

# Reimagining solidarity in post-colonial Madagascar: An historical, cultural and theological examination of the concept of fihavanana in the Malagasy context

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REIMAGINING SOLIDARITY IN POST-COLONIAL MADAGASCAR:  
AN HISTORICAL, CULTURAL AND THEOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF  
THE CONCEPT OF *FIHAVANANA* IN THE MALAGASY CONTEXT

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the S.T.L. Degree  
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*When I was consecrated as a Bishop in Madagascar in Dec. 2006, the Prime Minister said to me, "You are now not only a leader in the church; you are now a leader in the country." "The role of the church leaders in Madagascar is very important. Unfortunately, they sometimes have been seen as politically motivated. We want to make sure that what we do and say is not politically motivated but God-oriented and promotes the values and morals of the Kingdom of God."*  
*Bishop Todd MacGregor, American Anglican Bishop of Tulear*<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

As a Malagasy citizen and a Jesuit studying Christian ethics, I have reflected on the successive political chaos in Madagascar in the process, I have endeavored to discover the root cause of the successive political chaos that plagues the country. I also have questioned why Church leaders have failed to contribute some practical solutions to the problem, while at the same time helping fellow Malagasy citizens to open their eyes to their reality which requires reflection and discernment, as well as action, in the light of reason and faith. St. Ignatius encourages the faithful to always “think with the Church,”<sup>2</sup> but when Church leaders failed to draw upon the resources of Malagasy culture and the tradition of *fihavanana*, as they should have done especially in 2009, how can the people “think with the Church?”

Post-independence Madagascar has been characterized by severe political instability and a series of deep political crises. The heights of these crises peaked in 1971-72, 1990-91, 2001-02, and in 2009. Each of these phases of political unrest came with a cost, not only in material resources, but also in human life. As a result of these crises, the Malagasy people have suffered from the erosion and loss of a shared sense of the common good. During the same periods,

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy C. Morgan, “Jesus Weeps in Madagascar,” *Christianity Today*, January 30, 2009, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2009/january/jesus-weeps-in-madagascar.html?paging=off>.

<sup>2</sup> Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*, trans. by Louis J. Puhl (Westminster, M.D.: The Newman Press, 1959), no. 352.

Madagascar has experienced a number of *coup d'états*, amendments to the country's constitution, and serious incidents of civil unrest.

In all of the turmoil that Madagascar has experienced, often it is the ordinary people who suffer the most. On the other hand, the elite tend to benefit from the turmoil, following the old saying "there is profit in chaos." Motivated largely by self-interest, the elite go on to establish a so-called 'stable state' with little input from the poor. Those in charge further enter into partnerships with developed countries and negotiate contracts to the benefit of the elite.

Historically and indeed culturally, the Malagasy people have resolved their political, socio-cultural, and economic problems by living the way of *fihavanana*: a Malagasy term for solidarity. In the post-Christian era and especially after Malagasy's independence, the people of Madagascar relied heavily upon the contributions of Church leaders to resolve political, socio-cultural, and economic problems of the country. Church leaders regularly reminded the common people to live in accordance with the principles of *fihavanana*. Traditionally, the way of *fihavanana* has proven to be effective in resolving the political, social-cultural, and economic problems facing Madagascar. But in more recent times, as was case in 2009, it must be acknowledged that all efforts by the Church leaders to invoke the principles of *fihavanana* proved to be a failure. Such a reading of Madagascar's recent history requires us to ask: Why have Church leaders failed to be successful in their efforts to use *fihavanana* as a strategy for addressing political problems in Madagascar? Part of this thesis seeks to explore and explain some of the complicated reasons why these most recent efforts have failed.

In seeking to acknowledge the tremendous value of *fihavanana*, which has helped the Malagasy people to organize their lives and to solve many kinds of problems, it is important to recognize how *fihavanana* is, in fact, the last rampart for unity among the Malagasy people.

Mindful of the fact that the modern context of Malagasy life is quite different from the past, it becomes important to re-evaluate *fihavanana* and assess its relevance for post-colonial Madagascar in the new millennium.

*Fihavanana*, the principle of solidarity, ranks among the most prominent and distinctive cultural values in Madagascar. Within the Malagasy context, the origins of the practice of *fihavanana* can be traced to pre-colonial times. Although *fihavanana* remains one of the most treasured and practiced cultural values in Madagascar to this day, political instability continues to divide the Malagasy people, working directly against *fihavanana*. Some Malagasy seek to abandon *fihavanana* and follow a more western style of individualism and self-determination. Others seek to simply maintain the *status quo*. Still others, myself included, hope to reimagine and rediscover *fihavanana* so that, as a unique form of Malagasy unity, it may flourish once again in today's world. The challenges that impact *fihavanana* today emerge out of a context so very different from the one in which it originated as a social practice. In the past, *fihavanana* worked well in a local context: that is; within the confines of a family or a clan. But today, Madagascar exists as part of a global village. Thus, the question becomes: How do we reinvent *fihavanana* today so that it continues to be relevant and applicable to the Malagasy people? Herein lays the heart of this work.

Reimagining *fihavanana* is about detaching it from its traditional internal and external limits and then opening it up to a global sphere of influence in which everyone is included and feels at home as free and responsible person. People are then able to contribute to the common good, bringing about unity amid diversity and coupling autonomy with solidarity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Cathleen Kaveny, *Law's Virtues: Fostering Autonomy and Solidarity in American Society* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 25-28.

The Malagasy people appreciate the wisdom of *fihavanana* and the values it inculcates in the people. Most of the Malagasy people are aware that *fihavanana* is constitutive of their identity; to simply do away with *fihavanana* is not an option. To do so would mean discarding a part of the identity of the Malagasy people, causing them to lose their identity. Indeed, the Malagasy desire to develop and promote their cultural values. Such a sentiment resonates with one of the fundamental insights of *Gaudium et spes*: “We must do everything to make all persons aware of their right to culture and their duty to develop themselves culturally and to help their fellows.”<sup>4</sup>

Given Malagasy history, seeking to practice *fihavanana* is both challenging and difficult. Such challenges and difficulties can be best understood in light of the disparity between the initial context in which *fihavanana* flourished and the modern context in which it struggles to remain relevant. Human development, and thus changes in culture, need to be taken into account. Turning once again to *Gaudium et spes*, the document emphasizes that education must have “its source and its cradle, as it were, in the family; children in an atmosphere of love learn there more quickly the true scale of values, and there, too, approved forms of culture are almost naturally assimilated by the developing minds of adolescents.”<sup>5</sup> Viewed from the perspective of Catholic Social Teaching, cultural formation requires a commitment to faith and reason that serves human flourishing through education across the lifespan. The same must be taken into account when evaluating the modern impact of *fihavanana*.

Taking the above three points into account, and mindful of the current reality in which countless Malagasy people struggle to create the conditions that will lead to a cultural recovery of the solidarity they once experienced, this thesis has three key objectives. First, *fihavanana* is

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<sup>4</sup> Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes* (7 December 1965), no. 60, at The Holy See, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 61.



best understood by taking into account its etymology, characteristics, and significance to Malagasy worldview. Doing so requires evaluating both positive and negative aspects of *fihavanana* and critically demonstrating a number of internal problems that undermine *fihavanana*, problems which are deeply tied to the historical and contemporary social structures of Madagascar.

Secondly, in the effort to explain the origins of the Malagasy people and the political systems adopted by their leaders over time, an examination of the history of Madagascar is needed. This historical analysis begins by reviewing the centrality of monarchical structures of power and authority that continue to extend influence to the present day in Malagasy society and in the Malagasy Church. By analyzing both social and ecclesial history, it is possible to identify some of the major threats to *fihavanana* as well as the possible reasons why Church leaders were unable to provide effective leadership for the people of Madagascar during the political crisis of 2009.

Finally, the third and main objective of this thesis is to identify the contemporary issues of injustice inherent in the socio-culture and political structures of Madagascar and in doing so to consider their gravity in terms of social sin in the light of Christian Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching. This approach appeals to both Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching as valuable resources for reflection, decision-making, and action in Madagascar. These important foundations also provide the Malagasy and their Church leaders new ways of imagining *fihavanana* for a new moment in the history of the country and the Church.

## Chapter One: Malagasy Fihavanana and Its Internal Problem

### 1. The Context of Madagascar

Madagascar is an island in the Indian Ocean off the southeastern coast of Africa. It is about 400 km across the Mozambique Channel from Africa. Madagascar spans 1580 km from north to south, and 500 km from east to west. It is the fourth largest island in the world after Greenland, New Guinea, and Borneo.<sup>6</sup> Today Madagascar has about twenty ethnic groups; most of them live along the coast. The largest and most dominant of the groups is the *Merina* people, who are scattered throughout the island.<sup>7</sup> Madagascar is unique because it is one of the few African countries to have one language spoken nationwide, called Malagasy, which has Indonesian roots. Malagasy also includes influences from Bantu languages, Arabic, French, and English. Even though Malagasy has many dialects, neighboring ethnic groups can understand each other fairly easily. Today, the Malagasy people use Malagasy and French as official languages.

Madagascar is the country's name in Malagasy; "Malagasy" refers to both the people and the language. According to the latest statistics dated June, 2014, the Malagasy population is approximately 23,000,000<sup>8</sup>; 52% of the population practice indigenous religions; 41% are Christians and 7% Muslim.<sup>9</sup> Six provinces form Madagascar: Antananarivo, Fianarantsoa, Toamasina, Toleary, Mahajanga and Antsiranana with Antananarivo as the capital city.

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<sup>6</sup> "Geography et Histoire," France Diplomatie, last modified February 2, 2015, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/dossiers-pays/madagascar/presentation-de-madagascar/article/geographie-et-histoire-8716>.

<sup>7</sup> "Ethnic Groups in Madagascar," WildMadagascar.org, accessed April 30, 2015, [www.wildmadagascar.org/people/ethnic\\_groups.html](http://www.wildmadagascar.org/people/ethnic_groups.html).

<sup>8</sup> "Madagascar People 2015," Countries of the World, last modified March 2, 2015, accessed April 30, 2015, [http://www.theodora.com/wfbcurrent/madagascar/madagascar\\_people.html](http://www.theodora.com/wfbcurrent/madagascar/madagascar_people.html), accessed March 7, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> "Constitutional History of Madagascar," Constitutionnet, accessed April 30, 2015, [www.nationmaster.com/country-info/profiles/Madagascar/Religion](http://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/profiles/Madagascar/Religion).

Madagascar has adopted democracy as a system of government evidenced by the existence of three major branches of government, namely the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary.

## **2. The Social Scientific Understanding of Solidarity and the Catholic Point of View**

Sociologically, solidarity is defined as the perceived or realized organization of individuals for group survival, interests, or purposes that arise in the face of external threats or internal needs.<sup>10</sup> As such, solidarity is understood as a human means for helping a group of persons or institutions strengthen their unity when threats are leveraged against them by internal or external factors. Solidarity can be manifested in different forms according to its respective setting. For instance, solidarity within families is a process what is shaped by collective life events such as marriages, births, deaths, reunions, holidays, celebrations, and so on. In parallel ways, solidarity can be extended to other social groupings.

Viewed from a Catholic perspective, solidarity can be understood in different ways according to particular contexts. For example, *Gaudium et spes* describes solidarity as a way in which people relate to one another. A foundational principle of solidarity is based upon God's creation of people for the formation of social unity; choosing and redeeming them as a people; Christ's life of sharing in human fellowship, and his example to his followers to treat each other as brothers and sisters (1Jn 4:20-21).<sup>11</sup> As such, solidarity is manifested in family life,<sup>12</sup> intermediate bodies or organizations,<sup>13</sup> in relationships and mutual co-operation between citizens, groups, and countries,<sup>14</sup> and in the strengthening of the bonds of social interactions.<sup>15</sup> Another example can be found in *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, which describes solidarity using

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. *The Concise Encyclopedia of Sociology*, George Ritzer and J. Michael Rayan, ed. (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell Publication, 2011), 602.

<sup>11</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, no. 24.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 48.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 75.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 26, 57, 63, 85.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 90.

concepts such as: (i) interdependence;<sup>16</sup> (ii) Christian virtue that embraces charity and fraternity, manifest in total gratitude, forgiveness, reconciliation, and sacrifice; and (iii) a means to overcoming sinful structures.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the Church's fundamental theology emphasizes how the intimate life of the Trinity (one God in three persons) is the perfect model for solidarity.<sup>18</sup> A third example of this teaching is found in John Paul II's magisterial teaching, *Evangelium vitae*, which rightly describes solidarity as openness to others and service for them. Solidarity, properly understood, can be manifested: (i) through our communities of origin;<sup>19</sup> (ii) between families<sup>20</sup> by means of participation in the social and political life; and (iii) through our participation in the whole of human society.<sup>21</sup> In summary, solidarity is meant to strengthen the unity between individuals and communities as it renders relationship with diverse populations possible.

The Catholic Church's understanding of solidarity can be distinguished from other perspectives on solidarity because of its appeals to theological foundations. According to Catholic teaching, as mentioned above, solidarity is founded on the intimate life of the Trinity. To be in solidarity is to participate in God's life and mission to build peace, justice and full humanization through love. True and just solidarity aims at promoting the common good—the good of each individual and the well-being of every person are related to the good of the community in spite of differences. This means that promoting the common good requires each member of the community to participate fully in the activities needed according to his/her capacity. In other words, all members of the community have a moral responsibility to work for

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<sup>16</sup> Pope John Paul II, Encyclical on Social Concern *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (30 December 1975), nos. 26, 36, at The Holy See, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 40.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Pope John Paul II, Encyclical on The Gospel of Life *Evangelium vitae* (25 March 1995), no. 93, at The Holy See, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 93, 94.

<sup>21</sup> *Evangelium vitae*, no. 101.

the improvement of the living conditions of all members of the community. In this situation, difference has a positive meaning: “complementarity.” Desmond Tutu makes the following observation:

This beautiful story tells us a fundamental truth about us—that we are made to live in a delicate network of interdependence with one another, with God and with the rest of God’s creation. We say in our African idiom: “A person is a person through other persons.” A solitary human being is a contradiction in terms. A totally self-sufficient human being is ultimately subhuman. We are made for complementarity. I have gifts that you do not; and you have gifts that I do not. Viola! So we need each other to become fully human.<sup>22</sup>

Solidarity and the common good are necessarily related to the evangelical vision that every human being is meant to live with others and find his/her fulfillment more completely and more easily in this form of community<sup>23</sup> as Kenneth R. Himes confirms: “human beings only truly flourish in the context of the community.”<sup>24</sup>

### **3. An Examination of Malagasy *Fihavanana***

#### **3.1 An Understanding of *Fihavanana***

The term *fiavanana* which is the Malagasy term for solidarity comes from *fiavan(a)-ana*, with its root *avana*. In a narrow sense, *avana* means parent/kin/lineage.<sup>25</sup> In other words, *avana* expresses right relationship in consanguinity. Therefore, *avana* is an expression mostly used within a close family circle. But *avana* can also be used in a broader sense, with a meaning that extends beyond blood ties. When someone has a good relationship with another, he or she becomes a *avana*. *Avana* may be a friend or a coworker. In this sense, the other becomes part and parcel of the family. “To be called a *avana* means that one is accepted as a family

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<sup>22</sup> Desmond Tutu, *An African Prayer Book* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), xiv.

