for every Christian” (Murphy et al., *Synoptic* 210).

In this study I will be responding to the question of how can Christians internalize the gospel message in order to play their role in the community of believers and society at large? In other words, how can an African Christian integrate the gospel message and make it personal? The metaphors “to internalize” and “playing a role” are rhetorical

tropes that permeate this research. In proposing a collaborative ministry as a rhetorical construct, the significance of the African culture will be acknowledged without compromising Christian ideals.

Collaborative ministry will address both the internalizing of the gospel and the taking of responsibility that comes with it in the community. I will use this opportunity to show that collaborative ministry is a rhetorically powerful process of getting Christians to take the call to evangelize very seriously and to fulfill the ultimate demand of the gospel, especially in the Diocese of Abakaliki in Eastern Nigeria. We must note that the idea of ministry or mission has been an integral part of the history of salvation as evident in the Scriptures.

Even though some scholars insist that the Old Testament has little, if anything, to say about mission, the more general understanding is that mission is an important Old Testament concept. Its foundation lies in the understanding that the transcendent God is also the God who is involved in history. He is the God who acts, always playing a role in the history of humanity. The record of His involvement in history indicates that His work is both revelatory and redemptive. Just as people know who God is by what He has done, believers are identified by what they are doing or have done. Since the fall of humanity (*Holy Bible*, Gen. 3), God's primary activity has been redemptive, as the confessions in the Old Testament reveal (see *Holy Bible*, Deut. 6:20-24; 26:5-9; Jos. 24:2-15). This redeeming activity of God is missionary because God sends His messengers to the house of Israel and His prophets as His spokesmen to all nations.

Clearly, God's missionary concern is inclusive, not exclusive. As indicated in the listing of the nations in the *Holy Bible*, Genesis 10, God's interest has always been

available to all people, not just to the people of Israel. When God called Abraham and his descendants, they were chosen, not to be exclusive vessels, but rather to be a means of blessing to “all families of the earth” (*Holy Bible*, Gen. 12:1-3: 18:16-19; 22:9-19; 26:1-5; Gen. 28:10-14). As time went on, God made it clear to the people of Israel that they had been elected as his chosen people (*Holy Bible*, Ex. 19:3-6). They became in turn the recipient and guardian of God's special revelation (*Holy Bible*, Heb. 1:1-3) and the channel through which the Redeemer would enter the stream of human history (*Holy Bible*, Isa. 49:1-10) as an incarnate Son of God. Still, the election was not an end in itself. God called the people of Israel to be holy, separate, or distinct from other nations, but they were also to be priests to them, by living among them and leading them to God as their primary purpose of existence.

During his public ministry and teachings, Jesus made it clear that His mission was to continue after He ascended into heaven. We find in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles an account of His mandate to His followers, telling them to go to the entire world, make disciples, baptize them, and preach the gospel (*Holy Bible*, Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21-22; Acts 1:8). Jesus wanted the church to reach out beyond itself. This commission made a dramatic change in the emphasis of mission. Instead of looking to foreigners to come to Jerusalem, as did the Old Testament, the church's mission is to go into the entire world and not to wait for the world to come to it. Not just selected prophets like Jonah but all the believers were to go and tell others what they had seen.

It is clear that the scope of the Church's mission is inclusive. The Church is to cross all barriers--to reach out to all ethnic groups, clans, tribes, social classes, and

cultures, including Africa. The message of salvation is to be shared with all people everywhere. The extent of this wonderful invitation to share the Good News of salvation is so extensive and encompassing that John Paul II tells us:

The universality of salvation means that it is granted not only to those who explicitly believe in Christ and have entered the Church. Since salvation is offered to all, it must be made concretely available to all. But it is clear that today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept the gospel revelation or to enter the Church. The social and cultural conditions in which they live do not permit this, and frequently they have been brought up in other religious traditions. For such people salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his Sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It enables each person to attain salvation through his or her free cooperation (“Redemptoris” n10).

The respect accorded the non-Christian religion does not exempt the Church in Africa from proclaiming the message of salvation and that is why the African Synod acknowledged and recognized its urgency to the millions of people in Africa who are not yet evangelized. The Catholic Church certainly respects and esteems the non-Christian religions professed by very many Africans because these religions are the living expression of the soul of vast groups of people. However, it must be noted that neither

respect and esteem for these religions nor the complexity of the questions raised is an invitation to the Church to withhold from them the proclamation of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, the Church holds and believes that these multitudes have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ (cf. *Holy Bible*, Eph. 3: 8); riches in which we believe that the whole humanity can find, in unsuspected fullness, everything that it is gropingly searching for concerning God, man and his destiny, life and death, and truth (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n47). To facilitate the sharing, and effectively execute the missionary command of Jesus, the new disciples are to be baptized and taught. The purpose of the teaching is to do more than to share information. It is to provide nourishment in the faith as well. The Great Commissioning from Jesus is a mandate, which the Church is expected to obey. However, the Church does not have to do the job alone because He has promised that He will be with the Church until “the end of the world.” Armed with this assurance, the Church has been obedient, for the gospel was presented first in Jerusalem (*Holy Bible*, Acts 1-8), then in Samaria (*Holy Bible*, Acts 8-12) and finally to the entire world (*Holy Bible*, Acts 13-28).

Jesus' presence among us is felt through the Holy Spirit. In fact, the disciples were not to go out into the world until the Holy Spirit had come upon them (*Holy Bible*, Acts 1:8). This injunction from Jesus is the only time in the Bible that a Church is told not to be involved in mission. The reasons are clear. The Holy Spirit empowers the Church. He also convicts and converts sinners (*Holy Bible*, Acts 5:14; 11:21,24; 18:8), performs mighty works of grace in believers (*Holy Bible*, Acts 4:8-10), disciplines the Church (*Holy Bible*, Acts 5:13-14), sends forth workers (*Holy Bible*, Acts 8:26; 13:1-3), presides over the missionary council (*Holy Bible*, Acts 15), restrains and contains

workers (*Holy Bible*, Acts 16:6-10), and exercises supreme ecclesiastical authority (*Holy Bible*, Acts 20:28).

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Church preached Jesus (*Holy Bible*, Acts 2; 8:35; 10:36-44; 1 Cor. 2:1-2). The Church's mission to the world was strengthened through its intimate fellowship and unity (*Holy Bible*, Acts 2:44). Every effort was made to maintain this characteristic (*Holy Bible*, Acts 6:1-7; 15). The missionaries Jesus sent out were instructed to go only to the house of Israel, to preach and to meet every human need. They were not to be overly concerned about their physical or material needs, nor were they to spend an undue amount of time with those who willfully rejected their message (*Holy Bible*, Matt. 10:1-15). After the resurrection, missionaries were arrested (*Holy Bible*, Acts 4 and 5), suffered under torture (*Holy Bible*, 2 Cor. 4:7-10), and some of them were killed (*Holy Bible*, Acts 7).

The apostle Paul was the most outstanding of these missionaries. God had called him to be a missionary to the Gentiles (*Holy Bible*, Acts 26:16-18; Rom. 1:5; Eph. 3:1); his commission was a mandate by the Church of Antioch (*Holy Bible*, Acts 13:1-3). The Holy Spirit led him in his ministry (*Holy Bible*, Acts 16:6-10). He preached Jesus (*Holy Bible*, 1 Cor. 2:1-2), met people on their own level (*Holy Bible*, Acts 17), established autonomous, indigenous churches (*Holy Bible*, Acts 14:23), and worked with others--often training them to do the works of the ministry (*Holy Bible*, Acts 16:1-3). Paul further refused to be dependent for his own livelihood on the communities that he established. Yet he was grateful when churches responded to his needs (*Holy Bible*, Phil. 4:14-18). Significantly, he identified with those with whom he worked (*Holy Bible*, 1 Cor. 9:19-23). Mission was the heartbeat of the New Testament churches.

This enormous involvement in the mission of the gospel is tantamount to the affirmation of faith and consists of taking responsibility for spreading the Good News of salvation. The same spirit is what is expected of the Church today in our contemporary society. We are to allow the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus to direct the proclamation of our faith.

EVANGELIZATION AS A VOCATION

The signs of the times indicate that partial evangelization has been identified as a problem within the Catholic Church in Africa. Pope John Paul II made it clear that the reason it seemed appropriate to convoke the African Synod was to promote “an organic pastoral solidarity throughout Africa and the adjacent Islands” (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n16). He further states that the (Catholic) Church in Africa can only move forward by strengthening communion among her members, beginning with her pastors (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n17). Prior to this strong invitation, Paul VI had made an appeal that borders on emulating “the fervor of the greatest preachers and evangelizers, whose lives were devoted to the apostolate...they have known how to overcome many obstacles to evangelization” (Paul VI, “Evangelii” n80). The message of the gospel has no deep roots in the life of the African Catholic Christian and therefore, militates against translating the word of God into the personal lives by the believer and against a deep involvement in evangelization. Most Catholics often view evangelization as an inclination towards Protestantism, but the changing world scene and the deterioration of Western civilization and the weak condition of the Church in most parts of the world makes its rebirth and re-interpretation imperative.

The great mandate of Christ to his followers is to ‘go out to the whole world and proclaim the gospel’ (*Holy Bible*, Mk 16: 15). The Church is essentially missionary and ministry-oriented; we cannot think of a Church without evangelization. And it is above all this mission of evangelization that the Church is called upon to pursue. The Christian community is never closed in upon itself. The intimate life of this community – the life of listening to the Word (of God) and the Apostles’ teaching, charity lived in a fraternal way, the sharing of bread – this intimate life acquires its full meaning only when it becomes a witness, when it evokes admiration and conversion, and when it becomes the preaching and proclamation of the ‘Good News.’ It is the whole Church that receives the mission to evangelize; the work of each individual member is important for the whole (Paul VI, “Evangelii” n15).

INCLUSIVE MINISTRY: By mandating every Christian and promising to be with them always, until the close of the age (*Holy Bible*, Mt 28: 20) Jesus implies there is no exclusion in ministry. No wonder during Jesus’ public ministry tax collectors (*Holy Bible*, Mt 9: 9-13; 10: 3), fishermen (*Holy Bible*, Mt 4: 18-22; Mk 1: 16-20; Luke 5: 1-11; John 1: 40-42) were among those called, women ministered to his needs (*Holy Bible*, Luke 8: 2) and even after the resurrection he called a Rabbi/Pharisee into the ministry (*Holy Bible*, 1Cor 9: 1-18; 1Cor 15: 9; Gal 1: 13; Phil 3: 6). Following the footsteps of Jesus, the early Christian communities called many of its members into the ministry according to the diversity of services arising from their needs (*Holy Bible*, 1Cor 12: 5; Rom 12: 7).

In our century a Catholic ministry should be built to reflect such collaboration between the laity cum laity, the ordained ministers cum ordained ministers and the laity

cum ordained ministers, in terms of the needs of the community. Credibility and relevancy is of utmost importance, the Catholic Church in Africa must delineate as clearly as possible what it is and what it must fully carry out, in order that its message reflect these characteristics (John Paul II, "Ecclesia" n21). There is also a constant call for solidarity in evangelization, bearing in mind that the urgent call to spread the good news is one incumbent on the entire Church by virtue of their baptism. So, when John Paul II says that from a distant day the call of the Lord Jesus, "You too go into my vineyard" never fails to resound in the course of history: it is addressed to every person who comes into this world, collaboration is implicated therein (John Paul II, "Christifideles" n2). In other words, everybody must be ready to work and must be assigned a responsibility in the vineyard. The call being addressed to every person is symbolic of God's openness to accept the collaboration of the human person with him. With such invitation so expressly given by the originator of the message, more so the reason recipients should coordinate their individual response in order to address the pressing needs of the world today. For example, in the Catholic diocese of Abakaliki, these needs are currently being met due to the active training program of catechists. A Catechists' Training Center was opened in the diocese in 1996 to meet the need for trained personnel in the parishes. There is a regular program of instruction each year for the diocesan catechists to update their knowledge and discuss other pastoral problems while working towards some common approach. The urge to start a formation for catechists and other lay workers in the Diocese of Abakaliki was in answer to the questions from the African Synod:

Has the Church in Africa sufficiently formed the lay faithful, enabling them to assume competently their civic responsibilities and to consider socio-political problems in the light of the Gospel and of faith in God? (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n54).

John Paul II went on to state that he has consequently called for thorough formation of the lay faithful, a formation that will help them to lead a fully integrated life. Faith, hope and charity must influence the actions of the true follower of Christ in every activity, situation and responsibility (“Ecclesia” n54).

In addressing the pressing needs more concretely, the Catholic Church in Africa decided to look into itself to sort out the hindering factors toward achieving the required evangelization. According to John Paul II, “the Third Ordinary General Assembly (1974), on evangelization in the modern world, made possible a special study of the problems of evangelization in Africa. It was then that the bishops of the Continent present at the Synod issued an important message entitled Promoting Evangelization in Co-Responsibility” (John Paul II, “Ecclesia” n4). This call by the Catholic bishops of the African continent is further reflected in recent discussions and reflections of the Church Synods. In “Evangelii Nuntiandi” (December 8, 1975), Paul VI made it clear that as an evangelizer, the Church needs to be evangelized herself. As a community of believers, community of hope lived and communicated, community of brotherly love; she needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hoping, to the new commandment of love. But as a ‘People of God’ immersed in the world, and often tempted by idols, she always needs to hear the proclamation of the ‘mighty works of

God' which converted her to the Lord, to be called together afresh by him and reunited (Paul VI, "Evangelii" n15).

We cannot ignore the fact of 1987 Synod on the laity resurrecting such issues as the ministries and Church services entrusted at present and in the future to the lay faithful; the growth and spread of new "movements" alongside other group forms of lay involvement; and the place and role of women both in the Church and in society, as pointed out by John Paul II ("Christifideles" n2). It will be comprehensible considering these developments that in convoking the African Synod, John Paul called it an "initiative of great importance for the Church" and adhered to the petitions often expressed for some time by the African Bishops, priests, theologians and representatives of the laity, so as to promote an organic pastoral solidarity within the entire African territory and nearby Islands (John Paul, "Ecclesia" n5).

Inasmuch as the substance of the gospel is vital to proper evangelization and its assimilation, the collaborative effort that I am proposing for the Catholic Church in Africa to achieve desired results is inevitable to harness the rich symbols of the gospel. I will demonstrate that collaborative ministry is consistent with the practice of the early church, the teachings of Vatican II and the statements of John Paul II. I intend to ground my arguments in the theology of Augustine, who has provided the resources used by the Catholic Church's documents. Therefore, I will argue that rhetorically, collaborative ministry is an invitation to contemporary priests to consider inviting their parishioners into lay leadership and apostleship equipping them for service within their own unique socio-cultural environment; fully conscious of the need for orthodoxy within the Catholic tradition.

Collaborative ministry as a rhetorical tool will continually construct and reconstruct, what Jeffrey Walker has described as “the larger sphere of discourse within which specific acts of legislation and jurisprudence (decrees and judgments) have occurred and will occur. It not only leads to the production of laws and institutions through the cultivation of communal assent, and thence to the production of specific judgments in specific forums which enact and enforce the laws, but it also continues to cultivate the shared agreements on which the laws depend, as well as to instigate and shape the processes through which existing laws, policies, and civil institutions will be altered. As such rhetoric is the ‘guide’ and ‘teacher’ of legislation and jurisprudence and is necessarily ‘joined’ with them from the beginning of civil society but is not identical with them or limited to their sphere. It is, rather, their condition of possibility” (Walker, 112).

Members of the workshop No. 1 outlined many of the problems and difficulties of presenting the message of the gospel in the world today. Among the many issues that were raised: 1) the difficulty of communication between generations, between social and professional groups, and different cultural and linguistic environments and a need for a language flexible enough to be adapted to each of this multiplicity of situations. 2) The mistake of presenting the message – especially in the countries of the Third World – through the cultural forms and categories of the West. Being unable to adapt, or having difficulty in adapting to such conditions, these peoples tend to identify Christianity with what is Western or foreign. On the other hand, excessive nationalism sometimes leads to rejection of Christianity, which it considers essentially bound up with foreign cultures (“The Laity” 37-38).

So, when John Paul II says that the church needs greater re-launching of evangelization in the present age in a variety of ways, rhetoric is implicated, because “the moment has come to commit all of the Catholic Church’s energies to a new evangelization and the mission ‘*ad gentes*.’ No believer in Christ, no institution of the Catholic Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples (“Redemptoris” n3). This call to a new evangelization is a radical change in emphasis on evangelization and therefore, rhetorically in tune with the signs of the time.

In “Lumen Gentium” n12, it is strongly affirmed that the Holy Spirit makes holy the People, leads them and enriches them with his virtues, while ‘allotting his gifts according as he wills and distributing special graces among the faithful of every rank so that they can undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church.’ The invitation to evangelize is addressed to the people of God as indicated in the documents of the Church and set down by Pope John Paul II when he challenged the Church to renew her missionary commitment (“Redemptoris” n2); and urgently called the Catholic Church in Africa to experience ‘the sign of the times, an acceptable time, a day of salvation’ that must be seized in order to pursue the renewal and building up of the Christian community in Africa and its Islands (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n6). This call is also in adherence to the call made by Pope Paul VI when he said, “we wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize...” (“Evangelii” n14). There is an implication ensuing from the fact that a community without borders is being

created or enhanced within an existent African traditional society by complying with this mandate. The essence of the 1994 African Synod is to enhance and have an effect on the existence of this emerging community.

AFRICAN SYNOD AND CHURCH RENEWAL: In every age the Catholic Church has always sought possible ways to advance the course of the gospel in the world through renewal movements and special sessions among and with the people of God. Thus, we do acknowledge that the people of God of every rank, acting together in good faith can undertake various tasks towards the renewal of the Catholic Church. For one can say that the call for an African Synod by Pope John Paul II in January 1989 bore testimony to the fulfillment of this gospel urgency. The Special Assembly of the Synod of bishops had the role of assisting and advising the Pope, in other words, acting as a Consultative Body (Canon 343). In effect, this Canon tells us that the Bishops are playing the role assigned to them by virtue of their ministry to the flock of Christ. “According to the recommendation of the Second Vatican Council, Bishops dedicated to carrying out ‘their Apostolic office as witnesses of Christ before all people are to exercise personally, in a spirit of trusting cooperation with the presbyterate and other pastoral workers, an irreplaceable service of unity in charity, carefully fulfilling their responsibilities of teaching, sanctifying and governing’” (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n98).

In the same vein, the data to be used by the bishops in their deliberation will be drawn up from the response of the members of the Catholic Church at different levels, forming a kind of contribution to the decision process of the community. To this effect John Paul II says, “I must now add that the response of the African peoples to my appeal to them to share in the preparation of the Synod was truly admirable” (“Ecclesia” n26),

because “speaking earlier to the members of the Council of the General Secretariat on 23 June 1989, he laid special emphasis on the involvement of the whole people of God, at all levels and especially in Africa, in the preparations for the Special Assembly” (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n23). It can be seen that the entire people of God played a significant role in the outcome of the synod. The Synod is already a public discourse owned and is controlled by the public working according to their gifts given in accordance with their ranks by the Holy Spirit.

SYNOD AS PUBLIC DISCOURSE: Therefore, it should be noted that the voice of the laity is not ruled out in the special gift of ministry because they are also invited to share in this extraordinary mission of Christ (priest, prophet-teacher, king). The early missionaries in Africa, paid less attention to this issue, that is, involving the laity in their mission, and sometimes their attitude to the catechists resulted in controversy. The changing missionary attitudes toward Africans were discernible in the 1890s affecting the belief that the most suitable evangelists of Africans are Africans (Kalu 41). The idea that this gift had to be shared in a spirit of communion (*koinonia*) in order to resonate its source and increase the spirit within the Catholic Church family was ignored by the missionaries.

Thus, John Paul II said, “precisely because it derives from Church communion, the sharing of the lay faithful in the threefold mission of Christ requires that it be lived and realized in communion and for the increase of communion itself. St. Augustine writes: ‘As we call everyone {Christians} in virtue of a mystical anointing, so we call everyone priests because all are members of only one priesthood’” (“Christifideles” n14). They may not necessarily use their gift in the same capacity as the Pope and the bishops,

but as it is implied in this document, being members of the Catholic Church they are endowed with the same mission of Christ. However, in making reference to some Catholic Church documents Anthony Bellagamba states “the church is the sacrament of union with God (Vatican Council, “Dei” 61-64). The church is koinonia, and gathers people of all races, nations, and tribes to help them live in unity. The church is and makes communion (Vatican Council, “Lumen” n1): is communion of all gifts, of all peoples, of all services, of all vocations, of all local communities which incorporate the fullness of its being, and yet need to be linked with one another, and with the sign and center of communion, the pope, to be fully church (Vatican Council, “Lumen” 14-16; “Gaudium” 22; Paul VI, “Evangelii” 61-62)” (Bellagamba 18). From all indications, the laity is being offered a beautiful opportunity to share in the evangelizing mission of Christ by exercising their function fully in the Catholic Church. This mission is tied to the effective administration of the Catholic Church and evangelization, and the laity sharing in the universal priesthood of the faithful, therefore, is qualified to share in the administration and mission of the Catholic Church to evangelize. For instance, the Catholic Church in Abakaliki is still grappling with this aspect of the evangelization of its people. Just before the year 2000, the Catholic Church launched a program called “Evangelization 2000” which necessitated the opening many schools of evangelization where the laity and the clergy participated in an active training program of evangelization. These schools ceased to exist after the year 2000 and therefore, needs to be resurrected in a bid to continue the training of evangelizers within the diocese of Abakaliki and Africa as a whole. The school gave the diocese the opportunity to train evangelizers, who in turn trained others. The Catholic diocese of Abakaliki will need to

open this school in all of its parishes, in order to engage both laity and the clergy in activities geared towards ongoing evangelization in the diocese.

The ongoing education advocated through the schools of evangelization is in response to the call for continued proclamation of the Gospel as directed or instructed in the "Apostolicam Actuositatem" of Vatican II, demanding a training for lay people that is many-sided and complete if the apostolate is to attain full efficacy. This training for the apostolate is required not only by the continuous spiritual and doctrinal progress of the layman himself, but also by the variety of circumstances, persons and duties to which he should adapt his activity. This education to the apostolate must rest on those foundations, which the Vatican Council II has in other places set down and expounded. It is not a few types of apostolate that require, besides the education common to all Christians, a specific and individual training, by reason of the diversity of persons (culture) and circumstances or history ("Apostolicam" n28).

As in the preparation of the African Synod, some of the laity has often been called upon in some cases, though not all, to play a part in the decision process. They have in most instances used the special gifts conferred on them through the power of the Holy Spirit in expanding the course of the gospel through service and active evangelization. It becomes expedient to seek a deeper insight from the Augustine's rhetorical theory exposing the elements that 'can help us learn the various modes or varieties of ways from which the loving expositor can choose the particular signs he will lay before the learner in order to "prompt" him (Murphy 291).

PRIMARY QUALIFICATION FOR MINISTRY: They are also fully endowed with the gift of the Holy Spirit as Catholic Christians because God has given it to the Catholic

Church. Does the possession of the Holy Spirit create a good and generous atmosphere to the assurance of proper utilization of the medium to achieve the required message? Augustine seems to point to the fact that we are delving in the area of medium of communication only and ignoring the “message” per se, when we raise questions of this sort. In other words, we must not neglect the message because meaning is a union of medium and message, form and content, thereby leading to the construction of an audience (cf. chapter five). In that sense, there are enormous possibilities available for exploration because, as Murphy says, “God controls the message and the rhetorician chooses the medium” (Murphy 291). If it is within the confines of the rhetorician to choose the medium, bearing in mind the conventionality of signs, then their socio-cultural environment cannot be overlooked within the context of communicating the message.

Hence, the call made by John Paul II to the Catholic Church in Africa to respond to the “signs of the time” in order to renew the Christian communities within their continent (“Ecclesia” n6). The Catholic Church in Africa must overcome the mistakes of the early missionaries and involve the laity in the renewal of the Catholic Church within its continent. It is difficult to guarantee that the simple possession of the Holy Spirit is enough to assure effectiveness in evangelization and ministry specifically. One of the conclusions of the members of Workshop No. 1 in the *Proceedings of the Third World Congress for the Lay Apostolate* is a dynamic development of language, whether for documents, or for rhetorical and literary expressions or in symbols and images – breaking up stereotypes and getting back to human and spontaneous sources – is indispensable and urgent to give adequate expression to the new situations and problems of our time. To

cope with the difficulties of time and study that man has today, it is also necessary to look for brief and precise formulas that will express the truth of Christ (“The Laity” 39).

These requirements as outlined by the above workshop, especially the development of language, are to be integrated into the program offered by schools of evangelization in order to approach the Gospel from common point of view. This need for integration is the more reason the diocese needs to keep running the schools of evangelization as a way of responding to the signs of the times.

SECONDARY QUALIFICATION FOR MINISTRY: It is also pertinent to note that the Second Vatican Council stated the need for a free flow of information in the Catholic Church, freedom of thought, lawful freedom of inquiry, tempered by humility and courage in whatever branch of study the theologians and members of the faithful have specialized (Vatican Council, “Gaudium” 62). The fact that some lay people are as academically qualified as ministerial priests, give them the right to express their views and make meaningful contributions to the teaching of the Catholic Church.

In their conclusions, the members of Workshop No. 1 in the *Proceedings of the Third World Congress for the Lay Apostolate* said we are convinced that the essential presentation of the message (Gospel) must be reformulated and revitalized in such a way as to come close to the real and dramatic problems of our times. This reformulation and revitalization requires: very concrete implementation of the Second Vatican Council; exploration of the more dynamic movement of theological thinking; study of the experiences of Christians involved in all (Catholic) Churches and religious communities. In this process of renewal, we need wisdom and courage as well as a profound sense of the roots of Revelation. The Church of (Saint) John, the Church of (Saint) Paul, and the

Church of (Saint) Peter, complementing and not opposing each other, may symbolize this wisdom, joined with the living fountain of contemplation. In other words, their union is that of the prophetic and mystical spirit, the social and apostolic spirit and the institutional and traditional spirit (“The Laity” 40).

As already pointed out, the laity as individuals in the society has a role in the interpretation of the signs of the time, being part of the universe. Each individual person is unique, one that places us within the macrocosm of the human society as individuals, equipped with the resources to learn about the universe, and about God, and therefore about our role in the universe which God and the society wants us to play. This is the construction of our environment and the different communities, based on our collective uniqueness. The individuality of each person is already an initial specialization because of the uniqueness of that personhood in each of us. Therefore, the consequence of our learning is to take part in the role-play of the universe (natural signs), focusing on the socio-cultural environment we find ourselves (conventional signs). For instance, recently, there was an article in the *New York Times* by Gretchen Ruethling about a priest in Chicago who believe that what the Catholic Church needs today is a Billy Graham type of ministry. According to the article (“Billy Graham Is the Role Model; Catholicism Is the Creed”) “when the Rev. Robert Barron talks about why he thinks Jesus is the answer to what is missing in people’s lives, he mentions St. Augustine’s writings about the restlessness of the human heart. He also evokes less common figures in Roman Catholic sermons: Mick Jagger and Bono” (A12). According to the article, the Rev. Barron (a theology professor at the University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois) has been invited by Cardinal Francis George of the

Archdiocese of Chicago, to jump-start evangelization within the archdiocese with a focus on energizing Catholics about their faith and drawing inactive Roman Catholics back to the Church (A12).

To undertake role-play within and without the Catholic Church community (ministry) presupposes discerning of the message from God, embedded within the signs and symbols of our collective society. The signs and symbols are the visible presence of our uniqueness in terms of the meanings and interpretations ascribed to them. Our ultimate goal in the society is to use these signs and symbols in creating our environment, leading to a society where we are all involved in finding the way to God and to one another. It is the responsibility of the Catholic Church in Africa to renew the message of the gospel within its socio-cultural environment. The Catholic Church can do it effectively by understanding and using the conventional signs within its environment in order to correctly communicate the message of the gospel. Therefore, Archbishop Mayala of Mwanza, Tanzania called for an urgent conversion of heart among the clergy, in order to allow the laity to be fully involved in evangelization. He states that “unless we undergo such a profound change of mind and heart in ourselves, it will not be possible for most of us to recognize, accept and affirm the rightful place of the laity as agents of proclamation and give them the necessary formation to exercise properly their ministries” (Mayala 10).

If “the medium fails, Augustine would say, it cannot be the fault of the message, but only the weakness of two imperfect human beings groping through a universe of multitudinous signs toward the signs that will for them reveal that message. The manifest love that passes between teacher and learner will help them keep trying out different

signs until the learner learns the message” (Murphy 291). The prerequisite for participation in the ministry within the Catholic Church gravitates towards understanding the signs that will reveal the message and understanding when these signs call for alternate signs leading to responsibility for the faith.

Therefore, it is within the domain of rhetoric to use the “conventional signs- especially when arranged in the sophisticated patterns taught by a rhetor as an enormous divine responsibility which God places upon every man” (Murphy 290). If our role in any form within the community is always compounded with signs, we must be sensitive in using them, implying being rhetorical, in order to achieve the desired end of communication. To this effect Augustine says that he wrote *On Christian Doctrine* in order that we may be the kind of people we ought to be who seeks to labor in sound doctrine, which is Christian doctrine, not only for ourselves, but also for others (4. 31. 64). On the same note, Murphy says that man is called and obliged to be as rhetorical as possible in order to assist his neighbor in learning about the universe and God (Murphy 290). The communion called for in this instance has a scope, limited in time frame and still sustains a deep meaning very fundamentally rooted in charity. Augustine says in his sermon *On the Anniversary of His Ordination* that

We fail as pastors-and God forbid that we should-because of our own failings, and we excel as pastors-and God help us to this goal-only by His grace. It is for this reason, my brothers, we entreat you not to receive the grace of God in vain (*Holy Bible*, 2Cor 6:1). Make my ministry fruitful. You are God’s tillage (*Holy Bible*, 1Cor 3:9). Receive the planter and the cultivator, who come from without, for the giver of increase comes from within. Those who are agitated must be chastened,

the faint-hearted must be consoled, the feeble must be sustained, the argumentative must be refuted, the treacherous must be guarded against, the untutored must be taught, the indolent must be goaded, the contentious must be restrained, the proud must be held in check, the quarrelsome must be placated, the impoverished must be aided, the oppressed must be delivered, the good must be commended, the evil must be endured, and all must be loved. Help me in this great diversity of duties by praying and obeying that I may derive pleasure, not from presiding over you, but from being of help to you (Howe 215-216).

Certainly the highest of the values is God himself, who as an invisible entity, is directly responsible for our being and has an absolute control of all his creatures. And in this context, the Incarnation of his only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ and the promise of his Holy Spirit, affirm the invaluable place that God has in our being. Faith is the link between God and his rational creatures. It is a gift to humans who are created in his image and likeness. As a result of faith, the Catholic Church is formed, that is, made up of individuals who received the gift of faith and profess it by covenanting with God through baptism in the same Catholic Church. The covenanting with God in the Catholic Church is a call to responsibility in the spreading of the good news of the kingdom of God.

The Bible is filled with the experiences of the community of faith with their God in history. These experiences are then documented as evidence of their faith and belief in the omnipotent and ever-present God. It is also the community of faith that will interpret this authoritative document and assign to it a cogent meaning. Augustine will remind us that it should be interpreted with “charity.” He defines charity in *De Doctrina (On*

Christian Doctrine), as “the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one’s self and one’s neighbor for the sake of God” (3. 10. 16).

As indicated in my introduction, divine revelation, early Christian communities, God’s work and human response, God’s action and his people’s re-action, is the life of the Catholic Church. This element constituting the life of the Catholic Church is also the basis of diversity. The three distinct early Christian communities – Jerusalem, Hellenistic Greek, and Gentile – have different experiences of the revelation of the “Word of God.” They have also a distinct historical background that accounts for the characteristics of their respective communities. The message revealed is one, but because they are experienced or received in different forms they are therefore interpreted according to the historical circumstance of the community. Revelation is one because the gift of faith is one, while worship is regulated according to the rules of the community. This oneness of revelation is because cult and faith are not just synonymous, according to Lohmeyer. He says there is a sharp distinction between faith and cult (worship). Faith makes heart and world, time and space, one before God. Cult, he maintains, on the other hand, is that god-directed activity that is based on a revelation regulated by holy rules and pursued by a society, which is a historically existing entity and is rooted in such revelation (Lohmeyer 5-6). The communities have one story to tell, but the story was told in different ways, expressed in diverse forms.

It is worthwhile to note that Lohmeyer made it clear that cult implies community just as community implies cult, since both are based on God’s revelation in history. Cult is only possible, he says, in community, whereas community is only possible through cult; and the more completely the community recalls and relates itself to the act of God

that is the basis of its cult and fellowship, the greater is the power and grace of that cult. Therefore, the more consistently cult clings to its own secret and guards it as God's wonderful act in the course of the years and the centuries, the more closely it binds the community together (Lohmeyer 6). Can this clinging of cult to its own secrets account for the survival of the communities and the persistence of the cults of the communities? It is possibly so and moreover, it can also account for the collapse of those cults that could not survive the test of time.

It is in this context that I see Saint Augustine's rhetorical theory as very pertinent to the clergy of our time in order to make use of the riches of our cultural dynamics in ministry. What Augustine offers to our clergy today is a situation where "an expansion of critical appreciation as a means of learning . . . with its plea for a gifted, broadly trained Christian maker of discourse, might well take its place with some other great pleas" (Murphy 63).

In other words, seminars, publications in journals, symposia, Synods, and Scripture lessons are welcome ways to initiate a discourse environment among peer groups in the public space. I am optimistic that the outcome of the African Synod has rejuvenated the Catholic Church as discussions on non-fallible matters of faith and morals are being implemented in Abakaliki Diocese and in the rest of Africa. Such conversational contexts that seek not violence are a sine qua non for collaboration in ministry because it creates a face-to-face situation where the other is fully recognized as real and part of the overall reality of everyday life. I will argue that collaborative ministry should be rooted in the rhetorical theory of Augustine where matter and form are equally essential, in other words, in an incarnational approach.

Augustine's rhetorical theory will address the message and the medium and therefore, becomes a horizon of significance that will enlighten our discourse philosophically even though the subject matter is circumscribed, with a focus of attention on the Catholic Church and on the Catholic Church in Africa in particular.

STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION: Judging from the Humanities and Liberal Arts perspective where there is no one truth, but rather truths and nobody has the complete access to truth, we cannot neglect rhetoric in searching for avenues to further the kingdom of God on earth. Rhetoric is necessary in evangelization and ministry since it dwells on contingent issues and temporalities within particular social context that cannot be broken from the web of relationships – communication. According to Walker, “there is, in sum, no transcendental or stable truth to which the human mind has any reliable access. We have only our fluctuating, slippery, and uncertain human logos by which to interpret, judge, and act within a world of dangers, desires, and probabilities; and the practical consequences of our logos-built beliefs, even if they have no certain epistemic truth to rest on, are matters of life and death, pleasure and pain, honor and dishonor, beauty and ugliness. Logos is all we have, and our chances for joy depend on the skill and wisdom, the Sophia, with which we handle it” (Walker 27-28). At the end of this study we will move from the rhetorical theory to the ecclesiastical rhetoric evident in the indigenous Catholic Diocese of Abakaliki. It will develop cross-cultural communication as a bud and flower interpersonal communication.

The articulation of my ideas will be laid out in six chapters. In the first chapter, I will outline my prospectus to cover the necessary issues relating to the discussion. It will provide an outline of the project. Chapter two will show the problem and its causes

identified by the church, i.e. Vatican II and the African Synod, letting the Catholic Church criticize itself, and solutions outlined or suggested by the Catholic Church as well. In chapter three, I will proffer my solution, “collaborative ministry,” which addresses the problem identified by the Catholic Church and show its consistency with the solutions suggested by the Catholic Church. Chapter four will demonstrate that my solution is both rhetorically viable and theologically sound, leaning on the rhetorical theory and theology of Saint Augustine. The fifth chapter will be a journey into the early Church practices as described in the Scriptures and other historical documents of the Catholic Church, showing the consistency of these with the solution being offered by this research. Chapter six is a conclusion to summarize the entire preceding elements of this research showing how this perspective on ministry is both consistent with the Catholic Church’s recommendation and the practice of the Catholic Diocese of Abakaliki in Eastern Nigeria.

The foregoing is an attempt to highlight the problem of ‘partial evangelization’ within the Catholic Church in Africa in particular. The message of the gospel has no deep roots in the life of the African Catholic Christians and therefore, militates against translating the word of God into the concrete lives of the believers and involving the people in the work of evangelization. If the great mandate of Christ to his followers is to go out to the whole world and proclaim the gospel (*Holy Bible*, Mk 16: 15); it must have been addressed to every Christian when Jesus promises that “I am with you always, until the close of the age” (*Holy Bible*, Mt 28: 20) and this implies there is no exclusion in ministry. Basically in the course of his public ministry Jesus called tax collectors (*Holy Bible*, Mt 9: 9-13; 10: 3), fishermen (*Holy Bible*, Mt 4: 18-22; Mk 1: 16-20; Lk 5: 1-11;

Jn 1: 40-42), women ministering to his needs (*Holy Bible*, Lk 8: 2) and even after the resurrection he called a Rabbi/Pharisee into the ministry (*Holy Bible*, 1Cor 9: 1-18; 1Cor 15: 9; Gal 1: 13; Phil 3: 6) as a demonstration of the direction he intends for his community. Within the early Christian community, following the steps of Jesus, they (the community) called many members into the ministry according to “the diversity of services” (*Holy Bible*, 1Cor 12: 5; Rm 12: 7).

The Catholic ministry in the Catholic Church in Africa (Abakaliki Diocese) should build a ministry reflecting collaboration between the laity and the ordained ministers in terms of the needs of the community. “According to the Synod Fathers, the main question facing the (Catholic) Church in Africa consists in delineating as clearly as possible what it is and what it must fully carry out, in order that its message may be relevant and credible” (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n21). There is the constant call for solidarity in evangelization, bearing in mind that the urgent call to spread the good news is one incumbent on the entire Catholic Church by virtue of their baptism. Accordingly, John Paul II says “from that distant day the call of the Lord Jesus ‘You too go into my vineyard’ never fails to resound in the course of history: it is addressed to every person who comes into this world” (“Christifideles” n2). In other words, anybody who is ready to work must be assigned a responsibility in the vineyard. The call being addressed to every person depicts God’s openness to accept the collaboration of each human person with Him. If the invitation is so expressly given by the originator of the message, all the more reason for the recipients to coordinate all of their individual responses in order to address the pressing needs of the world today.

In addressing the pressing needs more concretely, the Catholic Church in Africa decided to look into itself to sort out the hindering factors toward achieving the required evangelization. According to John Paul II, the Third Ordinary General Assembly (1974), on evangelization in the modern world made possible a special study of the problems of evangelization in Africa. It was then that the bishops of the African continent present at the synod issued an important message entitled “Promoting Evangelization in Co-Responsibility” (“Ecclesia” n4). This call by the Catholic bishops of the African continent is further reflected in recent discussions and reflections of the Catholic Church Synods. The 1987 Synod on the laity brought to light such situations as the ministries and Church services entrusted at present and in the future to the lay faithful; the growth and spread of new “movements” alongside other group forms of lay involvement; and the place and role of women both in the Church and in society, says John Paul II (“Christifideles” n2). No wonder, in convoking the African Synod, John Paul called it an “initiative of great importance for the Church” and adhered to the petitions often expressed for some time by the bishops, priests, theologians and representatives of the laity in Africa, in order to promote an organic pastoral solidarity within the entire African territory and nearby Islands (“Ecclesia” n5).

The substance of the gospel is vital to proper evangelization and its assimilation, requiring a collaborative effort that I am proposing for the Catholic Church in Africa in order to achieve the desired results. I will demonstrate that collaborative ministry is consistent with the practice of the early Church, the teachings of Vatican II and the statements of John Paul II. I intend to ground my arguments on the theology of Augustine, who has provided the resources used by the Catholic Church’s documents. I

will argue that rhetorically, collaborative ministry is an invitation for contemporary priests to invite their parishioners into lay leadership and equip them for service within their own, unique socio-cultural environment, while maintaining the essential orthodoxy of the church. Collaborative ministry as a rhetorical tool will continually construct and reconstruct the larger sphere of discourse within which specific acts of legislation and jurisprudence (decrees and judgments) have occurred and will occur. It not only leads to the production of laws and institutions through the cultivation of communal assent, and thence to the production of specific judgments in specific forums which enact and enforce the laws, but it also continues to cultivate the shared agreements on which the laws depend, as well as to instigate and shape the processes through which existing laws, policies, and civil institutions will be altered. As such rhetoric is the “guide” and “teacher” of legislation and jurisprudence, it is necessarily “joined” with them “from the beginning” of civil society but is not identical with them or limited to their sphere. It is, rather, their condition of possibility (Walker 112).

Chapter two highlights the remote reference to the problem and causes of partial evangelization as outlined in the documents of Vatican II, those of John Paul II and the African Synod addressed to the entire Church and the Catholic Church in Africa in particular. There is the constant call for solidarity in evangelization, bearing in mind that the urgent call to spread the good news is one incumbent on the entire Church by virtue of baptism. Therefore, John Paul says “from that distant day the call of the Lord Jesus ‘You too go into my vineyard’ never fails to resound in the course of history: it is addressed to every person who comes into this world” (John Paul, “Christifideles” n2). In other words, anybody who is ready to work must be assigned a responsibility in the

vineyard. The call being addressed to every person underscores God's desire for the collaboration of every human person in the evangelization of the world. If the invitation is so expressly given by the originator of the message, the more reason the recipients should coordinate their individual response in order to address the pressing needs of the world today.

So if we must address the pressing needs more concretely, the Catholic Church in Africa must opt for self examination to decipher the hindering factors toward achieving the required evangelization. To this effect as mentioned above, John Paul II states that, "the Third Ordinary General Assembly (1974), on evangelization in the modern world, made possible a special study of the problems of evangelization in Africa. It was then that the bishops of the Continent present at the Synod issued an important message entitled "Promoting Evangelization in Co-Responsibility" (John Paul, "Ecclesia" n4). This call by the bishops of the African continent is further reflected in recent discussions and reflections of the Catholic Church Synods. The 1987 Synod on the laity brought to light such situations as the ministries and Church services entrusted at present and in the future to the lay faithful; the growth and spread of new 'movements' alongside other group forms of lay involvement; and the place and role of women both in the Church and in society," says John Paul II ("Christifideles" n2). No wonder, in convoking the African Synod, John Paul called it an "initiative of great importance for the Church" and adhered to the "petitions often expressed for some time by the bishops of Africa, priest, theologians and representatives of the laity, "in order to promote an organic pastoral solidarity within the entire African territory and nearby Islands" (John Paul, "Ecclesia" n5).

Collaboration in ministry consists of identifying, in **chapter three**, the dynamics laid out in Church documents emphasizing the obligation of every Christian to spread the message of Christ (*Holy Bible*, Mt. 18:20). Here, attention will be given to John Paul II's encyclical "Redemptoris Missio" which emphasizes in no uncertain terms the importance of the traditional mission *ad gentes*, but also calls for a "new evangelization" (n30). This "new evangelization" is a new term first used by John Paul in his address to the Latin American bishops at their meeting at Haiti, in 1983. It suggests a radical turn in evangelization demonstrated by the extraordinary qualification, "New." In the light of this term "new", Gadamer says that if anything does characterize human thought it is this infinite dialogue with ourselves which never leads anywhere definitively and which differentiates us from that ideal infinite Spirit to which all that exists and all truth is present in a single vision. It is in this experience of language in our education in the midst of this interior conversation with ourselves, which is always simultaneously the anticipation of conversation with others and the introduction of others into the conversation with ourselves that the world begins to open up and achieve order in all the domains of experience (Gadamer 492).

This simply affirms Augustine's strong belief that language is a conventional sign whereby human beings agree to show to one another how to convey ideas and feelings. The early missionaries did not take this into consideration and therefore, produced half-baked Christians who did not get involved in ministry after receiving the faith. The clergy of Abakaliki diocese must work towards collaboration with the laity in order to open up their world and achieve an order within their domain. They must see and realize that the language of the Gospel (God's message) are coded in conventional signs that will

demand decoding when we show one another how to convey the ideas and feelings buried within that domain.

Chapter four will show that collaborative ministry must be conceptualized and drawn along the lines of the rhetorical theory of Augustine having been at the thin-line between philosophy and theology, and also considered a catalyst for most linguistic and semiotic scholars like Ferdinand de Saussure, Steven Mailloux, and Jacques Derrida.

Again if Augustine's argument is that human beings need to know the nature of signs in order to understand the language of the Bible, and then need to understand rhetoric in order to explain the Christian message or teach it to others, then the more reason he is at the thin-line between philosophy and theology. And if every Christian is obligated to spread Christ's message (e.g. *Holy Bible*, Matthew 18: 20), rhetoric becomes a sine qua non for every Christian.

As stated earlier this study will be responding to the question of how can the Christian internalize the gospel message in order to play their role in the community of believers? How can an African Catholic Christian integrate the gospel message and make it personal? The metaphors, such as "to internalize" and "playing a role" are rhetorical tropes that engulf this research. Collaborative ministry then becomes a rhetorical construct, the altar where the significance of the African culture will be acknowledged without compromising Christian ideals.

Collaborative ministry will therefore be addressing both the internalizing of the gospel and the taking of responsibility that comes with it in the community. Collaborative ministry becomes a rhetorically rich process of getting Christians to take the call to evangelize very seriously while fulfilling the ultimate demand of the gospel in

the Catholic Diocese of Abakaliki in Eastern Nigeria. It will also be acknowledged that the notion of ministry or mission has been an integral part of the history of salvation as evident in the Scriptures.

Furthermore, it should be asked: “is there any reason to believe that the Spirit speaks and acts more efficaciously in Judaic, Hellenic, Coptic, Roman, Iberian, Teutonic, Slavic, Gallic, Celtic or Anglo-Saxon terms than in the terms of any ethnic-culture group in Africa, Asia or the Islands far away” (Hillman 27).

In view of the rhetorical call, “the signs of the times,” as initiated by Vatican II, “the communication of the divine Word to humankind, as also any human response, presupposes mutual historical conditioning and cultural enfleshment of the communicants. People exist only in limited historical periods and within concrete cultural contexts, all with their respective symbol systems of communication” (Hillman 31).

Therefore, this chapter will highlight some semiotic (linguistic) and cultural inhibitions to ministry in Abakaliki Diocese. I will opt for “an Augustinian via media” (Hastings 19). The death toll and disease that faced the early missionaries will be acknowledged and the hostility of the people in Africa (Westermann 139).

In **chapter five**, my attention will be focused on divine revelation and the early Christian communities; God’s work and human response, God’s action and his people’s re-action. The three distinct early Christian communities – Jerusalem, Hellenistic Greek, and Gentile – have different experience of the revelation of the Word of God. They also had a distinct historical background that accounts for the different characteristics of their respective communities. The message revealed is one, but because they are experienced

or received in different forms they are therefore interpreted according to the diverse historical circumstances of the community. Revelation is one because the gift of faith is one, while worship is regulated according to the rules of the community. This is because cult and faith are not synonymous, according to Lohmeyer. He says there is a sharp distinction between faith and cult (worship). Faith makes heart and world, time and space, one before God. Cult, he maintains, on the other hand, is that god-directed activity that is based on a revelation regulated by holy rules and pursued by a society, which is a historically existing entity and is rooted in such a revelation (Lohmeyer 5-6). The communities have one story to tell, but that story is told in different ways and expressed in diverse forms.

It is worthwhile to note that Lohmeyer made it clear that cult implies community just as community implies cult, since both are based on God's revelation in history. Cult is only possible, he says, in community, whereas community is only possible through cult; and the more completely the community recalls and relates itself to the act of God that is the basis of its cult and fellowship, the greater is the power and grace of that cult. Therefore, the more consistently cult clings to its own secret and guards it as God's wonderful act in the course of the years and the centuries, the more closely it binds the community together (Lohmeyer 6). If cult clings to its own secret and guard it as a sacred act of God, it will greatly influence the survival of the communities and the persistence of the cults of the communities. It is possibly so. Moreover, it can also account for the collapse of those cults that could not survive the test of time.

"Christifideles Laici" will be examined as a product of the Synod on the laity in 1987 where lay people were called upon to hearken to the call of Christ by working in his

vineyard. They were strongly invited to take an active part, both responsible and conscientious in the mission of sharing the fruits of the gospel in this moment in our history as Church (John Paul, “Christifideles” n3). This document stresses points similar to those presented in the 1987 Synod on the laity based on (1) rights of the laypersons and (2) the unique character of secularity of the laypersons. It was a faithful reflection and response from the 1987 Synod on the laity, following the same outline (John Paul, “Christifideles” n2) – contemporary situation, doctrinal analysis of the foundations for understanding the identity of the laity and finally, presentation of pastoral issues related to the lay mission in the Church.

He set out to re-echo the call issued by the fathers of Vatican II who situated this event (mission of the laity) in the call by Christ to all lay faithful, both men and women, to work in his vineyard (John Paul, “Christifideles” n1). This beautiful work set out to persuade and to stir the laity towards a deeper awareness of the gift and responsibility which they share, both as a group and as individuals, in the communion (*koinonia*) and mission of the Church (John Paul, “Christifideles” n2).

Therefore, I will focus on some of the Vatican II documents that are the bedrock for the 1987 Synod on the laity that gave birth to “Christifideles Laici.” Even though the Vatican II fathers depended on the call of Christ in the Scriptures, I will not dwell on the Scriptures here due to the prior treatment already developed in chapter two. Centering on Vatican II, I will pay particular attention to “*Lumen Gentium*” (LG) and “*Apostolicam Actuositatem*” (AA). The proceedings of the 1987 Synod on the laity will be looked into, though the “Christifideles Laici” has already put together the entire outcome.

The fullness of evangelization is the participation of the faithful (Paul VI, “Evangelii” 24) and John Paul II and the 1987 Synod on the laity emphasized this strongly in their deliberations. When John Paul told the Africans to evangelize their continent in new evangelization, he was acknowledging that as Catholic Christians, they are first of all Africans. One of the greatest crises in ministry at present is the reprogramming of the mind of the Catholic Church in Africa to see its values as positive as well as Christian. Christian religion has always been looked at as the “white man’s” religion as it was ushered in hand in hand with colonialism. It is noted that the early missionaries condemned many values in African society as evil. The stigma needs to be evaluated.

It must be acknowledged that Christianity is superior to every culture, including African values. Therefore, Christian values are more universal than African values creating a situation whereby Christianity must be Africanized and not Africa being Christianized, as echoed by Peter Sarpong of Ghana (Healey xvi). Sarpong emphasizes that the main task of the missionary is not to work for but with the people, because God is revealing himself today through the African people within their local environment (Healey xvi).

Other factors militating against ministry are the whole idea of “Roman Catholic Priest” and “Roman Catholic Church.” If God is revealing himself to the people in their local environment, then we need to reprogram our thought cycle or process in order to reflect the linguistic elements of the environment. This reprogramming of the thought process is the dilemma of the Catholic Church in Africa in a 21st century, where they have been granted freedom both by God and their religious system, but are still mentally

and linguistically in crisis. This reprogramming refers to various aspects of the Christian faith and practice. Therefore, Eugene Hillman makes a point saying that “instead of importing more foreign-bred ideologies and alien accoutrements of religion, thereby partly burying the real meaning of Christianity’s good news and sometimes reducing it to bad news, Lonergan’s culturally sensitive missionary, acknowledging a multiplicity of valid and graced cultures, would ‘proceed from within’ the local culture” (Hillman 26).

The concluding **chapter (six)** will be evaluating the “Ecclesia in Africa” as a rhetorical document addressed to the people of Catholic Christians in Africa in order to re-order their domain. It is a persuasive material tailored to this specific audience. For Schrag, “persuasion is never simply and solely the art of argumentation. It also proceeds by dint of a showing, a making manifest through the evocation of new life styles and new ways of seeing the world. Persuasion should not be reduced to argumentation on matters of belief. Its movements are sketched against a broader background of the habits, customs, and social practices of the polis” (Schrag 182). We can conclude that this document of Vatican II is persuasive in conjunction with the “Christifideles Laici.” There is a visible sign of collaboration between these Synods, documents and the council, in terms of consistency of purpose and direction.

Collaborative ministry in the Catholic Church in Africa will also lead to consistency of purpose and direction founded in Christ. In other words, any success in ministry is a God thing as Paul declares in the *Holy Bible*, Romans 15:18-19: “For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum I

have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ.” This chapter is geared toward showing how collaborative ministry is a suitable persuasive tool in evangelization, thereby reinforcing from the Pauline, to the Church documents and Augustine’s practical approach to building an authentic community.

The power and possibility of change is tied to the inherent capability of the human person. Heraclitus clearly indicated that the world is in flux; that includes human persons. In human society, we must respond to changing situations in a web of communication. As Hugh Dalziel Duncan says, “Burke tells us, there is no such thing as perfect communication; ‘Only angels communicate absolutely.’ For better or worse, the human condition is a condition of imperfect communication, and we solve our problems in society as best as we can through recalcitrant and mystifying symbols that cause the problems we must yet solve if we are to act together at all. Thus, symbols are both blessing and curse—a blessing if we turn our study of their use into a method of social control, a curse if we let their power overwhelm us until we accept symbolic mystification as reality” (Burke, *Permanence* xvii). It is our effort to turn our study of the use of symbols into a method of social control that gives a rhetorical significance to collaborative ministry. The minister is both the instrument of the gospel and of service to the community emerging from the word of God.

In this study, I will use the resources from the Bible, teachings of the Church and the relevant rhetorical and philosophical traditions as a springboard to elucidate the need for a collaborative ministry and to achieve the desired goal of evangelization. I am referring to the level of socio-cultural context where the gospel becomes indigenous. If the recent Church documents consistently call for the involvement of the laity in the work

of evangelization, one can deduce that there is a dissonance between the gospel and people's daily lives as well as active roles.

Evangelization is aimed at planting the message of the gospel in the lives and cultures of the people of the world. Thus, people and culture (society) cannot be separated from the gospel (Church) itself. It is simply expressed by Cunningham when he asked: "Is not every member of the public of the Church also a member of the public of society?" (65). They both make a homogenous whole and each compliment the other. In other words, we cannot neglect the people and their culture in constructing the ministry within their context. One must assume that if people do not participate fully in the work of evangelization, then there is need for a powerful and rhetorical approach to ministry in order to commit people to the mission of evangelization.

The Church has always been very fervent and active in evangelization, especially in the Catholic Diocese of Abakaliki. The Saint Patrick Fathers (Kiltegan Fathers) did a great job in spreading the gospel in Abakaliki district, while opening many missionary schools as ancillary to evangelization. Many of the beneficiaries of education and the gospel have given up their faith after attaining the educational benefits of the missionary schools. It is necessary to acknowledge the importance of incorporating an evangelization or ministry that is indigenous and at the same time faithful to the Christian faith. This dual emphasis has always been lacking in the work of evangelization in the immediate past centuries and in Abakaliki Diocese in particular. No wonder Pope John Paul II said that the reason it seemed appropriate to convoke the African Synod was to promote "an organic pastoral solidarity throughout Africa and the adjacent Islands" ("Ecclesia" n16). He further states that the (Catholic) Church in Africa can only move

forward by strengthening communion among her members, beginning with her pastors
(John Paul, "Ecclesia" n17).

CHAPTER 2

THE PROBLEM & ITS CAUSE AS IDENTIFIED BY THE CHURCH

This chapter is an affirmation of the existence of partial evangelization within the Catholic Church in Africa. The African Synod (1994) rooted in the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965) and John Paul II's insistent call in his encyclicals is an effort to awaken and create an awareness of this problem and therefore, involve the entire Church in evangelization. It is as John Paul said to the Nigerian bishops during his visit in 1982, that the Catholic people, under their pastoral leadership, have the opportunity, the privilege and the duty to give a corporate witness to the Gospel of Jesus in the culture in which they live. They have the power to bring the Gospel into the very heart of their culture and the fabric of their daily lives. In other words, it is only when Christian families have been truly evangelized and become aware of their evangelizing role that there can be an effective evangelization of culture, an effective encounter between the Gospel and culture. He maintains, as did Paul VI in "Evangelii Nuntiandi", n20 that the split between the Gospel and culture is the drama of our time (John Paul, "Carry" n12). The Church has been able to identify and acknowledge that the lack of collaborative ministry among Catholic Christians and pointed out as well some of the causes of this anomaly. In this chapter, I hope to expose some of these problems as outlined in the Church's documents and some of the solutions proffered by the Church.

EVANGELIZATION OF ABAKALIKI DISTRICT

Clergy: Since the beginning of evangelization in Abakaliki district, the laity has not been significantly encouraged to participate actively in the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church has made it evident that the normative text for evangelization is the Scriptures, which contain the “*ipsissima verba*” (exact words) of Jesus and the story of the early Church. The Church’s view will highlight Christ as the center of evangelization, so that Jesus Christ becomes the focus of attention.

The spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was initiated and executed in Eastern Nigeria 121 years ago by the Holy Ghost Fathers. It was not until 1911, 26 years later that the Roman Catholic Superior at Calabar, Father Lena, applied to the Provincial Commissioner, H. Bedwell, for permission to extend Roman Catholic activity into the districts of Ikom, Obubra, **Abakaliki**, Ogoja and Obudu (Ekechi 135). It is now 95 years since the people of Abakaliki district were exposed to the opportunity of encountering the message of the Christian religion. This initial breakthrough attracted other missionaries within the vast ethnic groups in this region, including the people of the Abakaliki district. The first mission school opened in Abakaliki town by 1922 through the Holy Ghost priests from Eke parish; another school was opened at Ishiagu at the same period. However, Abakaliki district was mainly evangelized by the Kiltegan Fathers (Saint Patrick Fathers) whose mission concentrated within the areas stretching from Calabar into Ogoja, in Cross River State. It was only in 1955 that Ogoja and Abakaliki was erected as a diocese after becoming a prefecture in 1938. As a prefecture carved out from Calabar, Monsignor Thomas McGettrick of the Kiltegan Fathers was named as its prefect apostolic (Bane 152-153). These two civil provinces, Ogoja and Abakaliki, after

becoming a diocese in 1955, with Rev. Dr. Thomas McGettrick as the bishop and a “few Nigerian-born priests, initiated a very active missionary activity. The majority of the members of the clergy at this time belonged to Saint Patrick’s Society (SPS)” (Bane 153).

However, the work of the Holy Ghost Fathers in some areas of the district like Ishiagu by 1922 through Eke parish, Enugu State and Uturu near Okigwe in Abia State was not without the strong influence of Western civilization in the form of education, because the establishment of primary schools was always the first step taken by the missionaries. The impact of these missionaries has remained indelible in the lives of the people and is greatly acclaimed in the writings of many African scholars. O. U. Kalu (Senior Lecturer in Church History, University of Nigeria, Nsukka), E. E. Uzukwu (Rector and Lecturer, Spiritan International School, Enugu, Nigeria), F. K. Ekechi of Department of History in Kent University, Ohio (1971), J. E. Eberegbulam Njoku (Professor and Director of International Services at Touro College, New York) and J. F. Ade Ajayi (Professor of History at University of Ibadan, Nigeria) are among the many scholars who have commented on the indelible contribution of the early missionaries. Some of them have acknowledged that the missionaries used the services of the natives in order to reach the hearts of the people. The natives who were trained in the teachings of the Church assisted the missionaries in imparting the knowledge of the Gospel in the local dialect and acted as interpreters for the ‘*white man.*’ The missionaries stood against the colonial self-interested efforts geared towards economic goals.

Proto-Catechists: The collaboration exhibited by these missionaries with the locally trained assistants demonstrates the rhetorical praxis employed in order to reach the natives with an effective message. However, these assistants, or *catechists* as they were

called, turned out to be over-zealous and pushed for the abrogation of traditional values to the extent that it bred enmity between new converts and the traditional adherents. The down side of the use of catechists was that other members were never to aspire to the same position as long as their catechist was alive. In this study, I will demonstrate the down side of these premature early experts in the teachings of the Church and the method of the early missionaries. The role of the catechists turned into a one-man-expert-show, based on the fact that they were not fully trained to train others. My study will employ the rhetorical theory of Saint Augustine, to show why collaborative ministry as promoted by John Paul II and the African Synod is more rhetorically viable than the method employed by the early missionaries. Collaborative ministry was especially exemplified in the missionary activities of Saint Paul to the Gentiles made explicit in the epistles of the New Testament section of the *Holy Bible*. This exemplification of collaborative ministry in the epistles will be addressed extensively in the fifth chapter of this research.