<sup>23</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, no. 26.

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth R. Himes, *Responses to 101 Questions on Catholic Social Teaching* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), *Responses to 101 Questions* 36.

<sup>25</sup> Oyvind Dahl, *Meanings in Madagascar: Cases of Intercultural Communication* (Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 1999), 85.

member.”<sup>26</sup> The basis for this broader usage is the conviction among the Malagasy that all families come from a common origin and/or ancestor. It is well expressed in the Malagasy proverb: “Men are like the creeping stem of the pumpkin, and if traced, are found to be one.”<sup>27</sup>

With the prefix *fi-* and the suffix *-ana*, *havana* forms a substantive noun *fihavanana*. Therefore, *fihavanana* can be translated as kinship, but also friendship, solidarity, readiness to help, and good relationship.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, *fihavanana* has a verb form, “*mihavana*,” meaning “to be conciliar/peaceful.” Thus, *fihavanana* also can be translated as “peace,” which is evident in the Malagasy translation of the Bible: “For He is our peace”: “*Izy no fihavanantsika*” (Eph. 2:14).<sup>29</sup> No western word can capture exactly the full meaning of *fihavanana* because it is rooted in a specific Malagasy custom. The whole of Malagasy thought and action becomes an expression of *fihavanana*. In addition, kindness, mutuality, and respect are characteristics of *fihavanana*.<sup>30</sup> According to Antoine Rahajarizafy, kindness constitutes the very being of a person as individual and communal.<sup>31</sup> It constitutes the basis of social life. It is the relationship between people. It is not, however, merely an individual affective sympathy — a *feeling* toward others — for it also requires actions in order to improve the economic life of every person and the community as a whole. It challenges people toward political sincerity, honesty, and concern for the common good and the well-being of others. Kindness fosters participation, collaboration, cooperation, and unity for the good of all. Mutuality is expressed through gifts and care.

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<sup>26</sup> Dahl, *Meanings in Madagascar*, 85.

<sup>27</sup> J.A. Houlder, *Ohabolana or Malagasy Proverbs: Illustrating the Wit and Wisdom of the Hova of Madagascar* (Antananarivo: Press of the Friends’ Foreign Missionary Association, 1915), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Dahl, *Meanings in Madagascar*, 85.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Pierre Andre Ranaivoarson, “Inculturation, Paradigm of Christian Living and the Malagasy “Fihavanana” in Madagascar” (S.T.L. Thesis, Weston School of Theology, Cambridge, 1993), 82-83.

<sup>31</sup> Antoine de P. Rahajarizafy, *Hanitra Nentina-dRazana* (Perfume of the Ancestors) (Fianarantsoa: Lib. Ambozontany, 1970), 16-21.

Mutuality is a constitutive part of relationships and especially *fihavanana*. *Fihavanana* urges the Malagasy people to an experience of inclusive mutuality; it excludes no one. It challenges them to practice mutual care and support in times of difficulty and misfortune. It fosters a permanent sharing in joy and celebration. “Suffering together, rejoicing together,” says the Malagasy proverb. *Fihavanana* evaporates when mutuality is broken; that is to say, when some people are suffering from injustice or poverty while others are enjoying abundance, or when some are dominated and exploited by others.<sup>32</sup> Mutual aid is an explicit example of how the Malagasy people practice *fihavanana*. It is expressed especially by their way of building a community through the rites of transition, namely birth, circumcision, marriage, and death. In any rites of initiation, everyone has to contribute in various ways (food, money, skills in music or dance) to the ceremony. But, the most important thing is one’s physical presence. In addition, eighty percent of Malagasy people are farmers. In all that they do, they work together, as expressed in the proverb: “You can’t dig ground under water unless you do it together.”<sup>33</sup> *Valintanana* (mutual work) is the way people help each other, especially through house building and the cultivation of rice. Therefore, *fihavanana* is more important than money; says the Malagasy proverb: “better lose a little money than a little friendship.”<sup>34</sup>

Respect,<sup>35</sup> is constitutive of human existence. Life is impossible without respect for others. It is not simply in external and formal manners, nor is it a sort of diplomatic attitude to others; it is a deep human concern for other persons and for the world. A human person is in essence a communal being. Respect is thus related to the virtue of hospitality. Human living flourishes via various forms of hospitality: receiving the stranger, helping orphans, assisting the

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<sup>32</sup> Rahajarizafy, *Hanitra Nentina-dRazana*, 22-30.

<sup>33</sup> Houlder, *Ohabolana or Malagasy Proverbs*, 32.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-38.

homeless, etc. Naturally, kindness, respect, and mutuality generate concession, consensus, non-violence, and non-competition in Malagasy culture.

### **3.2 Social Cohesion as the Fruit of *Fihavanana***

There are two social structures in the Malagasy tradition: the vertical structure or hierarchy and the horizontal structure or *fihavanana*. The two are inseparable and interrelated. *Fihavanana* flourishes when hierarchy is respected. *Fihavanana* strengthens hierarchy. Hierarchy in traditional Malagasy society is set up according to the following scheme: God is above all, then the ancestors, followed by the elders and finally, younger people are at the bottom. Governance of the people depends on this hierarchy. Fear of God (*Zanahary*, meaning “the one who gives life to everyone”) enables the Malagasy people to do good and avoid evil. This way of thinking is expressed in the Malagasy proverb: “Don’t think of the silent valley, for it is God who is overhead.”<sup>36</sup>

The Malagasy people also hold fast to the traditional belief in the power of the ancestors who can bless and/or curse the living. Malagasy people are very careful and respectful of the words that are said on the deathbed, which have the power to bind an elder’s children. Therefore, the words said on the deathbed must be taken *verbatim* to avoid a curse. The elders have the right to govern the living family. The younger ones have the duty to obey the elders. The Malagasy people are very respectful of their elders, whom they consider as guardians. All must obey the elders because their words are so powerful: “The exhortation of father and mother is like the kick of an ox, if it hits well it may kill you, if it does not hit so well, it could still make you dizzy.”<sup>37</sup> Apart from obeying the elders, the young have the duty of assisting elders in a physical manner, for example carrying a bag on a voyage or while shopping: “The one who has seniors does not

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<sup>36</sup> Houlder, *Ohabolana or Malagasy Proverbs*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Dahl, *Meanings in Madagascar*, 82.



need to speak, the one who has juniors does not need to carry the burdens.”<sup>38</sup> Respect for this social ordering of relationships contributes to *fihavanana*.

*Fihavanana* begins at the level of family. However, it can be extended to a friend, to a neighbor, to a fellow citizen, and even to a stranger. This inclusiveness is expressed by hospitality which begins by the simple greeting, a gesture given to everyone who passes by the house saying: “*mandrosoa an-trano*” meaning “come home and take at least a cup of coffee or tea,” or by a simple conversation in a coffee shop, the market place or a bus station. This small gesture of welcoming and dialogue makes everyone feel at home. In public administration, consensus is the perfect expression of inclusiveness. Malagasy people understand consensus as the just milieu for all decision-making. The aim is to make everyone included and comfortable. In doing so, the Malagasy people strive to avoid anger and any confrontational language. Due to the weight of *fihavanana*, people are always looking for consensus in whatever they decide to do. For example, in the case of appointing or choosing the head of a village, the first criterion is to settle upon the decision of the elders. A Malagasy proverb says: “Those who have their hair cut long ago have long hair.”<sup>39</sup> To make the decision more consensual, Malagasy people pay attention to the proportionality of different social classes. For instance, if the elder in class A was appointed to be the head of the village, his vice-head has to be among the elders in class B. The extension of *havana* in different ways and the principle of consensus make everybody feel at home.

### **3.3 Inequality among the Malagasy as Negative Aspects of *Fihavanana***

Malagasy society is cohesive, yet honest dialogue is often silenced. According to the hierarchical structure in traditional Malagasy society, the elders, especially males, have been

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<sup>38</sup> Dahl, *Meanings in Madagascar*, 84.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

given great powers in handling tradition and culture. Thus, these elders take up leading roles in institutions such as family, school, hospital, church, justice, and government. Competence is not a requirement for such leadership roles. However, modern notions of democracy challenge this way of proceeding. When all literate and adult citizens have the right to choose their leaders, freedom of expression and social equality among citizens prove to be very important. Since these are both absent in *fihavanana*, problems arise between elders and young people. As many cases throughout the world demonstrate, young people possess a contemporary wisdom that the wisdom of elders cannot supply.

When hierarchy is too firmly entrenched, the family can be like a machine. As a consequence, the capacity for discernment can be weakened because the authoritative word given by parents or by elders is the word to be executed, without question. If someone, especially a younger person, has good ideas, he or she is nonetheless fearful and hesitant to initiate a conversation because of a firmly held belief in the curse which would befall him or her. The family lives in fear of breaking the *fihavanana*. However, fear can generate hypocrisy. For fear of elders or parents, young people tend to hide the truth about themselves. They say things they do not want to say in order to please their elders and parents. When such actions become second nature; these young people live in duplicitous ways and educate their offspring to act in the same manner. Such a situation dismantles and destroys their self-identity. However, whether they like it or not, there comes a time when these same young people can no longer tolerate such abuse. The only exit that they see before them is violence that manifests itself in different forms. Such experiences gave rise to the realities that resulted in four *coup d'états* since independence was gained in 1960. Violence brings with it division among family members, between clans, and throughout the entire society. Violence prevents people from controlling themselves and

managing chaotic situations. Very often, the common good is placed in danger. For instance, the strikers and demonstrators of 2009 destroyed not only public property, such as the National TV station, the radio station, some administrative buildings, and some roads, but also looted the biggest private stores in the capital city. The angry strikers were not aware of the fact that sooner or later, they would have to pay indirectly for this damage. Thus, the government was forced to seek external investors to reconstruct the economy, and this led to a national debt and ultimately, to the creation of dependency.

### 3.4 Conclusion

As can be seen from the foregoing paragraphs, Malagasy *fihavanana* goes beyond the general understanding of solidarity due to the fact that it is part and parcel of the daily life of the Malagasy people. Even when there is no clear reference to Christianity in *fihavanana*, its characteristics as expressed in the virtues kindness, mutuality, and respect, remind the Malagasy Christian of Jesus' command to love one another: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:39). Viewed from this perspective, *fihavanana per se* is good and enables the Malagasy people to foster good relationships among themselves. However, the socio-political and cultural structures which reinforce *fihavanana*, by not allowing individuals to flourish, are a problematic issue. In other words, the "equality" which is often present in Christian expressions of solidarity, is missing in *fihavanana*. Viewed from a Christian perspective, the "relationality, equality, and mutuality emerge—out of the commitment to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three equally divine persons in the one triune God—as three essential characteristics of Trinitarian monotheism,"<sup>40</sup> is simply not present.

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<sup>40</sup> Meghan J. Clark, *The Vision of Catholic Social Thought: The Virtue of Solidarity and the Praxis of Human Rights* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 61.

## **Chapter Two: The History of Madagascar and External Threats to *Fihavanana***

A brief overview of the history of Madagascar from its earliest origins until the recent political crises reveals certain realities and specific social arrangements that hinder *fihavanana*. If the Malagasy people wish to consider themselves as a united people, then *fihavanana* has to go forward into the future despite the many external forces that influence the country from without. At the same time, the negative effects of political systems which the elders/leaders of Madagascar have followed since before colonization have negative effects on the way the Malagasy people foster solidarity.

### **1. Racial Discrimination and the Nostalgia for an Ancestral Origin**

Most researchers recognize that the first Malagasy people to live on the island were migrants from different parts of the world, probably Arabs, Indo-Melanesians, and Africans. The hypotheses of Alfred Grandidier and Hubert Deschamps, French geographers and historians, have provided the Malagasy people with a sense of identity. The findings of these two historians are chosen because almost every recent and current study on the identity of the Malagasy people begins with their respective hypotheses.

#### **1.1 Indo-Melanesian Descent**

Grandidier, generates the hypothesis that the proto-Malagasy were of Indo-Melanesian descent. While it is true that Indo-Melanesia origins of the Malagasy people represent a significant distantiation of Madagascar and Africa, Indo-Melanesians had far more experience in sailing than many Africans. Moreover, it was much easier for them to sail across the Indian Ocean because of the prevailing winds.<sup>41</sup>

The Malagasy people speak one language with different dialects. The Malagasy language itself, inherited from one common ancestor, is mostly Malayo-Polynesian. Grandidier was

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<sup>41</sup> Alfred Grandidier, *L'origine des Malgaches* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1901), 11.

astonished at this proposition and thought that the first migrants to Madagascar were Indo-Melanesians who escaped from Mongolic and Caucasian invasions around 2500 BCE because there is no hint whatsoever of Sanskrit in the Malagasy language.<sup>42</sup>

The first Negro Indo-Melanesians who arrived on the coasts of Madagascar formed the core of the population of this island. Migrants from Africa came, but in very small numbers and with less developed civilizations because neither Malagasy customs nor the Malagasy language have any hint of their influence. Proto-Malagasy came from the Indo-Melanesians who were of mixed racial backgrounds (Indonesian and Negro-Oceania) since it was easy for them to arrive on the island due to ocean currents. The Malagasy language is related to 250 Indonesian languages, especially to Malayan, Javanese, Batak, Tagalog of Philippines, and Maanjan of Borneo. All Indonesian languages are derived from the same original language: the common Indonesian which has diversified over the ages. The Malagasy language is one of these branches conserved or acquired over a period of independent evolution on a remote island.<sup>43</sup>

Patrilineal clans with matrilineal features marked both Malagasy and Indonesian society. Endogamy with two sisters was strongly taboo. Both Indo-Melanesian and Malagasy people practiced limited polygamy. They categorized people according to kinship and/or age and stratified society into three groups: nobles, free, and slaves. It was a taboo for them to say the name of a king after his death.<sup>44</sup> Both the Malagasy and the Indo-Melanesian people were monotheists. However, their god had no attributes. They practiced an ancestral cult with offerings, sacrifices, and funerals. They had very elaborate funeral customs.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Grandidier, *L'origine des Malgaches*, 13.