Catholic Action: The call by Pope Pius XI (1931) for collegiality in the Church and greater participation of the laity (*Catholic Action*) was the initial break with the old time tradition of the clergy-cum-catechist-alone type of ministry. The Catholic Action is the army of lay people who in dedicating themselves increasingly to the apostolate in many countries have formed themselves into various kinds of movements and societies that have pursued and continue to pursue properly apostolic ends, while working in closer union with the hierarchy (Vatican Council, “Apostolicam” n20). It was succinctly said of Pius XI in *The Lay Apostolate* that “if the faith and charity of Christ unites us all and sustains us for our mutual welfare; if the collaboration of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy shows itself already flourishing and recognized from the dawn of Christianity

in the first teaching of the Apostles; if this apostolic cooperation has, through the centuries in the history of the Church, assumed the most varied forms of organization, discipline, method and extent, according to the needs of the times – yet the noblest form of collaboration, which is Italian Catholic Action, after developing under the Pontificates of Pius IX, Leo XIII, Pius X, and Benedict XV, received its most vigorous impulse and its organic form from the great mind and heart of Pius XI” (n697). Since then the Catholic Church has come to realize the importance of the involvement of the whole Church in the work of evangelization. Pius XI was a staunch supporter of missionary work and wanted to integrate Christianity with native cultures instead of forcing a European culture upon them. It is said in *The Lay Apostolate* that as Shepherd and Father of the nations [*native cultures*], Pius XI revived the faith of families, and from the domestic hearth sent forth lay people to engage in social action and Catholic Action, to make them collaborate with the divinely instituted hierarchy, in the establishment of the reign of Christ in civil life. He thus directed the zeal of the faithful towards that royal priesthood which, without placing the flock in the same rank with the shepherd, makes them into a unique, wise, prudent, active army, for the development and defense of Christian life (n696).

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in conjunction with popes and numerous bishops have deservedly praised, promoted and described Catholic Action as a collaboration of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate. It was this Council that brought the matter to light by expounding the theological implications and praxis inherent in integrating Christianity with native cultures. In “*Ad Gentes Divinitus*”, the Council enjoins Christians to show by the example of their life and the witness of their word, the

new man which they put on in baptism, and reveal the power of the Holy Spirit by whom they were strengthened at confirmation, so that seeing their good works, others might glorify the Father (cf. *Holy Bible*, Matt. 5: 16) and more perfectly perceive the true meaning of human life and the universal solidarity of mankind. The Second Vatican Council sets Christ as the paradigm for Christians in their effort to witness to the Gospel. It states that just as Christ penetrated to the hearts of men and by a truly human dialogue led them to the divine light, so too his disciples, profoundly pervaded by the Spirit of Christ, should know and converse with those among whom they live. It is expected that through sincere and patient dialogue they themselves might learn of the riches, which the generous God has distributed among the nations (Vatican Council, “Ad Gentes” n11).

We must understand with John Paul that the process of the Church’s insertion into people’s culture is a lengthy one. It is not a matter of purely external adaptation, for enculturation means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures. It is through enculturation that the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within. Through enculturation the Church for her part becomes a more intelligible sign of what she is and a more effective instrument of mission (“Redemptoris” n52).

Transformation of Human Culture: Theologically, we are faced with the extent of the power of the Holy Spirit possessed by the convert and the level of expression of this unique grace. We are confronted with the sphere of influence of the Holy Spirit on the

cultures that interact with the Gospel and the level of cohesion in that culture and the Gospel. Man, according to the Second Vatican Council, is disposed to acknowledge, under the impulse of grace, the Word of God who was in the world as the true light that enlightens every human person (*Holy Bible*, Jn. 1: 9), before becoming flesh to save and gather up all things in himself (“Gaudium” n57). Saint Augustine believes that the means used by the pagans are not evil in and of themselves and therefore, could be used by the Church to arrive at the most sublime truth. H. Richard Niebuhr points out that Charles Norris Cochrane’s interpretation of “the regeneration of human society through the replacement of pagan by Trinitarian principles is the theme of that Christian movement which Athanasius and Ambrose began and which Augustine brought to a great climax in his *City of God*” (206). H. Richard Niebuhr places Augustine within the group called conversionists who tend to put together the themes of creation and redemption, of Incarnation and Atonement in one association. In a sense, “the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us, the Son who does the work of the Father in the world of creation, has entered into a human culture that has never been without his ordering action” (Niebuhr 193). No wonder John Paul II in his message to the professors and students of the Augustinianum Institute of Patrology during his visit on May 8, 1982 stated, “I fervently wish that his [Augustine] philosophical, theological and spiritual doctrine [should] be studied and spread, so that he may continue, also through you, his teaching in the Church, a humble but at the same time enlightened teaching which speaks above all of Christ and love. Just as, in his judgment, do the Scriptures” (John Paul II, “To Study” n10).

In his struggle with the pagan world of his time, Saint Augustine was able to formulate a philosophy and theological spirituality consistent with the teaching of the Catholic Church. In doing so much to promote and establish Christian culture, Augustine developed three main arguments based on the faithful exposition of Christian doctrine; the careful salvaging of pagan culture, to the extent that it had elements capable of being salvaged (no small amount in the area of philosophy); and finally the insistent demonstration of the presence in Christian teaching of whatever was true and perennially valid in pagan culture, with the advantage of finding it perfected and exalted there. The works of Saint Augustine deserve to be studied in our world today as an example and stimulus that will deepen the encounter of Christianity with the cultures of the peoples (John Paul II, “Augustinum” II. 1).

The Relationship of Christ to Culture: H. R. Niebuhr states that “Christ is the transformer of culture for Augustine in the sense that he redirects, reinvigorates, and regenerates that life of man, expressed in all human works, which in present actuality is the perverted and corrupted exercise of a fundamentally good nature; which, moreover, in its depravity lies under the curse of transiency and death, not because an external punishment has been visited upon it, but because it is intrinsically self-contradictory” (209). The good nature of the human person when corrupted flows into the culture rendering it perverse. Therefore, when the corrupted nature of the human person is healed, the culture becomes renewed as well, since “Christ is seen as the converter of man in his culture and society, not apart from these, for there is no nature without culture and no turning of men from self and idols to God save in society” (Niebuhr 43). The Second Vatican Council affirms there are many links between the message of salvation

and culture. In a sense, through his self-revelation to his people culminating in the fullness of manifestation in his incarnate Son, God spoke according to the culture proper to each age. Similarly the Church in the modern world, which has existed through the centuries in varying circumstances, has utilized the resources of different cultures in its preaching to spread and explain the message of Christ, to examine and understand it more deeply, and to express it more perfectly in the liturgy (cult and worship, as we shall see in chapter five) and in the various aspects of the life of the faithful (Vatican Council, “Gaudium” n58).

Accordingly, Aylward Shorter maintains we can think of African Christian Spirituality in terms outlined by Magesa, aiming at the integral development of human beings in community, while enabling them to take control of their own lives and to make the right choices by themselves (16). Harry Sawyer was also thinking of our humanization in Christ when he said that the Incarnation is God intending us to be in fellowship with Him (*Holy Bible*, Eph. 2: 16, 18), and that, through this fellowship with God, we are led into a new fellowship with our fellow men (*Holy Bible*, Eph. 3: 6); in other words, that the Incarnation provides the basis for a common life (111). Our humanization in Christ can be achieved by allowing the Good News of Christ to continually renew the life and culture of fallen man, while combating and removing the error and evil which flow from the ever-present attraction of sin. The Good News never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples, taking the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age and nation, together with the supernatural riches it causes them to blossom from within, fortifying, completing and restoring them in Christ (Vatican Council, “Gaudium” n58).

Communion of Christians: The communion of Christians is an echo of John Paul II who said that “communion with Jesus, which gives rise to the communion of Christians among themselves, is an indispensable condition for bearing fruit: ‘Apart from me you can do nothing’ (*Holy Bible*, John 15:5). And communion with others is the most magnificent fruit that the branches can give: in fact, it is the gift of Christ and his Spirit” (John Paul, “Christifideles” n32). Communion, as a gift, is given in order to be shared with the entire human race in their own history, in the form of missions. John Paul II tells us that such a mission has the purpose of making everyone know and live the “new” communion that the Son of God made man introduced into the history of the world. In this regard, then, the testimony of John the Evangelist defines in an undeniable way the blessed end towards which the entire mission of the Church is directed: “that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ (*Holy Bible*, 1 Jn 1:3) (John Paul, “Christifideles” n32).

The African Synod [1994] acknowledged that salvation is also meant for the people of Africa. Christ came that we may have life abundantly and to “give his life as a ransom for many” (*Holy Bible*, Mark 10:45); Christ “entered once for all into the Holy Place, ... with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption” (*Holy Bible*, Heb. 9:12). Therefore, the Apostle of the Gentiles (Saint Paul) tells us that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all” (*Holy Bible*, 1 Tim 2: 4-6). Since God, in fact, calls all people to one and the same divine destiny, “we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God

offers to everyone the possibility of being associated with this Paschal Mystery” (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n27). The opportunity to be associated with the Paschal Mystery of Christ will encourage Christians to cooperate in the cultural framework and collective activity characteristic of our times, thereby humanizing them (cultural framework and collective activity) with a Christian spirit. However, a full cultural development can only be achieved when humanization is imbued with Christian spirit and accompanied by a deeply thought out evaluation of the meaning of culture and the knowledge of the human person (Vatican Council, “Gaudium” n61).

Salvation of Cultures: The Second Vatican Council discussed some principles for proper cultural development, and in the light of the relations between culture and the Good News, it stated that there are many links between the message of salvation and culture. In his self-revelation to his people culminating in the fullness of manifestation in his incarnate Son, God spoke according to the culture proper to each age (“Gaudium” n58). Therefore, we must never aim at replacing the cultural and religious experiences of any people with the Western world’s articulated religious experience. This salvation of culture echoes the stand of Pius XI who wanted to integrate Christianity with native cultures instead of making them European. The human person must see culture in terms of the totality of those impositions on nature within the different moments in history. Therefore, there is no one culture, but cultures. According to Niebuhr,

what we have in view when we deal with Christ and culture is that total process of human activity and that total result of such activity to which now the name culture, now the name civilization, is applied in common speech. Culture is the

‘artificial, secondary environment’ which man superimposes on the natural. It comprises language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes, and values. This “social heritage,” this “reality *sui generis*,” which the New Testament writers frequently had in mind when they spoke of “the world,” which is represented in many forms but to which Christians like other men are inevitably subject, is what we mean when we speak of culture (Niebuhr 32).

The document of the Second Vatican Council, “Ad Gentes Divinitus,” states that if the Church is to be in a position to offer all men the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, then it must implant itself among all these groups in the same way that Christ by his Incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the men among who he lived (“Ad” n10). The social and cultural circumstances being referred to in the Second Vatican Council documents is the “social heritage” and the “reality *sui generis*” mentioned by H. Richard Niebuhr in this referenced work.

In the same light, Christianity must become incarnate in African cultures because Christ is present in every human situation, in every community and in every human tradition. It must be explicitly acknowledged that Christianity needs to be incarnated within the cultures of the Africans. Africans must experience Christ in their own communities and within their cultural traditions; they are not to be asked to react to someone else’s experience of Christ (Shorter 22). Shorter maintains that the “incarnation” (or “the seeds of the Word” as the Second Vatican Council put it) has been accepted as favorable by Pope Paul VI and the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar. Christ

is at work in non-Christian traditions and he has planted seeds there, authentic Christian elements that the (African) Christian must recognize and put to use. Traditional culture must be carefully examined and the seeds of the Word must be uncovered “with gladness and respect.” Nothing must be allowed to be lost which can “praise the glory of the Creator, manifest the grace of the Savior, or contribute to the right ordering of Christian life” (Shorter 23).

Native Cultures: The foregoing is a reiteration of the ongoing discourse on the limitless nature of salvation that Christ has won for the human race, even for those who are yet to believe in the Gospel message but live an upright life. In other words, the people of Abakaliki are not in any way an exception. The condemnation of some traditional values by Christian preaching becomes problematic, especially when branded as pagan and against the Word of God. Our task in evangelization should rather be to inculturate the Gospel into the lives of the people, as John Paul II told the Nigerian bishops. He made it clear that it is the task of the bishops and their priest co-workers to offer the people a perennial message of divine revelation – “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (*Holy Bible*, Eph 3:8), which will help the people to bring forth from their own living tradition original expressions of Christian life, celebration and thought – *Catechesi Tradendae*, 53 (John Paul, “Carry” n12).

Therefore, engaging in the condemnation of most traditional values by the Christian teaching and praxis cannot be equated with presentation of a “perennial message of divine revelation.” Condemnation is demoralizing, whereas persistent presentation of the “eternal Gospel” (*Holy Bible*, Rev 14:6) will yield original expressions of the Good News. Because this attitude towards evangelization and the

Gospel has affected the people and their response, the African Synod set out to re-educate the people about their responsibility to evangelization and cultural values. “This awareness is especially evident in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations devoted to evangelization, catechesis, the family, reconciliation and penance in the life of the Church and of all humanity, the vocation and mission of the lay faithful and the formation of priests” (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n18). Therefore, the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops had the task of examining appropriate ways and means through which Africans would be better able to implement the mandate which the Risen Lord gave to his disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (*Holy Bible*, Mt 28:19) (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n28). In other words, they have to decipher the appropriate approach to evangelization that will root the Gospel within the African culture.

This emphasis seeks to correct the attitude of the early missionaries toward evangelization and the involvement of the people of God in it. As Hastings makes clear, the high era of Catholic missionary action and achievement in Africa in the first half of the twentieth century was not a time in which African-ness was cultivated, but only with the Second Vatican Council did there appear a very different pattern of ecclesiastical existence – a pluralist diversity in place of the ultramontanist which had been held in a particularly simplistic manner by most missionaries (9-10). The mission of the Church is to evangelize and therefore, it “is not tied exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, to any one particular way of life, or to any customary practices, ancient or modern. The Church is faithful to its traditions and is at the same time conscious of its universal mission; it can, then, enter into communion with different forms of culture,

thereby enriching both itself and the cultures themselves” (Vatican Council, “Gaudium” n58).

Africa is very rich in cultural values, which forms a “vast web in which the religious could not be separated from the secular, the personal from the public” (Hastings 36). The “Synod Fathers highlighted some of these cultural values, which are truly a providential preparation for the transmission of the Gospel.... Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and of a spiritual world. The reality of sin in 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” (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n42).

These developments in attending to other cultures are what could have enhanced the Gospel from the early beginnings of evangelization. The Synod Fathers seem to infer that it would have been easier for the Africans (Abakaliki people in particular) to integrate the Gospel and its praxis into their daily life because some of their cultural values are already a providential preparation for the transmission of the Gospel. It is just as Pius XI says that one must never lose sight of the fact that the Church’s objective is to evangelize, not to civilize. If it does civilize, it is done through evangelizing. (Semaines, 461-462) It is evident that there is a problem with the process of evangelization and its effects on the Gospel and the culture of the people. I am intent on addressing the process of evangelization and how it will transform the life of the people as well as make the Gospel indigenous.

ACTIVE DESEMINATION OF THE GOSPEL

Evangelization: Of significance here is the person of the historical Jesus who became human in everything except sin (*Holy Bible*, Heb. 2: 14-18, 4: 15) and “committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the people among whom he lived” (Hillman 32). The same message has been transmitted from generation to generation through the early Jewish, Hellenistic and Gentile Christian communities in their distinctive cultural traits (to be explored in chapter five). But in the African context, the “missionary Christianity in its Western garb and never entirely hidden colonial connections challenged that unitary whole from top to bottom.” (Hastings 36). The feeling of disconnection and alienation within the garb in which the Gospel is being presented leaves the people unconnected to the message and therefore un-incarnated to the Gospel.

The call for the “new evangelization” by Pope John Paul II flows from the recommendations of the Second Vatican Council and this has captivated other Christians and Catholics alike. The captivation cannot be divorced from the new verbal expression and opinion coded in a persuasive undertone inducing Christians to accept the new answer. New verbal expressions entail new approaches and methods, including tools inherent in the process of its execution. Most of these will be highlighted in subsequent chapters. However, “new evangelization” was a term popularized in the encyclicals of Pope Paul VI – “*Evangelii Nuntiandi*” – in responding to the new challenges stated above which face the Church in advancing its mission. And so John Paul II felt that the time had come for the Church to refocus on its mission *ad gentes*, to redirect its energies towards evangelization. He strongly believed that “no believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples” (John Paul,

“Redemptoris” n3). There is no exception in this area, because the new evangelization pertains not only to those who do not know Christ, but also to the dechristianized, the non-Christian religions, and those who have already received the faith, the non-believers and those who no longer practice.

Some have claimed that even though evangelization was urgent, many Christians failed to participate in it until recently, because they believed it was the responsibility of the priest and the catechist. This misconception was alluded to by John Paul II during his visit to Nigeria and corrected as well. He told the catechists that from the very beginning when the first missionaries arrived in Nigeria they have been constant and indispensable partners of the priests. The catechists assisted the early missionaries at every turn by acting as interpreters, preparing the people for various sacraments, baptizing the dying when no priest was around, animating the local Catholic community and leading it in Sunday worship in the absence of the priest and spearheading most Church development projects. He went on to remind them, quoting from *Catechesi Tradendae*, n19, that their special area of competence and dedication is catechetics, and its twofold objective of maturing the initial faith and of educating the true disciple of Christ by means of a deeper and more systematic knowledge of the person and the message of our Lord Jesus Christ (John Paul, “Unity” n6). One can understand why a scholar may claim that “the Catholic missionary effort in Africa had long been authoritarian enough, and in most places it had been distinctly slow in looking for any black initiative at all above the level of catechist. Only in a few areas, most notably the White Father missions around the great lakes, was there an African clergy of any considerable number in 1950” (Hastings 122-123). The same problem has been identified in our time and so the African Synod was geared

towards correcting it. John Paul II said this to the members of the Council of the Secretariat on 23 June 1989, with special emphasis laid on the involvement of the whole People of God, at all levels and especially in Africa, in the preparations for the Special Assembly. He said that if the Synod were prepared well, it would be able to involve all levels of the Christian community: individuals, small communities, parishes, dioceses, and local, national and international bodies (John Paul, "Ecclesia" n23).

So the 1950s was an era when the problems of the young Church were surfacing more and more obviously and in which, therefore, there was an obviously increasing need for new approaches, for an Africanization of Catholic Christianity instead of a mere imposition of forms long developed elsewhere (Hastings 124). The forms that were imposed did not deal with the multi-language in Africa and tribal divisions, poverty and illiteracy, marriage practices, beliefs in ancestral spirits, witches, rain-makers and other customs closely connected with evangelization (Hastings 124). In other words, evangelization and ministry had inevitably ceased being incarnational in its approach and therefore, alienated the faithful unconsciously from active participation in this ministry.

The council of Jerusalem in the early Church allowed the Gentiles to retain some of their cultural practices, instead of adopting the Jewish cultural practices. At this meeting in Jerusalem we witness the apostles and elders of Jerusalem defending the right of Paul and Barnabas to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles without forcing converts to obey the Jewish law (*Holy Bible*, Acts 15). The outcome of the meeting showed the early Church led by strong leaders yet involving the voice of the congregation (*Holy Bible*, Acts 15:12,22). The messengers sent from Jerusalem to Antioch were not part of the twelve apostles. The Church of our century is being called upon to assume its role in

evangelization and ministry. The people of Abakaliki can only play a role in evangelization and ministry if the Gospel is not foreign to them, but indigenous, as recommended by the Jerusalem Council.

Scripture as Normative Text for Evangelization: The Gospel needs to be incarnated within the particular Christian communities that receive it, and this is the rhetorical approach that we cannot ignore. Saint Paul did the same in Areopagus while addressing the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers of Athens, Greece (*Holy Bible*, Acts 17: 19). Paul saw the Athenians were very religious and even had an altar to an unknown God. He based his sermon on this significant finding among the Athenians. As Eugene C. Ulrich and William G. Thompson observe, “developing confidence and competence in the use of Scripture in our lives can make us ‘critical participants’ in these revealing texts. The more thoroughly we befriend this profound source of wisdom, the more powerfully and accurately can it contribute to and shape the reflections and actions which guide our Christian lives” (Ulrich, and Thompson 39). In other words, the Bible is the primary text of evangelization, thereby superseding the cultural influences of the evangelizer so that the product of evangelization (converts, communities, etc.) will be rooted in it.

The early Catholic missionaries were not rhetorically equipped as to make that quick connection between the Good News of Jesus Christ, their cultural idiosyncrasies and the culture in contact with the message of Jesus Christ. Consequently, the converts were not rhetorically equipped as well to face the cross-cultural conflicts that emerged with the reception of the Good News as to role-play it in their daily dealings with the needs of the community. The Second Vatican Council, the encyclicals and exhortations of John Paul II and the African Synod are all geared towards this re-awakening of the

immensity of the Christian life that lies within the African continent (culture). As “Instrumentum Laboris” clearly states “the [S]ynod is an opportunity to re-examine the process of communication of the Good News to see how effectively it enables Africans to grasp, live and tell in their own manner the mighty works of God” (“Instrumentum Laboris” n20).

The “Instrumentum Laboris” of the African Synod delineates vast and often rapid changes in the cultural, economic, social and political fields that are taking place in Africa. African peoples are aspiring to attain human rights and freedoms, including the freedom of belief and worship. This effort to attain human right and freedom is part of the context in which the Church has to proclaim the Good News of salvation in Africa. The first is the need for continuity, that is, the need to build on the work of the early missionaries, fathers in the faith, who planted and nurtured the particular churches of Africa with outstanding dedication and zeal. The second is the need for change, to correct what may have been the errors of the past and to pursue unremittingly the program of implementing the teachings of the Second Vatican Council (Instrumentum Laboris n21).

The Second Vatican Council was an opportune moment for the Church to identify and acknowledge the richness of non-Christian religions and adopt an evangelization that will respect the diversity and peoples’ indigenous culture. The very recent Synod on the Eucharist (October 2005) did not ignore the cultural leanings of this beautiful sacrament of nurture and grace.

Qualities of Evangelization

(i) Christocentric: My attention in this study is to examine “collaborative ministry” as a perspective in ministry, rich in rhetorical tropes and loaded with theological underpinnings and a new emphasis on evangelization rooted in culture and community. Collaborative ministry allows for participation of the laity and clergy as well in continuing the work of Jesus Christ. It allows for diversity. Collaborative ministry allows for interpersonal relationship between human persons and God, the birth of authentic communities of faith, and an ongoing service to the rising needs of the community. The new form of evangelization to emerge from collaborative ministry will be founded on the person of Jesus Christ and his Gospel. As John Paul II said on January 3, 1991 while commissioning the families of the Neo-Catechumenal Way communities that “the task which awaits you – the new evangelization – demands that you present, with fresh enthusiasm and new methods, the eternal and unchanging content of the heritage of our Christian faith. As you well know, it is not a matter of merely passing on a doctrine, but rather of a personal and profound meeting with the Saviour” (John Paul, “Families should” n12).

Also in his address, to the Council of the General Secretariat for the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops on September 10, 1990 at Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast, John Paul II requested that priests, whether sons of Africa or missionaries who have come from elsewhere, seminarians and consecrated persons, share their experiences in the spiritual and apostolic fields. He asks that they should share that experience in close unity with the catechists who occupy such an important place among their brothers and sisters, with the pastoral councils, the movements, the base

communities in the Church, and the parishes. United around your Bishops, you will thus sketch an African face for the Church, which dwells in your land, the image of Christ, the reflection of the Creator's splendour (John Paul, "Address" n4).

The biblical mandate remains a fact of becoming all things to all men, that God may by all means save some (*Holy Bible*, 1 Cor. 9:22). Referring to this text, Cunningham tells us that Paul "adjusted his message to his audience as he identifies himself, by turns, with Jews and with Gentiles. He does not claim that the Gospel is infinitely malleable; in that case, it would have no power to change lives. Nevertheless, the various emphases of the Christian faith allow it to shift its weight when necessary" (50). This biblical reference is a rhetorical demonstration of how Paul avoided altering the Christian faith or message in the process of bringing his audience into agreement, but he has rewoven and tailored the story of Christ Crucified and Risen in order that it might gain adherence with whatever particular group of people he was addressing (Cunningham 50). Saint Paul in the letter to the Romans says, "whoever will give worship to the name of the Lord will get salvation. But how will they give worship to him in whom they have no faith and how will they have faith in him of whom they have not had news and how will they have news without a preacher? And how will there be preachers if they are not sent? As it is said, how beautiful are the feet of those who give the glad news of good things" (*Holy Bible*, Romans 10: 13-15). In other words, only the "sent" or designated agent of evangelization can proclaim the desired message to the people in such a way that their lives will be transformed into newness by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ (*Holy Bible*, Romans 13: 14). The significance of this text has drawn the attention of Burke in

terms of “hearing” (language), indicating the relationship between faith and reason whereby the doctrines of the former are learned by application of the later (*Religion* 189).

Such transformation gained through the learning of the doctrines of the faith with the aid of reason does not exclude the environment and cultural embodiments of the evangelized. This type of transformation is a Spirit-led communication of the Gospel of the kingdom in such a way or ways that the recipients have a valid opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and become responsible members of his Church. This approach recognizes the essential work of the Holy Spirit, the various ways of conveying the Good News, holistic concern for the persons involved, the need for actual communication and understanding of the message, and the necessity of productive Church membership on the part of the convert. This is what the Church since Pius XI has conceived as the background for collaborative ministry. The ensemble of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ revolves around this great substance of human embodiment of the Gospel message.

The adoption of collaborative ministry will enable the ensemble of human activity to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” thereby making them means and acts of salvation. The “New Evangelization” is a call to a collaborative ministry that is Christocentric. In the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the African Synod, the fathers designated the “world of communications” as the first Areopagus of the modern age, which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as the “global village.” The fathers went on to affirm that the world of communications is both a culture to be evangelized, and a possibly potent means of evangelization. This world should be examined to see how it could best

be harnessed for evangelization, and the threats it may pose to African identity and values (Instrumentum Laboris n20).

Such caveats are indispensable if one considers that the African society did not have any separation in terms of the social and the religious; African life was holistic in nature. As Adrian Hastings puts it, “in Africa itself there was an absolutely integral relationship between religion and culture. African tradition was inherently holistic. Here less than anywhere could you mark off the secular from the sacred. The religious permeated pretty well everything or – one might well say – the secular permeated everything” (24). The early missionaries could never have been able to entirely make the separation with religion and culture without being educated or having experienced it him/herself. Taylor, a CMS missionary and also an African declared in his day that the evangelization of Africa must be done by Africans; by her own sons and daughters (Crowther and Taylor 305), who will be able to decipher the religious from the social, instead of throwing the baby out with the bath water. The task is ours today to make the distinction without destroying one or the other. This task is a visible implementation of the *kairos* of the people of God in Africa.

It is within their domain to make the Church

A plurality in unity, a fellowship of local churches, exchanging among themselves their vision of the Risen Christ in a bond of faith, hope and love. It is not simply a question of finding in African traditions factors that are consonant with Christianity, but of being prepared to go much further than this. We are back again at the concept of incarnation, for Christianity must become incarnate in African cultures. Christ is present in every human situation, in every community

and every human tradition, and this fact must be rendered explicit. Africans must experience Christ in their own communities and within their own cultural traditions; they are not asked to react to someone else's experience of Christ (Shorter 22).

F. K. Ekechi, of the Department of History at Kent State University in Ohio remarked that it is clear the early missionaries were eager to overthrow the social order and hoped to replace it with a foreign and Christian structure. Thus they induced their converts to break the laws and customs of the society (Ekechi 17). Therefore, the Bible was never the primary source of reference in dealing with crises in the cultural contact of the Gospel with the values of the people in the context of the early missionaries. Rather the Western Church, in its missionary thrust, was transplanted to every other continent. The new churches, though, were replicas of the Western Church in every respect. What was done in the West, was repeated everywhere else; what was taught in the West, was echoed elsewhere; the way the community was organized and run in the West, became the pattern everywhere else (Bellagamba 28). It was Pope Paul VI who strongly supported de-westernization of the Church and its indigenization, when he asked a historic question in his address to all the bishops of Africa: "must the Church be European, Latin, Oriental ... or must she be African?" (Hickey 199)

(ii) Christianization: Robert J. Hater (a priest of the archdiocese of Cincinnati and a professor of religious studies who specialized in evangelization, catechesis and ministry) maintains in his article, "Distinctive Qualities of Catholic Evangelization," that it must be acknowledged how Vatican II effected a major shift in the attitude towards God's

presence among all great world religions and cultures (e.g., Buddhism, Islam, Judaism). No longer can a westernized form of Christianity be imposed upon other cultures; rather future Christianity will be changed in light of non-western cultures as Buddhism. Islam and native religions bring fresh insights to Christianity. In other words, just as westernization changed Jewish Christianity; in the same way will world cultures bring new insights, vocabulary and spirit to contemporary Christian understandings of Jesus and the Kingdom (Boyack 21-22). Before concluding in these terms Hater traced the word “evangelization” from a Greek verb “*euangelizo*,” meaning to “convey Good News” of a wedding, party, athletic victory or such-like. The Septuagint (Greek version of the Hebrew Bible) uses it in 2 Samuel, Psalms, the prophets, and historical writings. Psalm 40: 9 stated that “in the assembly of all your people, Lord, I told you the Good News (“*euangelizon*,” the noun) that you saved me.” He states that Paul used *euangelizo* primarily as a missionary term. In those contexts it refers to “announcing the Good News of Jesus” as well as the broader sense of “describing the whole activity of a Christian disciple.” Paul’s application reflects the early Church’s practice whereby *euangelizo* refers to Jesus’ mission and ministry, his life and preaching; the activity of Christians to non-believers and the shared belief with fellow Christians (Boyack 14). In other words, the work of the Christian missionary is *euangelizo* — the sharing of the mission and ministry, life and preaching of Jesus and the activity with non-believers and among themselves. Hater points out that this is why Cardinal Suenens in *The Gospel to Every Creature*, published in 1956 linked “evangelization” with the whole process of Christianization. (Boyack 15).

In the light of the wide range of definitions and the continuing debate, it is well to consider two kinds of definitions. First, many insist on defining evangelism only in the strictest sense of the above New Testament words — preaching the Gospel, communicating God's message of mercy to sinners. Such a definition places strict limits to arrive at a precise definition of evangelism. It refuses to speak in terms of recipients, results, or methods, laying all its emphasis on the message. This type of definition is certainly correct, as far as it goes. It would represent the view of many evangelicals concerning evangelism. Many others, however, believe that such definitions are inadequate for the present day and that they are partly responsible for a truncated sort of evangelism too often practiced in the past.

Many would, therefore, prefer what might be described as a “holistic” definition, or one that takes into account the “Good News of the kingdom.” Following the thought process of Hater and Cardinal Suenens, one can understand that evangelization is an entire Christian activity and therefore involves every member of the community. Christians will be enabled to respond to the message of Christ in the context of their own historical moment and situation. This response based on the historical moment and situation constitutes the rhetorical tilt to the whole idea of evangelization. Evangelization gives birth to evangelizers who will bear witness to life, preaching, ministry and Christian activities. According to Bellagamba, evangelization in its strictest sense as proclamation of the Gospel is the primary activity of missionaries. No one can ever be considered a missionary without having performed this task (51).