<sup>43</sup> Hubert Deschamps, *Histoire de Madagascar* (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1960), 20-21.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

## 1.2 Indo-Melanesian and African Descent

Hubert Deschamps' hypothesis confirms that proto-Malagasy people came from Indo-Melanesian and African roots. He argues that there were some Africans who might have come with the Indo-Melanesians. He imagined two possibilities: the proto-Malagasy Indonesians arrived at the north or east coast of the deserted island. They settled there and then later conquered the African coast to obtain slaves and brought them to Madagascar. Or coming from India, they sojourned on the African coast and mingled with or associated with Africans and then went together to Madagascar.<sup>46</sup> Deschamps proposed two dates for the first migrants: 300 BCE – 200 AD or 500 AD.<sup>47</sup> According to this hypothesis, the proto-Malagasy were Indo-Melanesian-African. Thus, Deschamps found in Malagasy culture some similarity with both Indo-Melanesian and African cultures.<sup>48</sup> Deschamps' hypothesis is close to the latest genetic research confirming that half of the genetic lineages of the human inhabitants of Madagascar come from 4,000 miles away in Borneo, while the other half derive from only 250 miles away in East Africa.<sup>49</sup>

## 1.3 Conclusion

As a recapitulation, Malagasy identity is mostly Indo-Melanesian-Bantu. In fact, all Malagasy people are at a certain level *metis* or hybrid. None can claim a pure race. Hence, the formation of Malagasy solidarity (*fihavanana*) might be generated from these two cultures (Indo-Melanesian and Bantu). In other words, the formation of Malagasy *fihavanana* may be inspired from both Borneo and Bantu ways of understanding solidarity. Borneo people have their

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<sup>46</sup> Deschamps, *Histoire de Madagascar* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1960), 26.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>49</sup> Mathew E Hurles et al., "The Dual Origin of the Malagasy in Island Southeast Asia and East Africa: Evidence from Material and Paternal Lineages," *The American Journal of Human Genetics*, March 25, 2005, accessed April 30, 2015, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1199379](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1199379).

respective form of solidarity, which is expressed by the bond within a family and/or a clan.<sup>50</sup> Bantu people also have this kind of solidarity, which is expressed in the philosophy of *Ubuntu*.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, some Malagasy people still claim to be a pure race.

## **2. Tension Between the Highland and Coastal Peoples**

In order to understand this tension between the highland and coastal peoples, an overview of the Malagasy political system from its official start to the present day is necessary. This overview traces the contribution of the churches represented by the MEC (Malagasy Episcopal Conference) and the FFKM (*Fiombonan'ny Fiangonana Kristianina eto Madagasikara*: Council of the Christian Churches of Madagascar) the political problems in Madagascar, and the tensions that are perpetuated as a result.

### **2.1 Before Colonization: 1600-1890**

The English and French were in constant tension for more than 200 years (1674-1890). *Neither Betsimisaraka tribe, nor Sakalava tribe, had any clear political system.* They became pirates. On the east coast the Europeans, mainly the English, trained the Betsimisaraka tribe whereas, on the west coast, the Arabs trained the Sakalava tribe. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these two tribes made annual slave-raiding assaults on the neighboring Comoros Islands and even on the African coast.<sup>52</sup> However, the most significant pirate contribution came from the east coast through a man named Ratsimilaho,<sup>53</sup> the son of a European pirate and a Malagasy princess. Ratsimilaho was born in 1712 and educated in London. He succeeded in unifying the many disparate tribes along some 400 miles of the northeast Malagasy

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Kenneth Sillander, "Kinship and the Dialects of Autonomy and Solidarity among the Bentian of Borneo," in *Anarchic Solidarity in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 2011), 141-169.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (New York: Seabury Books, 2009), 2-27.

<sup>52</sup> Maureen Covell, *Historical Dictionary of Madagascar* (Lanham: Scarecrow, 1995), 40.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

coast. He subsequently took the name Betsimisaraka. The Sakalava became a powerful kingdom whose empire stretched from the southwest coast to the northernmost tip of the island. But its far-flung nature and constant infighting among its various sub-tribes eventually led to its dissolution.<sup>54</sup>

While Betsimisaraka and Sakalava were preoccupied with Europeans and Arabs on the coasts, the kings of Merina consolidated their power around Analamanga, later called Antananarivo. Antananarivo became the Merina capital in the late eighteenth century during the reign of Andrianampoinimerina (1745-1810), the greatest Malagasy ruler in the island's history.<sup>55</sup> He had a clear political program by which he organized the defense, economy, and administration of the kingdom. The western border was secured against the Sakalava who had been raiding the kingdom for slaves. The system of state-administered rice irrigation was regularized and extended, as was the system of markets. The territory of the kingdom was divided into districts, and the villages were brought under the control of the royal administration via the creation of the post of village headman, and roving supervisors.<sup>56</sup> Through skillful diplomacy and enlightened leadership, he succeeded in greatly expanding the Merina kingdom, including some sub-tribes to the east of Antananarivo (Sihanaka and Bezanozano) and the Betsileo tribe to the south. But it was not enough for him; on his deathbed, the king told his son and successor Radama I, "Imerina has been gathered into one, but behold the sea is the border of my rice-fields."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Raymond K. Kent, *Early Kingdoms in Madagascar* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 204.

<sup>55</sup> Covell, *Historical Dictionary of Madagascar*, 29.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*



Radama I, who assumed the throne in 1810, took up his father's challenge. He entered into relations with the British, an action which helped him to unify most of the island in 1820.<sup>58</sup> Radama opened the country to English missionaries (London Missionary Society), who built churches, put the Malagasy language into a written form, and spread the Christian faith throughout the island.<sup>59</sup> Through the person of James Cameron,<sup>60</sup> a brilliant Scottish engineer, a miniature Industrial Revolution was launched that featured the construction of an aqueduct and reservoir, the manufacturing of bricks and soap, and the advent of the first printing press in Madagascar.<sup>61</sup>

Radama's widow and successor, Ranaivalona I, however, was to reverse much of her late husband's work during her reign (1828-1861). She ruined almost the whole foreign trade in Madagascar. The teaching activities of the missionaries were stopped, and the missionaries themselves were expelled in 1835. Malagasy Christians were suspected of owing loyalty to the foreign powers represented by the missionaries and ordered to give up their beliefs. Many were killed when they refused to do so.<sup>62</sup>

Ranaivalona I furthered the industrial work of Cameron and Radama, with the help of a remarkable Frenchman named Jean Laborde. Shipwrecked near Madagascar in 1831, Laborde went on to build a factory that produced weapons, pottery, candles, sealing wax, bricks, rum, sugar—basically all the products a small country would need to be largely self-sufficient. He also constructed the Queen's Palace.<sup>63</sup> Radama II who took over for only a year after the death of

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<sup>58</sup> Covell, *Historical Dictionary of Madagascar*, 178.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, 161.

<sup>61</sup> Covell, *Historical Dictionary of Madagascar*, 178.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-198.

Ranavalona I, reestablished contacts with the East, and welcomed back the Christian missionaries.<sup>64</sup>

The three ethnic groups discussed above each had their own government systems before and during the European settlement. The two tribes on the coasts, however, did not have any clear political organization, whereas the Merina kingdom had a systematic defense, economic, and political organization. It also was open to modernity through cooperation with the English, the French, and missionaries who helped in writing down the Malagasy language. These opportunities made the Merina kingdom more powerful, and in turn had an impact on the other ethnic groups on the coasts, especially in terms of expansion. Thus began the tension between the coastal and highland peoples. This tension threatened the kind of solidarity they wanted to build.

## **2.2 During Colonization: 1890-1959**

The Merina kingdom had three more queens: Rasoherina who assumed the throne in 1863, Ranavalona II in 1868, and Ranavalona III in 1883. However, power during their reigns resided in the hands of the Prime Minister, Rainilaiarivony (1828-1896), who married each of the queens in succession.<sup>65</sup> Rainilaiarivony also had a great political organization for his country, including the creation of a cabinet with eight ministries: interior, foreign affairs, justice, defense, commerce, industry, finances, and education. He converted to Christianity as a means of acquiring some benefits of western civilization.<sup>66</sup>

But Rainilaiarivony could not resist France's desire to add Madagascar to its collection of African colonies. Britain had never evinced a colonial interest in the island, and in 1890 it signed a treaty with France recognizing the French protectorate over Madagascar in exchange for

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<sup>64</sup> Covell, *Historical Dictionary of Madagascar*, 179.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

France's recognition of the British protectorate over Zanzibar.<sup>67</sup> In December of 1894, French troops began their assault from the East and West coasts of Madagascar. The war lasted for one year. On October 1, 1895, the French, under General Duchesne took the capital and their commander forced the Queen's representatives to sign away the country as a protectorate,<sup>68</sup> and the following year the French Parliament voted to annex the island as a colony.<sup>69</sup>

As colonizers, the French destroyed the whole political system in the country. In the beginning, the French kept the last queen Ranaivalona III on the throne. The first intention was to rule indirectly through Malagasy ministers.<sup>70</sup> Finally, she was exiled to Réunion Island in 1897, then to Algeria where she died in 1917.<sup>71</sup> Rainilaiarivony was dismissed as prime minister and confined under house arrest in his country home just outside the capital and shortly afterwards was exiled to Algiers, where he died in 1896.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, the French conquerors instituted a dual juridical system: French laws for colonists and a mercilessly unjust code known as the *indigénat* for the Malagasy. *Indigénat* was a law which set up a special legal system for non-French citizens, and the *corvée*, which established an obligation to furnish a certain number of days of labor to the government, as well as head and cattle taxes which followed the imposition of colonial rule and facilitated control of "difficult" subjects.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, over 2,000 Malagasy died due to the participation in World War I on behalf of the French.<sup>74</sup> This horrible situation roused Malagasy nationalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century led by a Malagasy schoolteacher

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<sup>67</sup> Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, 243.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>71</sup> Covell, *Historical Dictionary of Madagascar*, 180.

<sup>72</sup> Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, 250.

<sup>73</sup> Covell, *Historical Dictionary of Madagascar*, 7.

<sup>74</sup> Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, 258.

named Jean Ralaimongo.<sup>75</sup> However, World War II interrupted Ralaimongo's effort and those of other nationalists. The French government promised the Malagasy people to restore their independence if they would assist France in winning World War II. Hence, 34,000 Malagasy soldiers served in the French forces, plus 2,000 more that left Madagascar in June, 1940.<sup>76</sup> Due to such vain promises, the nationalist activities renewed and culminated in a fierce rebellion in 1947, which began simultaneously in several parts of the country. The French succeeded in quashing the insurrection. The move to independence gathered pace when General Charles de Gaulle came to power in France in mid-1958. He visited Antananarivo and later decided to give Madagascar its independence. Finally, Madagascar regained its independence on June 26, 1960.<sup>77</sup>

For those who were not happy with the extension of the Merina kingdom, the French invasion and colonization was a relief for them, because the Merina kingdom, considered the most powerful in Madagascar, was completely destroyed. This situation weakened the unity among the Malagasy people. The only factor of Malagasy culture that France could not destroy was their language. Many Malagasy writers, who knew very well their mother tongue and were potentially able to animate the Malagasy to fight against French domination, were exiled. Even though the French exiled these writers, they were able to rekindle patriotism among their fellows through the use of the subtlety of Malagasy language. France was aware that the Malagasy people had a deep love of their country, even though there were tensions between the highland and coastal peoples. This love was expressed by the different movements in different parts of the

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<sup>75</sup> Covell, *Historical Dictionary of Madagascar*, 191.

<sup>76</sup> Brown, *Madagascar Rediscovered*, 262.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 270-271.

country fighting for independence.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, France always mistrusted the highland people due to their diplomacy skills. This would be proven by the post-independence power struggle, which weakened the Malagasy sense of *fihavanana*.

### **2.3 The First Republic: 1960-1971**

During the colonial period, General Joseph Simon Gallieni conquered the island and built up a French administration, partly by introducing indirect rule, and using local leaders within the colonial apparatus. At the same time, he also made sure that all of the most important Merina political institutions were destroyed. The task was completed in 1905 when Gallieni left the country.<sup>79</sup>

When Madagascar gained independence in 1959, the official declaration was on June 26, 1960. The first constitution was adopted in 1959 under the leadership of Philibert Tsiranana who had been appointed by the French president Charles de Gaulle. Before the adoption of the constitution, the Malagasy Episcopal Conference (MEC) did not hesitate to express some fundamental principles that were of much help in the formation of that first constitution. These principles were focused on the role of the state, the importance of national unity, the family, education, non-governmental organizations, and the importance of labor.<sup>80</sup> Madagascar enjoyed political stability for almost 12 years under the presidency of Tsiranana. However, Tsiranana had not paid enough attention to the problems in the south and south-western part of Madagascar, arid regions that are vulnerable to drought and climatic changes, and whose population heavily depends on cattle-rearing to survive. Consequently, the local uprising in 1971, led by Monja

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<sup>78</sup> For example, Raseta, Ravoahangy, Rabemananjara as nationalist chiefs; they come from different regions in Madagascar.

<sup>79</sup> Wenche Hauge, "Madagascar between peace and conflict—domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management," in *Conflict, Security & Development* 11, no. 5 (November 2011): 511-512.

<sup>80</sup> The Malagasy Episcopal Conference (MEC), "Madagascar devant l'Elaboration de sa Constitution [Madagascar, in Elaborating its Constitution]," in *The Church and the Society in Madagascar*, vol. 1 (Antananarivo: Foi et Justice, 1889-1960), 197-203.

Jaona, sprung out of a movement named *Mouvement National pour l'Indépendance de Madagascar* (MONIMA) based in the south.<sup>81</sup> MONIMA was one of the most extreme nationalistic groupings, working not only for “independence” but also for a total break with France. Tsiranana subdued the strike by the use of the army and incarcerated the leaders. It is important to note that Tsiranana adopted the French military system: gendarmerie, army and police. He placed the gendarmerie directly under his own authority. To safeguard his personal security and to avoid any potential military coup, President Tsiranana also gave his Minister of the Interior, André Resampa, a free hand to establish the security forces, *Les Forces Républicaines de Sécurité* (FRS), which would act as an interior unit.<sup>82</sup> One year later, the students of Antananarivo also protested against the education system, which was too French.<sup>83</sup> The protest was supported by the population. In the army and the gendarmerie, the officers were well aware of the strong popular demands for political change and a break in ties with France. They sympathized with the people. Therefore, the army did not take part in any action against the protesters. For instance, the gendarmerie were present on the streets but abstained from the use of force. However, the Security Forces (FRS), that were loyal to Tsiranana, fired at the crowds. Many people died and many more were wounded. The FRS incarcerated some students and leaders of the strike. This ultimately led to the downfall of the first Republic in 1972. Hence, Tsiranana handed over power to General Gabriel Ramanantsoa who was in office for 3 years, and after him Colonel Richard Ratsimandrava, the initiator of the idea of *fokonolona* (group of people) as a way of decentralizing power. However, six days after his investiture, Ratsimandrava

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<sup>81</sup> Hauge, “Madagascar between peace and conflict—domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management,” in *Conflict, Security & Development*, 517.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 515.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 517.

was assassinated and no one knows who assassinated him and why they did so.<sup>84</sup> Two possibilities can be envisioned: the tension between the army and the gendarmerie or his identity as a highlander. This is another tension, which divided the Malagasy among themselves.

In the context of these events, the responsible leaders of the Catholic, Anglican and Protestant churches which were not yet formed as FFKM intervened, asking for the release of prisoners involved in the strike and for education reforms, which could take the context of Madagascar seriously.<sup>85</sup> As a result, the state freed the prisoners and agreed to adopt the concept of the *malgachization* of education. The idea was brilliant because it called for the prioritization of what is Malagasy; it was not an eradication of other things, but a prioritization of one thing over others. However, the top leadership of the country at that time betrayed the Malagasy people. They took *malgachization* to the very extreme and twisted the idea of *malgachization* as the eradication of all foreign civilization introduced in Madagascar. They implemented this philosophy in all public schools, but sent their own children to private schools that were using foreign languages like French and English.

#### **2.4 The Second Republic: 1975-1991**

The new president, Didier Ratsiraka, who had undertaken military studies in France, introduced a socialist ideology in Madagascar, and made his “Red Book” a new constitution (1975). However, this Red Book led to a dictatorial regime which survived until 1991.

It was during this period that the FFKM became an important watchdog in the life of the country.

Founded in 1980, the FFKM criticized the state for human rights violations, corruption, the

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<sup>84</sup> Hauge, “Madagascar between peace and conflict—domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management,” in *Conflict, Security & Development*, 518-519.

<sup>85</sup> MEC, “Pour que Reviennent la Paix et l’Ordre,” *The Church and the Society in Madagascar*, 2:170-171.

spread of the black market, theft, prostitution, and violence.<sup>86</sup> People became poorer because of inflation and the monopolization of the economy by the state.

Moreover, in 1991 the state of affairs in the country led the FFKM to organize a series of conventions, to which all parties of the crisis were invited.<sup>87</sup> The conventions were aimed at finding solutions to the country's political and economic problems. One of the outcomes of the conventions was that a permanent *Comité de Forces Vives* (living force) was to be set up. The state refused to participate in this sort of National Assembly. There was no way for negotiation. Finally, the *Comité de Forces Vives* asked for general and peaceful demonstrations to the palace of the president. In response to that, Ratsiraka fired at the crowd and this culminated in the massacre of August 10, 1991. As a response to this horrible situation, there was a declaration from Cardinal Victor Razafimahatratra to Ratsiraka: "With all due respect, I call upon Mister President, Didier Ratsiraka to take political courage and, in his wisdom, consider to retire and hand over power in order to make way for creating conditions to ensure security and restore peace."<sup>88</sup> These two interventions led to a Referendum, which opened the gate to the third Republic, a third review of the constitution, and a new presidential election.

## **2.5 The Third Republic: 1992-2009**

On May 2, 1992 the MEC published guidelines on Christian attitudes in the face of the referendum.<sup>89</sup> As citizens, Christians were reminded of their duty to vote freely according to their conscience. Therefore, they had a clear choice to vote: "Yes" to the new constitution or

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<sup>86</sup> Hauge, "Madagascar between peace and conflict—domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management," in *Conflict, Security & Development*, 519.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 519-520.

<sup>88</sup> MEC, "Declaration of Cardinal Victor Razafimahatratra, archbishop of Antananarivo," in *The Church and the Society in Madagascar*, 4: 54-56.

<sup>89</sup> MEC, "Referendum and Election," in *The Church and the Society in Madagascar*, 4: 63-67.



“No” to maintain the old one. At the same time, the MEC reminded Christians to begin thinking about their preferred candidate for the subsequent presidential election.

The “Yes” vote emerged victorious from the referendum and a new constitution was adopted. Albert Zafy won against Didier Ratsiraka through a second round ballot with 66.74% of the vote. However, Zafy's time in office was widely marked by economic decline, which negatively impacted his popularity. Therefore, in the context of accusations of corruption and abuse of power, the National Assembly impeached Zafy on July 26, 1996. Didier Ratsiraka was reelected as president and stayed in office from 1996-2001.

According to an amendment to the constitution promulgated in 1992, the president is elected for 5 years and can be elected for a second term. In 2001, the Malagasy people were ready for an orderly presidential election. Faced with this situation, the MEC gave some guidance to eligible voters, electoral campaigns, observers, and all Christians. These guidelines were aimed at ensuring a transparent election. They were concerned about freedom of conscience in an election, detecting fraud, noting malpractice, corruption, and all kinds of potential discrimination. The MEC wanted a free and fair election.

Eventually, the result of the election was not clear enough, even though the HCC (Higher Constitutional Court) declared Ratsiraka as the winner over his opponent Ravalomanana, the then mayor of Antananarivo. Ravalomanana did not trust the electoral process and he called for a recount of the cast ballots. However, the HCC refused. Their refusal led to a long general strike lasting more than 6 months from the day it began in the capital city. With no intervention coming forth from the HCC, Ravalomanana declared himself the new president of Madagascar. He went on to compose a new government with a prime minister and other officials for different ministers. Ratsiraka's response to this alternative government was moving the capital city to

Toamasina (the eastern city of Madagascar) along with the entire administration. He tried to isolate Antananarivo from the rest of Madagascar by building barricades along all the frontiers of Antananarivo. This was another tension between the highland and coastal peoples. However, most of the army personal were not on his side and they supported the population and removed the barricades. A number of civilians and soldiers were subsequently killed in running battles between the two camps. Finally, Ratsiraka fled to France and the HCC declared Ravalomanana the winner of the first round election with 51.46 % of the ballot.<sup>90</sup>

In the aftermath of this chaos, the MEC on April 27, 2002 declared a “No” attitude to violence and “Yes” attitude to reconciliation.<sup>91</sup> The MEC condemned any kind of violence and advocated for freedom of speech and human dignity. The MEC equally condemned an illusory peace, which suppressed knowledge and killed life. They repeated what Albert Camus said: “It is not order which reinforces justice, but justice which gives certitude to order.”<sup>92</sup> The MEC also stressed the importance of national unity as expressed in the peoples’ sense of belonging as Malagasy. It condemned the use of divisive terms such as “citizen” or “foreign.”

## **2.6 The Fourth Republic: 2010**

The economic state of the country, which was not in Ravalomanana’s favor and his personal misunderstanding with the mayor of Antananarivo (Andry Rajoelina) degenerated into another crisis. Andry Rajoelina began to gather the poor and unemployed from downtown areas of Antananarivo. In one month, he inspired mass demonstrations. However, some other group of people took this opportunity to destroy public property like the National Radio and Television

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<sup>90</sup> Hauge, “Madagascar between peace and conflict—domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management,” in *Conflict, Security & Development*, 522.

<sup>91</sup> MEC, “No to violence, yes for reconciliation,” in *The Church and the Society in Madagascar*, 6: 95-103.

<sup>92</sup> Albert Camus, cited in MEC, “No to violence, yes for reconciliation,” in *The Church and the Society in Madagascar*, 6: 99.

Station and president Ravalomanana's property. The ultimate demonstration reached the former palace of the president. Unfortunately, there were already some anonymous soldiers who waited to fire on the demonstrators. Many died and many others were wounded. Finally, under pressure, Ravalomanana transferred power to his close General in the army and fled to South Africa. Through the help of some army officers, he took over power. He governed as a transitional president for more than four years. However, the tension and division among the Malagasy people became more serious. It was not only a division between the highland and coastal peoples; it was even within family members. The Malagasy people became even poorer. There was a great deal of insecurity and violence.

## **2.7 Ecclesial Failure**

As mentioned above, in every political crisis that has happened in Madagascar, the MEC and the FFKM have always been in the forefront in advocating for human dignity and national unity. The best success story is the intervention of the MEC in 1972-1975 when they advocated for the release of prisoners, especially the students, and cautioned on the attempt at malgachizing the education system. For the FFKM, their success story was to offer guidance that culminated in the fall of the dictatorial regime of Ratsiraka in 1991, succeeded by the clear and direct declaration of Cardinal Razafimahatratra asking the current president to resign. They achieved such success through the use of *fihavanana* (solidarity) as a guiding principle for unity among the Malagasy. However, both umbrella church organizations failed in the political crisis of 2009. Most of what the Church leaders did in 2009 was all about declarations.<sup>93</sup> However, declarations in the Malagasy context do not mean anything because the Malagasy people are so focused on their daily struggles: either they have no time to reflect on these declarations or they do not

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<sup>93</sup> Lea Ratsiazao, "Reconciliation Nationale," *Madagascar Tribune*, April 30, 2015, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.madagascar-tribune.com/Fanambarana-nataon-ny-FFKM->

understand them as anything more than a mere theory. Moreover, declarations have no impact on the impunity of the leaders of the country. Such declarations require action on the part of the church leaders, which ideally should redress the injustice done by any oppressors. Christians expected practical solutions to the problem, not mere theories. The church leaders, especially the MEC, failed to learn or did not remember what Bishop Denis Hurley said about the horrible situation in South Africa:

The Churches have gotten used to publishing declarations and pastoral letters concerning the racial situation in South Africa in the hope of change. In fact, they have practically changed nothing. It is obvious that for Christians to get change in South Africa, they have to spread the doctrine, bearing witness and act in a way that goes far beyond what can be done by the number of whites who work in the Church, be they leaders, teachers and activists. This requires a conversion effort and dedication close to heroism. Mediocrity is ineffective. But unfortunately, mediocrity is the rule as is usually the case in human affairs.<sup>94</sup>

Church leaders' thoughts do not go beyond the common Malagasy's thoughts. Church leaders have a very short memory of the history of their country. A lack of deep reflection and discernment causes confusion in their actions (or, in this case, lack of action). Above all, such mediocrity in Madagascar leads to an inauthentic peace.

The failure of the Church leaders has diminished their reliability as voices from the people and for the people. If they want to restore their credibility, the Church leadership should first of all recognize their failure, and then enact a self-examination of conscience as proposed by SECAM:

But perhaps at this point it is necessary for us who are engaged in pastoral care/work to put critical questions to ourselves, and ask ourselves, in our turn, whether we are always sufficiently attentive to teaching the faithful, and forming them in light of what the Gospel demands in terms of justice. Has not the good seed of the gospel message found anything more than thorns and prickles, pebbled and dry paths? Will we have turned out

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<sup>94</sup> Denis Hurley, "La Situation en Afrique du Sud et l' Attitude de l' Eglise," cited in Bernard M. Muyembe, ed., *Eglise, Evangélisation et Promotion Humaine: Le Discours Social des Evêques Africains* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1995), 168.

to sow ungenerously? Have we done enough to awaken people's consciences and form them?<sup>95</sup>

Church leaders should draw on lessons from their failure by examining the way in which they resolved the problems encountered in 2009. In the event that the Church leadership has to make a declaration, they have to make such a declaration very clear so their people are able to understand exactly how they are to proceed. Moreover, the church leaders should analyze the different political crises from the past, and they should at least be aware of the real causes of the crisis in 1975, 1991, and 2002, which motivated many Malagasy people to strike and demonstrate. At these times of crises, the Malagasy people were thirsty for a real change—change from the colonial system to a more Malagasy system in 1975, and change from neo-colonialism to liberalism in both 1991 and 2002. On the contrary, in 2009 the situation was not nearly so clear. Such lack of clarity explains why the majority of the Malagasy did not support it. Thus, the Church leaders hesitated and seemed to act with confusion, dividing among themselves. The clear division between Protestants and Catholics, the rich and the poor, came to the surface. Ravalomanana, a Protestant, was supported by the head of the FFKM, also a Protestant. The Catholic Archbishop of Antananarivo tried to act as a negotiator, but he was overly inclined toward Andry Rajoelina, a Catholic. The Malagasy lost hope because their “parents” were divided among themselves. In the end, those who brought *fihavanana* to solve the crisis instead became its enemy. Finally, Church leaders should consider the damages caused as a result of this crisis which came about because of their failure to address the problem properly. Madagascar was in total social, economic, and political chaos. Foreign investors closed their businesses in a move that increased unemployment, and tourists no longer came to Madagascar

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<sup>95</sup> SECAM, “Resolutions et Recommandations de la VIIe Assemblée,” cited in Bernard M. Muyembe, ed., *Eglise, Evangélisation et Promotion Humaine: Le Discours Social des Evêques Africains* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1995), 166.

as they had before. The smuggling of precious wood, stones, and cows was rampant day and night. The country was living in chaos.

## 2.8 Conclusion

*Fihavanana* has contributed to a positive sense of community and hospitality. This principle has proved to be the product of kindness, mutuality and respect that has enabled the Malagasy people to build (albeit limited) social cohesion. Be that as it may, cultural mores such as hierarchical order are given considerable and unchecked influence in Malagasy society. Sadly, this often allows elders to abuse power over those who are younger; some elders place the needs of the community over the individual, which undermines personal flourishing. This kind of model of *fihavanana* is certainly rooted in fear because it is opposed to a western notion of human rights.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, when *fihavanana* takes fear as a starting point, it blocks human and other values such as personal autonomy, freedom of expression, and active participation in the public sphere. As a consequence, the individual is given little significance because of the weight of the group; people can easily become dependent on the group, and refuse to take responsibility for their own lives. For this reason I maintain that *fihavanana*, while in itself good, requires some reconstruction to allow individual flourishing.

There are also other challenges to the current understanding of *fihavanana* that work against its ability to deliver authentic solidarity. Cultural history reveals a proclivity among some Malagasy people toward racism. While the causes are indeed complicated, this phenomenon can be traced back to various political systems adopted by leaders in Madagascar that worked to divide the Malagasy people among themselves (highland and coastal peoples).

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<sup>96</sup> Sylvain Urfer, "Anthropologie Malgache et Perception des Droits Humains," in *Christianisme et droits de l'homme à Madagascar*, edited by Giulio Cipollone (Paris: Editions Karthala, 2008), 64.

The Church is not free of responsibility for these divisions. Indeed, there are significant problems with how the Church has promoted (or failed to promote) a truly Christian notion of *fhavanana*. This, too, has stunted the growth of an authentic solidarity for the Malagasy. In light of all these challenges, the following chapter provides some directives about how we might reconstruct *fhavanana* in light of Gospel values and Church teaching in order to suggest a way forward.