(iii) Proclamation: According to John Paul II, proclamation is the permanent priority of mission. The Church cannot elude Christ’s explicit mandate, nor deprive men and

women of the “Good News” about their being loved and saved by God. He maintains that all forms of missionary activity are directed to this proclamation, which reveals and gives access to the mystery hidden for ages and made known in Christ (*Holy Bible*, Eph 3: 3-9; Col 1: 25-29), the mystery which lies at the heart of the Church’s mission and life, as the hinge on which all evangelization turns (John Paul, “Redemptoris” n44). More so, Cunningham tells us that when human beings communicate the Gospel to one another, they are engaging in the activity of proclamation as distinct from revelation. Therefore, he maintains that proclamation takes place, not only in the pulpit, but also at the altar; not only in the Church, but throughout the world. It will always occur whenever one human being seeks to persuade another in ways that are faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ (202).

For Paul VI, as indicated already, evangelization will also always contain – as the foundation, center and at the same time summit of its dynamism – a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men as a gift of God’s grace and mercy (Paul VI, “Evangelii” n27). Therefore, if evangelization is the foundation, center and summit of proclamation, it must not neglect man’s concrete life. If man’s concrete life, both the personal and the social, is on par for the course with evangelization, then evangelization must be adapted to the different situations that are constantly being realized in human society. This adaptation and diversification cannot be effectively achieved without rhetorical considerations or implications.

Moreover, since Vatican II has concretely stated that “the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God,” (“Ad”

n35) it was inadequate for the missionary to have created a situation whereby the people were left out in this mandate from our Lord. The people of Abakaliki diocese must realize that evangelization is a basic duty for them as Christians, so that they can serve the needs of their people. The method of evangelization of the early missionaries was exclusive, thereby leaving the people uncommitted to the course of the Gospel and the Church as well, contrary to the “way that Christ by his Incarnation committed himself to the particular social and cultural circumstances of the people among whom he lived” (Hillman 32). The style of evangelization used by the missionaries did not really empower and allow the people to assume the necessary responsibilities leading to full stature in the Church. They had more authority and voice in the communities’ affairs than they had in their supposedly acquired faith community, creating a lapse in the response to the call of Christ to get involved in the work of evangelization.

The missionaries were more interested in the great number of converts, building Churches, schools and hospitals as the case may be, than empowering the people to assume responsibilities in the new communities. Education was a priority, but those trained were not deeply grounded in religious and cultural values, which were relegated to the background, causing a disservice to their respective communities in the spirit of the Gospel. Hillman says,

Schools, used for evangelizing their impressionable audiences, resembled nothing so much as factories mass-producing new Christians. This type of evangelism often consisted in little more than memorizing translated prayers, doctrinal formulas, biblical texts, foreign songs and alien laws – with the fear of punishment as the motive force. This yielded large numbers of churchgoers. But

it also amounted to, at least tacitly, a systematic denigrating of the children's immemorial cultural heritage (Hillman 47).

The Holy Ghost Roman Catholic Missionary Society embarked on the formation of the Christian Village as a method of evangelization. Through this method, they bought slaves from the traders, freed them and taught them the Christian religion, hoping that they would be the African evangelists of Africa. The educational training given to these ex-slaves was not adequate to meet the impending handicap to be encountered by the missionaries. In his article, "The Methods and Ideology of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1905," P. B. Clarke says that "the ex-slaves did receive a rudimentary grounding in the three Rs [reading, [w]riting and [a]rithmetic] and became, in their capacity as interpreters, clerks in government service and teachers, pioneers of Roman Catholic education and influence in Eastern Nigeria" (Kalu 39). Such converts as the foundation of the Roman Catholic education left a lot to be desired; no wonder the congregation abandoned the project in the course of time and adopted the strategy of converting eminent persons in the society instead. For instance, the conversion of the Idigo and the Obi of Onitsha was a turning point for the people in the Catholic faith in Eastern Nigeria. Clarke tells us that the "conversions of Idigo and Samuel were followed by those of other influential members of society. Ephrem, an Anglican deacon and 'prince heretier' to the throne of Onitsha, came to 'true' church, it was alleged, after a dispute with CMS pastors over the meaning and interpretation of St. John's Gospel chapter 6, concerning the Eucharist" (Kalu 47).

This type of evangelization did not breed deep-rooted Christians who would be able to teach and practice their faith in the midst of serious challenge affecting their lives.

The Gospel was certainly not incarnated in such a way as to enable them to preach the Word of God without a threat to the belief in traditional religion. However, it must be acknowledged that the Holy Ghost Roman Catholic Missionary Society realized that it was only through proper education that they could win the citizens of Nigeria. Therefore, Clarke said that

by 1904 Lejeune was convinced the government was on his side. "It prefers," he wrote to Le Roy, "Roman Catholic educated agents to those educated by other denominations." In the same letter he emphasized that the Catholic Church must spread its influence by furnishing the government with personnel and ended, "education is the only way ahead in Africa, there is no other possible way to convert the people" (Kalu 50-51).

The type idea being conveyed in the above statement is why Vatican II

has inspired a type of ministry which is more in keeping with the Gospel than with the law, based more on the Spirit than on power and authority, and directed more to the needs of people than the traditions of the community. Vatican II has rooted ministry in history, has pneumaticized it, and has made it available to all who are called. Above all Vatican II has called for a sharing of ministries among God's people, and for recognition of many types of ministry. Vatican II has brought back ministry to the mainstream of the church's life, recommending plurality of ministries, cooperation among ministers, acceptance of ministries, and proper utilization of ministers for the good of the people and for the growth of the kingdom (Bellagamba 75).

The emphasis laid on education by the early missionaries was *ad rem* to the evangelization of the people, but did they really involve the people within the faith communities? In other words, was Paul VI's suggestion that these genuine efforts be really animated by love taken into consideration? The attention and emphasis on education was directed towards mere conversion and the securing of a place in the government of the country. The converts were not drilled adequately in the teachings of the Scripture since Catholic evangelization was mainly driven towards sacramentalizing and therefore, numbers were important. The Catholic tradition was never driven by the emphasis on Scripture as a basis for personal relationship with God. This lack of emphasis on Scripture by the Catholic Church detracts from one of the signs of love mentioned by Paul VI aimed at transmitting to Christians, not doubts and uncertainties born of an erudition poorly assimilated, but certainties that are solid because they are anchored in the Word of God. The faithful need these certainties for their Christian life; they have a right to them, as children of God who abandon themselves entirely into his arms and to the exigencies of love (Paul VI, "Evangelii" n79). To receive baptism was the ultimate goal of all aspirants to conversion, since it was a visible mark towards being educated and getting a good career.

I will uphold education as necessary, but its content is vital in determining the extent of involvement of the educated in the affairs of the community at large, both Church and civil society. I will uphold an evangelization and ministry that is collaborative, giving the Spirit a chance to humanize our societies. It is clearly evident that there is consistent lack of collaboration among the Catholic Christians; therefore, the duty of the Church is to reinstate the mission assigned by Jesus Christ. If there were

collaboration, probably the Church would not devote such energy trying to motivate the faithful to focus their attention on the missionary activity.

Catholic Christians have the responsibility to spread the Gospel by virtue of baptism. Since they have failed to be involved in this mission of the Church, either as intellectuals or messengers, the Church deems it necessary to use various forms of interaction to awaken this consciousness among the faithful. It is evident that a problem does exist. The solution to this problem is an ongoing event, thereby necessitating the attention given to it in this chapter. The constant social, environmental and political changes of individuals in the society complicates this problem even more – therefore the need for a rhetorical approach addressing the contingencies of life in the human society. The next chapter will help us see that ministry as a *mélange* of context and form resonate on the community of persons.

CHAPTER 3

COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY: THEORY AND PRACTICE

One of the dynamics used in stimulating collaborative ministry is the “new evangelization,” a new language launched by the Catholic Church to bring about a radical turn to the way evangelization had been carried out through the centuries. This new language ushered in an inclusive and broad understanding of evangelization, instead of focusing strictly on unbelievers. The inclusive characteristics touch the evangelized, the evangelizers and the non-evangelized. In effect, the society at large – especially within the African context – is the object of evangelization, whereas the subject remains the contents of the Good News.

CONCRETE ECCLESIA

The death of Christendom means that contemporary Christians do not naturally possess their own land or geographical location where their only culture will be religious. The loyalty of contemporary Christians to their geographical environment is both a duty and responsibility. The existence of different geographical peoples entails the multiplicity of peoples, and the Church is obliged to create an avenue of relating with these people. The Second Vatican Council recognized this fact and said it is possible to create in every country the possibility of expressing the message of Christ in suitable terms and to foster vital contact and exchange between the Church and different cultures. Nowadays, when

things change so rapidly and thought patterns differ so widely, the Church needs to step up this exchange by calling upon the help of people who are living in the world, who are expert in its organizations and its form of training and who understand its mentality, in the case of believers and nonbelievers alike (Vatican Council, “Gaudium” n44).

Shortly after the African Synod (1994), Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, in his book, *A Listening Church* (1996) observed that “the incarnational tension within the (African) Church implies that the Church as an institution cannot ignore the structures of the (African) society in which she is living” (124). In essence, the existence of the Church within any culture is already a counter-cultural encounter which neither that culture nor the Church can control. The encounter is bound to be a mélange of values at the disposal of the individuals exposed to the environment and therefore, inescapable. The moral unity that is maintained in the midst of these values becomes an identifying symbol for the local Church, though linked in communion to other local Church communities. It is within the context of these identifying symbols that one can genuinely speak of the “concrete ecclesia (Church)” as Cardinal Ratzinger [Pope Benedict XVI] and Maier used it in speaking about Cyprian and his North African Church, saying that “one is not a Christian alone but as a member of a concrete ‘ecclesia,’ united around a priest placed in charge of it” (Ratzinger 50).

These insights evoke a very strong case for the rhetorical issues grounding the facts elucidated in those points of view. In other words, collaborative ministry is rhetorically grounded and compellingly irresistible in order to make an ecclesia concrete, unable to ignore the structures of the society in which she finds herself. The Church calls on all Christians, especially the laity, to participate actively in its whole life. They are

not only to animate the world with the spirit of Christianity, but also they are to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of mankind (“Gaudium” n43). The theoretical questions underlying these assumptions are: how can the message of the Gospel be presented to the Africans (Abakaliki diocese) without ignoring their existing structures and how can the African Catholic Church be local within a Church that ignored most of its structures in the past? The point is, how can two genuine cultures with different value systems interpenetrate each other without one subsuming the other. An African cannot be a Catholic Christian without first being a member of one African society, and so in the words of Pope John Paul II “African Catholics are assuming ever greater responsibility in their local Churches and are seeking a deeper understanding of what it means to be both Catholic and African” (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n11). This internalizing of the message of the Gospel requires an adequate process of making the Gospel a natural part of the life-style of the people of Abakaliki diocese, not attempting to formulate an African (Abakaliki) Christian doctrine or Gospel, but rather allowing the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to be reflected through the culture of the African. Due to the fact that African society has always been a close-knit community of persons, it is strange for converts to the Christian religion to consider themselves as more advanced and privileged than their brothers and sisters who are unbelievers. This superiority complex exerted by Christians created some kind of division and enmity between families and communities, whereby Christians decided to neglect their community responsibilities in the pretext of Christian religious obligation. In the same vein, the same laxity infiltrated into the Church community, leading to lack of active involvement in the affairs of the local Church.

The melting pot here is in the contextuality of the Word spoken in the community, used in expressing the existing and the emerging values of the society. The Words form visible symbols of meaning within the cultural group. This neglect of responsibilities by the Christians explains Uzuoku's observation that it is because of a poor theology of baptism and a clericalized ministry that the laity have been denied their dignity in the Church (105). The poor theology of baptism is the concept of evangelization as conquest, as evident in the history of Christendom. Jose Comblin asserts that with such a conception of evangelization it is radically impossible to evangelize the indigenous peoples of the Americas and African peoples, who might possibly submit because they were fascinated by the Church's power, without their inner souls being reached (152). Such a conception of course leads to a situation whereby the Christians will quarantine themselves in order to be separated from the conquered and less privileged people of their society, in terms of acceptance of the revelation of the Word of God.

"Evangelization itself," reiterated by Comblin, "was conceived as teaching the catechism. Being a Christian meant, first, not being a heretic and knowing the truths of faith. Doctrine had priority over actions of charity. Today the concern for truth considered as a set of propositions is still prevalent in evangelization" (149). The leadership role of the priest is necessary to reestablish in the Church a holistic approach to ministry, which sees the involvement of laypeople in the economic and political domains as an invaluable manifestation of the life of the Church (Uzuoku 101).

The doctrine handed down from the missionaries, which persists today, reduces the Word of God in the community to a collection of laws and formulas committed to memory. According to Hans-Georg Gadamer,

preaching is not, like a legal verdict, a creative supplement to the text that it is interpreting. Hence the Gospel of salvation does not acquire any new content from its proclamation in preaching such as could be compared with the power of the judge's verdict to supplement the law. It is not the case that the Gospel of salvation becomes more clearly determined only through the ideas of the preacher. As a preacher he does not speak before the community with the same dogmatic authority that a judge does. Certainly preaching too is concerned with the interpretation of a valid truth, but this truth is proclamation, and whether it is successful or not is not decided by the ideas of the preacher, but through the power of the Word itself, which can call men to repentance even though the sermon be a bad one. The proclamation cannot be detached from its fulfillment. The dogmatic establishment of pure doctrine is a secondary thing. Scripture is the Word of God, and that means that it has an absolute priority over the teaching of those who interpret it (295).

If preaching is not a legal verdict, it must be an establishment of a relationship between God and his people; it will not end in simple recitation of the formulas, as in the case of Abakaliki diocese, but become an expression exuding a personal love of God in their lives.

Since Scripture (Word of God) has priority over the teaching of those who interpret it, the rhetorical approach that must be employed in order to elicit a genuine conversion that will commit the people to the course of the Gospel is paramount. In other words, such approach must take cognizance of the people's worldview, where "the

community and society looms large” (Uzukwu 106). African society (Abakaliki) has a worldview where the

spirit(s) is very much part of the human world and is a vital dimension for the humanization of the world. A similar situation is noted in the emergence of the Church, which is the sphere of the operation of the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of God. It is true that membership in the Church is through the conversion of individuals. But, as the new Israel of God, or the People of God, the Church is neither conceived nor experienced as a collection of individuals (Uzukwu 106).

MINISTRY AS COMMUNITY

Ministry and witnessing to the Gospel is not an individual activity, but a communal one. It is a conglomeration of form and content because the “Word” is the true light that enlightens every human being (*Holy Bible*, Jn 1:9). Thomas O’Meara defined ministry as “the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit’s charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to witness to, serve and realize the kingdom of God” (142). Ministry is inextricably tied to the community and therefore to a context. It is rhetorical. The minister, as an agent of Jesus Christ and the community, cannot ignore the influence of the Spirit and individual personality traits. The Second Vatican Council tells us that the Spirit is at work in the heart of every person, through the “seeds of the Word,” to be found in human initiatives, including religious ones, and in man’s effort to attain truth, goodness and God himself (“Ad” n3, n11, n15; “Gaudium” n10-11, n22, n26, n38, n41, n92-93). It must be acknowledged that the Spirit is at the very source of man’s (Africans’) existential and

religious questioning, a questioning which is occasioned not only by contingent situations (rhetorical situations) but also by the very structure of his being (John Paul, “Redemptoris” 28).

Proclamation, and every form of ministry, is made in union with the entire ecclesial community, and therefore, never a merely personal act. The missionary, according to John Paul II, is present and carries out his work by virtue of a mandate he has received; even if he finds himself alone, he remains joined by invisible but profound bonds to the evangelizing activity of the whole Church; so that sooner or later, the hearers of the Word come to recognize in the missionary the community which sent and supports him/her (John Paul, “Redemptoris” n45).

In other words, there is no room for individualism in ministry because the word we proclaim is not a mere human truth, but the Word of God embedded in an inherent power of its own. Therefore, an evangelizer acts not in virtue of the mission which he attributes to himself or by a personal inspiration, but in union with the mission of the Church and in her name. When an individual evangelizes in the name of the Church, who herself does so by virtue of a mandate from the Lord, no evangelizer is the absolute master of his evangelizing action, with a discretionary power to carry it out in accordance with individualistic criteria and perspectives; he acts in communion with the Church and her pastors (Paul VI, “Evangelii” n60). Thus, John Paul II reiterates that these communities become a means of evangelization and of the initial proclamation of the Gospel, and a source of new ministries. At the same time, by being imbued with Christ’s love, they also show how divisions, tribalism and racism can be overcome (“Redemptoris” n51).

The evangelizing activity of the Christian community, first in its own locality, and then elsewhere as part of the Church's universal mission, is the clearest sign of a mature faith. A radical conversion in thinking is required in order to become missionary, and this holds true both for individuals and entire communities. The Lord is always calling us to come out of ourselves and to share with others the goods we possess, starting with the most precious gift of all, our faith. The effectiveness of the Church's organizations, movements, parishes and apostolic works must be measured in the light of this missionary imperative. Only by becoming missionary will the Christian community be able to overcome its internal divisions and tensions, and rediscover its unity and its strength of faith (John Paul, "Redemptoris" n49).

These insights from Pope John Paul II convey the importance of collaborative method in the mission of the Catholic Church to plant the faith in every culture. He insists that developing ecclesial communities, inspired by the Gospel, will gradually be able to express their Christian experience in original ways and forms that are consonant with their own cultural traditions, provided that those traditions are in harmony with the objective requirements of the faith itself. To this end, especially in the more delicate areas of enculturation, particular Churches of the same region should work in communion with each other and with the whole Church, convinced that only through attention both to the universal Church and to the particular churches will they be capable of translating the treasure of faith into a legitimate variety of expressions (John Paul, "Redemptoris" n53).

Pope Paul VI further states that

evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life. But on the other hand evangelization risks losing its power and disappearing altogether if one empties or adulterates its content under the pretext of translating it; if, in other words, one sacrifices this reality to a local situation. Now, only a Church which preserves the awareness of her universality and shows that she is in fact universal is capable of having a message which can be heard by all, regardless of regional frontiers.” (“Evangelii” n63).

THE WORD AS A SIGN

Responding to these developments in the Catholic Church, Elochukwu Uzukwu reminds us that they prompted the emphasis on Small Christian Communities as an ideal pattern of evangelization in Africa, because they are the cradle for the flowering of the new pattern of collaborative ministry foreseen by the African Synod, as originally adopted by the Synod of 1974 and the Fourth Plenary assembly of SECAM in 1975 (105). Using what he called the “Manja Paradigm” (Central African Republic), he propounds a “ministry with Large Ears,” based on a totem for the chief (rabbit, an animal with large ears). He states that

the chief is considered to be very close to God, to the ancestors, and to the protective spirits of the community. He does not replace the ancestors. But along with other elders, he makes them present (represents them) in his person and

behavior. The manja underline listening as the most dominant characteristic of the chief. His “large ears” bring him close to God, ancestors, and divinities and close to the conversations taking place in the community. He has the last Word because he speaks after having assimilated and digested the Word in the community. He is the guardian of the dynamic, life-giving Word, which creates and re-creates the community. “Word” means truthfulness, fairness, honesty, communication (Uzukwu 127).

Collaborative ministry in the African Catholic communities, Abakaliki in particular, will allow the inexhaustible nature of the Word to be acknowledged and appreciated, but more fundamentally, it will be celebrated among the people.

The Word embraces the whole of humanity. When uttered, it heals and provides humane living. Such a sacred Word is “too large” for the mouth. This Word is an almost personalized phenomenon. No speaker ever totally masters or appropriates it; rather it belongs to the human community. Each sacred speech (of the community leader or of the representative of the community) approximates this Word (Thomas 28).

The same applies to the Gospel we are challenged to proclaim and bear witness to in various forms of ministry.

The Gospel entrusted to us is also the Word of truth. A truth which liberates and which alone gives peace of heart is what people are looking for when we proclaim the Good News to them. The truth about God, about man and his mysterious destiny, about the world; the difficult truth that we seek in the Word of God and of which, we repeat, we

are neither the masters nor the owners, but the depositories, the heralds and the servants. (Paul VI, “Evangelii” n78). The Word of God (Gospel) is an ongoing revelation to be experienced by a concrete person in a concrete situation. Probably, we can see why Burke tells us that “things can but move or be moved. Persons by definition can act. In being endowed with words (symbols) by which they can frame responses to questions and commands, by the same token they have responsibility” (*Religion* 187). Any particular person as the sole owner cannot usurp this Word; instead it becomes a personal experience linked to the narration and description of the revealed Word. Joseph G. Healey maintains that the

contemporary theology of revelation emphasizes the communication of God himself to his people. Revelation is an ongoing, dynamic process of God’s self-disclosing presence, which changes persons’ hearts as well as their minds, transforming their whole way of life. Revelation takes place in history, in the everyday events of the lives of individuals and communities. It is not primarily conceptual or verbal, but an experience of God’s presence at the heart of everyday life (Healey 129).

I can confidently say that revelation is wholly meaningful within the context of a life-situation. The life-situation becomes the springboard to share the peculiar experience with the community or another member of the community. The life-situation becomes the African Catholic (Abakaliki) Gospel with similarities to the other four Gospels, yet maintaining its originality and novelty. In the same vein, Pope Benedict XVI, in his address to the Staff of La Civiltà Cattolica in Rome states that the “signs of the times”

must correctly be interpreted in order to transmit the teachings of the Church effectively in our world. He categorically stated that accurate interpretation does require that the evangelizer present in efficient ways the announcement of the Good News in accord with the historical situation [as distinct from the historical moment] in which men and women live today (Benedict XVI, “Evangelization Needs” 7 Feb. 2006).

Based on these concrete events of their lives, the people of Abakaliki diocese being exposed to the revelation of the Word will become

responsible for evangelization and catechesis. Each person has a contribution to make to the evangelization of the whole community. As Saint Paul says in the *Holy Bible* 1 Corinthians 12:4: “To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” The SCCs (Small Christian Communities) themselves provide a unique opportunity for the development of different gifts and ministries. Through these groups laymen and laywomen exercise real responsibility in building a truly local Church and developing an expression of their faith from within their own cultural experience (Healey 130).

The Word becomes a common sign by which we hear and express meanings to one another as well. Augustine maintains “Words have come to be predominant among men for signifying whatever the mind conceives if they wish to communicate it to anyone” (*On Christian* 2. 3. 4). He further states that

thus it happened that even the Sacred Scripture, by which so many maladies of the human will are cured, was set forth in one language, but so that it could be spread conveniently through all the world it was scattered far and wide in the various

languages of translators that it might be known for the salvation of peoples who desired to find in it nothing more than the thoughts and desires of those who wrote it and through these the will of God, according to which we believe those writers spoke (Augustine, *On Christian* 2. 5. 6).

The rhetoric of collaborative ministry is grounded in the acceptance that the various languages of the translators will unveil the hidden treasure in the Sacred Scripture originally set forth in one language. The significance given to the various languages of the translators has become the theoretical basis for collaborative ministry.

It is within the realm of the various languages that the people of Abakaliki diocese, as it was for Augustine, will find the will of God for them as set out in the original language. To participate in ministry, the people of Abakaliki diocese must come to the realization that as Augustine says,

he is a slave to a sign who uses or worships a significant thing without knowing what it signifies. But he who uses or venerates a useful sign divinely instituted whose signifying force he understands does not venerate what he sees and what passes away but rather that to which all such things are to be referred. Such a man is spiritual and free, even during that time of servitude in which it is not yet opportune to reveal to carnal minds those signs under whose yoke they are to be tamed (*On Christian* 3. 9. 13).

Therefore, the power of language cannot be under-estimated within the context of collaboration. The power of language is a remote reason necessitating the claim of Kenneth Burke that insofar as men cannot live by bread alone, they are moved by

doctrine; in other words, they derive purposes from language, which tells them what they ought to want to do and tells them also how to do it. It is in this process of telling them that they are goaded with great threats and promises even unto the gates of heaven and hell (*Religion* 274).

METANARRATIVES

Therefore, ministry will never be executed effectively and collaboration will be sacrificed on the altar of individualism unless the Catholic Church in Abakaliki comes to understand that the story of faith begins with daily life(s). However, we must acknowledge that members of our contemporary society are formed by an infinite variety of stories; not only classic stories of western civilization, but also local stories too numerous and too diverse to specify. The moral formation of a person today is far more diverse than was that of the typical Athenian citizen; we belong not simply to a particular city-state, but to a wide range of overlapping communities (Cunningham 119). Faith can only be expressed in the concrete life of the believer and in a familiar language. Therefore, we hear John Paul II instructing that missionaries “must learn the language of the place in which they work, become familiar with the most important expressions of the local culture, and discover its values through direct experience” (John Paul, “Redemptoris” n53).

Collaborative ministry as a rhetorical tool will facilitate the acquisition of deep-rooted faith, which will easily be expressed in the form of the daily life experience that touches the other members of the community. It will create a discursive environment whereby the human person is treated as a unique individual with emotions and feelings. It invites us to see the human person as someone capable of a response to discourse, not

an object to be talked about or talked at, thereby avoiding the mutual interaction of persons. This methodology calls for openness toward the other, while accepting the significance and worth of the other in a conversation in view of the historical moment. The historical moment of each person already situates each individual, and therefore, the importance of the face, alterity, and otherness of the Other. The Catholic Christians of Abakaliki diocese are thus led to the level whereby they understand the message of the Gospel within their historical moment. They are propelled as well to live in a life worthy of the message in response to their historical moment. Collaborators become what Arendt calls “story tellers” trying to unify their past lives with the Gospel while carving a way for present life situations; they “dig under the rubble of history in order to recover those ‘pearls’ of past experience, with their sedimented and hidden layers of meaning, such as to cull from them a story that can orient the mind in the future” (Benhabib 91). And Burke states that the very resources of language to which such quandaries owe their rise also goad men to further questioning—for language makes questioning easy. Given language, one can never be sure where quest ends and question begins. Therefore the search for some grand over-all purpose as seen among philosophers, metaphysicians and theologians emerge (*Religion* 275).

Collaborative ministry becomes an invitation to dialogic performance stemming from respective cultural and historical contexts, where meaning is jointly sought, shared and acted upon by the entire people of the Abakaliki diocese. Collaborative ministry will envisage “a continuous process of conversation in which understanding and misunderstanding, agreement as well as disagreement are intertwined and always at work. The very commitment to conversation as the means through which the enlarged

mentality is to be attained suggests the infinite reversibility and indeterminacy of meaning” (Benhabib 197-198). There needs to be an ongoing conversation between African traditional life style and the Christian life, intertwined with agreement and disagreement until such a time when meaning is attuned to the historical moment. In a society where the reality is jointly constructed based on the readiness to welcome change, while accepting the problems of the society with openness to the reality of the historical moment, we cannot overlook dialogue. Ronald Arnett would opine that the historical face of dialogic civility is based in change and willingness to address the problems that impact human development in a given period of time within the public arena. Dialogic civility exists wherever there is genuine effort to offer public change within a conversational context that seeks not violence, but concern for the other and calls for responsible action (301-302). This conversational context is a *sine qua non* for collaboration, because it creates a face-to-face situation where the other is fully real and this reality is part of the overall reality of everyday life, and as such, massive and compelling. The conversational context is demonstrative of the Church as an open society or community, which has also enshrined in her constitution the need for a freedom of expression and free flow of information, but in humility (Vatican Council, “Gaudium” n62).

The setting for collaborative ministry requires a conversational background about faith, a place or home for the conversation, and a face-to-face situation where the other is fully real in the context of openness to the reality of the historical moment. Such attitude will absolve the Catholic Church from the danger of what Benhabib qualified as “hermeneutic monism of meaning,” namely the assumption that the narratives of

Christian culture are so univocal and uncontroversial that in appealing to them one could simply be exempt from the task of evaluative, ideal-typical reconstruction (226).

Listening exercises, parish discussions and information-giving groups will encourage the willingness to address the problems impacting the community of faith in a given period of time within the public arena, and in a conversational context that seeks a concern for the other while calling for a responsible action (ministry). Cunningham, speaking about Christian practices said, Christians also engage in community-oriented practices. These may include regular gatherings for prayer and worship, and for the acknowledgement of community life. They may also include practices that address the wider human community, that is, action on behalf of others. Communal practices may be even more important for the formation of an audience's processes of judgment; for in the context of such communal practices, people learn about transformation and action, which operate at the very center of rhetorical activity (Cunningham 94). The process will create an avenue for the voiceless members of the community of faith to give their word in a significant way that advances creativity within the Catholic Church. A community of faith where everybody will have the opportunity to share and participate in the public discourse is created within the historical moment. Elochukwu E. Uzukwu has rightly pointed out that, "many missionaries and colonial officers, who labored under a superiority complex, found it difficult to appreciate the kind of free speech practiced in Africa, which allows the creative Word to generate humane living in the community" (128).

Ministry in the Catholic Church in Africa is intimately tied to the birth of new communities of faith bearing in mind that services arose within the Church according to the needs of the Gospel, taking a cue from the early Church communities. In the early

Church community, we can identify “the ministry of the seven chosen to oversee the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians (*Holy Bible*, Acts 6), and those placed in charge of the churches as presbyter-bishops (*Holy Bible*, Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5), and numerous services in the church, whose list is not supposed to be exhaustive (*Holy Bible*, 1 Cor 12)” (Uzukwu 131 – 132). The historical moment for the Catholic Church in Africa is the counter-cultural encounter of the Gospel with African cultural values.

It may be easier in a monocultural district of the church to discern what the Spirit is saying to the churches. But in the present multicultural world context where Asians, Europeans, and Africans live the paschal mystery of Christ, the discernment of the unity established in difference (Irenaeus, Gregory the Great, John Paul II) becomes an art which needs to be frequently tested by the vote of the people to confirm the operation of divine providence in the service of leadership and to limit human error (Cyprian) (Uzukwu 144).

In the same vein we notice that Saint Augustine relates word and deed as a superior semiotic appeal that can create a rhetorical unity in the community of faith. Calvin Troup tell us that “through his rhetorical choreography he [Augustine] instructs the very ministers who have asked for his *Confessions* on how to conduct their rhetorical work in their own temporal age” (Troup 137). For Augustine says,

it is wisdom itself that shines through me, clearing my cloudiness, which again overwhelms me, fainting from it, in the darkness and amount of my punishment. For my strength is brought down in need (*Holy Bible*, Psalm 31:10), so that I cannot endure my blessings, until Thou, O Lord, who hast been gracious to all

mine iniquities, heal also all mine infirmities; because Thou shalt also redeem my life from corruption, and crown me with Thy loving-kindness and mercy, and shalt satisfy my desire with good things, because my youth shall be renewed like the eagle's (qtd. in Oates 188-189).