## **Chapter Three: Solutions to the Problems Undermining *Fihavanana***

This chapter begins by explaining the role of a Christian ethicist as an agent capable of stimulating others to think, act and decide according to each person's conscience. It is also about engaging everyone in the struggle against all oppressive situations by exercising a universal co-responsibility with his/her human faculties enlightened by faith. Such a process can be inspired by "practical theology, defined as a theological discipline, which is concerned with the Church's self-realization here and now—both that which is and that which ought to be."<sup>97</sup>

### **1. The Role of a Christian Social Ethicist**

#### **1.1 One Who Stimulates Others According to Their Consciences**

Generally, ethics is defined as a branch of philosophy which studies moral behavior in humans, with a focus on how one should act. In this sense, the focus is more on the individual who is looking for happiness, the ultimate objective of ethics. However, no individual exists apart from society, which may help or hinder the person in question. Thus, the human person is always in tension between his or her conscience and the norms imposed by society. This tension impels human beings to use their faculty of reasoning. The manner in which any person employs his/her human faculties reflects and forms his/her character. In fact, human beings are not born "programmed." Human beings often become what they do. Each person is a builder of his/her life. Therefore, one can even define ethics as the art or science of decision-making, which makes one more human. In accordance with Christian ethics, faith should shape the way Christians reason and act. Richard M. Gula states that:

In short, moral theology is interested in the implications of Christian faith for the sorts of persons we ought to be (this is often called "the ethics of character" or "agency ethics") and the sorts of actions we ought to perform (this is often called "the ethics of doing").

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<sup>97</sup> Karl Rahner, "Practical Theology within the Totality of Theological Discipline," *Theological Investigations*, IX (London: Herder, 1973), 106.



Both concerns...character (or agency) and action...need to be considered in any complete project of moral theology.<sup>98</sup>

Thus, a Christian ethicist is one who is able to help his/her fellow Christians to think, decide and act in light of their faith. However, this understanding of the role of a Christian ethicist is limited; it needs a wider lens. When one is interested not only in the attitude of the individual toward society, but also the attitude of the society toward the individual; it is this relationship that is called social ethics.

## 1.2 One Who Fights Against Oppressive Situations with a Universal Co-responsibility

*The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* provides a broad understanding of “society” as:

a set of individuals and/or institutions in relations governed by practical interdependence, convention, and perhaps law—these relations may vary from the local to the international. The modern concept emerged in later eighteenth-century Europe (in arguments against absolutism and civic republicanism) to denote a supposed sphere of causal and moral self-sufficiency lying between the political and the personal. The concept was the ground for the new ‘science’ of ‘sociology’. It later came to be used more loosely to include the political and the personal. Many liberalisms have resisted the idea of ‘the social’, preferring to see individuals as self-sufficient. Some philosophers, however, including Williams and Rawls, as well as some critics of liberalism, like McIntyre, have recently reasserted conceptions of the social as the ground of moral possibility and moral judgment.<sup>99</sup>

Therefore, social ethics is interested in the choice the individual poses vis-à-vis the structures of society. The individual finds herself face to face with objective situations which are external to her within which she has to be situated, and which pose acts which implicate the choice aimed at maintaining or modifying the structure of the society. Here, two principles are very important: respect for the human person and the promotion of real and true relationships with others. Therefore, social ethicists have a duty to act in a way that engages all oppressive situations whether on the political or economic level. Social ethicists also have a duty to act in a

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<sup>98</sup> Richard M. Gula, *What are they Saying About Moral Norms?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 9.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., edited by Ted Honderich (Oxford: University Press, 2005), 879.

way that engages people for universal co-responsibility. This means that living today in a society with planetary dimensions, one has to model one's project on the needs of others and on service to others.

The only attitude that permits humanity to live in freedom from oppression and solidarity is peace. It is not a sentiment but an act, which demands a precise choice. It is a way of living with others. It is a system of inter-human relationships. Peace is the fruit of justice, which shows us the importance of non-marginalization in the economic, cultural, and political life of nations. Peace and justice are foundational for the recognition of the dignity of the entire human family expressed by the principles of equality and inalienable rights.

The originality of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which we find in its Preamble,<sup>100</sup> consists in the fact that the rights are founded on human dignity, and no longer upon the social contract according to Hobbes and Locke's ideas. Rights are not only about freedom, life, and property (the three rights according to Locke) but also about economic, social, and cultural rights, which are indispensable to the dignity and free development of the human person (§22). Hence, moral reflection on the social life of human beings is today no longer situated solely at the individual level but also at the level of the entire human family through the examination of the common good. Here we need to clarify two ethical terms: "licit" or "illicit" depending on our choice to contribute or not to the common good. The choice is licit if it contributes to the respect of peace (in a relational system which privileges the common good of humans to the good of a state or to a particular society). On the other hand, the choice is illicit if it creates or maintains overwhelming structures, which engender individual or group or state oppression, domination, and violation of human rights on all levels.

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<sup>100</sup> "Preamble," *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, accessed May 7, 2015, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.

### 1.3 One Who Utilizes Scripture, Tradition, and Experience

Scripture is one of the sources which a Christian ethicist can use to enlighten her reason and that of her fellow Christians, even of human beings in general. Some theologians consider Scripture to be a divine command, while others consider it to be a moral reminder. The first group believes that Scripture sets a moral norm that demands adherence.<sup>101</sup> The second group believes that Scripture is a moral reference guiding us to understand the nature of humanity and helping us to live an integrated life.<sup>102</sup>

Moreover, Christians believe that the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament, are significant because they reveal Jesus, his time on earth and the cultural milieu in which he lived. Guided by faith, Christians come to recognize that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6). This recognition can help them to know God and, in knowing Him, come to love Him and act as He teaches them through Jesus, His Son. In so doing they can also relate to others in a selfless manner. Jesus' teaching through his words and deeds shapes the actions of Christians and the decisions they make. This can draw them closer to the true happiness they seek. They believe that their deepest desire is to be fulfilled by the other and to become who they are meant to be, by the creator who is totally other but always near. They acknowledge their lack and their hope to receive fulfillment from God. They appeal to God with the hope of understanding and reciprocity.

Furthermore, Christians believe that true happiness is achieved only by acting according to the dictates of what are considered to be the general principles of Christian ethics. These principles impel them to act ethically. For Christians, the kingdom of God preached by Jesus is

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<sup>101</sup> Cf. Karl Barth, "Ethics as a Task of the Doctrine of God," *Church Dogmatics*, II/22, ch. 8, accessed April 9, 2015, <https://books.google.com/books?id=mhn5VoV-CRUC&pg=PA509&lpg=PA509&dq=Ethics+as+a+Task+of+the+Doctrine+of+God&so>.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Josef Fuchs, *Human Values and Christian Morality* (Dublin: Cahill and CO. Limited, 1970), 76.

the ultimate destination and the fulfillment of human desire. They strive to bring the kingdom of God to the here and now. This desire influences the way they act and it shapes their lives. Thus, to reflect ethically on the New Testament, one needs to read it with the lens of the central message of Jesus about the kingdom of God. Also, one needs to be clear that the kingdom of God is not something to wait for. It is about our human flourishing *hic et nunc*. Wolfgang Schrage says the thrust of Jesus' message is to show that "the eternal transcendence of God is at work here and now."<sup>103</sup> And it is not meant only for Christians but for all of humankind as Karl Rahner articulated through his idea of "anonymous Christians":

The fact that the history of salvation is coexistent with the whole history of the human race (which is not to say identical, for in this single history there is also guilt and the rejection of God, and hence the opposite of salvation) no longer poses any special problem today for the normal interpretation of Christianity. Anyone who does not close himself to God in an ultimate act of his life and his freedom through free and personal sin for which he is really and subjectively guilty and for which he cannot shirk responsibility, this person finds his salvation.<sup>104</sup>

Everyone is called to the kingdom of God, to salvation. However, this call requires awareness, discernment, choice, and decision. In this, Schrage agrees with Bultmann that the unity of Jesus' eschatological message and his ethical message are to be found in the deepest meaning of each: the individual "now stands under the necessity of decision."<sup>105</sup>

The final decision is up to the individual. Freedom of conscience is essential in the realm of ethics. Jesus himself preaches about freedom of conscience, and in doing so, shows that no law, even that of the Sabbath, is more important: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27). Jesus breaks the law of Sabbath to rescue someone from the problem that impedes the person. Jesus does it out of love for others. Love commands everything.

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<sup>103</sup> Wolfgang Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 18.

<sup>104</sup> Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978), 142.

<sup>105</sup> Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 25.

Schrage writes, “According to Bultmann, Jesus says nothing specific about the concrete substance of the love he demands. Jesus can only leave the decision to each individual in his concrete situation.... Anyone who truly loves knows what must be done.”<sup>106</sup> James Bretzke argues: “Scripture must be integrated with our other sources and the sacred claim axis must allow for intersection with the rational claim axis if our moral methodology hopes to involve the entire human community in its complexity.”<sup>107</sup> In other words, Scripture, Tradition and lived experiences are always interrelated in Christian Catholic morality. It is through the lived experiences that everyone comes in.

In my effort to reimagine *fihavanana* in post-colonial Madagascar, I draw upon two Christian ethical sources, the Bible and Catholic Social Teaching. Both the Old and New Testaments provide warrants for action on the part of God’s people. Catholic Social Teaching is apposite because it has: “a social wisdom based on biblical insights, the tradition of the early writings of the Church, scholastic and other Christian philosophers, theological reflection, and the contemporary experience of the People of God struggling to live our faith in justice.”<sup>108</sup> Since the publication of *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, the Church has closely followed human reality through its joys and struggles, denouncing injustice and promoting peace through its directives, propositions, and actions. To facilitate this task, an evaluation of the social/political structures and the complex tensions in Madagascar, considered as social sin, need to be evaluated according to the Scripture and the Catholic Social Teaching of the Church.

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<sup>106</sup> Schrage, *The Ethics of the New Testament*, 80.

<sup>107</sup> James T. Bretzke, *A Morally Complex World: Engaging Contemporary Moral Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 92.

<sup>108</sup> Edward P. DeBerri et al, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 5.

## 2. Social Inequality, Racism, and Division as Social Sin

### 2.1 An Understanding of Social Sin

By recovering foundational principles rooted in the dignity and rights of the human person, the Malagasy people will be able to transcend some kinds of discrimination and tensions that exist between the highland and coastal peoples, which are inherited from their “respective possible origin” and different political systems. Indeed, the current reality—marked as it is by a constant tension between highland and coastal peoples—is a paramount example of social sin.<sup>109</sup>

#### 2.1.1 Scripture on Social Sin

In the Book of Genesis, chapters 1-11, we see a demonstration of the social aspect of sin. In these early pages of the Hebrew Scriptures, it is evident that a significant emphasis is placed on the whole over and above the individual as Gordon J. Wenham states:

The opening chapters of Genesis describes an avalanche of sin that gradually engulfs mankind, leading first to his near-annihilation in the flood, and second, to man’s dispersal over the face of the earth in despair of achieving international cooperation.<sup>110</sup>

According to Wenham, the consequences of sin are not limited to the first humans; rather, sin’s reach extends to the entire human family. Author Mark O’Keefe confirms Wenham’s thoughts: “Sin affects the entire community, and it is the entire community which faces the judgment of God and is called to repentance.”<sup>111</sup>

As salvation history develops, prophets arise to warn God’s people against social sin. The most famous of them, Isaiah, warns the people about their failure in worshiping without justice in the name of God: “What do I care for the multitude of your sacrifices? says the Lord. I have had enough of whole-burnt rams and fat of fatlings; in the blood of calves, lambs, and goats I

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<sup>109</sup> *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no. 36-37.

<sup>110</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 1 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1987), Li.

<sup>111</sup> Mark O’Keefe, *What are They Saying About Social Sin* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1990), 6.

finds no pleasure.... To bring offerings is useless; incense is an abomination to me,” (Isa 1:11-13). While this passage manifests Israel’s guilt regarding inadequate worship, it is also a warning against unjust practices occurring in their social relations. Worship, properly understood, must strengthen the relationship with God and close the gaps between neighbors, because the one is radically affected by the others.

Similarly, the prophet Jeremiah speaks out against leaders, priests, and kings who led God’s people astray. His warnings reveal a sense of urgency and speak to the familiar theme of power abuse by elders trusted by the community: “You have scattered my sheep and driven them away. You have not cared for them, but I will take care to punish your evil deeds” (Jer 23:2). This is certainly a recognition of the reality of social sin in which the injustice of those leaders affects the whole community.

The preaching of the prophet Amos is another important example of a prophet who challenges the gains of the ruling authority at the expense of the lowly. Known as champion of the poor and a critic of the wealthy, this prophet criticized and condemned individual sins of the elders because their actions prevented Israel’s flourishing. In particular, Amos worked against violence (3:10), oppression of the poor, and exploitation of human life (2:6).

The examples above suggest that in the Hebrew Bible social sin is a negative force that blocks human flourishing. As such, it not only ruptures a people’s relationship with God, but it also prevents the entire community of Israel from experiencing God’s vision of covenantal love. “Sin, therefore, is not merely the injustice (and thus violation of the covenant) of one person but an unfaithfulness to the covenant which permeates the community.”<sup>112</sup>

The Christian Scriptures continue these themes set forth by their Jewish ancestors. For example, Saint Paul describes the social structure of sin as both (i) the sinful state of the world;

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<sup>112</sup> O’Keefe, *What are They Saying About Social Sin*, 6.

and (ii) a powerful force that works against authentic human flourishing. In his Letter to the Romans, Paul affirms that sin came into the world through one person (5:12), reigns in the world (5:21), and enslaves humanity (6:6).<sup>113</sup> But, uniquely for the author of Romans, sin is not of human origin. Rather it is personified under the disguise of Satan (1Cor 5:5; 7:5). Consequently, sin brings death (Rom 5:12). In this sense, social sin can be a deviation from the good, resulting in lawlessness, iniquity, and lawless deeds.

### 2.1.2 Catholic Social Teaching on Social Sin

Building on these Scriptural foundations, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* offers a distinction between “social sin” and “personal sin.” Accordingly, the *Catechism* maintains that sin is a personal act.<sup>114</sup> Yet, the personal characteristic of sin implies responsibility of the community on the level of conscience formation—things like contribution, collaboration, suggestion, and societal acceptance without rejection. Thus the culpability of personal sin can be mitigated by the influences of social sin. *The Catechism*, for instance, maintains: “sin makes men accomplices of one another and causes concupiscence, violence, and injustice to reign among them.”<sup>115</sup>

Scholars point to the scholarship of thinkers like Pope John Paul II for many insights regarding the origins of social sin. Written under his pontificate, the *Catechism* references his beliefs about the relation between individual persons and their relation to society as a whole. Accordingly, three significant themes emerge: (i) the person makes society; (ii) society makes persons; and (iii) there is a relationship between the anonymous individual and the collective masses.

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. O’Keefe, *What are They Saying About Social Sin*, 6.

<sup>114</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no 1868, at The Holy See, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 1869.



Throughout his pontificate, Pope John Paul II emphasized how each individual's sin affects others. Speaking in South Africa, for instance, the Pope suggested that there was a time when "the existing ban on marriages between White and Black people (Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, 1949) was extended to White and Colored people."<sup>116</sup> In the Pope's thinking, these social mores could not be traced to societal values; instead they came from family and were communicated between different tribes. In time they became a model, or a style, of accepted social practice.

Another example is what some African tribes call the "justice of society." According to this principle if someone is caught stealing a cow to feed his hungry family, the elders could fabricate trial rules willy-nilly; the consequences might include beheading of the chief or a firing squad. Here again accepted social practice pays no consideration to the human rights or basic values established by consensus. Instead, families and the society at large simply went along with the *status quo*; they accepted the rules of society even when their conscience might have argued otherwise.

While practices such as those described here may prove effective and successful for reducing the number of thieves, there are destructive ethical elements to the story. Being forced to cooperate with evil structures on an individual level renders an entire society unjust. Some social scientists refer to this and similar processes as "externalization" because it locates the center of control from the choice of an individual to some external structure. And since individuals comprise the community, the whole system becomes poisoned.

Since the origins of sin are not merely attributed to the individual, society at large can influence and cause an individual's cooperation with social sin. Pope John Paul II defended this

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<sup>116</sup> "The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Acts Commences," South African History Online, last modified July 4, 2012, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/existing-ban-marriages-between-white-and-black-people-prohibition-mixed-marriages-act-19>.

position when he spoke of “sins attacking one’s neighbor, or against one’s brother and sister.”<sup>117</sup>

The danger of social sin, according to the Pope, is based on the idea that humanity exists as a communion of persons, not lone islands. Thus, sin is “an offence against God because it is an offence against one’s neighbor.”<sup>118</sup> This category of sin is best illustrated by examples such as oppression of the poor, racism, offences against human dignity, violations of human rights, or destruction of the environmental ecosystem. The Pope cites those, and others, when he speaks about “social sin against love of neighbor; or social sin against others’ freedom; or social sin against the common good.”<sup>119</sup>

One of the dangers of life within an oppressive community is the temptation of a herd mentality. John Paul II considers it as anonymous collectivity—a social sin referring to the relationship between the various human communities. This third type of social sin refers to the whole society or the whole community in which “the moral conscience of many people becomes clouded.”<sup>120</sup> This is seen when the whole community and society at large lose the “sense of sin.”<sup>121</sup> The genocide of Rwanda is a classic example of this category. In this kind of social sin, people consider the wrong thing as the right thing. As such, the moral conscience is completely blind, and there is no “sense of God.”<sup>122</sup>

A common strand running through all of the insights regarding social sin is the influence of a dominant, often socially constructed, individual that exercises power over others. In John Paul’s thinking this influential figure (or social reality) is “rooted in personal sin,” because someone has been introduced freely and knowingly into the society and become the influence

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<sup>117</sup> Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Reconciliation and Peace *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (2 December 1984), no.16, at The Holy See, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., no.18.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

over others that pulls them away from the values which encourage human flourishing.<sup>123</sup> For this reason, John Paul II denies that a society can sin; rather, he suggests “sin in the proper sense, is always a personal act, since it is an act of freedom on the part of an individual person and not the property of a group or community.”<sup>124</sup>

### **2.1.3 Social Sin in the Malagasy Context**

The Malagasy people are victims of all three types of social sin explained above. And while they feel the effects of social sin in general, it is clear that the second—namely, those attacks that directly impact personal freedom, which touch basic rights and dignity—are among the most egregious. Indeed, this is a sin against one’s brother and sister.

Accordingly, social sin touches all aspects of life in Madagascar. By ceding power to the male elders, social cohesion is ruptured: family, school, church, and the nation have been wounded. Moreover, a lack of dialogue in the family has brought frustration to children and disrupted family life. This frustration often manifests itself in acts of aggression, anger, and violence. What is worse is that teachers and educators have been given few resources to understand the situation as experienced by students. To combat such problems they often have dismissed students from school, assuming that the problem was with the student. Furthermore, many students have simply lost hope.

Added to this is a lack of dialogue between the faithful and their pastors. Further distance has been added by a severe clericalism, which only has strengthened the divide between Christian ideals and daily religious experiences. Perhaps the misguided model of elder power in society has crept into Church leadership as well. Evidence for this can be seen in a growing

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<sup>123</sup> *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no. 36.

<sup>124</sup> *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 16.

dearth of dialogue between the top ecclesial leaders and the ordinary people who practice the faith.

Indeed, “racism” perpetuated by a group of people due to their “respective origin,” the tension between the highland and coastal people due to the political system inherited from the past and perpetuated by some politicians and leaders in Madagascar has damaged the relationships within the Malagasy people. Clearly, this is expressed in a whole host of ways: the fight between the army and gendarmes in 1972, the possible assassination of the president Ratsimandrava, the burning of the palace of the king in Antananarivo in 2005, the blockage of Antananarivo from other regions during the riot in 2001-2002, the real tension between Catholics and Protestants in 2009. Still today the Malagasy people live in constant tension, which leads to mistrust, hatred, prejudices, and insecurity.

As noted before, social sin is rooted in personal sin. It has become evident that we need a personal conversion before dealing with the reformation of social structures for charity begins at home. The structural change requires action and the responsibility of each individual. In his apostolic letter *Octogesima adveniens*, Pope Paul VI claimed “it is too easy to throw back on others’ responsibility for injustice, if at the same time one does not realize how each one personally shares in it, and how personal conversion is of priority.”<sup>125</sup> Granted, personal conversion is not possible without the recognition of grace, which can help any one of us onto the right path. In solidarity, moral value, according to John Paul II, helps men and women to recognize the demand of God’s will through faith.<sup>126</sup> How might the Malagasy people apply such conversion to their social structural problems and the tensions due to the racial claims and divisions between highland and coastal peoples?

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<sup>125</sup> Pope Paul VI, Encyclical on A Call to Action *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971), no. 48, at The Holy See, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>126</sup> *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no. 38.

### **3. Solution to the Unjust Social Structures in Madagascar**

#### **3.1 An Individual Change**

Individuals cannot do everything to end the problem of injustice in their traditional social structures, so each Malagasy person needs to be aware of and recognize the truth about that and move to personal conversion—a conversion from social sin which involves, at one level, changing one’s own lifestyle in ways that will help reform and transform society. *Sollicitudo rei socialis* suggests that solidarity requires: (i) on the part of the influential, a responsibility and willingness to share; (ii) on the part of weaker parties, an active claiming of rights (§39). These requirements can be applied to the leaders and to the citizens in Madagascar. In a more practical way, each Malagasy has to say “no” to any structure which undermines his/her integral development and be able to say “yes” for its reform in a peaceful way. Thus E. D. Andriamalala claims his rights and duty as a Malagasy citizen vis-à-vis the regime in place: “It is my duty to protect or not the charter of my nation, to support or not those who are in power. Forcing me to do so or preventing me from doing so undermines directly my freedom.”<sup>127</sup>

#### **3.2 An Urgent Responsibility of the Leaders and Elders**

Experience teaches the Malagasy people that strikes and demonstrations have damaged many things in Madagascar. Strikes and demonstrations become tools for politicians to gain power by bloodshed. Strikes and demonstrations have led Madagascar into deep poverty due to the destruction of the common good. They have brought mistrust and division among the Malagasy people. This situation compels me and other Christian ethicists to look for more pastoral directives when it comes to dealing with political leaders. It is better to evaluate or criticize their leadership than to push individual Malagasy to revolt. Since Church leaders through the intervention of the FFKM and the MEC have done their part, I want to highlight as

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<sup>127</sup> E. D. Andriamalala, *Ny Fanagasiana* (Antananarivo: Librairie Mixte, 2009), 4.

well the importance of the continental level in terms of the work of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM). This is a way for the Malagasy people, and of course the church leaders in Madagascar, to go beyond the mentality of an island people who want to solve everything within their own boundaries. Insights from SECAM meetings held in 2000 and 2013 are instructive in this regard since these two meetings stress mainly the positions of SECAM vis-à-vis the attitude of leaders in Africa and Madagascar.

SECAM 2000 defined leadership as service for others.<sup>128</sup> This means that the first duty and responsibility of the leaders must be to serve their people. Therefore, SECAM condemns all kinds of ideas and acts from any leaders in Africa which do not correspond to this principle: authoritarian and oppressive regimes which undermine the personal freedom and fundamental human rights (right to vote); the spirit of domination or self-interest; fratricidal conflicts and hostilities, etc. In other words, the duty of government is to protect and promote the common good. Leaders have to be proud of their own people and put their people's interests before their personal gains. Above all, leaders must work harder toward the unity of their countries.<sup>129</sup>

Moving from denouncing realities and giving theoretical directives, SECAM 2013 provides more practical directives and offers solutions to the leaders in Africa. Therefore, SECAM encourages African leaders to foster unity among Africans and to seek for a vision of the common good.<sup>130</sup> Public leaders have to be open to dialogue and work together with specialists in different fields to avoid all pretension to know and solve everything alone. In addition, leaders have to cultivate the virtues of honesty and sincerity which make their

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<sup>128</sup> “Message de la 12ème Assemblée Plénière du Symposium des Conférences Episcopales d’Afrique et de Madagascar (SCEAM),” La Société des Missionnaires d’Afrique, last modified October 7, 2000, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://peres-blancs.ccf.fr/foijus14.htm>.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> “Notre Evêque Présent a la 16ème Assemblée Plénière du SECAM, Kinsasa,” Eglise Catholique au Maroc, July 17, 2013, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.diocesesabat.org/?q=notre-eveque-present-la-16eme-assemblee-pleniere-du-sceam-kinshasa-08-15-juillet-2013-0>.

leadership transparent. Moreover, they should not be obstacles in the fight against corruption. Those leaders who are already involved in corruption have to acknowledge their mistakes and must face stern disciplinary action, which should be widely publicized so that no one is seen to commit this crime with impunity. Elections have to be free, fair, transparent, and peaceful.<sup>131</sup>

Despite these recommendations and directives from SECAM, many leaders in Africa, including Madagascar, continue their corrupt and oppressive ways. This means that the Catholic Church has to take action. The creation and empowering of social centers for justice is one of the best ways the Catholic Church in Madagascar can actively challenge the injustice done by national and local leaders. The Catholic Church in Madagascar already has two entities which aim at promoting peace and justice through faith, namely *Justice and Peace (J&P)* run by the Episcopal Conference, and *Justice and Faith (J&F)* run by the Jesuits.

Historically, *J&P* was a commission demanded by GS §90 and set up by Pope Paul VI in 1967. Pope John Paul II reorganized it in 1988. *J&P* then existed at the local level. Its very mission is to enhance justice in a given country by concrete actions in all aspects of life: basic community, movements, associations, parishes, dioceses, and the whole country. Concerning justice, the commission aims at identifying and analyzing situations of injustice, education for justice, teaching of the Social Doctrine of the Church, fighting against corruption, intervening in public or even in political situations. Concerning peace, the commission aims to analyze the current conflicts and reestablish peace; denouncing and preventing the hidden conflicts; education about peace and non-violence. As for *J&F* in Madagascar, it was founded in 1987 under the provincialate of Philibert Andriambololona in view of the service of faith and promotion of justice inspired by Decree 4 of the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Congregation of the Society of

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<sup>131</sup>“Notre Evêque Présent à la 16ème Assemblée Plénière du SCEAM, Kinsasa,” <http://www.diocesesabat.org/?q=notre-eveque-present-la-16eme-assemblee-pleniere-du-sceam-kinshasa-08-15-juillet-2013-0>.

Jesus.<sup>132</sup> This committee is meant to witness to the Gospel outside of the ecclesial circle where Christians and people of good will come and work together. Studying culture, society, political life, economy, and the religious sphere in order to protect the universal value of human rights, the specificity of Malagasy cultures and Christian values drawn from the Gospel as a source are the main tasks of *J&F* members.<sup>133</sup>

From their respective foundations in Madagascar, each committee has done very good work. However, it is not enough. These two committees need to collaborate closely: to make themselves credible after the political crisis in 2009, they have to change their structure. For instance, the heads of these two committees are until now priests. In the eyes of the Malagasy people, religious and priests are not supposed to be the heads of such committees because people cannot differentiate between their religiosity or priestly life and their tasks as promoters of justice and peace. Moreover, many people complain about their partiality vis-à-vis the regime and the current leader. Therefore, *J&P* and *J&F* have to form laypersons to be in charge and help the citizens to know their rights and duties as the Synod Fathers wished in 2009. It requires attending to the call for the involvement of committed Christians in the political processes to bring strong Christian values of honesty, inclusiveness, tolerance, and desire to serve in this arena.<sup>134</sup>

Finally, *J&P* and *J&F* have to help the FFKM in its present efforts to bring about national reconciliation. They have to make clear to the FFKM that its effort for forgiveness and reconciliation will be a mere illusion unless those leaders who came in after the first Republic to

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<sup>132</sup> “Foi et Justice, Madagascar,” Oeuvre des Missions Catholiques Françaises d’Asie et d’Afrique, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.omcfaa.org/projet-madagascar-foi-et-justice-madagascar,7.php>.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Message to the People of God of the Second Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops *Ecclesia in Africa* (23 October 2009), at The Holy See, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).



the present day, are tried in court. This is the only way the Malagasy people can deal with those who perpetuate impunity in Madagascar. Desmond Tutu, well-known as peacemaker and reconciler, is very clear about such situations:

True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the degradation, and the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end dealing with the real situation helps to bring real healing. Spurious reconciliation can bring only spurious healing.<sup>135</sup>

A question remains: will the FFKM be able to expose the awfulness, the abuse, the pain, the degradation, and the truth done by those leaders who succeeded in Madagascar since its independence? As Tutu always reminds us: forgiveness does not mean forgetting. On the contrary, forgiveness requires remembering so that the atrocities that have happened will not happen again. This situation gives the perpetrator the opportunity to feel what the victims felt:

Forgiveness does not mean condoning what has been done. It means taking what happened seriously and not minimizing it; drawing out the sting in the memory that threatens to poison our entire existence. It involves trying to understand the perpetrators and so have empathy, trying to stand in their shoes and appreciate the sort of pressures and influences that might have conditioned them.<sup>136</sup>

Robert Enright elaborates on Tutu's idea by explaining that: (i) forgiving is not condoning or excusing wrongdoing; (ii) forgiveness is not the same as legal pardon; (iii) forgiveness is a personal response to one's own injury; (iv) therefore, we can forgive and still bring legal justice to bear as required by the situation.<sup>137</sup> Even if reconciliation and forgiveness are interrelated, there is a difference that must be clearly understood. Forgiveness is one person's response to injury while reconciliation involves two people coming together again.<sup>138</sup> In this case, the injurer must realize his or her offense, see the damage done, and take steps to rectify the problem. As

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<sup>135</sup> Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 270.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* 271.

<sup>137</sup> Robert D. Enright, "Interpersonal Forgiveness," *Exploring Forgiveness* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 48-49.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

Enright says: “When in a chronic situation of abuse, a forgiver may not reconcile.”<sup>139</sup> Will the FFKM be able to tell these leaders that they must first of all acknowledge their sins and pronounce them publicly because it is the Malagasy people in general who are the victims? Will the FFKM be able to remind the Malagasy people, after the possible forgiveness and reconciliation that the atrocities done by these leaders will never happen again? In this case, the FFKM can be a radical disciple who is a presence that disturbs.<sup>140</sup> Conducting their task as mediator, the FFKM may take an inspiration from the genuine dialogue found in St. John’s Gospel.