Saint Augustine makes a clear distinction between *verbum sapientia* and *verbum scientia* with each significant on the distinctive level of human application and epistemology.

Through collaborative ministry the words and deeds of the Christians are incarnated in particular cultures and histories. The words and deeds evoke interpretation and therefore, the participation of the audience cannot be considered nonessential. The actions we exude in daily living are open to interpretations and cannot in any way be ignored in themselves. According to Calvin Troup, Augustine claims that gestures are natural and naturally understood; however he could only learn words by listening to others and the words themselves revealed no necessary connection to the objects they signified (Troup 86). The life of the Christian is simply an effort to live the Gospel values by imitating the good examples of other members of the community. The paradigm for such emulation *par excellence* is God himself. Luke 8:2-56 in the *Holy Bible* shows how Jesus brought the Good News. He not only preached; he demonstrated his power over the forces of nature in saving his fearful disciples. He exorcised a demon, healed a poor woman that had hemorrhaged for twelve years, and raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. Clearly he brought the Good News by word and deed and not by word only. Similarly, Paul described how he had been used to “win obedience from the Gentiles, by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the

Spirit of God so that ... I have fully proclaimed the Good News of Christ” (*Holy Bible*, Rom. 15:18-19).

In other words, evangelization as a collaborative ministry can be fully achieved when we take into account the “holistic” approach, or the Good News of the kingdom. Therefore, evangelization must be a Spirit-led communication of the Gospel of the kingdom in such a way or ways that the recipients have a valid opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and become responsible members of the Catholic Church. Such an approach takes into account the essential work of the Holy Spirit, the various ways of conveying the Good News, holistic concern for the persons involved, the need for actual communication and understanding of the message, and the necessity of productive Church membership on the part of the convert. The Catholic Church wants its members to understand evangelization in these terms, where an equal emphasis is placed on the word and deed. The balance is a necessity, although different situations may sometimes call for more emphasis on one aspect or the other. The biblical mandate remains “to become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some” (*Holy Bible*, 1 Cor. 9:22).

In terms of the above, collaborative ministry is both theoretical and praxis oriented, leaning heavily on understanding the Word in order to live it out in the community of faith. How can one understand the Word effectively as to apply it to the daily life? How can we negotiate the numerous significations inherent in the Word and the cultural interpretations to come to its full knowledge? For according to Augustine, the vocal pronunciation of all these words is caused by the depth of this world, and the blindness of the flesh, by which thoughts cannot be seen, so that it is necessary to speak

aloud in the ears; thus, although flying fowls be multiplied upon the earth, yet they derive their beginning from the waters (qtd. in Oates 246). This is the social context of making meaning meaningful. Augustine seems to imply here that social meaning is relational and therefore, contextually cultural. Among the signs by means of which men express their meanings to one another, says Augustine, some pertain to the sense of sight, more to the sense of hearing, and very few to the other senses. In other words, when a man nods, a sign is given to the sight of the person whom we wish by that sign to make a participant in our will. Some signify many things through the motions of their hands, and actors give signs to those who understand with the motions of all their members as if narrating things to their eyes (Augustine, *On Christian* 2. 3. 4).

Hans-Georg Gadamer also asserts that “Scripture is the Word of God, and that means that it has an absolute priority over the teaching of those who interpret it” (295). He further states, “Bultmann himself points out that all understanding presumes a living relationship between the interpreter and the text, his previous connection with the material that it deals with. He calls this hermeneutical requirement ‘fore-understanding’, because it is clearly not something attained through the process of understanding, but is already presupposed” (Gadamer 295). In other words, the epistemology of collaborative ministry is founded on the fact that as human beings the capability to grasp the Word of God is not the acuity of the evangelizer, but because the Word of God has broken into the human temporality and finiteness. According to Calvin Troup, “through the incarnate Word, God inhabits the very temporal frame He created and produces belief in people through acts of human significance. Rhetoric thereby becomes a legitimate linchpin within the Christian orthodoxy of the Confessions” (Troup 5). The end of all ministries is

to create a unique community of faith that understands the Word of God and acts it out in daily living.

CIVILIZATION OF LOVE

The certitude to this truth can be guaranteed with collaborative ministry acting as the rhetorical trope where the incarnate Word is made meaningful, understandable and applicable to the community of faith. At the center of this performance is charity (*caritas*). “In terms of rhetoric,” says Troup, “Augustine posits that love is a prerequisite to belief, the motivation for speaking, and a necessary element for valid interpretation (4.12.19, 10.3.3-4; Sutherland 148)” (Troup 116). He again states that “by his reinvocation of charity, Augustine reminds us that interpretation takes place within a community for the sake of that community (12.23.32)” (Troup 124). It is to these same types of communities that John Paul II referred as a “sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, a solid starting point for a new society based on a ‘civilization of love’” (“Redemptoris” n51). With every new interpretation emerges a “new evangelization” which must strive to incarnate Christian values and open the Gospel message to the culture of the people in context, and in this case the people of Abakaliki diocese. A diocese where despite the magnanimous spirit with which the St. Patrick priests worked tirelessly to sow the seed of the Gospel through education which was in the forefront of the apostolate, culture still inhibits deep commitment to the faith. According to Thomas McGettrick, bishop emeritus of Abakaliki diocese:

Education was in the forefront of the apostolate. Mind has to be taught to think and to know and wills to act in a right way. So at all central parishes schools

leading to First School Leaving Certificate [FSLC] (standard VI) were slowly maybe, but surely built up. Then as outstations began, schools developed from Infant I and II to standard VI if possible (19).

Therefore, understanding and the acquisition of knowledge are grounded within the community where the sharing of ideas is effectively paramount. The acquisition of knowledge and understanding becomes more effective when founded on the terms of collaboration with other members of the community or society. Therefore, collaborative ministry becomes both a theory and praxis, since it enhances learning and understanding of the goals of the community, responding to the command of Jesus: Go out to the whole world to proclaim the Good News (*Bisar*) of salvation. The Good News of God's saving work and the proclamation of that news cannot be separated, as evident from the Old Testament (*Holy Bible*, 2 Sam. 4:10, Ps. 40:10, Isa. 52:7), because the Israelites believed God was actively involved in their lives (including battles and wars). Therefore, *bisar* came to have a religious connotation. To proclaim the Good News of Israel's success in battle was to proclaim God's triumph over God's enemies. Believing that credit for the victory belonged to God, the Israelites' proclamation of the Good News of victory was, in fact, proclamation about God. This proclamation of the victory of God becomes the application of the theory and practice in the Old Testament, whereas its theoretical understanding is different in the New Testament. Hence Augustine makes this analogy between the believer, unbeliever and God.

We have no fear that anyone who knows Him could be pleased. And He wishes to be loved, not for selfish ends, but so that He may confer an eternal reward on

those who love Him, which is the very object of their love. Thus it is that we also love our enemies. For we do not fear them, since they cannot take away that which we love. [And if we hate them, it means we have given them power to take away He whom we love.] Rather are we sorry for them, for the more they hate us, the further removed are they from that which we love. If they were to turn to Him and love Him as the source of blessedness, they would necessarily love us also as companions in a great good (*On Christian* 1.29.30).

Notably visible is the consistent call by the Catholic Church to its members to take responsibility in spreading the Good News of the Word made flesh. John Paul II distinguished three situations that are glaring to the entire Catholic Church.

First, there is the situation which the Church's missionary activity addresses: peoples, groups and socio-cultural contexts in which Christ and his Gospel are not known, or which lack Christian communities sufficiently mature to be able to incarnate the faith in their own environment and proclaim it to other groups. This is mission *ad gentes* in the proper sense of the term.

Secondly, there are Christian communities with adequate and solid ecclesial structures. They are fervent in their faith and in Christian living. They bear witness to the Gospel in their surroundings and have a sense of commitment to the universal mission. In these communities the Church carries out her activity and pastoral care.

Thirdly, there is an intermediate situation, particularly in countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, 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 his Gospel. In this case what is needed is a “new evangelization” or a “re-evangelization” (“Redemptoris” n33).

All of these indicators are present in the different parts of the universal Church, either in their totality or in part. The Catholic Diocese of Abakaliki is reminiscent of these indicators and therefore the urgent need for complete responsibility of the faithful in carrying out the mission enjoined on them by the entire Church.

John Paul II reiterates in the same encyclical that “the mission *ad gentes* is incumbent upon the entire people of God. Whereas the foundation of a new Church requires the Eucharist and hence the priestly ministry, missionary activity, which is carried out in a wide variety of ways, is the task of all the Christian faithful” (“Redemptoris” n71).

The origin of this mission is Jesus who was sent to the earth to reveal the Father (*Holy Bible*, John 1:18; 14:9), to glorify the Father (*Holy Bible*, John 13:31; 14:13; 17:1,6), to bring the kingdom of God on earth (*Holy Bible*, Matt. 12:22-32), and to make God's love and mercy known to a lost world. He came to seek and save the lost (*Holy Bible*, Luke 19:10). His mission was inclusive. While Jesus' ministry was primarily for the Jews, he also met the needs of non-Jews. He healed the daughter of “a woman of Canaan” and praised the woman for her faith (*Holy Bible*, Matt. 15:21-29) and healed the servant of the Roman centurion (*Holy Bible*, Matt. 8:5-13). On another occasion, he initiated a conversation with a Samaritan woman, which led both to her conversion and to that of the entire community (*Holy Bible*, John 4).

The Catholic Church has come to realize that the significance of the historical moment, which is highly rhetorical, is necessary for the advancement of the course of the Gospel in our society. The historical moment is what gives credence and commitment to the truth of the Gospel through the influence of the Holy Spirit present and active in every time and place. John Paul II assures us that “the Spirit, therefore, is at the very source of man’s existential and religious questioning, a questioning which is occasioned not only by contingent situations [rhetorical] but by the very structure [historical situations] of his being” (“Redemptoris” n28). Those existential issues are embedded within the historical moment of the human person; their religious and cultural inclinations are intertwined in the present day socio-cultural and religio-political environment. We must come to realize that

by humbling human pride and detaching man from himself on the one hand, by revealing God’s love and attaching man to his one good, Christ restores what has been corrupted and redirects what has been perverted. He transforms the emotions of men, not by substituting reason for emotion, but by attaching fear, desire, grief, and joy to their right object. The citizens of the holy city of God, who live according to God in the pilgrimage of this life, both fear and desire, and grieve and rejoice. And because their love is rightly placed, all these affections of theirs are right. The moral virtues men develop in their perverse cultures are not supplanted by new graces, but are converted by love (Niebuhr 214).

What is the place of religion and faith in Abakaliki diocese, a society where poverty and corruption, observance of traditional customs and cultural values are the daily encounter of the Catholic Christian?

COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY IN ABAKALIKI DIOCESE

Similar questions have been asked by John Odey, a Catholic priest from Abakaliki diocese:

How could the Christian faith become more of a practical reality in the light of the people's life? How could it become more effective? And how could it transform its efficacy to the oppressed and convince them that the Christian God is the One who has demonstrated his love for the world in the Incarnation, and his option for the poor in Christ's strong criticisms of the rich and the powerful? How can theology truly merge the context of our time in order to actualize the profundity of the social, political and economic demands of the Christian love? (75).

To these questions and several others of the like John Paul II admonishes that we fight hunger by changing our lifestyle – a motto that has been used in Church circles showing the people of rich nations how to become brothers and sisters to the poor; while turning to a more austere way of life which will favor a new model of development that gives attention to ethical and religious values (“Redemptoris” n59).

In a document on the African Synod at the Eight Plenary Assembly of SECAM held in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1987. John Paul declares,

that the credibility of the Church in Africa depended upon Bishops and priests who followed Christ's example and could give witness of an exemplary life; upon truly faithful men and women religious, authentic witnesses by their way of living the evangelical counsels; upon a dynamic laity, with deeply believing parents, educators conscious of their responsibilities and political leaders animated by a profound sense of morality ("Ecclesia" n22).

Therefore, the clergy of Abakaliki diocese must work towards collaboration with the laity in order to open up their world of development and achieve a new model of development within their domain. They must see and realize that the language of the Gospel (God's message) is coded in conventional signs that will demand decoding when we show one another how to convey ideas and feelings through what John Paul II called a missionary activity that brings light and an impulse towards true development ("Redemptoris" n59). The spirit of collaboration already exists in the diocese of Abakaliki and Africa at large as noted in the final document of the African Synod and only needs to be strengthened with the "communion among her members, beginning with her Pastors" (John Paul, "Ecclesia" n17). The new communities created by this communion will be the new people of God marking by their word and deed the true meaning of their assembly. The style of ministry evident in these communities is a major step towards challenging the existing characteristics of the African society. Collaborative ministry will aid in restructuring the Church and so her message and witness will be more convincing to society. In the traditional African society, the community or family models looms large and the world of the spirits (ancestors) are joined with the human world. The individual is never juxtaposed to the community or society; rather the gifts of each person are

brought together with those of others to build a genuine and humane society. Harry Sawyerr says that African society is based on a clan relationship embracing the living, the dead and the unborn. This clan relationship is in effect a covenant relationship (30).

The holistic view of the community tallies with Alyward Shorter's conception of the Incarnation as Christ's invitation to the human race to identify with fellow human beings, because the world of the spirit is also the world of bodily existence (Shorter 18). This type of openness will create in African Christians a new "attitude that makes them active and creative, bringing new institutions and new structures into existence" (Shorter 19). African communal living is an invitation to modern Catholic Christians to assume a responsibility in their emerging communities of faith where they will encounter one another and Jesus Christ, "the eldest brother, the first-born among many sons," a biblical image proposed by Harry Sawyerr (Shorter 17). The individual gifts will be seen as a sign of responsibility within this community—a call to service of God and neighbor and personal ministry (*Holy Bible*, Rom. 12:7; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:11) or talking of the ministry of angels (Hebrews 1:14). In same vein, the ongoing relationship with the society which the Christian considers pagan and yet never succeeds in separating himself completely, constitutes a perennial problem. In response to this problem, Niebuhr states that the

radical Christian has also always been required to take recourse to principles he could not derive directly from his conviction of Christ's Lordship. His problem here has been that of living in an interim [contingency]. Whether exclusive Christians are eschatologists or spiritualists, in either case they must take account of the "meanwhile," the interval between the dawning of the new order of life and

its victory, the period in which the temporal and material has not yet been transformed into the spiritual. They cannot separate themselves completely, therefore, from the world of culture around them, nor from those needs in themselves which make this culture necessary. Though the world lies in darkness, yet distinctions must be made between relative rights and wrongs in that world, and in Christian relations to it (Niebuhr 73).

In relation to the rights and gifts of communities and individuals, Elochukwu Uzukwu says that the recognition

is basic to the understanding of ministry in the church. It shows that fundamentally all members of God's family are graced (filled with God's particular gifts). All communities have their particular gifts which they bring to the communion of churches. No member of the church-family has an origin different from other members, though each has his or her own particular gifts. There is no question of any member being superior to any other member. In other words, no one, apart from the Son of God, the Head and Master of the church, is more a child of the common Father of all in the one church which is the Mother of all. All are begotten through the same ritual process of baptism in "water and Spirit." Ministries and services are exercised for the well-being of the community; through them the church-community bears witness to the Reign of God in the world (112).

As a learning process the collaborative ministry creates an environment where the members of the community of faith both learn and share their religious experiences

through their services within the community. Collaborative ministry will lead to easy integration of the Christian values based on its semblance with their cultural values. It becomes a rhetorical tool to familiarize the new members of the community of faith with new ways of attending to the responsibility required of them in the society. The responsibility required of the new members is a clear demonstration of the importance of human institution and the dignity of each person in the human family as we shall see in the next chapter.

The faith experience of each community becomes the “fifth gospel,” as distinct from the “synoptic” (Luke, Matthew and Mark) and the “fourth” (John) gospels. It becomes a narrative or story. It is not an individual story but a communal story. It is collaborative and therefore conventional. All the gospels are the result of the post-Easter religious experience of the community of believers formed after they received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the primary agent of evangelization and therefore empowers the ministers to engage in the formation of communities. The same Holy Spirit is still at work in the Catholic Church today, no matter the geographical location of this community of faith.

CHAPTER 4

COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY AS A HUMAN INSTITUTION

The Word of God is coded with the narrative of the early Church communities. The faith experiences of the early Church communities are expressed in language(s). It becomes expedient to delve into the nature of signs in order to deconstruct these unique experiences of the early believers. The very project of deconstructing their (early Christians) faith experiences enhances internalization and participation on the part of the contemporary Christians because the communal structures used in the construction of their (early Christians) historical moment cannot be ignored in the process.

The rhetoric of collaborative ministry lies in the fact that it is a way of inviting all Catholic Christians to get involved in the task of evangelization or matching their faith with deed. It is a way of talking, persuading, and transforming the existing Catholic Christian communities to incarnate the Gospel in their communities of faith and the society at large. In the first place, they have to understand the Word of God in order to translate it into their personal lives. This effort to understand the Word of God implies the question of constructing meaning and understanding within a certain context, and therefore, we have to evoke the sign function of conventional signs.

It is implicit that not just any external sign is conventional, but basically the rhetorical common places (*loci or topoi*). Therefore, Saint Augustine maintains that all those practices which have value among men because men agree among themselves that

they are valuable are human institutions; and that of these some are superfluous and extravagant, others useful and necessary. Thus if those signs which actors make in their dances had a natural meaning and not a meaning dependent on the institution and consent of men, the public crier in early times would not have had to explain to the Carthaginian populace what the dancer wished to convey during the pantomime. It is true that everyone seeks a certain verisimilitude in making signs so that these signs, in so far as is possible, may resemble the things that they signify. But since one thing may resemble another in a great variety of ways, signs are not valid among men except by common consent (*On Christian 2. 25. 38*).

In other words, the incarnate Word secures the entire sign function; unifying the signifier (speech) and signified (thought) – which together constitute the sign – with its referent (object) by necessary rather than arbitrary relations. The relations are necessary because they are eternal relations, despite the fact that they are expressed temporally (Troup 114). For Saint Augustine, there is no other reason for signifying, or for giving signs, except for bringing forth and transferring to another mind the action of the mind in the person who makes the sign (*On Christian 2. 2. 3*). Collaboration is all about bringing forth and transferring to another mind the action of the mind in the person making the sign. It is also opening forth the mind to receive the action transferred from another person who made the sign. These two actions and the inter-locking of minds cannot be productive unless the signs are meaningful and understood. The meaning is accomplished when the signified is correctly represented to the recipient. Words are signs and therefore fall within these categories. “For words have come to be predominant

among men for signifying whatever the mind conceives if they wish to communicate it to anyone” (*On Christian* 2. 3. 4).

We immediately notice that Saint Augustine becomes skeptical over the power of signs to convey the meanings of words, because words in themselves are indicated in the form of signs; in other words, they (signs of words) have been constructed by means of letters. Thus words are shown to the eyes, not in themselves but through certain signs, which stand for them (*On Christian* 2. 4. 5). These signs are sometimes complex in themselves especially when they appear ambiguous and most often unknown. In a situation of this nature, we need to consult experts, learn or compare them with similar words or expressions. Augustine maintains that

if we do not know certain words or expressions in our own language, we become familiar with them by reading and hearing them. Nothing is better commended to the memory than those types of words and expressions which we do not know, so that when one more learned appears who may be questioned, or when a passage appears in reading where the preceding or following context makes their meaning clear, we may easily with the aid of the memory refer to them and learn them (*On Christian* 2. 14. 21).

Thus Saint Augustine establishes the necessity of the translation of the Word of God which was set down in one language and through collaboration was translated into many languages of peoples so that many more will come to open forth their minds to receive the action being transferred from the translators and finally the will of God as set

down in the Scriptures. This will of God is made manifest through the power of the Holy Spirit, who is said to have inspired the translations, whereby

many men spoke as if with the mouth of one. It is said and attested by many of not unworthy faith that, although the translators were separated in various cells while they worked, nothing was to be found in any version that was not found in the same words and with the same order of words in all of the others. Who would compare any other authority with this, or, much less, prefer another? But even if they conferred and arrived at a single opinion on the basis of common judgment and consent, it is not right or proper for any man, no matter how learned, to seek to emend the consensus of so many older and more learned men (Augustine, *On Christian 2*. 15. 22).

The people of Abakaliki diocese are called upon to translate these actions intended by God through the translators into their own languages. The lay people are strongly invited to play a role “in the formation of these ecclesial communities, not only through an active and responsible participation in the life of the community, in other words, through a testimony that only they can give, but also through a missionary zeal and activity towards the many people who still do not believe and who no longer live the faith received at Baptism” (John Paul, “Christifideles” n34). When the people of Abakaliki and all Christians for that matter begin to respond to this call (command), “by the same token they have responsibility,” according to Kenneth Burke (*Religion* 187). The acceptance of this responsibility is tantamount to collaboration and a form of what Burke will classify as “Obedience” which ensues through “Humility” as an attitude, unlike “Pride” that

produces the act of “Disobedience.” At this point language becomes dissonant leading to no collaboration. Therefore, “implicit in the distinction between Obedience and Disobedience there is the idea of some dividing line, some ‘watershed’ that is itself midway between the two slopes. Often a word used for naming this ambiguous moment is ‘Will,’ or more fully, ‘Free Will,’ which is thought of as a faculty that makes possible the choice between the yea-saying of Humble Obedience or the nay-saying of Prideful Disobedience (the choice between *serviam* and *non serviam*)” (*Religion* 187). The complexity of this ‘watershed’ may not be examined in its fullness here, but the relevance cannot be overlooked as well because somehow it plays a role in determining the constitution of common language.

The common language identifies communities through the use of signs that convey uniform meanings to them that may be distinct from the meaning of the other interpreters. Saint Augustine asks:

And how would it harm me, O my God, thou Light of my eyes in secret, if while I am ardently confessing these things – since many different things may be understood from these words, all of which may be true – what harm would be done if I should interpret the meaning of the Sacred writer differently from the way some other man interprets? Indeed, all of us who read are trying to trace out and understand what our author wished to convey; and since we believe that he speaks truly we dare not suppose that he has spoken anything that we either know or suppose to be false. Therefore, since every person tries to understand in the Holy Scripture what the writer understood, what harm is done if a man understands what thou, the Light of all truth-speaking minds, showest him to be

true, although the author he reads did not understand this aspect of the truth even though he did understand the truth in a different meaning? (*Confessions* 12. 18. 27).

Even though Saint Augustine is not ascribing to the plurality of literal truths in Scripture, he does acknowledge the multiplicity of perspectives on truth that amounted to different levels of interpretations of the truth. Consequently, Scott and Stark will stress that

the theme of the individual's relationship to the human society pervades all of Arendt's works, both in Germany and America. Her 1929 gloss on Augustine provided her with a way of rooting 'plurality' in the 'multiplicity' of human society while balancing it against collective common purpose. In the dissertation, not unexpectedly, she makes this move within the framework of the Christian commandment to love one's neighbor (153).

In assuming such posture of thought, the uniqueness of the individual is acknowledged while promoting what Scott and Stark has called "collective common purpose." Arendt seems to distance from the usurpation of the human person in his political writings, thereby giving a place to the many individuals constituting the human society, thanks to Saint Augustine. The issue of the authorial intention is also very remote in this context, since contextuality is the distinguishing mark of a community of faith. The context refers to the writer and his cultural-historical setting. If we know nothing concerning who wrote a passage, when it was written, or under what conditions it was written, we will be guessing at the meaning behind and between the particular texts in question. A good

knowledge of the experiences of the author and the thought process of the time will always facilitate a good grasp of that text. Therefore, the date of writing is necessary for a good interpretation. For instance, words about God's Spirit written before the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost might be given one meaning while they would be given a different meaning after Pentecost. The intended audience is a *sine qua non* for a close reading of any text. Words addressed to unbelievers would be interpreted very differently from words addressed to believers. The meaning of a passage might depend upon knowing whether the original audience was Jewish or Gentile. The interpreter also needs to know what occasioned the writing, or why the writer wrote his message and what his purpose was. It is within this realm that the people of Abakaliki can establish a community that encounters the truth on their level, thereby creating their own signs of words as evident in their culture.

Signs must be located within the realm of things, which men have themselves instituted; whereas, on the other hand, we have those things, which they have seen to be firmly established or divinely ordained. That which pertains to the institutions of men is partly superstitious and partly not superstitious (Augustine, *On Christian* 2. 19. 29). It is noteworthy that human institutions are imperfect reflections of natural institutions or are similar to them. Therefore, those human institutions which pertain to the association with demons as we have said should be completely repudiated and disdained while those which men have established among themselves are to be adopted insofar as they are not extravagant and superfluous (Augustine, *On Christian* 2. 26. 40). In other words, we cannot neglect those human institutions that are found to be helpful to the social

intercourse in the necessary pursuits of life within our contemporary society (Augustine, *On Christian 2. 39. 58*).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HUMAN DIGNITY

The proclamation of Jesus Christ to the human race is in itself a revelation to the people their inalienable dignity received from God through the Incarnation of his Only Son. The fact that the Church has been designated and entrusted with the responsibility of revealing the mystery of God, who is the ultimate goal of man [human person], she opens up to man at the same time the meaning of his own existence, that is, the innermost truth about himself (John Paul, "Ecclesia" n69). That truth stems from the fact that the foundation of

man's [human person] origin is at the same time both the beginning of the man-made world in Adam's original sin and the origin of his separation from God. His descent is defined by generation and not by creation. The world is no longer an utterly strange place into which the individual has been created. Rather, by kinship in generation the world has always been familiar and belongs to him. In his conception of the being of man, we can understand the obligatory function of equality. Thus there is not one in the human race to whom love is not due, either as a return of mutual affection or by virtue of his share in our common nature. This love is simply an expression of interdependence (Scott and Stark 104).

Therefore, the Church has strongly affirmed the worth of each person as an individual within the community of persons. The significance of human life is found primarily in relationships with others and with God and this emphasis has its origin from

the creation account in the Book of Genesis. In this book (Genesis) we are told that God created man in his own image and likeness. Therefore, John Paul II states that

the dignity of the person is *the most precious possession* of an individual. As a result, the value of one person transcends all the material world. The words of Jesus, “For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and to forfeit his life?” (*Holy Bible*, Mk 8: 36) contain an enlightening and stirring statement about the individual: value come not from what a person “has” – even if the person possessed the whole world! – as much as from what a person “is”: the goods of the world do not count as much as the goods of the person, the good which is the person individually (John Paul, “Christifideles” n37).

He also called on the Church in the continent of Africa to remember that in creating the human race, male and female, God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity, endowing them with inalienable rights and responsibilities proper to the human person. Consequently, the African customs and practices which deprive women of their rights and the respect due to them should be abrogated and every effort should be made to foster the safeguarding of these rights (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n82). In other words, John Paul’s views is a response to the Second Vatican Council understanding of man, especially in the context of freedom. The Council believes that God willed that man should be left in the hand of his own counsel so that he might of his own accord seek his creator and freely attain his full and blessed perfection by cleaving to him. Man’s dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice as moved and drawn in a personal way from

within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint (“Gaudium” n17).

For his own part, Saint Augustine in discussing the nature of man describes him as “a small part of thy creation. Thou hast prompted him, that he should delight to praise thee, for thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee” (*Confessions* 1. 1. 1). Therefore, there is that attraction toward God that is irresistible, because therein lies true happiness. In other words, Saint Augustine will scout for the dignity of the human person within the context of this natural attraction. This context of natural attraction will turn him towards the creation account again to discover that the words of Scripture make it clear that we are created in the image and likeness of God.

Therefore, Augustine says in the *Confessions* that this is why thy minister – through begetting children by the Gospel strives so that he might not always have them babes whom he would have to feed with milk and nurse as children. He admonishes them to be transformed by the renewing of their minds, that they may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. He maintains that God did neither say, “Let man be made,” but rather, “Let us make man” nor did God say, “After his kind,” but after “our image” and “likeness.” Indeed, it is only when man has been renewed in his mind and comes to behold and apprehend the truth of God, that he does not need another man as his director, to show him how to imitate human examples. Instead, by God’s guidance, he proves what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. And God continues to teach him, now that he is able to understand, to see the trinity of the Unity and the unity of the Trinity (*Confessions* 13. 22. 32).

In other words, the human person will always need another person for guidance and direction because of the multiplicity of truths as acknowledged by Saint Augustine.

It is only

in thy Church, O our God, by the grace thou hast given us – since we are thy workmanship, created in good works (not only those who are in spiritual authority but also those who are spiritually subject to them) – thou madest man male and female. Here all are equal in thy spiritual grace where, as far as sex is concerned, there is neither male or female, just as there is neither Jew nor Greek, nor bond nor free. Spiritual men, therefore, whether those who are in authority or those who are subject to authority, judge spiritually. They do not judge by the light of that spiritual knowledge which shines in the firmament, for it is inappropriate for them to judge by so sublime an authority (*Confessions* 13. 23. 33).

Therefore, the Catholic Christians in Africa and everywhere are invited to share in the immensity of God almighty who is the end of all truth. The dignity of the human person is closely tied to our liberty as children of God. It is not simply the type of liberty that will permit us to follow our own inclinations and desires. It is more or less that capacity to transform our drives and habits through the power of the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead (*Holy Bible*, Rom. 8:11). It is not simply that liberty we acquire in order to attend to our personal interests. It is freedom to share in the suffering of our Lord Jesus and the transformation being effected by the Spirit working throughout all creation (*Holy Bible*, Rom. 8:22-23). It is not the freedom from getting involved in the community of faith, but rather the freedom for loving relationships with other people

in the community, the whole creation, and God. A relationship alerting Christians that being grafted in Christ does not exonerate them from participating in genuine interaction with people of their community, and avoid alienating themselves as the chosen and privileged people over the rest of the members of the traditional community. This type of relationship is reiterated in a caveat echoed by John Paul II who says, “the sense of the dignity of the human person must be pondered and reaffirmed in stronger terms. A beneficial trend is advancing and permeating all peoples of the earth, making them ever more aware of the dignity of the individual: the person is not at all a ‘thing’ or an ‘object’ to be used, but primarily a responsible ‘subject,’ one endowed with conscience and freedom; called to live responsibly in society and history; and oriented towards spiritual and religious values” (“Christifideles” n5).

The strong calling for Christians to live responsibly will be the bedrock for them to give due respect to the teachings and practices of African traditional religion instead of the attitude exhibited by the early converts in Africa who looked down on adherents to the traditional religion as inferior and less privileged, thereby breeding division and hatred. To this effect John Paul II demanded that the adherents of African traditional religion should be treated with great respect and esteem, and all inaccurate and disrespectful language should be avoided. For this purpose, suitable courses in African traditional religion should be given in houses of formation for priests and religious (“Ecclesia” n67).

CONVERSION — CHURCH FAMILY

The Church is not merely an organization of people who occasionally gather for worship, entertainment, or service. It is the primary community through which God wills

that the relationships, which constitute his image, should be healed and through which the fullness, which he desires for all humankind, should be most clearly displayed. John Paul II acknowledged that within the African community the reality of sin in its individual and social forms is very much present in their consciousness, as is also the need for rites of purification and expiation (“Ecclesia” n42). The Church is also an evangelizer and she begins by being evangelized herself, in other words, striving towards purification and expiation through the empowering encounter with Jesus Christ. She is the community of believers, the community of hope lived and communicated, the community of brothers and sisters; and she needs to listen unceasingly to what she must believe, to her reasons for hoping, to the new commandment of love. She is the people of God immersed in the world and often tempted by idols, and she always needs to hear the proclamation of the mighty works of God which converted her to the Lord; she always needs to be called together (Church) afresh by him and reunited (Paul VI, “Evangelii” n15). The Hebrew term (*qahal*) meant simply “assembly” and could be used in a variety of ways, instances of which we see in the Old Testament referring for example to an assembling of prophets (*Holy Bible*, 1 Sam. 19:20), a gathering of soldiers (*Holy Bible*, Num. 22:4), or a coming together of the people of God (*Holy Bible*, Deut. 9:10). The use of the term in the Old Testament in referring to the people of God is important for understanding the term “Church” in the New Testament and Catholic Church documents. A case in point is John Paul II who in quoting “Gaudium et Spes” said “ the people of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the whole world. Moved by this faith it tries to discern authentic signs of God’s presence and purpose in the events, the needs, and the longings which it shares with other people of our time. For faith throws a new light on all things

and makes known the full ideal to which God has called each individual, and thus guides the mind towards solutions which are fully human” (John Paul, “Christifideles” n3).

The Church is the English translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*. The use of this Greek term before the birth of the Christian Church is important as two streams of meaning flow from the history of its usage into the New Testament understanding of Church. First, the Greek term which basically means “called out” was commonly used to indicate an assembly of citizens of a Greek city and is so used in the *Holy Bible*, Acts 19:32, 39. A herald normally called the citizens who were quite conscious of their privileged status over and against the slaves and non-citizens to the general assembly. These privileged citizens dealt with matters of common concern in their meetings, which were conducted democratically. When the early Christians understood themselves as constituting a Church, there is no doubt that they may have perceived themselves as called out by God in Jesus Christ for a special purpose and that their status was a privileged one in Jesus Christ (*Holy Bible*, Eph. 2:19). The case of the early Church was a response to the treatment, the persecution, which they received at the hands of the civil authorities of the time, a reaction against Christians consistent with the way Christ was treated before them.

In the African society, the family is the nucleus of the community and the seedbed of the entire society, “the foundation on which the social edifice is built” (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n80). Therefore, “the Christian family, as a domestic Church built on the solid cultural pillars and noble values of the African tradition of the family, is called upon to be a powerful nucleus of Christian witness in a society undergoing rapid and profound changes” (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n92). The place of an individual in the community

(family) is very unique, so that no two people have what the Igbo call *chi* even if they are blood relations. In discussing *The Writer and His Community*, Chinua Achebe said that the Igbo people

are second to none in their respect of the individual personality. For whereas many cultures are content to demonstrate the value and importance of each man and woman by reference to the common fatherhood of God, the Igbo postulate an unprecedented uniqueness for the individual by making him or her the sole creation and purpose of a unique god-agent, *chi*. No two persons, not even blood brothers, are created and accompanied by the same *chi* (Hopes 57-58).

Therefore, the importance of the individual is sacred, and yet this uniqueness is made beautiful in the context of the community where the expressions are manifest. In other words, the individual is subordinate to the family or the community at large.

Again, Chinua Achebe illustrated this importance attached to the family when he said that

the non-Westerner does not as a rule have those obligations because in his traditional scheme and hierarchy the human hero does not loom large. Even when, like Ezeulu, he is leader and priest, he is still in a very real sense subordinate to his community. But even more important, he is subject to the sway of non-human forces in the universe, call them God, Fate, Chance or what you will. I call them sometimes the Powers of Event, the repositories of causes and wisdoms that are as yet, and perhaps will always be, inaccessible to us (Hopes 57).

For the people of Abakaliki diocese, life originates from the family and grows to maturity through the community. Therefore, John Paul II is right in declaring in *Ecclesia in Africa* that “the Christian family, as a ‘domestic Church’ built on the solid cultural pillars and noble values of the African tradition of the family, is called upon to be a powerful nucleus of Christian witness in a society undergoing rapid and profound changes” (“Ecclesia” n92). The question of the family and life are held in high esteem among the people of Africa, so much so that they believe that the dead continues to live and have communion with the living. An understanding of this magnitude is a preparation for catechesis on the Catholic Church teaching on the *communion of saints*, an area that Abakaliki diocese will still need to develop in line with the directives of the Church. John Paul II admonished the Catholic Church in Africa to see that the love for life which has led them to give such great importance to the veneration of ancestors; an intuitive belief that the dead continue to live and remain in communion with them, be in some way a preparation for belief in the communion of saints. The peoples of Africa respect the life, which is conceived and born, and also rejoice in it. They reject the idea that it can be destroyed, even when the so-called progressive civilizations would like to lead them in this direction through practices hostile to life imposed on them by means of economic systems that serve the selfishness of the rich. Africans show their respect for human life until its natural end, and keep elderly parents and relatives within the family (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n43). The society is undergoing rapid and profound changes due to the major problem of the greatly varying scope of the communities that are formed by narratives. Also, we do have communities formed by a particular narrative such as a local congregation, the citizens of a small town, or even the members of a single family. Most

people belong to a number of such communities. Each group may be formed by a different set of stories; many people will thus find themselves living in a number of very different moral worlds (Cunningham 118).

The image of the family commitment was also so significant in the early Church that it was used to describe the relationship of Christ and the Church (*Holy Bible*, Eph. 5). Again, since the early churches were house churches, family relationships were very important because of the pagan forces which threatened them, so they conceived all believers as members of the household of God (*Holy Bible*, Eph. 2:19 or the household of faith (*Holy Bible*, Gal. 6:10). The primary purpose of the family of God was obedience to Christ, and everyone's calling was to do the will of God. This faith commitment, then, shaped the purpose and function of the family. The family was guided by Christ-like love, and the purpose of the family was to give witness to the love of God and bring people to a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ, thus creating the larger family of God.

This purpose of the family is why the Church adopted the collaborative ministry as a rhetorical tool to aid in routing the believers back to the fundamental tenets of the Scriptures and their own cultural values as well. Either way, the Church stands to affirm the necessity of evangelization in our world today so as to perpetuate the Gospel values, which already exist in the African culture. Saint Augustine offers us a way of understanding our society in general. The human person is naturally created to be good and the (human) nature we are endowed with is beautiful, therefore any mistake by the human person is simply a turning away from the original culture. In this way he did acknowledge the beauty of culture in itself. Augustine offers us the necessary tools for

understanding the new evangelization. It shows why John Paul II defines “new” in terms of fervor, method, content and zeal.

The case of African culture in relation to the Gospel values must follow the paradigmatic development of the early Christian communities as indicated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DIVERSITY & UNITY IN EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

The practices of the early Christian communities as revealed in the Scriptures and other relevant documents of the Catholic Church do not reflect a difference from what I am proposing in this research. Therefore, the Scriptures should become the normative text for evangelization and the early Christian communities of faith should assume a paradigmatic quality. The communities are unique in themselves and do manifest diversity as well, whereas unity, a common trait of these communities, is reflected in the constant change occurring within the communities as they continued to spread the message of the Gospel among the people of their time.

CHRISTIAN VOCATION TO WITNESS: MESSENGER AND INTELLECTUAL.

The intellectuals in the Catholic Church have a lot to do in order to salvage the situation in our society today, if we are to emulate the paradigmatic communities in the early Church. The Church's expectation is that every Christian should assume the task of manifesting persistently the new discoveries in his or her field, thereby fostering a constant dialogue. This dialogue to emerge would enable the Church to maintain a continuous unfolding of truth while acting as the guardian of its purity. In other words, we can assign a two-fold vocation to the Catholic Christian as an intellectual and as a messenger. In the case of the former, he or she shares in the mission of mankind to unveil the truth and listen to reality, no matter where its voice is heard. In the later vocation, he or she is the messenger of the revelation of reality in his or her own century

and culture, the herald of the self-disclosure of being. He or she both illuminates reality and points the way for his or her generation in the mastery of the earth, conquest of the universe, creating of culture, and growth in human dignity. This function is ultimately a rhetorical event in the life of the Catholic Christian. The early Church did exactly the same thing in the formation of its communities and the service to one another. It is pertinent to note that when Paul started writing, he mainly exposed the life of the early Christian communities. This action of Paul as demonstrated in his writings was rhetorical due to the fact he made manifest the incarnate life of the communities “in Christ.” The “in Christ” of Paul is a rhetorical invention detailing the orientation towards the partnership with Jesus Christ who told him at his conversion — the Damascus road experience (*Holy Bible*, Acts 9:3-19; 22:6-21; 26:13-23) — “I am Jesus Christ, whom you persecute.” The variations in the details of this conversion experience are accounted for by recognizing that each story is told to a different audience on a different occasion. Paul was traveling to Damascus to arrest Jewish people who had accepted Jesus as the Messiah. As he neared Damascus, a startling light forced him to the ground and he was struck blind and was led into the city. Ananias met Paul and told him that God has chosen him to be a messenger for the Gentiles (*Holy Bible*, Acts 9:17) and thereby he received his sight, and like other believers before him was baptized.

According to Dodd, Paul used *synergos* (the Greek word from which “synergism” is derived) to describe his coworkers as those working with him in spreading the Gospel. He also calls them partners (*koinonos*; *koinonia*). Paul considered ministry in the Spirit as a ministry in partnership among his coworkers (105). In the *Holy Bible*, 1 Cor 3:5-9, Paul uses the “we” and “partners” to refer to Apollos and himself; and in Philemon 9-10,

12-17 we hear Paul saying he should have liked to retain Onesimus for himself, so that Onesimus might serve him on Philemon's behalf in his imprisonment for the Gospel, but he did not want to do anything without Philemon's consent, so that the good Philemon did might not be forced but voluntary. The origin of ministry is in God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit manifested in the community of believers. Bonhoeffer tells us that

Both ministry and Church spring from the triune God. The offices exist to serve the Church, and their rights only originate from this service. That is why the Church has to adapt its offices to the varying needs of time and place. The offices in the Church at Jerusalem had to be different from those in St. Paul's missionary Churches (252).

THE BIRTH OF EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

The existence of a community raises the issue of its construction and possibly the architect(s) responsible for it. Christianity as a religion has strong leanings toward a community oriented form of existence. It becomes necessary to seek the reason behind these congregating within this particular faith group and the power behind its subsistence in being, instead of waning into a natural extinction. The fact of being qualified as "Christian" traces a link to the Jewish personage who is God-man, who died and was resurrected to life. The Easter event made him known and accepted as the Savior of the world, and belief in him guarantees eternal life to those who proclaim him as their Lord and God. This Easter event means the acceptance of faith as concretized in baptism. Prior to this event it is somewhat difficult to identify a community of faith; rather we had communities that trusted in their God because they were persuaded to that effect. After

the resurrection, the persuasion was based more or less on experiencing the Risen Christ, therefore, a faith and belief punctuated by community. Just as William Henry Paine Hatch says that “when we pass from Jesus to the community of believers which was formed in Jerusalem after his death and resurrection, we are at once conscious that *pistis* is no longer simple trust in God; for the idea of conviction or belief now predominates over that of trust in both the substantive *pistis* and the verb *pisteuein*” (Hatch 26-27; cf., Baillie 44, and Kinneavy 6).

One faith, one baptism and one God, is a statement of faith. The way faith is expressed by different people differs, even though its ultimate goal is towards one God. Faith and baptism are one judging from the fact that they emanate from the same source, but the mode of receptivity is rather diverse and tailored to the disposition of the receiver. According to Baillie “what we have to notice is the remarkable outcropping of this idea in all parts of the New Testament alike. That body of early Christian literatures doubtless reflects different types of Christianity as well as different temperaments. But the deeper one goes into it, the more one is impressed by its deeper unity” (44). It becomes crucial to ask what (or who) is the source of faith and baptism? Who bestows or dispenses this faith or baptism — God, a human person, or society? Are they given as gifts to the receivers or as responsibilities? These questions cannot be adequately addressed unless one digs deeply into the concept of faith in its complex history. The history is reflected in James L. Kinneavy’s new hypothesis that

There is a major Greek origin for some of the fundamental characteristics of the Christian concept of faith as it is seen in the New Testament. This major source is the Greek concept of rhetoric at the time. It dominated the schooling of the time

in Greek and Roman education, and it was conspicuous in Jewish schools also. It was an honorific concept, and it was a complex concept, much more complex than just a combination of intellectual and emotional appeals (20).

James L. Kinneavy went to state that the Greek concept of rhetoric was flexible and adaptable because it served as a framework on which the different views of faith could be erected, with varying emphases in the writings of Paul, John, Peter, James, Mark, Matthew, and so on. Moreover, it reflected a concatenation of cultures and schools of thought due to the counter-cultural encounter resulting from economic and political situations of the time. Therefore, the concept of faith could accommodate Hebraic notions from the Old Testament, Greek notions from philosophical and school rhetoric, the peculiar amalgam of Greek and Hebraic notions that is found in some of the major Jewish authors of the time writing in Greek, and some of the concepts of the mystery religions (Kinneavy 21). The intercultural encounter we see in the New Testament is affirmed in the document of Vatican II, “*Lumen Gentium*,” when it says that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world (cf. *Holy Bible*, Jn. 18: 36), the Church or people of God which establishes this kingdom does not take away anything from the temporal welfare of any people. The document maintains that the Church fosters and takes to herself the abilities, the resources and customs of peoples, insofar as they are good. By taking the abilities, resources and customs of the people, the Church purifies, strengthens and elevates them (“*Lumen*” n13). Therefore this spiritual Israel called the Catholic Church is to be distinguished from that carnal Israel which is one people, one nation because of the newness of grace necessitating its existence, and not by nobility of descent, by their minds and not by their race (Augustine, *On Christian* 3. 34. 49).

FAITH AS SOCIAL EVENT

The context warranting the reception of these gifts is essential in assessing the human element inherent in these religious experiences. I have introduced the human element into this discourse because these experiences as we claim are only recognized, discussed, experienced, touched and used within a social context. It is necessary to associate these elements within their social existence in order to really make sense of them. Therefore, faith is a social event given and received within a social context; given and received within a community, as evident with the people of Israel, “a community of faith which took its birth as a nation, a nation which took its birth as a community of faith” (Buber 9). Martin Buber asserts that the person who finds himself in the relationship of faith is primarily the member of a community whose covenant with “the Unconditioned includes and determines him within it...and the community arises as the joining together of the converted individuals” (9).

As a social event, faith is rooted in the community though with the connotation of diversity, resulting in multiple communities of faith. Faith is not diverse itself and therefore will become a source of unity being inherent in the communities. However, its expression is diverse due to the disposition of the receiver or its social contextualization. The modes of the receivers can never be the same because of the existence of diversity in the human person. The finite nature of the human person is a determinate factor of his mode of reception; it is a limitation in the nature of the human person.

INDIVIDUAL FAITH

The New Testament, especially the epistles of Paul, focuses very much on this aspect of faith, meaning the concentration on the person as regards decision towards conversion.

There is some sense of involvement of knowledge and awareness leading to the decision and conversion. James L. Kinneavy says that in a sense, the conversion of an individual is a total commitment to Christ, and therefore it is similar to the commitment of the Hebrew to the God of the Old Testament, involving obedience and allegiance. However, insofar as it is a change, it is also a persuasion, and therefore it is a New Testament notion (29). It is of course a persuasive process with the goal of attaining a place in the community and reaching a certain union with the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Dockrill, our faculties provide not only the materials for thought about God but reasons for believing that he exists as well, yet the God who makes himself known to the human person in these ways is a being who is experienced as finite. Therefore, he puts forth this question: what reason is there for believing that the God we experience is one and the same with the infinite being? He says there is none; it is an act of faith to believe they are the same (Dockrill 377). In other words, because of the impotence of reason, we are compelled to take refuge in faith. The *terminus ad quo* is infinite and therefore unlimited in its nature, that is to say, it is unified in itself. This impotence of reason is basically rooted in the fact that we rather construct the “God” that fits into our horizon of significance. To achieve this purpose effectively, we definitely need the resources of our environment to be translated into a new experience, and this translation of the resources of our environment is of course rhetorical. “Rhetoric will take on different emphases when it is put to different tasks. In fact, it gains its strength from its unique application to specific contexts” (Cunningham 30).

Each individual in all situations is clothed with a constructed reality as distinct from human nature, be it social or religious life. A particular audience in a specific

rhetorical context is actively constructing the individual; therefore, theology and ministry must speak with an authoritative character. David S. Cunningham reiterates that a theology that does speak with an authoritative character can become more than an act of intellectual gymnastics: it can also become a way of winning converts to the faith. For him, conversion is not simply an interiorized dialectical moment, but a rhetorical activity. Dialectic seeks an act of the intellect, judgment, and secures its religious end in contemplation, while rhetoric seeks an act of the will, assent, and secures its religious end in conversion. These two elements (dialectic and rhetoric) mean that a properly authorized argument persuades others not simply to think about Christianity but to adopt the Christian life as their own (Cunningham 146), which ultimately is the aim of evangelization and ministry.

COMMUNAL FAITH

The citizens of any country share a common goal in the pursuit of their daily duties. The duty of the citizen is to make the *polis* a unified force for countering of societal constraints. Whatever binds citizens together is normally encouraged and pursued, but again the central force is united on trust of the system and its operations. For the Christian community it is the trust in God as an extension of individual faith which constitutes the point of unity.

In the Sign of the Cross the whole action of the Christian is described; to perform good deeds in Christ, to cling to Him with perseverance and to hope for celestial things, thereby refraining from profaning the sacraments (Augustine, *On Christian 2*. 41. 62). For Augustine, it was

On this account Christian liberty freed those it found under useful signs, discovering them to be among those who were nigh, interpreting the signs to which they were subject, and elevating them to the things which the signs represented. From them were constituted the [early Christian] Churches of the holy Israelites. For those it found under useless signs it not only prohibited and destroyed all servile obligation to those signs, but also destroyed the signs themselves, so that the pagans were converted from a corruption of many simulated gods, a thing frequently and accurately called fornication in the Scriptures, to the cult of God. Nor were they led to a servitude under the useful signs, but rather to an exercise of the mind directed toward understanding them spiritually (*On Christian* 3. 8. 12).

However, the individual faith experience is rich with diversity culminating in communities of faith, diversity of worship and doctrine. It has often been said that worship unites, but doctrine divides. If there is diversity in worship and it is said to unite, then one can say that the only unity in worship is diversity. The only thing that can account for this unity is our limited and fallen nature.

The early Christian community was a society comprising three distinct groups of people. It was a society with the characteristics of diversity like any other society. Among these three, one can still identify other smaller groups and anonymous persons within the same society. The geographical position of some of these cities and the commercial centers, in conjunction with the activities that went on within and around them made movement and communication quite easy for the people. The inter-cultural encounter is why one has to acknowledge the presence of anonymous persons. It is this

inter-cultural encounter therefore that creates a distinguishing mark in the society, between different people. The three major groups that one can easily identify in the early period of Christianity are the Palestinians, the Hellenistic Jews and Greeks, and the Gentiles. The non-Christian world or the so-called pagan society, that is, the society encountered by the emerging Christian communities, may rather have a counter-cultural encounter within the emerging communities of faith such that their influence cannot be overlooked. This pagan society must have exerted a lot of influence on the Hellenistic Jews, the Greeks, and the Gentiles, just as much as these early Christian communities must have on them too. For example, we are told by David S. Cunningham that the New Testament, the patristic era, and the Reformation all influenced and were influenced by the rhetorical tradition (6). Many of the converts into Christianity at this time were renowned products of this pagan society, very rich intellectually. The Hellenistic Jewish, Greek and the Gentile communities helped in creating their environment and society as much as their society played a significant role in creating them. There are three components to the above discourse, namely: the faithful, the act of believing, and the faith. These components constitute an ideal communication network, creating an avenue for persuasion.

Therefore, Kinneavy maintains that if the establishment of faith is viewed as a process in which God, through the verbal message, reveals knowledge to assenting humans, then faith is seen as a communication process involving the same components as other communication processes. The components of communication process are the sender, the receiver, the message, and the subject matter. It is not surprising that one can analyze faith in this way because any communication process can be so handled as well.

And simply having in common these elements would not suffice to establish a common semantic base for the notions of persuasion and faith. What faith and persuasion have in common besides this genus structure of communication is the species nature of persuasion as a particular kind of communication (Kinneavy 50).

DEVELOPMENT OF CULT

According to Dunn, the Palestinian Christians maintained the tradition of Jewish worship virtually unchanged by attending the Temple daily, expecting it to be the place of Jesus' return (127). This intercultural activity warrants asking whether the worship was Jewish or Christian or a conglomeration of cultures? Reflecting on the later historical development of cult and worship in the early Christian community, it is clear that what emerged was Christian in orientation though with fuzzy integration among the people of the synagogue or the Temple. Granted early Christians did visit the Temple, but the old cult of Judaism eventually collapsed, thereby leading to a new way of life. Cult really had no priority in the early community. It was subordinated to service (Bernier 13). This new way of life is a constructed reality based on the already existent structure of the people. The people were the same but their life was no longer the same and even their environment was transformed into a better, socially rich community rooted in charitable values.

According to Hahn, nothing bespeaks the novelty of Christian worship so plainly as the terminology employed for its concepts. He holds that almost none of the traditional concepts occur in the New Testament; and where they do, they are unmistakably used metaphorically. Cultic terminology is consciously avoided for Christian worship; it serves only to characterize the Temple worship of the Old

Testament and to describe the Christ-event or the conduct of Christians in the world (35-36). One can understand the claim of Maurice Wiles in terms of the above assumptions. He states that the importance of the early Church's worship as a clue to the understanding of many features of the New Testament has been much stressed in recent years. The main emphasis in such studies has lain upon liturgical practice as helping to explain the way in which different New Testament writings have come to take their present form. But in all these moves, the practice of worship is almost equally important for any study of doctrinal development within the New Testament period (62-63).

Fundamental issues that one cannot easily dismiss are, according to Lohmeyer, (a) the mutual relationship of the cult and Gospel with faith; (b) the relationship between the Gospel and the cult; and (c) the relationship between the divine revelation and the historical community, God's Word and the human response, and God's action and his people's re-action (1). Their relationship is one embracing a communication process, whereby it would appear that liturgical practice has here provided the effective medium (of communication) for conserving and transmitting to the next generation an important doctrinal concept, as related by Maurice Wiles (63).

My attention will be focused on the third point, that is, divine revelation and historical community, God's Word and human response, God's action and his people's re-action. The divine revelation and historical community is the basis of diversity. The three distinct early Christian communities mentioned above have different experiences of the revelation of the Word of God. They have also a distinct historical background that accounts for the characteristics of their respective communities. What is revealed is one, but because they are experienced or received in different forms, they are therefore

interpreted according to the historical circumstance of the community. Revelation is one because the gift of faith is one, while worship is regulated according to the rules of the community. Interpretation is based on the historical circumstances of the community because cult and faith are not just synonymous, according to Lohmeyer; there is a sharp distinction between faith and cult (worship). Faith makes heart and world, time and space, one before God. Cult, he maintains, on the other hand, is that God-directed activity that is based on a revelation regulated by holy rules and pursued by a society, which is a historically existing entity and is rooted in such revelation (Lohmeyer 5-6). The communities have one story to tell, but the story was told in different ways, expressed in diverse forms.

It is worthwhile to note that Lohmeyer makes it clear that cult implies community just as community implies cult, since both are based on God's revelation in history. Cult is only possible, he says, in community, whereas community is only possible through cult; and the more completely the community recalls and relates itself to the act of God that is the basis of its cult and fellowship, the greater is the power and grace of that cult. Therefore, the more consistently cult clings to its own secret and guards it as God's wonderful act in the course of the years and the centuries, the more closely it binds the community together (Lohmeyer 6). It is possibly so, and moreover it can also account for the collapse of those cults that could not survive the test of time.

Cultic Practices: The varieties of cults are the distinguishing mark of separate communities at the time. Such communities as Palestinian Christian, Hellenistic Jewish and Greek Christian, and Gentile Christian are easily identifiable. These cultic

communities are constructed based on their social leanings in conjunction with their particular religious experience as distinct from the other communities.

Therefore all arts pertaining to this kind of trifling or noxious superstition constituted on the basis of a pestiferous association of men and demons as if through a pact of faithless and deceitful friendship should be completely repudiated and avoided by the Christian, not that the idol is anything, as the apostle says, but because the things which the heathens sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God. And I would not that you should be made partakers with devils. For what the apostle says concerning idols and the sacrifices that are made in their honor should be understood concerning all imaginary signs which lead to the cult of idols or to the worship of a creature or its parts as God, or pertain to the concern for remedies and other observations which are not as it were publicly and divinely constituted for the love of God and of our neighbor but rather debauch the hearts of the wretched through their love for temporal things (Augustine, *On Christian* 2. 23. 35).

(i) Palestinian Christian Community: The Palestinian Christian community is likely the very community that the earthly and historical Jesus was very much in touch with in the course of his earthly ministry. Very little is known about this community except for the accounts that were set down later in writing based on the oral tradition of the same community. According to Hahn, the data concerning the early Christian worship are not very copious and we are especially poorly informed about the early Aramaic-speaking community of Jerusalem and Palestine (40). One characteristic of this community was a

strong attachment to the culture and custom of their people to the extent that it conflicted with the teachings of the earthly Jesus. This conflict affected the new converts and became a stepping-stone to the foundation of other minor communities.

(a) Temple Worship: Due to the actions and words of the earthy Jesus, especially towards the Temple and cult, their attitude must have been transformed. According to Hahn, there were circles in the primitive community that adhered much more closely to Jewish tradition than others; but nowhere could one ignore the fact that what mattered were no longer the law and a promise for the future. It was the saving and fulfilling act of God in Christ that was the focus of attention for the community as it offered praise, thanksgiving, and intercession (35).

There is no other possible community that could have taken to the Jewish tradition than the Palestinian community. Their doing so is why Dunn strongly maintains that so far as we can tell the earliest Christians in Palestine maintained the traditions of Jewish worship virtually unchanged. They attended the Temple daily, probably expecting it to be the place of Jesus' return (127). The Temple and the cult had a different meaning for them now, unlike what it meant for the other Jews. The Temple was a place specially located and marked out for cultic activities in the Jewish context. In the new understanding, it was the gathering of the people that gave meaning to the Temple and to a cult. This new meaning was richly rhetorical since there was no change in location of the Temple, but the old meaning was reinterpreted to place the emphasis on the people. The presence of Christ was identified in the gathering of his people, the assembly – *εκκλησια*. But Dunn seems to be saying that it is evident the earliest community in no sense felt themselves to be a new religion, distinct from Judaism. He

maintains that there was no sense of a boundary line drawn between themselves and their fellow Jews. It is like they saw themselves simply as a fulfilled Judaism, the beginning of an eschatological Israel (239).

(b) Orthodoxy: The place of importance given to the Temple demonstrates the desire for communal participation in the collaborative act establishing the Jewish society. The communal participation in the collaborative act does not in any way counter the possibility of entertaining differing beliefs within the community. Dunn points out that it was normal for the Jews to hold one or more eccentric beliefs, because Judaism was only concerned with orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy. That is, they were concerned with right practice rather than right belief, and so the early Christians were not only simply Jews but in fact continued to be quite “orthodox” Jews (Dunn 239). Moreover, their strong monotheistic faith did not allow them to be easily influenced by the rest of the world at the time. They were concerned in making every other person Jewish, even the new converts to Christianity. The Council of Jerusalem (*Holy Bible*, Acts 15) met specifically to discuss this concern at a point in time. Gentiles were asked not to circumcise as the other Jews but to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and strangled animals. Circumcision had very strong covenantal significations for the Jewish race and the new converts to Christianity may not have understood them because, as Augustine says,

He is a slave to a sign who uses or worships a significant thing without knowing what it signifies. But he who uses or venerates a useful sign divinely instituted whose signifying force he understands does not venerate what he sees and what

passes away but rather that to which all such things are to be referred. Such a man is spiritual and free, even during that time of servitude in which it is not yet opportune to reveal to carnal minds those signs under whose yoke they are to be tamed (*On Christian* 3. 9. 13).

The Council was effective and persuasive in the early Church communities in the effort to unite their ministries and be able to face the persecution of members of the new faith.

Therefore, in place of these specifically covenantal restrictions, the early communities started developing their own few practices “in place of many, which the teaching of the Lord and the Apostles had transmitted to us, [specifically the sacrament of baptism and the celebration of the Eucharist] and these are very easy to perform, very sublime in implication, and most upright in observance.” (Augustine, *On Christian* 3. 9. 13). Augustine went on to state that “when anyone instructed perceives one of these, he knows what it refers to so that he venerates it not in carnal servitude but in spiritual freedom. But just as it is a servile infirmity to follow the letter and to take signs for the things that they signify, in the same way it is an evil of wandering error to interpret signs in a useless way. However, he who does not know what a sign means, but does know that it is a sign, is not in servitude. Thus it is better to be burdened by unknown but useful signs than to interpret signs in a useless way so that one is led from the yoke of servitude only to thrust his neck into the snares of error” (*On Christian* 3. 9. 13).

(c) Cultic Adaptation: The effects of the resurrection event led to the urge of separation from Judaism, though seeking new meanings in the old practices. As Augustine maintains, “even some truths concerning the worship of one God are discovered among

them [the people]. These are, as it were, their gold and silver, which they did not institute themselves but dug up from certain mines of divine Providence, which is everywhere infused, and perversely and injuriously abused in the worship of demons. When the Christian separates himself in spirit from their miserable society, he should take this treasure with him for the just use of teaching the Gospel” (Augustine, *On Christian* 2. 40. 60). Therefore, not to be fully Jewish for these Palestine Christians could lead to loss of reality or being lost, which is losing contact with the Temple. The Temple was the center of their life, and every activity revolved around it. This centering of life around the Temple could account for the inspiration from old poems, used in the new hymns of the New Testament, such as the “Benedictus” (Lk1: 68 - 79) or the “Magnificat” (*Holy Bible*, LK 1:46-55). Hahn says these are eschatological hymns of Jewish origin that have been borrowed and elaborated from Christian perspective (48). M. Alfred Bichsel maintains that hymnologists seem to agree that these New Testament songs were inspired by older poems. For example, the “Magnificat,” could have been inspired by the song of Hannah and the “Benedictus” by the language used by the Old Testament prophets as well as the eighteen benedictions used in the Temple service (Bichsel 350). Why did they have to do these adaptations instead of ushering in totally new cultic practices within the communities? What was behind these changes and why effect the changes at all?