### **3.3 Dialogue in St. John’s Gospel as a Model for Mediation**

The call narrative in John’s Gospel is one of the best examples of a genuine dialogue, which enables the Malagasy people to envision a just and right social structure. The call narratives consist almost entirely of dialogue, so that the reader him/herself becomes a participant in the drama of discipleship. The reader is able to hear Jesus’ initial question to the first disciples, “What do you seek?” (Jn 1:38), as a question addressed to the reader as well. In this way the Johannine Jesus invites every reader to respond to his call to discipleship.

In the Malagasy setting, the leaders need to adopt this way of leading people. Instead of imposing the rule of traditional *fihavanana*, which does not allow people to express their own opinion, they need to be open to dialogue. Dialogue helps to understand one another better and can be of help for development in various ways. The leaders in Madagascar need to pay attention also to the way they open the dialogue to their people. They can use the initial question posed by Jesus: “What do you seek?” This is an open-ended question, which leads people to their growth. The Malagasy leaders need to give their people some space to grow and discover step-by-step

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<sup>139</sup> Enright, “Interpersonal Forgiveness,” *Exploring Forgiveness*, 49.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. Anthony J. Gittins, *A Presence That Disturbs: A Call to Radical Discipleship* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Press, 2002).

the meaning of life and its objective. In the Gospel of Saint John, Jesus never obliges anyone to follow him or to take the narrow path to eternal life. Craig R. Koester explains:

John's Gospel uses word pictures to give readers a way of seeing themselves in relation to God, Jesus, and other people. They also find that the Gospel gives them remarkably few specific commands about what to do or not do. There is no list of virtues and vices, no detailed manual on how to act in each situation.... But the Gospel also includes other images, which help readers work out the implications of what Jesus' command might mean.<sup>141</sup> This helps both the Malagasy leaders and the citizens to deal with their traditional way of maintaining *fihavanana*, which is mostly by fear. Love is the opposite of fear. If we are driven by true love, then fear will disappear, as Saint Augustine says: "Love and do what you will." Moreover, Jesus' word after his Resurrection comforts us: "I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world" (Jn 16:33).

To illustrate this point, the way both Jesus and the Samaritan woman come to a genuine dialogue is helpful because it requires a deliberate decision from both of them, Jesus and the Samaritan woman. According to the story, Jesus' first intention is to go to Jerusalem and the short cut to Jerusalem passes through Samaria. However, there was tension between Samaritans and Jews. But Jesus made the decision to pass through Samaria and to sit at the well of Jacob in the middle of the day. Frances T. Gench explains this act as follows:

Samaritan were considered heretics, foreigners, and unclean by Jews, who avoided contact with them (see 4:9). However, Jesus is presented as deliberately crossing this ethnic and religious boundary. Indeed, as the story opens, the narrator whispers to us that "he has to go through Samaria" (4:4; or translating more literally, "it was necessary" for him to pass through Samaria). Though the main route from Judea to Galilee was through Samaria, Jesus could easily have avoided it; many Jews did.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 188.

<sup>142</sup> Frances T. Gench, *Encounters with Jesus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 31.

At the same time, the Samaritan woman comes to the well and finds Jesus, a Jew, sitting at the well. She has the option to avoid Jesus by going back into the village. But she does not. These decisions from both sides make the dialogue possible and genuine. As a teacher, Jesus opens the dialogue by a very simple request “give me a drink” (4:7). Dialogue destroys barriers between two persons and potentially leads to mutual understanding. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus does not need to know his disciples. He knew them even before they followed him. The call of Nathanael is evidence of this, “even before Phillip called you under a fig tree, I saw you” (Jn 1:48). This situation is echoed in the Samaritan woman’s marital situation (4:18). The point here is that dialogues between Jesus and other people help them to know Jesus. That is Jesus’ mission: to help others to know him so that God the Father will be known, too, as Jesus openly says that the Father and he are one (Jn 10:30). The fruit of the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman is that she comes to know Jesus’ identity in stages.

Jesus’ disciples have a genuine freedom because they can express the truth about themselves as is seen in the case of this Samaritan woman. This is very important for the Malagasy people. According to what was treated above, traditional *fihavanana* does not allow one to express what or who one is. Very often, the Malagasy people in the name of *fihavanana* hide their opinion and their personality. That is why many Malagasy people live in duplicity due to their fear of breaking *fihavanana* or fear of shame due to public opinion as expressed in the Malagasy proverb: “It is not the land, but the opinion of the people which is taboo.” The Malagasy leaders need to be aware of what Jesus did to his disciples: He lets them express their opinions and treats them just as they are. These actions help them to be themselves and live in transparency. Such actions can even solve the problem of jealousy, which is strong in Malagasy society because of the fact that some have tried to overcome the weight of the group in

expressing their personality and have begun to open their minds to adopt some other cultural traits which could help them to develop in new ways. The way that Jesus took his disciples as they were gave the disciples a true sense of community centered in Jesus.

#### **4. Solution to Racism and Divisions**

##### **4.1 Fostering a New Relationship**

Previously it was noted that Christian solidarity can lead people into values and norms by living the first and the second great commandments “love God, love neighbor” (Mk 12:30-31; Mt 22:36-40) at the same time: “to men growing daily more dependent on one another, and to a world becoming more unified every day, this truth proves to be of paramount importance.”<sup>143</sup> Through love, there is a possibility of consideration and respect between one another as Jesus says: “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). Therefore, “Solidarity is the social face of Christian love.”<sup>144</sup> Solidarity is considered as a Christian virtue due to the fact that it leads people not only to forgiveness and reconciliation, but also to justice and peace.<sup>145</sup>

David Hollenbach, commenting in his introduction to *Gaudium et Spes*, raises awareness of its context and the challenge Christians and the Church have to face: “Deep social changes have raised new questions that must be addressed in ways that respond to humanity’s desire for a life that is full, and worthy of human nature. GS voices the Council’s conviction that Christ and the Church can respond to these questionings.”<sup>146</sup> As such, everyone who wants to implement

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<sup>143</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, no. 24.

<sup>144</sup> *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no. 39.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 40.

<sup>146</sup> David Hollenbach, “Commentary on *Gaudium et spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World),” *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries & Interpretations* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 266.

GS has to respect the dignity of the human person founded on his/her identity as image and likeness of God and on their conscience:

Thus, chapter 1 grounds its understanding of the dignity of the human person on the affirmation in the book of Genesis that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (12)... Dignity is also expressed in the call to obedience to conscience, and in the capacity for freedom as a key manifestation of the worth of human beings (15-17). That is the reason why the center of Catholic Social Teaching consists in respecting the transcendent dignity of human beings.<sup>147</sup>

This principle raised by GS helps everyone who wants to promote a healthy relationship with others by considering him/her as equal in dignity. As a result, GS suggests that human persons are related to one another by virtue of the universal fatherhood of God and fraternity in Christ.<sup>148</sup>

Thus, the relationship with one another must be rooted in God as a relationship between the Father and the Son: mutual love and mutual respect. Nourishing and respecting this relationship ensures peace for everyone. Hollenbach highlights that, “the Council’s teaching, however, makes clear that peace is the condition that should be expected when people live in accord with the moral order with which God has invested the created world. Also, peace flows from a life in accord with the love of neighbor taught by Jesus and from the reconciliation promised by the death and resurrection of Christ.”<sup>149</sup>

Even though GS has its limit of presenting the way everyone relates to one another due to its use of the term fatherhood (which sometimes offends some people), it clarifies the ambiguity and opens up to a wide horizon of relationship where everyone feels at home.

The relationship founded on the virtue of the universal fatherhood of God and fraternity in Christ, which paints a picture of humanity as a big family in Christ under God, where everyone is dignified, knowing that this dignity is protected by rights (the right to act according

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<sup>147</sup> David Hollenbach, “Commentary on *Gaudium et spes*,” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries & Interpretations*, 274.

<sup>148</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, no. 24.

<sup>149</sup> Hollenbach, “Commentary on *Gaudium et spes*,” in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching*, 283.

to the dictates of conscience and to safeguard their privacy, and rightful freedom, including freedom of religion) and duties. This relationship enables the Malagasy people to broaden their *fhavanana* and fosters unity among the entire Malagasy who were divided by the historical facts expressed by nostalgia for their ancestral origin, and the tension between the highland and coastal peoples worsened by the colonial system. The wisdom of the ancestors itself had imagined such openness and unity which is expressed by the Malagasy proverb: “Life is like pumpkin stalks, whose countless ramifications come down to the same origin.” If the Malagasy people are able to foster such true unity, they do not need to look back to their sad history and can stop blaming one another as well as the colonial system. What they need to do is to focus more on the present to reconstruct the future Madagascar through this unity. In this case, the understanding of the *Bergsonian* “intuition” enables the Malagasy people to build a new way of relating to one another by avoiding prejudices.

#### **4.2 Avoiding Prejudices**

Generally, the application of the “intuition method” of the French philosopher Henri Bergson helps every person to relate truly to one another by avoiding prejudices. *Bergsonian* intuition is different from the ordinary understanding of the term. Ordinarily, intuition means instinctive knowing (without the use of rational processes). On the contrary, Bergson explains intuition as: “the sympathy by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it.”<sup>150</sup> In other words, intuition is a direct knowledge, an exceptional experience of an object we want to know. As such, someone who wants to experience this direct knowledge has to have patience and avoid all kinds of prejudice toward his/her object. For instance, if I really want to know someone, I need to bridge the gap between us by direct dialogue with him/her. When I become familiar with

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<sup>150</sup> Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 190.

him/her, I begin to know more intimately who he/she is. This is the way to envision each Malagasy person relating to one another, not by judging from appearances, which is very often based on outward manifestations, which leads to prejudices, but by knowing the person deeply, just as he or she is. I have learned from my experience that prejudice is a great sin due to the fact that it is based on the pretenses through which people judge others. Most of the time, such judgment is wrong and creates a deep gap between two persons or groups of persons or tribes, or even among different countries.

Before I entered the Society of Jesus, I was sent to be in charge of the Jesuit Youth Center in a remote city in the southern part of Madagascar called Bezaha. This was my second experience leaving my hometown in the highlands. What I heard before reaching Bezaha, was that coastal people were very violent. After living there, I came to realize that the context in which the coastal people live is very different from mine (in the highlands). It is always hot and humid there, with a lot of mosquitos, which cause malaria, and with limited food. People get annoyed and frustrated very easily. While in my own place, I enjoy the coolness of the highlands, the variety of seasons, the fruits of the land. This situation made me aware that, even if we live in the same island, the contexts in which we live are very different and shape our behavior accordingly. Knowing others within their context helps to avoid prejudices. I believe that such contextual knowledge and experience can lead people to build new and true relationships with one another. Mindful of this conviction, I argue that it is the duty of the state to facilitate interaction among the citizens through public transportation, road-building, different ways of communication, promotion of the Malagasy language, inter-school activities, public parks, appreciation and promotion of cultural differences, etc. This conviction also raises the question: What would be the contribution of the Church in Madagascar? What contributions



might ecumenism and interreligious dialogue bring, not only in terms of social reform, but also in enlarging *fihavanana* to fit post-colonial Madagascar?

### 4.3 Ecumenism as a Tool for Unity Among Christians

Etymologically, ecumenism comes from the Greek verb *okein*. In the New Testament, *okein* has several meanings: the universe as a whole (Rev. 12:9; 16:14), the inhabited world (Luke 4:5; Acts 17:6; 19:27; Romans 10:18), the Roman Empire (Matt. 24:14; Luke 2:1), and the eschatological unity of God and humankind (Heb. 2:5). In the ancient Church ecumenical could be used to refer to all Christians, but also more specifically to those of the Roman Empire. Thus, synods or councils were called ecumenical to the extent that their decisions were understood to be binding on all Christians throughout the empire.<sup>151</sup>

From the sixth century the Patriarch of Constantinople claimed the title ‘ecumenical’ in order to signify his primacy over the various Eastern Churches. The Churches of the Reformation generally described the universal Church as ecumenical rather than Catholic in order to avoid any confusion with the Catholic Church of Rome. In the twentieth century ecumenical has emerged as the adjective used to describe all efforts designed to further rapprochement and reconciliation among Christian Churches. The goal of ecumenism—and the heart of that which is called the ecumenical movement—is the unity of the Church: a unity given in and by God and manifest in the service that the Churches are called to give jointly to the world. In contemporary discourse ‘ecumenical’ is also used in less specifically ecclesial contexts to describe any effort toward greater unity among persons or groups (secular ecumenism), including dialogue between different religions (interreligious ecumenism).<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Cf. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, Ian A. McFarland, et al., ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 157.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

During the nineteenth century the profound social changes resulting from industrialization and western colonial expansion brought forth the first modern ecumenical initiatives at both local and national levels. These initiatives reflected a renewed spiritual awareness. The divisions between churches were viewed as unacceptable because they were inconsistent with the confession of the Church as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Conscious of the need for a general renewal and conversion of the established Churches, Christians from a variety of confessional backgrounds met in groups for prayer and fellowship. This spiritual ecumenism found three basic expressions: a stress on unity in missionary activities, common witness in the face of social problems, and the pursuit of a common confession of faith that transcended established doctrinal divisions.<sup>153</sup> In the Roman Catholic Church, the term “ecumenism” is used to describe everything related to the unity of the Church. According to the *Decree on Ecumenism*, the term “ecumenical movement” indicates the initiatives and activities encouraged and organized to promote Christian unity.<sup>154</sup>

Since its creation in 1980, the ecumenical movement in Madagascar represented by the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed under the name FFKM, has done a good job. For instance, the ecumenical translation of the Bible in Malagasy, the publication of the book titled *One Flesh*, a pastoral guide for mixed marriages, a manual for civic education, a proposal for an electoral code, etc. However, it seems that this movement focuses more on socio-political situations in Madagascar than actual unity among Christians. To make this institution credible after its failure in 2009, its first and foremost objective needs to be redefined. One may ask is the Church indifferent to injustice? Being responsible to and for the Malagasy people, the Church

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<sup>153</sup> Cf. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 157.

<sup>154</sup> Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio* (21 November 1964), at The Holy See, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

must to propose directives that arise from the ethics of service, justice, truth, love, pardon, and hope. However, interventions on the part of the Churches have to be impartial vis-à-vis political powers or any ideological movement.