Language plays a major role in sustaining the community as evident in the common characteristics marking them out as an inalienable social and religious group. The factor of loss of the language will lead to disintegration and the need to find meaning for the arising needs of the community. According to Grassi,

only when the original unity of subject and object has been “broken through,” and hence the preverbal phonetic possibility of communication has disappeared, can the task of the definition of isolated appearances arise in order that this unity can be created anew (109).

Language as communication through speech or symbol and signs is a dialogue with the rest of the society that one finds him or herself with. Therefore, it is only considered meaningful when it deals with the concrete reality of our existence in order to find solutions to our concrete need. To this effect, Grassi concludes that

rhetorical speech ... is a “dialogue,” that is, that which breaks out with vehemence in the urgency of the particular human situation and “here” and “now” begins to form a specifically human order in the confrontation with other human beings. And because the material belonging to language consists in the interpretation of the meaning of sensory appearances – for the main thing is to order and form these – it is laden with figurative expressions, color, sounds, smells, tangibles (113).

(ii) Hellenistic Jewish Christianity: These were the Jews in the Diaspora who spoke Greek, converted from Judaism. According to W. F. Dicharry, in the *Holy Bible*, Acts 6.1 Hellenists (*Ἑλληνισταί*) were Greek-speaking converts from Judaism as distinct from Hebrews (*Ἑβραῖοι*), Hebrew or rather Aramaic-speaking converts from Judaism (1007). These Greek-speaking Jews would not know deeply all about the Temple because they had synagogues and only made pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem. The fact that they spoke Greek disposed them to the Greek culture and wisdom. They

were at home with two cultures, Hebrew and Greek. According to Dicharry, Hellenistic Jews in the Diaspora provided the fiercest opposition to Christianity because they were often more fervent in their Judaism than the Hebrews (1007).

Can this opposition account for the necessity of new forms of worship, which seemed to be developing within these early communities of faith? Dunn mentions such developments, pointing to the *Holy Bible*, Acts 2:46 and 5:42, recounting gatherings in private houses where different elements are seen in the meetings, such as prayer, teaching and common meals (127). Massey also mentions that even the quarters offered in hospitality to Christians for worship could not accommodate the increasing size of the congregation (141). These early converts were gathering in private homes either because they were not fulfilled in their worship in the synagogues or they were faced with threat. It may have been because the synagogues did not mean much to them since Jesus had made relative pronouncements about them. Luke's account in the *Holy Bible*, Acts 4:31 says that as they prayed, "the place where they were" was filled with the Holy Spirit and they continued to speak the Word of God with boldness. "The place where they were" would not have been in the synagogue. It must have been in the house of one of the members of the community. Dunn says that for some time this dual pattern of worship, synagogue and house-meetings, continued side by side, with no tension felt between them (128). He further states that there was a considerable element of diversity within Christianity almost at the very beginning of its existence, in fact a schism within the first Christian community – that is to say, the conservatives holding fast to tradition and the liberals adapting in the light of changing circumstances (Dunn 275).

We may not rule out the influence of the pagan world from the emergence of these house-meetings after attending the synagogue. The existence of the mystery cults in the pagan society must have played a part here, where only the initiates were allowed and they were not to divulge the secrets (*mysterion*) of the cult to non-initiates. As noted by Kinneavy, in Hellenistic culture, the training for citizenship happened in the “*ephebia*” lasting for two years and culminated in the initiation into political manhood with religious notation (73-75). We are also informed by Kinneavy that the initiation oath into the *ephebia* was quite religious and there were observances of religious feasts and processions in which the *ephebes* took place quite frequently with many statues of gods and goddesses throughout the usual gymnasium (76). Also present in the mystery religions was the context of the meal that was of prominent importance, and the early Christians could have taken over the same emphasis in their gatherings. Among the Hellenists, innumerable associations of all sorts had their roots in the gymnasium, such as banquets for city functions, speeches by visiting orators or rhetoricians or scholars, scientific conferences, musical recitals, men and women reciting poetry, rhetorical conferences and such gatherings comprising the citizens (Kinneavy 74-75). It is said that if Christianity had developed apart from the Hellenic world, all Christians would probably have taken the position of the rigorists. The Gospel as we know was written and translated into Greek, and borrowed much of its vocabulary from Hellenism, beginning with the all-important concept of the *logos*. In other words, Christianity simply could not escape the influence of the cultural atmosphere in which it developed. David S. Cunningham tells that

Christianity has traditionally placed great emphasis on the category of logos. Few other words are as rich in theological [and rhetorical] connotations as the Word. From its earliest connection to Spirit (as the breath of God's mouth, Gen. 1: 1-2), to the spoken words of God in the Covenant (Exod. 20: 2), to the Word who became flesh and lived among us (John 1: 14), to the Word that Christ spoke and that the Church continues to speak today (36).

Hahn maintains that Hellenistic Jewish Christianity exhibits a remarkable attachment to the intellectual and conceptual world of the Greek Old Testament. He also tells of Hellenistic Gentile Christianity, in which under certain circumstances the Old Testament could be given markedly lower status probably never having achieved the same significance it had for Hellenistic Jewish Christianity (Hahn 57). Walter Bauer on the other hand states that one must not simply postulate the use and recitation of the Old Testament in the Hellenistic sphere, be it Gentile or Jewish (Hahn 57). However, the Hellenistic Jewish Christians more than the Hellenistic Gentile Christians may have made greater use of the Old Testament, so that there is good reason to assert, as Hahn does, that for primitive Christianity as a whole the Old Testament was the bible of the Church (57). In other words, even though both the Hellenistic Gentile and Jewish Christianity made use of the Old Testament, it is assumed that the Hellenistic Jewish Christianity made more use of the Old Testament than the Hellenistic Gentile Christianity. These Hellenistic communities had two distinct orientations that influenced their adaptation to the revelation in the community; one was Gentile in inclination and the other was Jewish; they could not be divorced from the cultural impact exerted on the early Church communities. The cultural contact between these groups enriched the New Testament

Church and was passed on through many generations to the contemporary age. In other words, native cultural encounter with the Gospel is a rhetorical act, whereby they enrich each other and enhance the incarnation of the message of Jesus Christ in the life of the people.

(iii) Gentile Christian Community: These were mainly those who did not share in the promise of the covenant originally made with Abraham and Jacob and with their direct blood descendants. In short, outside the Israelite community, every other person automatically is a Gentile. Even the Jews who were living in the Diaspora were not fully regarded as true descendants of Jacob, because of their inter-marriage. The religion of the Israelites is such that it could not be separated from their social, political and moral life. Everything in life was one and the same thing because it always revolved around their religion. This holistic approach to life is simply so, because the attitude of the Israelites to the Old Testament, according to J.J. Castelot, was determined by religious rather than racial considerations. Therefore, social and political contacts with the Gentiles always involved the danger of religious contamination; since the Israelites were the sole champions of pure moral monotheism, this danger was a consideration of prime importance (Castelot 338). The first circle of believers and apostles of Jesus of Nazareth, and even of Jesus the Christ, were Jewish. Jesus of Nazareth himself was a Jew, but not necessarily Jesus the Christ, who one can conclude has no specific nationality. I am taking this stand because we have only one Jesus of Nazareth, but many Jesus Christs. The Gentiles shared fully from the experience of Jesus the Christ, a result of the Easter faith.

According to Castelot, the apostolic Church was at first, as must have been expected, exclusively Jewish. Therefore, it took much time and trouble, even divine intervention to clarify the question of admission of Gentiles into the Church and the manner of their admission (338). This very community had its genesis from what we may call the pagan world. In other words, they were not originally having the true faith. The Greek *Septuagint*, according to Castelot, rendered them as ' *εθνη*, and the Latin *Vulgate* in its turn, as *gentes*; the New Testament employed the same terminology, using *ethen* (*gentes*) to indicate non-Jews (338). Such a connotation as *gentes* placed the community in a situation of being influenced by the pagan world and the Palestine Christian community. The emphasis in this community was placed on the Holy Spirit for determining an order. For instance, Hahn says that in the *Holy Bible*, 1 Corinthians 14 does not mention the Lord's Supper, whereas in the *Holy Bible*, 1 Corinthians 11:17 shows that it was naturally in use. However, the comparison of the two texts shows that the "unified worship" repeatedly assumed to have existed throughout primitive Christianity is not very likely (Hahn 72). In this community, there was freedom as regards place of worship and way of worship. According to Hahn, there is no place for any ritual or cultic demarcation of a special area set aside for worship, and there is no place for any sectarian introversion of the devout, such as contemporary paganism had in the form of the mystery cults and its devotees (73). Dunn, with a focus on the *Holy Bible*, 1 Corinthians 14: 26-33, maintains Paul conceived of worship as a very spontaneous affair, without regular structure or form, wholly dependent on the inspiration of the Spirit. For him, Paul's only regulations involved speaking-in tongues and prophetic utterances. He required that each utterance in tongues be followed by an

interpretive utterance in the vernacular or be wholly excluded, and that each prophetic utterance be evaluated by the prophets and/or the whole community. No more than two or three *γλωσσολαλία* (*glossolalia*) and two or three prophetic utterances should be allowed in any meeting (Dunn 129).

This community had a complex creed and concepts because it was rooted in pagan philosophical, mythological and religious thought – for instance, the Christ-hymn of the *Holy Bible*, Phil 2:5-11 which has raised a lot of comments and interpretations from scholars. The hymn is said to be the fruit of many traditions and has deep-rooted and secret meanings which may never be fully understood except by trying to apply them to the concepts of humiliation and exaltation which were predominantly mentioned by Jesus in his teaching (CF *Holy Bible*, Matt 18:4, 23:12²; Luke 14:11, 18:14). For example, Ralph P. Martin portrays one of such traditions in an analysis, which seems to have wrapped the hymn in a knot. He claims that the author is a debtor to many traditions, and in particular, to both a Hebraic and Hellenistic thought-world, whereas the audience is a Gentile community of faith. The Hebraic tradition is shown in his use of the Old Testament, both by allusion and by explicit citation, seen in certain Semitic expressions in his writing and his doctrine of name. He went further to state that the author of Philippians 2:6-11 in the *Holy Bible* stands at the junction of two cultures and two religious traditions. This text allows us the opportunity of discovering the background of its author as Jewish, even though the ideas are evidently Greek ; and his concern, as a Christian, is to relate the Gospel to the larger Hellenistic world. Therefore, R. P. Martin is of the view that this hymn has cultic significance in that it hails the Church's Lord. It is equally a missionary manifesto of some Christian or Christian group

whose outlook reaches forth to the world beyond the confines of Jewish Christianity and sees that the Cosmic Christ, the universal Lord, is the one time answer to the religious quests of the Greco-Roman world (Martin 297-299). The point I am trying to highlight centers on the manifestation of inter-cultural and cross-cropping of ideas among the early Church, as long as it brought out clearly the concept and idea being conveyed, and I think the same collaboration can exist among the different Catholic Christian communities of our century.

Questionable Unity: The evidence of unity that can easily be identified from the above analysis may conclusively be tied to a common element of language, signs or symbols. According to Dunn, only one clearly unifying element seems to appear and that is Christ. He maintains that in the earliest community both Hebrews and Hellenists could justify their patterns of worship by appealing to the words and actions of Jesus (148). It is only in the person of Christ that unity is demonstrated among all the communities of faith in the early Church. However, recent studies in Scripture seem to highlight a gap in the thought and link between Christ of faith and the words and actions of the historical Jesus. Do these two realities mean the same thing? What exactly is being referred to here: The continuity between the two realities or the actual facts of reality? I seem to see two distinct realities being used as one and the same reality. The very language and words of the historical Jesus (the carpenter's son) cannot be phenomenologically identified with the Christ of faith (post-Easter events); though as an Incarnate Word, he is a single and indivisible person. As an Incarnate Word, one cannot separate Jesus from the Christ or speak of a Jesus of history who would differ from the Christ of faith (John Paul, "Redemptoris" n6). The communities of these two aspects of the life of our Lord cannot

be the same phenomenological reality due to the linguistic and historical transformation that might have taken place within them, but the Incarnate Word remains the same in all the communities of faith. On this note, I seem to identify a situation whereby there is unity in diversity; and diversity in unity. However, we are only trying to echo Dunn in another section where he makes a distinction between “one Jesus and many Christs.”

There is an underlying rhetorical tone one cannot ignore within these issues, even though those raising them do not explicitly point them out. Dunn says that if we recognize the continuity between the historical Jesus and the charismatic Christ we must also recognize that there are many charismatic Christ(s) – that is, the diverse understandings and presentations of the Christ of faith within first-century Christianity (216). So we can talk of many Christ(s) due to the faith communities’ experience, but one historical Jesus. Therefore, the people of Abakaliki diocese can definitely qualify for a community of faith, with a distinctive experience of the risen Christ, but rooted in the historical Jesus through Scripture and the tradition of the Catholic Church, the indivisible person present in the Incarnate Word.

Where then, does Dunn claim the point of unity lies? Is it in Jesus the Christ (of which there are many) or Jesus of Nazareth (of which there was one)? We cannot recover the Jesus of Nazareth, but we can recover Jesus the Christ since the experience of the community can always be reached through research, interview and archeological discoveries into their tradition. In other words, if we can recover Jesus the Christ through the experience of the community or the people, therefore, the importance of their culture cannot be underestimated since it is multiple, touching all aspect of their life. The same culture can grow or be enriched and it could die as well though cannot be extinct.

Relative Unity: The unity talked about by Dunn is sustainable to a degree. It is only existent in principle or in conceptual terms, but not in reality. In other words, we can say that diversity is all that there is, in our re-action to God's action. The existence of unity in principle is the basis for the stand taken by Dunn, when he says that worship of the first-century Christian churches had the same sort of pattern of unity and diversity. This unity is centered on faith in the Jesus of Nazareth now exalted, but within that unity there is a diversity, which displays almost endless variety whenever we look (149). The principle of unity is grounded in communication terms, whereas the praxis is distinctive of the multiple communities arising from hearing or being born through the Word of God. The theologian (evangelizer, minister) cannot even begin to understand Christian praxis without recognizing the importance of appeals to the spirit that holds the community together. Only thus can we hope to understand the Church's conversations and actions, its sermons and worship, its fellowship and practices as a community. The questions with which a community is typically preoccupied can often be answered only through an appeal to the *sensus communis* (Cunningham 87).

Dunn says that when we inquire within this diversity for the distinctive features of the religious experience that marked it out as Christian, the answer comes in varying forms. In all there is an underlying emphasis that there must be some co-relation between present experience and past tradition, between the exalted Christ experienced now through the Spirit and the earthly Jesus of kerygmatic and church traditions (200-201). So when we look back over the history of early Christian worship, the wealth of individual traditions and their often very diverse developments force us to raise the question of where their unity lies; but this same diversity precludes any facile answer

(Hahn 104). Hahn maintains that the New Testament traditions cannot be summarized on a simple plane; neither can the form of unified worship that crystallizes during the second century be considered the only possible and necessary outcome (104).

THE THEORY OF THOUGHT IN MANSEL

Henry L. Mansel in *The Limits of Religious Thought Examined* laid out an explanation to assist us in comprehending the complexities involved in these terms and concepts.

Mansel (1820-1871) was an English philosopher and theologian, educated at Merchant Taylor's School in London and at St. John's College, Oxford. It is said that he looked to France and Scotland for his philosophy and not to Germany, as did his contemporaries (Davie 152).

The revelation of God in Jesus the Christ through Jesus of Nazareth is always received according to the situation or circumstances of the individual. This aspect draws a limitation already to the revelation being experienced. Then we have also the limitations imposed by the nature of human thought or mind. According to Mansel, the analogy that Bishop Butler has pointed out, between religion and the constitution and course of nature, may be in some degree extended to the constitution and processes of the human mind. The representations of God which Scripture presents to us may be shown to be analogous to those which the laws of our minds require us to form; and therefore as such may naturally be supposed to have emanated from the same author (Mansel 64).

Can our minds really represent images as they are in themselves? Does the image correspond to the mind or does the mind correspond to the image? Does the concept really coincide with the reality as it is in essence?

Dockrill says that because we cannot think about God as an infinite being, what thoughts we have of him can come about only by his communicating himself to us in the form of the Incarnation according to the limitations of our nature. Thus, when the deity makes himself known to the human person in the general way of moral and religious experience, he appears in finite form. Therefore, while the infinite must accommodate himself to our finite capacities, we are unable to say how far it is distorted because truth is the correspondence of thought with the objects of consciousness, and we cannot tell how far, if at all, the divine thought and consciousness resemble human thought and consciousness (Dockrill 379).

Mansel says that the conclusion that the condition of human consciousness almost irresistibly forces upon us is one that equally exhibits the strength and the weakness of the human intellect. We are compelled, he says, to admit that the mind, in its contemplation of objects, is not the mere passive recipient of the things presented to it. It has an activity and a law of its own, by virtue of which it reacts upon the materials existing without and moulds them into that form in which consciousness is capable of apprehending them (Mansel 141). So the revelation of God takes place in an unlimited form to the human person, but the reception of that revelation has an imposition of limitedness to it. It is not inherent in the revelation *per se* but rather imposed on it from the recipient. And we have already observed that worship is a re-action to God's action in history. In other words, the action of God is unlimited but the re-action of the human person is limited.

According to Dockrill, Mansel's theory of thought is based on the empiricist principle that a person can think only the sorts of things he has experienced. The act of

thought cannot create its own object; being mediate and representative, it requires being based on an immediate and presentative fact of consciousness (Dockrill 371). He further states that thought, generally, does not make use of images, but concepts that are general notions as warrants or *topos*. These concepts are formed by the mind's noting what is common between the institutions of particular things and then fixing this common feature in the mind by the use of a sign or representative symbol, generally a word or group of words (Dockrill 372). It is difficult to appropriate the with the construction of the mind, following the mode of operation of the thought. To this effect, Dockrill says that Mansel tried to argue that the contradictions which surround attempts to think about the need not result from the nature of the alleged entity considered but rather from the incapacity of thought to handle such matters. According to him, it is not surprising that Mansel says that contradictions arise when the mind, which can reach only to the finite and relative, tries to deal with the infinite and absolute (Dockrill 375).

From the above, it is clear that diversity should not be strange, but normal. A lot of factors contributed to the existence of diversity. Massey in expressing these factors says that unforeseen and unplanned conditions developed that necessitated certain differentiation in the Church's worship with respect to time, place, and occasion. Chief among these were the continuing delay of the end of history, the definitive break of Christianity with Judaism, and the geographical extension of the Church's mission in the Greco-Roman world (141). In other words, when we face diversity as a reality, we find that the existence of persons and the factor of time play vital roles. The geographical factor does not offer much evidence for the persistence of diversity as such, because there could still be diversity within the same society as long as the human

persons naturally are different. The emphasis on the person draws us toward what builds a person to act.. In a sense, there is a clear identifying mark for persons as distinct from things, which can but move or be moved, whereas persons by definition can act, according to Kenneth Burke. In being endowed with words (symbols) by which they can frame responses to questions and commands, by the same token persons have responsibility (*Religion* 187). Here, we cannot fail to acknowledge the effect of tradition on individual persons, that is, when we underline the fact of our common limited human nature and individual characteristics even within the same tradition. The fact is that the whole situation is complex.

Another point to keep abreast with is that truth and falsehood, according to Dockrill, are not properties of things in themselves, but of our conceptions, and are tested, not by the comparison of conceptions with things in themselves, but with things as they are given in some other relation or as they are mediated in our experience. Therefore, truth in relation to the human person admits of no other test than the harmonious consent of all human faculties; and, as no such faculty can take cognizance of the absolute, it follows that correspondence with the absolute can never be required as a test of truth. And so the utmost deficiency that can be charged against human faculty amounts only to the fact that we cannot say we know God as God knows Himself. In the light of these, we can say that regulative knowledge is gained by direct experience of something related to but other than the object of knowledge (Dockrill 378).

As earlier indicated, our worship is only a re-action to God's action in history. God's action in the New Testament was made possible through tradition, Scripture and revelation. How close were the New Testament Christians to the reality of these three

factors? The human limitation notwithstanding, there are still other factors that made complete correspondence of these to their knowledge impossible. They include geographical, cultural, religious, and historical factors.

In all these, we may say with Lohmeyer that cult(ure) and community belong together, just as the individual and his activity in time belong together; and therefore, we are in fact also saying that the temporal locus of the cult(ure) is in a real sense history and tradition. It is important to note that the act of divine revelation, which once founded the cult(ure) and the community is an event in itself, to which heaven and earth, God and people together turn their gaze. As the act of divine revelation, it brings with it all the grace and all the demands, all the power and all the holiness of an act of God; and as an event it has all the reality of a human historical happening, a humanness that defines its concreteness. In so far as it links up past and present and future in this way – in other words in its canonical holiness – the cult(ure) is for the community the light which lights their way through time, the key to the enigmas of their passage, and their comfort through all the confusions of their history. This act (of God) has all the limited and conditioned characteristics of a single passing event and yet has the nature of a holy revelation. The holy has therefore assumed the dimensions of time and place, and likewise time and place, land and people have become holy, creating a unique experience for humanity. This very act and the institutions based upon it are valid for the whole people, but they are not made valid through the whole people. They permeate its history and are not consumed in it. They exist as a whole, as something inviolable, and for that very reason they are distinct from everything in history that is provisional – history being the place of things defective and unfulfilled; they preserve their distinction even though the history of

the community is not simply a history of the holy within it, but also of human beings within it. The Incarnation is something close to the analogy being presented here in a unified and constructive exposition. It is clear that revelation supercede history, just as Christianity supercedes every other culture. From the magnitude of this distinction there arises the inexhaustible wealth of forms and forces, each of them expressing again in miniature that mysterious unity and contrariety between all-embracing divine revelation and limited human event, each of them transitory like all human action and yet surviving for centuries and remaining as a living sign of God. In this way the sacred becomes history and history becomes sanctified, yet in both a fulfillment is required which is not history (Lohmeyer 6-8).

Therefore, through the discourse in this chapter it is clearly evident that Christian theology and rhetoric are identical because they both affirm and celebrate the power of language, and especially the power of the spoken word. Language is the sense of the medium through which we relate to one another and to God. But the Christian tradition also recognizes the ambiguity of speech, which can be used for good or ill (Cunningham 36). However, Christianity has always emphasized the need for and recognized the importance of speaking well – of coming together for worship around a common form of words, of speaking of doctrine rightly, and of lifting voices in praise and thanksgiving in a manner befitting the God of Jesus Christ (Cunningham 36), thereby curbing the ambiguity existent in speech. As Cunningham acknowledges, if rhetoric is defined as the *bene dicendi scientia* — that is, the science of or special knowledge about speaking well (13) — then the significance of the category of word (language) means that Christians are called upon to watch their language in the presence of God and have often ended their

worship gatherings with an act of *bene dicendi*, a benediction (Cunningham 37), “good diction.” Active participation in cultic activities helps us to speak well as against speaking in an evil way. Speaking well is the essence of rhetoric and therefore, implying eloquence. We cannot exclude speaking well from Augustine’s concept of eloquence (which will be examined in chapter six), since the Roman understanding of rhetoric is the science of speaking well. According to Cunningham, common wisdom or the *sensus communis* suggests the ability to act and think and speak rightly according to the standards of the community and the concrete location of the agent. Common wisdom is related to the notion of practical reason (*phronesis*; prudential), but it also includes the notion of speaking well (*eulogia*; *eloquentia*) (87).

To be a worshipping community, creates a condition whereby, as Calvin Troup tells us,

the Word of God speaks temporally in the flesh through the Gospel to produce belief and speaks eternally as ‘the sole good Master’ to confirm the truth of that belief (11. 8. 10). From this condition created by the formation of a worshipping community we see that the ‘interior Truth’ of which Augustine speaks is Christ himself, and that in his attempt to imitate Christ, instructional discourse would have to be primary. The Word was not only made flesh but maintains full status as Creator (11. 9. 11) (Troup 98).

In a sense, the community is always created and recreated or renewed. The survival of the early Christian community with the existent diversity has kept the faith, in the Jesus of Nazareth who is the revelation of God, until this century. This faith in Jesus of

Nazareth was apparently the case with the New Testament Churches, even though some of them died out or joined with other communities. “We would expect ministries to be fluid, in transition, constantly in process of re-definition, as new needs emerge in rapidly changing conditions and as ministers themselves respond to the changing experiences in their own faith life” (Rademacher 33).

The deep meaning of charisms for the building up of the community as was lived by early Christianity should be the guiding post of the African Catholic Church towards evolving a traditional spirituality, where gifts are for the service of the community (*Holy Bible*, 1 Cor 12). This is the time we need to re-educate ourselves with this style of ministry of service as evident in the New Testament and in the African traditional society.

What the Catholic Church is seeking for the African Catholic Christian is an understanding of communion [collaboration] that attends to the actual reality of the ministries and ministers themselves. This framework for ministry, based on specific services rather than ideal offices, will jointly develop and offer an ecclesiology that will support a relational theology of ministry (Hahnenberg 121). A relational theology of ministry is par for the course with collaboration in ministry.

INSTRUCTION OF INQUIRERS AS CONSTRUCTING AN AUDIENCE

Even though Christians have been mandated to preach the Gospel to every creature, any process adopted in order to fulfill this demand must require construction of arguments. “The speaker or writer constructs an audience that is adequate to the occasion. From a rhetorical perspective, speakers determine their audiences just as surely as they determine the content of their speeches” (Cunningham 69). The type of arguments applied

determines the type of audience the speaker or evangelizer tends to construct. For instance, in the case of the documents of the Church, most of them dwell heavily on Scripture because they have already constructed an audience that will definitely accept such arguments. According to Cunningham, when theologians and evangelizers present their arguments, they are addressing an audience that they hope will find their appeals persuasive. Therefore, they are building up the faith of the members of their audiences and the faith they seek to build is a particular; it is the Christian faith as the particular theologian and community understands it (96).

All evangelizers are rhetoricians inasmuch as they are constructing a community of faith based on the foundation of the Gospel or the Word of God. Their arguments will ceaselessly construct an audience in the direction of the hopes and perspectives leading to persuasion. The *ethos* of the speaker–evangelizer is necessary for effective persuasion, which can only be achieved when conversion and commitment is effected in the audience. Therefore, Augustine states

We do not wish to tire the listener, even when we speak in subdued style, but we desire rather that he hear not only intelligently but also willingly. And why do we employ divine testimonies in what we say in order to teach, except that we may be heard obediently, that is, that we may be believed with the aid of him to whom it is said, thy testimonies are become exceedingly credible? What does he desire who explains something to learners even in the subdued style but to be believed? And who would wish to hear him unless he could retain his listener with some sweetness of discourse? Who does not know that, if he is not heard with

understanding, neither is he heard willingly or obediently? (Augustine, *On Christian* 4. 26. 56).

Therefore, worship or cult creates an audience that continuously re-creates itself. A particular community with a particular language is loaded with signs meaningful to that community alone.

The primary task of the Catholic Christian is to preach the Gospel, the Word of God, just as a fifth century bishop like Augustine had the primary task of teaching and preaching the Word of God (Troup 78). We can assume the same responsibility because Augustine believes that with his flock, he is first of all a Christian and for them a bishop. In other words, Augustine and his flock virtually share the same primary function through teaching and instruction in the Word incarnate. Sharing in the teaching and instruction becomes a way to learn wisdom because the Word incarnate demonstrates perfect integration of substance, words and deeds (Troup 103) which as a necessity must accompany eloquence (Troup 78). Evidently, based on such categorization Augustine represented Ambrose first as devout, then as eloquent, and finally as the provider of substance to his congregation. Ambrose paralleled and extended upon the earlier images of Cicero and Hierius as the positive example Augustine knew personally and whose rhetoric he observed firsthand. Augustine further related Ambrose's rhetoric – his wisdom and eloquence – as an indivisible, irresistible force for good, even against resistance (Troup 31). The undisputed importance of providing substance to the Catholic Christians, who will in turn provide it to the others is essential if the Catholic Church in Africa wishes to sustain its members and strive towards continued evangelization of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Provision of the substance of the faith must be done in a language that contains common signs meaningful to the African community. The substance of the Gospel must be translated into the language of the people of Abakaliki diocese in order to lay claim to their text as their own and so respond to the call of the African Synod. At the aftermath of the African Synod John Paul II stated that

In order that the Word of God may be known, loved, pondered and preserved in the hearts of the faithful (cf. *Holy Bible*, LK 2: 19, 51), greater efforts must be made to provide access to the Sacred Scriptures, especially through full or partial translations of the Bible, prepared as far as possible in cooperation with other Churches and Ecclesial communities and accompanied by studyguides for use in prayer and for study in family and community. Also to be encouraged is the scriptural formation of clergy, religious, catechists and the laity in general; careful preparation of celebrations of the Word; promotion of the biblical apostolate with the help of the Biblical Centre for Africa and Madagascar and the encouragement of other similar structures at all levels. In brief, efforts must be made to try to put the Sacred Scripture into the hands of all the faithful right from their earliest years (“Ecclesia” n58).

It is interesting to note that the New Testament has been translated into a typical Abakaliki language, but there are still other major and minor linguistic groups within the diocese that do not have access to the Abakaliki language and therefore, a comprehensive access to the Word of God. A comprehensive evangelization decries leaving out any group of people with the capability of assimilating the Gospel. Therefore, Cunningham

maintains that the construction of an audience would include, on the most obvious level, the use of a natural language in which to phrase the argument (70). In the same line of thought, Terry Eagleton states that

It is not just that a writer “needs an audience”: the language he uses already implies one range of possible audiences rather than another, and this is not a matter in which he necessarily has much choice. A writer may not have in mind a particular kind of reader at all, he may be superbly indifferent to who reads his work, but a certain kind of reader is already included within the very act of writing itself, as an internal structure of the text (84)

Therefore, Cunningham states that through the deployment of certain arguments, theologians are in effect saying; this and that is what I want my audience to be, these are the kinds of people that I want them to become. The traditional name for this activity is catechesis, a theological activity, but he also classifies it as a thorough rhetorical activity (95).

The final chapter is a conclusion and summary of the foregoing chapters, outlining new evangelization as a persuasive strategy within the Church’s document and ecclesiology whereby Catholics are invited to answer the supreme call to preach the Gospel in season and out of season.

CHAPTER 6

THE RHETORIC BEHIND COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

This chapter highlights how the African Synod (1994) gives us an inclination to persuasion. Persuasion is seen not necessarily in terms of argumentation but in a more comprehensive way, embracing every human activity. As highlighted by Schrag,

the deeds of mankind, no less than its conversations, conspire in the discovery and communication of meaning structures in the public life of man. A protest march, as a pattern of institutional action, is a rhetorical display or making manifest of social ideals and goals. A political rally is an endorsement of a candidate through the sheer presence of the gathered bodies. The performance of a religious ritual announces the inscription of sentiments of valuation that preserve a tradition. In all this there is a rhetorical expression of variegated forms of meaning within the body politic of communicative practices. This expressivity can at times be more consequential and more revelatory than the rhetoric of the spoken or written word (Schrag 194-195).

The changing situation of the human society is a call for new methods and approaches to the social, religious and political events of the human person if we are geared towards building an authentic community. It is a persistent and an invitational persuasion that both teaches and questions the responsibility of the Christians in the task of ministry. In a sense, beliefs are themselves embedded within a more encompassing history and system of social practices. It is here that rhetoric must be prepared to fight against its subordination to argumentative techniques of disputation (eristics) and its construal as a strategy of debating, the winning of points in an argument with the intention of obliterating the beliefs of an opponent (Schrag 182). The salient point here is that we had been (in the early Church) and are all involved (today) in the ministry, though we failed to realize it at a certain point in the history of the Church. This involvement is an action in itself.

Therefore, I will agree with Calvin Schrag that the performance of persuasion should be expanded beyond forensics and deliberative rhetoric of political oratory. It should include a showing of paths of reflection, deliberation, and action that is nonargumentative in design, which in itself does not entail the displacement of the uses of argumentation. It resituates them in essence (183). Collaborative ministry ultimately becomes the performance of persuasion into action that is nonargumentative. It can broadly be equated with what Schrag calls the play of performative utterances, metaphorical deployment, mythopoetic elucidations, and experimentation with alternative styles of behavior in disclosing to the other new modes of thought and action (183). The indirect application of these forms outlined by Schrag is what makes the technique employed by the Second Vatican Council (1965), the African Synod (1994) and other

Church documents noncoercive in their style of argumentation, by tempering the process with nonargumentative forms of persuasion.

CONTEXTUALITY OF THE GOSPEL

To be attentive to the “signs of the times,” was a primary concern of the Second Vatican Council, facing the third world in a post-colonial era, to show a maximum respect for humanity’s invincible historical diversity and cultural pluriformity. Hence the council’s emphasis on the primordial and unique principle of “incarnation,” only recently designated by the neologism “enculturation.” John Paul II did emphasize the same point while declaring that

the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops was *an historic moment of grace*: the Lord *visited* his people in Africa. Indeed, this Continent is today experiencing what we can call a *sign of the times*, an *acceptable time*, a *day of salvation*. It seems that the “hour of Africa” has come, a favorable time which urgently invites Christ’s messengers to launch out into the deep and to cast their nets for the catch [*Holy Bible*, Lk 5:4]. Just as at Christianity’s beginning the minister of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia [Africa], rejoiced at having received the faith through Baptism and went on his way bearing witness to Christ [*Holy Bible*, Acts 8: 27-39], so today the Church in Africa, joyful and grateful for having received the faith, must pursue its evangelizing mission, in order to bring the peoples of the Continent to the Lord, teaching them to observe all that he has commanded [*Holy Bible*, Mt 28: 20] (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n6).

The communication of the divine Word to humankind, as also any human response, presupposes mutual historical conditioning and cultural enfleshment of the communicants.

Therefore,

in advocating multiple perspectives on the story of Jesus, early Christians were simply recognizing that people evaluate an argument in a variety of ways. Not everyone would be persuaded to faith as a result of hearing quotations of the Torah, or by manipulating complex theological distinctions, or even by listening to straightforward narration. Differing in argument, style, and arrangement, the Gospels remind us of the multiplicity of rhetorical contexts for which they were written (Cunningham 49).

People exist only in limited historical periods, and within concrete cultural contexts, all with their respective symbol systems of communication. God's dynamic self-communication, which we call grace, always has an incarnational tendency. In a sense, the ultimate rhetorical event in Christian theology as proclaimed by Cunningham, means that God's rhetorical activity is revelation and the human rhetorical activity is proclamation. Therefore, the human word of proclamation and the divine word of revelation become the ultimate word which theology speaks is called, quite properly, the *Word*, who became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth (Cunningham 203). There is an indispensable need for fleshly visibility, audibility, tangibility in particular historical and cultural forms capable of mediating the meaning of God's Word in the respective times and context of each distinctive people. This indispensable need for

fleshly visibility is why the Church is now striving for a new openness to all peoples, and why the Church aspires to become (Hillman 31) “the house which all may enter, and in which all can feel at home, while keeping their own culture and traditions, provided that these are not contrary to the Gospel” (John Paul, “Redemptoris” n24).

The human person forms the starting point of evangelization and culminates in the relationships of people and cultures among themselves and ultimately with God. Since the human person to be evangelized is not an abstract being but what John Paul II defined as “subject to social and economic questions” (“Ecclesia” n68), the Church will always walk and live intimately bound in a real sense to the history of the human society. John Paul II makes it clear that the “Church proclaims and begins to bring about the kingdom of God after the example of Jesus, because ‘the kingdom’s nature...is one of communion among all human beings – with one another and with God’” (“Ecclesia” n68). Each individual is incarnated within a cultural setting of an actual people speaking a particular language, owners of heritage with a perspective on the world and inserted within a history. It must be acknowledged then,

Human history finds its true meaning in the Incarnation of the Word of God, who is the foundation of restored human dignity. It is through Christ, the ‘image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation’ [*Holy Bible*, Col 1:15], that man [the human person] is redeemed. For by his Incarnation the Son of God has united himself in some fashion with every man [human person] (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n69).

In other words, every individual has a historical situation but inserted within a historical moment, place or home and a horizon of significance. In any case, Jesus Christ is the central authority for every Christian, no matter the cultural inclinations, so “the speaker who is associated with Jesus is authorized to speak, for Jesus is the person to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given – *Holy Bible*, Matt. 28: 18 (Cunningham 131).

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP AS AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION

This insertion of the human person into a historical moment and a horizon of significance defines the relational approach to communication whereby the human person is treated as a unique individual with emotions and feelings. Cunningham acknowledges that

Christianity has always given significant weight to the notion of personhood – an emphasis that has played itself out in biblical studies, doctrine, ethics, and worship. In early Christian thought, the person is understood as existing in relationship to others; personhood thus necessarily implies community.

Christianity had developed this highly nuanced approach long before the advent of the autonomous self of the Enlightenment. And although sometimes swept along in autonomy’s tide, Christianity can still reflect a notion of personhood very different from the atomized, individualistic model so prevalent in the modern age. Christianity’s more communal and relational model of personhood is now being recovered by a wide variety of theologians (110).

Even though there is something in the human person that warrants unreliability due to the fact that we make choices and always act according to our own free will, the relational

character still invites us to see the human person as capable of response to discourse, and therefore, should not be seen as an object to be talked about, talked at, and so avoiding the mutual interaction of persons. This invitation calls for openness toward the other while accepting the significance and worth of the other in a conversation in view of the historical moment. Therefore, persons must leave their respective historical situations in order to appropriate the historical moment and assume dialogue in the process. The historical moment of each person already situates each individual, and therefore, the importance of the face, alterity, and otherness of the other.

It is within the fact that we make choices and possess free will that constructive discourse should be located, and therefore, should be seen as an avenue of enhancing mutual interactions of persons within that discourse or dialogue. Just what Emmanuel Levinas referred to as “proximity beyond the ideas exchanged, a proximity that lasts even after dialogue has become impossible. Beyond dialogue, a new maturity and earnestness, a new gravity and a new patience, and, if I may express it so, maturity and patience for insoluble problems” (87). It should not produce a situation whereby the human person is treated as an object to be talked about, or talked at. The Church is continually inviting a shared experience, more constructive and authentic among its members in order to enrich evangelization. In this way evangelization is seen as a necessity of life for the Church. With regard to the Christian tradition, we might as well say that the very grammar of faith points up a vital sense in which the doing of theology is intrinsically performative. Word and deed are inseparable in Christian life and practice; and because word and action do not always or completely coincide, Christians have always been concerned about getting it right. The whole idea of getting it right in terms of faith is somewhat

elusive given the fact that circumstances and situations in which the Church finds itself are always changing, sometimes in small and imperceptible ways, sometimes in ways that are marked and drastic. Whether these changes are minuscule or expose major shifts, transitions, and developments, improvisation is a constant feature of Christian witness by virtue of the contingencies of created existence (Fodor and Hauerwas 82-83).

Therefore it is necessary to advocate for a meaningful dialogue and collaboration within the universal and particular churches. In a society where reality is jointly constructed based on the readiness to welcome change, while accepting the problems of the society with openness to the reality of the historical moment, we cannot overlook dialogue. Ronald Arnett would opine that the historical face of dialogic civility is based in change and willingness to address the problems that impact human development in a given period of time within the public arena. Dialogic civility exists wherever there is genuine effort to offer public change within a conversational context that seeks not violence, but concern for the other and calls for responsible action (Arnett 301-302). This conversational context, as already mentioned, that seeks not violence is a *sine qua non* for collaboration because it creates a face-to-face situation where the other is fully real and this reality is part of the overall reality of everyday life, and as such massive and compelling.

Since, evidently, scholars have always advocated for a dialogue, the type rooted in the philosophy of Martin Buber's I-Thou relationship, therefore, Pierre Hayat makes a point when he acknowledged Buber's teaching on the relation between the I who addresses a thou and the thou who calls upon an I, as the initial structure of meaning, beyond what can be stated (Levinas xx). The motive of these scholars has always been to

bridge the gap between individuals engaged in discourse, not necessarily to establish the place and importance of the other. The Church has come to realize that the entirety of the faithful must collaborate in order to achieve the desired goal of the Gospel of Christ. And as Hugh Dalziel Duncan clearly stated in the introduction to Burke's *Permanence and Change*, we cannot act together unless we know how to communicate with each other over the problems we must solve in order to act at all. In the act of communicating, we do not signal each other like semaphores; we exhort others, and ourselves, to act in one way and not in another. Prior to our acting, we must size up the situation in which we must act (Burke, *Permanence* xviii).

I have tried to show that if collaboration is rooted in the rhetorical theory of Augustine where matter and form are equally essential, in an incarnational approach, if faults do arise in the presentation of the message, constituting a morally incorrect position, they are classified as social sin or evil because it is a public mistake arising from misguided group arguments. However, John Paul II assures us that despite every difficulty, delay and contradiction caused by the limits of human nature, by sin and by the Evil One, the Church knows that all the forces that humanity employs for communion and participation find a full response in the intervention of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of man and of the world ("Christifideles" n7). Such mistakes had been made in the past even by the Church, resulting in the convocation of councils to correct the errors.

Benhabib makes a distinction of the public space based on three different conceptions corresponding to the three main currents of Western political thought. These are (1) the *republican civic virtue* tradition of public space described as the agonistic with Hannah Arendt as a point of reference; (2) the *legalistic* model of public space whereby

the problem of a just and stable public order is central promoted in the liberal tradition of Kant; and finally, the *discursive* public space which envisages a democratic socialist approach initiating the transformation of late capitalist societies (Benhabib 89). From the point of view of assessments of the three forms of public space as outlined, Benhabib says that Arendt's model is at odds with the sociological reality of modernity, as well as with modern political struggles for justice. The legalistic model of public space transforms the political dialogue of empowerment far too quickly into a juridical discourse about basic rights and liberties. This discourse model is the only one which is compatible both with the general social trends of our societies and with the emancipatory aspirations of new social movements like the women's movements. The radical proceduralism of this model is a powerful criterion for demystifying discourses of power and their implicit agenda (Benhabib 113).

In other words, a seminar, publication in journals, symposium, synods, and Scripture lessons are welcome ways to initiate a discourse environment among peer groups in the public space. Like Dr. Arnett, I hold that collaborative ministry exists wherever there is genuine effort to offer public change within a conversational context, with respect to the historical moment that seeks not violence, but concern for the other and calls for responsible action. In a conversation, I must know how to listen, declared Seyla Benhabib. I must know how to understand your point of view, I must learn to represent to myself the world and the other as you see them. If I cannot listen, if I cannot understand, and if I cannot represent, the conversation stops and develops into an argument, or maybe never gets started at all (Benhabib 52).

It has been made clear that the Church's constant relationship with the world gives reality and substance to her mission of telling the story of Jesus Christ. This story is a coherent narrative even though the Christian is not the author or producer. In line with the Christian's mission to tell the story of Jesus Christ, we can relate to the thought of Benhabib who says that narrativity or the immersion of action in a web of human relationships is the mode through which the self is individuated and acts are identified. Both the whatness of the act and the wholeness of the self are disclosed to agents capable of communicative understanding. Actions are identified narratively, Benhabib maintains, and identifying an action is equivalent to telling the story of its initiation, of its unfolding, and of its immersion in a web of relations constituted through the actions and narratives of others (126). And so, if the mission of the Church must be taken seriously, then cultural diversity must be part of the experience. The inclusion of cultural diversity in the mission of the Church is more urgent as the Church continues to invite the entire faithful into an active participation in the work of evangelization. In other words, a member of the lay faithful can never remain in isolation from the community, "but must live in a continual interaction with others, with a lively sense of fellowship, rejoicing in an equal dignity and common commitment to bring to fruition the immense treasure that each has inherited" (John Paul, "Christifideles" n20)

It is in this context that I see Saint Augustine's rhetorical theory as pertinent to the clergy of our time in order to make use of the riches of our cultural dynamics in ministry. What Augustine offers to the clergy today is a situation where "an expansion of critical appreciation as a means of learning . . . with its plea for a gifted, broadly trained Christian maker of discourse, might well take its place with some other great pleas" (Murphy 63).

In other words, a seminar, publication in journals, symposium, synods, and Scripture lessons are welcome ways to initiate a discourse environment among peer groups in the public space. I am optimistic that the outcome of the African Synod has rejuvenated the Church as new processes and conclusions in the non-fallible matters of faith and morals are being implemented in Abakaliki Diocese and the rest of Africa.

Our activities as a Church community are rooted in the fact that we have a remote beginning in the Word incarnate through the event of Pentecost. The event of Pentecost was the birth of the Church and since then she has always functioned with the power of the same Spirit. Every member of the community is supposedly filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit and therefore can meaningfully act with its help. The fullness of the Holy Spirit initiates the first and continuous presence of the community with the leaders striving through policies arrived at in wisdom to enhance the life of its members. The African Synod was more appropriate in the sense of consultation with the members of the community in the effort to advance a continued activity by the community. It is important to note that African society has a special respect for the elders of the community who form the epitome of wisdom. The elders on their part have deep respect and sympathy for their siblings who will take their place when death calls them to the other world. A council of elders often runs the community.

COUNCIL OF ELDERS

The council of elders can also be identified in the early Christian community whereby the elders or presbyters eventually became the priests. I think the emphasis is on the function and not the persona of the priest. A function defined by the wisdom and Spirit inherent in the person of the priest or an elder is applicable in the African context. There is still in

the African context a situation whereby an elder loses his honor and dignity if he continuously gives bad advice to the people and thereby is not very useful to the community. By this very fact one cannot overlook the qualities that define the individual person, which of course do not have a physical attachment but are instead incarnate in the human person. This incarnate quality can be defined as a charisma and is not the sole possession of any one person but rather bestowed on individuals who are disposed to its reception. The basis for these charisms stem from the fact that “whether they be exceptional and great or simple and ordinary, they are *graces of the Holy spirit that have, directly or indirectly, a usefulness for the ecclesial community*, ordered as they are to the building up of the Church, to the well-being of humanity and to the needs of the world” (John Paul, “Christifideles” n24).

This charisma can be identified with what Augustine calls “eloquence.” Eloquence, he says, is aptly expressed in the speeches and sayings of the eloquent, where the precepts of eloquence are found to have been fulfilled, although the speakers did not think of them in order to be eloquent or while they were being eloquent, and they were eloquent whether they had learned the rules or never come in contact with them. They did fulfill the precepts of eloquence because they were eloquent; and not that they applied them that they might be eloquent (*On Christian 4. 3. 4*). In other words, we can justifiably claim that the charisma is in-born in the eloquent either through exercise or habit (*On Christian 4. 3. 4*), the two ways mentioned by Augustine that lead to its skillful use. This eloquence is very much likened to the expectations of the Catholic Christians in terms of putting into practice their belief in the Word of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Augustine tells us, “those with acute and eager minds more readily learn

eloquence by reading and hearing the eloquent than by following the rules of eloquence” (*On Christian* 4. 3. 4). But Augustine’s ultimate solution to achieving eloquence (wisdom) hinges on the incarnate Word, which stabilizes memory by inhabiting the mind and speaking right moral order to the will from the inside, restoring the ability to reason. Similarly, through the Incarnation, the eternal Word participates in temporality, investing the elusive present and temporal knowledge with provisional stability (Troup 108). The participation of the eternal Word in temporality is made possible through the cult of worship, where the eternal and the temporal are rhetorically united in the context of the community of faith. In same sense, Augustine seems to find rhetoric as an answer to the unification and stability of discourse through the Incarnation. Troup — noting that how the Incarnation can satisfactorily stabilize discourse itself remains unclear — asserts that Augustine must overcome the impasse if he is to maintain his quest and ever hope to attain wisdom. Augustine accomplishes this, perhaps surprisingly, through rhetoric (Troup 109).

In the Catholic context, charisma is the gift of the Spirit of God to the believers who are called upon to act in the person of Jesus Christ in any situation they find themselves. The charisma belongs to Christ who gives the gift to the baptized Christians who have chosen to share in his Spirit and wisdom. Therefore, in the thinking of Augustine, “boys do not need the art of grammar which teaches correct speech if they have the opportunity to grow up and live among men who speak correctly. Without knowing any of the names of the errors, they criticize and avoid anything erroneous they hear spoken on the basis of their own habits of speech, just as the city dwellers, even if they are illiterate, criticize the speech of rustics” (*On Christian* 4. 3. 5).

So, when the Catholic Church speaks of the universal priesthood of the faithful, it acknowledges the participation of every Catholic in the council of elders of the community of faith. “They have ‘put on’ wisdom and received the spirit of God to the benefit of the one community of the Church. They, too, are challenged to work together with bishops and presbyters in the building up of the one Church of Jesus Christ. This is the reason they must have a share in the council of elders in parish and diocesan palavers. The word which every member of the Church utters originates in Jesus Christ, the Word and Wisdom of God, and is simultaneously spirit-given and spirit-filled” (Uzukwu 144-145). The people of Abakaliki will much more easily participate in the work of evangelization when they root the Gospel within their cultural values and habits, as long as it is not contrary to the dictates of Christian value system. Notably, the problem of ambiguity and obscurity, discordance and disintegration, and the division between eloquence and knowledge is a psychosocial disorder, which Augustine call original sin can exist (1. 7. 11-12; Vance 27) (Troup 115), because it is a matter of the heart or will. Therefore, in terms of rhetoric, Augustine posits that love (*caritas*) is a prerequisite to belief, the motivation for speaking eloquently and the necessary element for valid interpretation, thereby shifting emphasis from the speaker to the listener. The shift is necessitated through the recognition that love demands communication and becomes the only temporal source of hope for overcoming ambiguity in rhetorical situations (Troup 116).

In the same vein, within the African context the *pleroma* of charisma is situated within the community where the chief plays the vital role of listener and the giver of the last word in any conversation, according to Elochukwu E. Uzukwu in his book A

Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches (130). “We must take care to underline that the image of the chief or community leader,” says Uzukwu, “which will influence a truly Christian and truly African ministry in our church is not the bastardization of the image of the chief by African dictators, nor the imported Roman and feudal autocracy which dominates the present ministerial practice of the Roman Catholic Church. The typical hierarchy in Africa is a serving ‘sacred power’ or a selfless leadership, which is the polar opposite of autocratic or despotic rulership” (Uzukwu 130).

Leadership that gears towards despotism and autocracy is anti-African, and yet the African society is today beset with its existence in different parts of the continent. Adoption of this form of leadership degenerates into domination and hydra-headed forms of exploitation. This type of leadership is an extended form of colonialism, which used the ideology of

domination and exploitation of the colonized, intended to derive maximum profit from minimum investment. To realize this objective, the colonizers went ahead to deny the being of the colonized, their person, their culture, their worldview. In its place was installed the person, the culture, and the universe of the colonizer for the realization of the interests of the latter. The successful implementation of this ideology alienated the colonized. The machine for the realization of the colonial ideology was both technical (colonial military superiority) and religious (Christianity). Even if some missionaries opposed the methods of the colonizers, evangelization and colonization were linked; this link was even foreseen in the Berlin conference of 1884-1885, where Africa was partitioned. Consequently, the conquering Western powers set out to colonize, that is, to occupy lands which did

not belong to them, and to impose forced labor on populations to extend their domination and to develop their home economies. They also set out to civilize Africans: schools were introduced, and these were administered principally by missionaries; new technologies were installed; a new culture was born. And, finally, they Christianized Africa: Western Christian cosmology and notions of person and community were introduced to compete with or displace the local African cosmologies. This close link between the Christian religion and the political powers in the conquest of Africa must not be forgotten in the struggle for the reconstruction of the continent (Uzukwu 29-30).

This historical situation in which the African Catholic Church finds itself today cannot be divorced from the measures taken during the African Synod in order to set the Church on its course of action. These actions are inevitably rhetorical, taking a cue from Kenneth Burke who asserts, in an address delivered at the annual meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1950, that anything anyone does — verbally or nonverbally, consciously or unconsciously, for persuasion (the old rhetoric) or for identification (the new rhetoric) — is a rhetorical ‘strategy’ (Burke, “New Rhetorics” 59). Following Burke, Cunningham seems to believe that the less the speaker holds in common with the audience, the more difficult persuasion will be. Unless the members of the audience are unusually eager to have their opinions altered, they are unlikely even to listen to an orator whom they know to be hostile to their entire worldview. Therefore, the process of persuasion must begin with common ground, requiring identification; persuading others by speaking their language, identifying our ways with theirs (Cunningham 46). It becomes much more necessary to decipher why

the Synod must help us to discover the African face of the African bride of Christ which is the Church on our continent, with all its beauty and its ugliness, with the stigmata of many centuries of oppression, martyrdom, of the anthropological annihilation of Africans on all the continents. It will help us to meet the gaze of our mother the Church in Africa, which sounds out our hearts and asks us gravely: “How long will I have to wait for the day when you achieve in me what is lacking in the Catholic dimension of the body of Christ? Where will you finally make yourself the truly African Catholic Church?” (Alberigo 127).

TRANSFORMATION OF HUMANITY

The new evangelization initiated by John Paul II is geared towards the deep-rooted assimilation of the Gospel. When the Gospel is really assimilated, then one can expect a zealous participation in its dissemination among the people as a response to the ultimate call of evangelization. The response ties in with God’s rhetorical activity in revelation because he loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its savior (*Holy Bible*, Jn. 3: 16-17). The human person is lifted with the special offer of freedom, necessitated by a missionary activity derived from the radical newness of life brought by Christ and lived by his followers. This new life is a gift from God, and people are asked to accept and develop it, if they wish to realize the fullness of their vocation in conformity to Christ (John Paul, “Redemptoris” n7). It is interesting to find the continued use of “newness” or “new” by John Paul. I consider this usage as a rhetorical construct whereby a call to rededicate an appropriate

attention to evangelization assumes a new approach. This rhetorical construct by John Paul II is necessary because

What we do as individuals and institutions is shaped by the insinuation of ideals of action. Some of these ideals are very much in the forefront of consciousness; others are more recessed, eclipsed by the social forgetfulness or by the intrusion of self-deception and ideology (Schrag 63).

Schrag takes such a line of thought based on the fact that within communicative praxis, these so called idealities are displayed in the formation of personal ideals which cannot be divorced from cultural inclinations, resonate in the typification of social action, in institutional goals, and in the specific ethical norms that direct the course of human life within the society. The personal ideals and goals sometimes may not be polarized from the societal goals as they cannot be easily distanced from each other. They interlock in a context where the individual becomes the manifestation of the societal ideals. Therefore, Schrag strongly maintains that

in addressing the ideality of individual and institutional action one must avoid a facile bifurcation of the idealities of discourse and the idealities of action. Not only is there an implied ethic of discourse in the language of promise-making and in the giving of one's word, normative ideals are already at work in the signitive meaning of discourse as it strives for agreement and consensus (Schrag 62).

Agreement and consensus culminates in mission and proclamation, the rhetorical activity of the human person. Proclamation occurs whenever one human being seeks to

persuade another in ways that are faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Cunningham 202). John Paul tells us that proclamation, because it is made in union with the entire ecclesial community, is never a merely personal act. The missionary is present and carries out his work by virtue of a mandate he has received; even if he finds himself alone, he remains joined by invisible but profound bonds to the evangelizing activity of the whole Church (“Redemptoris” n45). The essence of the evangelizing activity is to bring the Good News of salvation to the entire human race; especially for the people of Abakaliki diocese to make an impact in the environ. Paul VI says evangelizing means

Bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: “Now I am making the whole of creation new.” But there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert [seeks to persuade], solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieux which are theirs (“Evangelii” n18).

Therefore, in his exhortation to the African Catholic Christians John Paul made it clear that the new evangelization should be centered on a transforming encounter with the living person of Christ. He strongly believes that the first proclamation (human rhetorical activity) ought to bring about an overwhelming and exhilarating experience of Jesus

Christ who calls each one to follow him in an adventure of faith. However, the task is already made much easier for the Africans because of their belief in God the creator from their traditional life and religion and thus also open to the full and definitive revelation (God's rhetorical activity) of God in Jesus Christ, God with us, Word made flesh. Jesus is the Good News, the God who saves the African from oppression and slavery ("Ecclesia" n57).

Jesus is the God who will save the African because he knows what is inside a person and therefore, John Paul II asks that we should not be afraid to allow Christ to speak to the person inside each one of us. Today too often people do not know what they carry inside, in the deepest recesses of their soul, in their heart. Too often people are uncertain about a sense of life on earth because invaded by doubts they are led into despair ("Christifideles" n 34). A lot of time the hardship of life generally incurs despair as a consequence of doubt, and therefore we are cautioned and challenged to reject a way of living which does not correspond to the best of our African traditions and the Christian faith. It has been noticed that many people in Africa look beyond the African continent for the so-called freedom of the modern way of life. The African people are being urged to look inside themselves and discover the riches of their own traditions, and also to look to the faith being celebrated in the Synod. Genuine freedom can only be attained when we find Christ who will lead us to the ultimate truth ("Ecclesia" n48).

TRANSFORMATION OF THE SOCIETY

The incarnational paradigm in rhetoric that Augustine employs embraces the temporal while pursuing and practicing truth in present moments. In effect, Augustine proceeds to benefit his listeners via integration, rather than to see the interpretive act as dialectic,

conflict, or subversion. Augustine aims to construct rather than deconstruct, to use criticism in pursuit of integrity, not to foster fragmentation (Troup 177). Such a rhetorical approach belongs to the people, the community and the society, believers and potential believers. It is more or less the contingency of the temporal existence that concerns Augustine less than the contingency of human beings (Troup, 177). The potentialities of the human person if utilized can transform the society and culture, because nature has been created good. It is only when the corrupted human person transfers the capacity of corruption on nature that culture is vitiated, so that the solution one can deduce is to guide the human contingency with rhetoric. John Paul II maintains that without doubt a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world. But to mend it, what is needed is to first remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself present in these countries and nations (“Christifideles” n34).

In Acts of the Apostles, the early disciples of Jesus were afraid of coming out to proclaim the Word of God until the Holy Spirit descended on them, an event that brought a significant change in their life and attitude towards the Gospel (*Holy Bible*, Acts 2: 1-47). Rebecca Chopp makes it clear that

Such imaging, an aesthetic play of images within the Scriptures, occurs within the discourse and praxis of Christian community; to say it differently, images are born out of and speak to the rhetorical practices of Christian community. Piety and prayer, after all, live together in discourse, and images of ascent to God arise out of the habits and longings of daily life. From creation stories that show the relation of all to all, through the differences made by a God who brings life from

nothing, to journeys of freedom, to possibilities of justice and peace, to communities born with tongues of fire so they may have the power to speak, stories give flesh to vision while vision performs the stories in the midst of daily life (41).

As the leaders of the Catholic Church in Africa worry over what has become of the zeal in evangelization, even with the teeming population of most of the Churches within the continent, so do members of the Church question their inadequate involvement in the administration of Church programs. The members also complain about lack of programs rich in nourishments for the faithful. However, in the midst of these counter attacks, one must realize that it is only by letting Christ into our life through evangelization can we be in a position to proclaim him to the world, while declaring our authentic freedom. The ability to proclaim the Word of God becomes what Rebecca Chopp called

A form of resistance to the practices and principles of modernity that control, dominate, and oppress. But proclamation resists by way of transformation, seeking to provide new discourses by a variety of strategies, methods, and ways, and to transform the ruling principles and order into ones that allow, encourage, and enable transformative relations of multiplicity, difference, solidarity, anticipation, embodiment, and transformation. Transformation occurs by creating new images of human flourishing, new values of otherness and multiplicity, new rhetorical practices of solidarity and anticipation (68).

We can achieve such transformation through our faith in Jesus Christ. John Paul II tells us that this faith in Jesus Christ was manifested unceasingly, forcefully and

unanimously in the interventions of the Synod fathers throughout the meeting of the Synod Assembly. In the strength of this faith, the bishops of Africa entrusted their continent to Christ the Lord, convinced that he alone, through his Gospel and his Church, could save Africa from its present difficulties and heal its many ills (“Ecclesia” n10). John Paul II further stressed that people in Africa must accept with open hearts the message of hope addressed to them by the Synodal Assembly. According to him, the Synod fathers explored at length and in all its complexity what the Church is called to do in order to bring about the desired changes, but they did so with an attitude free from pessimism or despair. Despite the mainly negative picture, which today characterizes numerous parts of Africa, and despite the sad situations being experienced in many countries, the Church has the duty to affirm vigorously that these difficulties can be overcome. The Church must strengthen in all Africans the hope of genuine liberation; based on the awareness of God’s promise that even history is open to God’s kingdom (John Paul, “Ecclesia” n14).

What I have tried to outline in this research is only affirmation of the existence of a problem within the Catholic Church, especially in Africa. The problem in itself is a perennial one and can only be addressed when rhetorically approached, because of the contingencies of life. These contingencies are strictly beyond the human control since our environment is in constant flux. The necessity of rhetoric is based on the “signs of the times” which defines the contingent inclination of the mission to evangelize the world.

Rather, every good and true Christian should understand that wherever he may find truth, it is the Lord’s. And confessing and acknowledging this truth also in the

sacred writings, he will repudiate superstitious imaginings and will deplore and guard against men who when they knew God, have not glorified him as God or given thanks to him, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise, said Augustine, they became fools. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man and of birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things (*On Christian 2. 18. 28*).

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