#### **4.4 The Centrality of Jesus' Prayer for Unity (Jn 17:21)**

New Testament writers give expression some to the spent of unity that can be found in Saint Paul's letters (Romans, Corinthians, Galatians and Ephesians) and the Acts of the Apostles. However, the Gospel of Saint John is centrally ecumenical because Jesus himself (Jn 17), before his death, wishes the unity of his disciples to be a witness to the unity of the world. Cardinal Walter Kasper, past-president of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, during a meeting in Dakar, reminded the Catholic delegates for ecumenism that promotion of Christian unity in Africa today must be founded on Jesus' call and prayer at the eve of his death: "So that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that the world may believe that you sent me" (Jn 17:21).<sup>155</sup> This prayer contains Jesus' final will and testament which is about preserving the unity of his disciples. Jesus established the one and unique Church, which is at the heart of our profession of faith in one God, one Lord Jesus-Christ, one Spirit, one Baptism and one faith (Eph 4:4). In other words, the uniqueness and unity of the Church corresponds to God's eternal plan and his salvific will to gather his people from the whole world (1 Cor 15:28).<sup>156</sup>

Unity among Christians is not an accidental reality. It is God's will. The division which exists among Christians is against God's will and Christ's plan, hence, sin. Ecumenism is an expression on the part of Christians that corresponds to the yearning of many persons for unity and peace. However, Christians, as followers of Christ, who wishes the unity of the whole

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<sup>155</sup> Walter Kasper, "Promouvoir l'unité des chrétiens en Afrique aujourd'hui," allocution lors de la rencontre des délégués catholiques pour l'oecumenisme, de l'Afrique francophone et de Madagascar, à Dakar, Juillet 2003, cited in Guilio Cipollone, ed., *Christianisme et droits de l'homme à Madagascar* (Paris: Karthala, 2008), 260-261.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 261.

humanity, should be the first among the architects of peace. This being said, the Church has to be understood as the sign and tool for unity with God and the unity of human beings.<sup>157</sup> Therefore the first objective of the ecumenical movement led by the FFKM in Madagascar must be the unity of Christians expressed by the reestablishment of the communion among the disunited brothers and sisters. The FFKM, currently well-known as part and parcel of civil society should go back to its vocation declared by its members during its inauguration in 1979:

In the face of the serious and uncertain situation which currently prevails, trusting in God's love, we shall be united to assure together the testimony of Christ. We shall be united in a way that our thoughts are one and our hearts beat in unison before the difficulties which we have to face, and the struggles which our nation carries on at present.<sup>158</sup>

It is true that this ecumenical movement was created soon after the political crisis in 1972-1975, seeking for reconstruction of the nation. However, its main objective was first of all unity. Therefore, the FFKM should recover and sustain its *raison d'être*.

The task of unity in Madagascar is not easy because each Christian church has its own way of understanding "unity." Most Protestant churches understand unity in its spiritual dimension, whereas the Catholic Church understands it in a practical form as visible communion with the Bishop of Rome and complete unity in sacraments and ecclesial ministry. Cardinal Kasper explains:

Most Protestants churches are not aware of a broken unity, a unity which once existed and which needs to be restored, but want to find the expression of a unity given to us all in Christ. Among Catholics, the model of unity is the unity with the Church of Rome, a unity under and in communion with the bishop of Rome.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Kasper, "Promouvoir l'unité des chrétiens en Afrique aujourd'hui," cited in Guilio Cipollone, ed., *Christianisme et droits de l'homme à Madagascar*, 261.

<sup>158</sup> Declaration from the members of FFKM, cited in Guilio Cipollone, ed., *Christianisme et droits de l'homme à Madagascar*, 255.

<sup>159</sup> Kasper, "Le mouvement oecumenisme depuis vingt ans," *Omnis Terra*, no. 388, January 2003, 15-16, cited in Guilio Cipollone, ed., *Christianisme et Droit de l'homme à Madagascar* (Paris: Karthala, 2008), 262.

The ecumenical movement's pastoral directives for the current situation in Madagascar should help the Christian churches to promote dialogue. In this context, dialogue is not necessarily theological. As a way of sharing what is within, dialogue requires simplicity, honesty, and charity. Dialogue should be rooted in the nature of the person and his dignity. As Pope John Paul II affirmed: "Dialogue is an indispensable step along the path *towards human self-realization*, the self-realization both of *each individual* and of *every human community*."<sup>160</sup> In short in the Catholic perspective, "dialogue seeks, through charity, penance, and renewal, to articulate a Catholic vision of truth that is based on the totality of the apostolic faith and is a foretaste of the eschatological unity to which the entire human race is summoned in the design of God."<sup>161</sup> The experience of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences has much to teach us about this "dialogue of life."<sup>162</sup>

To make rigorous the task of the FFKM, its members should choose a dialogical method appropriate to the current Malagasy context. Three possible models for such action include: comparative ecclesiology; the Christological method; and the contextual or inter-contextual method. Comparative ecclesiology consists in comparing the expressions of faith, worship, decision-making, structures, and spirituality in different Churches. It aims at discovering a mutual understanding and appreciation. The negative aspect of this method is that sometimes it leads the churches to stress more the differences than the unity. Thus, it does not necessarily lead to unity of faith. The Christological method focuses on what is common in Christ and develops methods of biblical, historical, and contextual research. It aims at giving rise to common

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<sup>160</sup> Pope John Paul II, Encyclical on Commitment to Ecumenism *Ut Unum Sint* (25 May 1995), no. 36, at The Holy See, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>161</sup> J. Gros McManus and A. Riggs, *Introduction to Ecumenism* (New York: Paulist Press, 1998), 119.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. <http://www.fabc.org/about.html>.

understandings of our faith rooted in the Christ-event while transcending the divisions of the past. Biblical and historical studies play a key role in this method operative in ecumenical dialogues today. The contextual or inter-contextual method allows the cultural concerns of the various churches and communities to be integral parts of the discussions. It recognizes that there are many social, cultural, and psychological issues that are dividing the churches.

Given the fact that the Malagasy people live in a very complicated situation, the ecumenical movement can use all of these three methods prudently. The negative aspects of each method must be attenuated as much as possible. Meanwhile, the FFKM needs to take advantage of the mutual recognition of one baptism, which is among the fruits of ecumenism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The FFKM should elaborate a catechism for children. This would help the young generation to have an ecumenical vision of faith through their discovery and knowledge of other churches. This could be a moment to correct the misunderstanding of ecumenism as “praising the same God.” The elaboration of such a project could engage the theologians of each ecclesial community to develop a doctrinal instruction comprehensible for others. Another mutual recognition is that of mixed marriages. Very few engage in this model of marriage because of strong tradition and the priority of the man over the woman. A mixed marriage may be acceptable at the beginning, but in the end, according to the local tradition, the family should go back to the religion of the man. Another problem is about the faith of their children. Young people often become confused when their parents do not explain to them what is going on. Parents need to explain to them the situation and assist their children in the process of growing into a mature, adult faith. At the same time, it is the duty of local priests or pastors to accompany young people on their faith journey.

From my experience, studying at a Reformed Church school for three years helped me to discover that Protestant schools are more open to the other Christian denominations than the Catholic schools. For this reason, I strongly recommend that the Catholic schools in Madagascar be open to receiving students from other denominations while respecting their identity and tradition. As a director of athletics for two years in a Catholic high school in Antananarivo, I have never organized any meeting with other Church denominations. There is a need to create a new environment which will facilitate more interaction between Christians through our schools and educational systems.

To sum up, ecumenism in Madagascar is not optional any more. The responsibility of FFKM is to state clearly its aims and objectives, which include unity among the Christian churches. Therefore, the FFKM has to have a common vision of the term “unity,” strengthened by a common project such as the accompaniment of mixed marriages or the common catechism for its members of the FFKM. The objective is to help the younger generation to better understand other Christian traditions. However, ecumenism is not enough for the Malagasy people. To open up *fihavanana* to a more expansive practice means that, interreligious dialogue must be seen as an opportunity for everyone who lives in Madagascar to feel at home. All church leaders in Madagascar, especially the Catholic leaders, have to bear in mind the spiritual ecumenism advanced by Pope John Paul II:

It is understandable how the seriousness of the commitment to ecumenism presents a deep challenge to the Catholic faithful. The Spirit calls them to make a serious examination of conscience. The Catholic Church must enter into what can be called a “dialogue of conversion,” which constitutes the spiritual foundation of ecumenical dialogue. In this dialogue, which takes place before God, each individual must recognize his own faults, confess his sins and place himself in the hands of the One who is our Intercessor before the Father, Jesus Christ.... Only the act of placing ourselves before God can offer a solid basis for that conversion of individual Christians and for that constant reform of the Church, insofar as she is also a human and earthly institution, which represents the preconditions for all ecumenical commitment. One of the first steps

in ecumenical dialogue is the effort to draw the Christian Communities into this completely interior spiritual space in which Christ, by the power of the Spirit, leads them all, without exception, to examine themselves, whether they have been faithful to his plan for the Church.<sup>163</sup>

#### **4.5 Interreligious Dialogue as a Tool for Unity among All who Live in Madagascar**

Dialogue is a conversation of two or more persons. Conversation could reveal the intention of those who are involved in seeking mutual understanding on an issue or situation through interrogation and learning, which may lead to an agreement. Thus, interreligious dialogue is a conversation among two or more believers of different religions who seek harmony.

The Malagasy Christians, through the efforts made by their church leaders, continue to seek unity and peace in Madagascar. However, they are very reluctant to open up to interreligious dialogue. Marked by the heritage of Western Christianity, the Christian churches, both Catholic and Protestant, do not see the particular importance of interreligious dialogue. They consider other religious traditions as outsiders. Christians need to take into consideration religious pluralism by promoting interreligious dialogue, which allows the adherents of the diverse believers and confessions to foster reciprocal understanding and human interrelationships. Hence, FFKM needs to face the challenge of opening itself to Islam and traditional religionists. Even if an official dialogue does not exist, it is promising that Christians who live with other religious adherents, such as Muslims, for instance, show their initiative to collaborate with them by protecting life in a difficult time.<sup>164</sup>

FFKM has to make a steadfast effort to foster partnerships among various religious traditions. Its members have to follow in the footsteps of some exemplary missionaries who seriously studied Malagasy customs and traditions in order to identify within the culture those

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<sup>163</sup> *Ut Unum Sint*, no. 82.

<sup>164</sup> There were fights between some Muslims and some tribes in Madagascar. Very often neighboring Christians protected Muslims by hiding them in their own homes.



Christian seeds, which are constitutive of spiritual and human values. They need to reorient the negative view of Malagasy traditional religions by seeing in them the image and likeness of God. They need to acknowledge that other religious traditions also are ways of salvation. The understanding of the mystery of the Incarnation invites everyone to focus more on interreligious dialogue than the spirit of relativism or theocentrism. It is the presence of the Word who invites the Christian to be interested authentically in others as Dennis Gira, an expert in the Study of Religions witnesses:

Jesus Christ, to whom the Christian is so deeply attached, is inseparable from the Creative Word, and as such, he is present, in person, to every being. For different cultural, historical, and geographical reasons, members of other religions express their experience of this presence in a way that is unique to them. The Christian has indeed received the grace to meet Jesus Christ where he explicitly appears and reveals what the human being is called to become. But others, in their fervent quest for truth, attain explicitly more or less the mystery—which is at once the mystery of the human being and the mystery of God. And by the way in which they express themselves this encounter can shed a new light on the faith of the Christian. It is left up to him to be attentive to that light and to actively seek it by opening himself up to interreligious dialogue.<sup>165</sup>

This spirit of openness allows the Catholic Church to give expression to its identity as the universal sacrament of salvation in an inclusive way. Thus, the Church's mission is to announce the love of God to all human beings. As a result, Christians have to change their attitude toward other religious traditions by encountering them as they are. Christians have to be sensitive, and avoid all kinds of discrimination, which may hurt others, for instance the use of the word “non-believers” and “gentiles.” Also, Christians are called to dialogue with other believers without prejudices. In practice, they are called to create a spirit of conviviality and collaboration in socio-economic activities. Christians also have to acknowledge the elements of holiness in other religious traditions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc. The Church of the future has no grounds for discrimination, as *Nostra Aetate* states:

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<sup>165</sup> Dennis Gira, “Parcours, La Bibliothèque de Formation Chrétienne,” *Les religions* (Paris: Centurion, 1991), 59.

We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1John 4:8). No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and rights flowing from it are concerned. The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against people or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this Sacred Synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to "maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2, 12, 14, 15), and, if possible to live for their part in peace with all people, so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.<sup>166</sup>

Mindful of this statement and its implications, Church leaders in Madagascar need to create structures of dialogue at both local and national levels. The creation of an episcopal commission for interreligious dialogue will give common directives, help religious, priests, and seminarians to engage genuinely in this dialogue. Above all, seeking for the positive aspects in each religious tradition can lead to a common point—the good as understood in Matthew's Gospel: "Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good" (Mat 19:17). The Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue confirms:

Concretely, it will be the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions and by following the dictates of their conscience that the members of other religions respond positively to God's invitation and receive Salvation in Jesus Christ, even while they do not recognize or acknowledge him as their savior.<sup>167</sup>

Misunderstanding and prejudice always bring conflicts between different religious traditions in Madagascar. Therefore, Church leaders need to create a center for interreligious studies. In particular, Jesuits have to play an important role in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. This is part and parcel of their mission in a world of ecclesial and religious pluralism. This situation led Father Adolfo Nicolas, the Superior General of the Jesuits, to reorganize the Jesuit Curia in

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<sup>166</sup> Second Vatican Council. Declaration of the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religion *Nostra Aetate* (28 October 1965), no. 5, at The Holy See, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>167</sup> Pope John Paul II. Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue on *Dialogue and Proclamation* (19 May 1991), no. 29, at The Holy See, [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

order to give more importance to ecumenical and interreligious affairs.<sup>168</sup> Given the fact that today's ecumenism and interreligious dialogue raise many and diverse challenges, the Society of Jesus stresses the importance of spiritual ecumenism, including spiritual direction of other Christians and even people of other religions. The Society of Jesus realizes the need for men like De Nobili and Ricci, so that a new generation will be available to encounter and engage to adherents of another religion. Today, the Society of Jesus prioritizes Jesuit formation in Asia and Africa. By way of example, the Society of Jesus is well aware that teaching Christology in India without reflection on religious pluralism and Indian traditions is unthinkable; or teaching theology in Africa without a reflection on Islam is unimaginable.<sup>169</sup> As for suggestions to the Society of Jesus at large, there must be a commitment to requiring philosophers and/or theologates to provide basic, required courses in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue as well as courses on Protestantism and Orthodoxy, plus a basic course on world religions, including traditional and indigenous religions.<sup>170</sup>

Currently, Jesuits in Madagascar lack a deep knowledge of the Malagasy. Without this, they will not have the capacity to discern the positive and negative aspects of their culture in accordance with the rights and dignity of the human person. For this reason, Malagasy Jesuits should be in touch with Malagasy traditional religion which embodies the Malagasy culture. At the same time, Jesuits should be knowledgeable about Islam and cultivate a spirit of openness and listening that is so important in today's world. Since the Malagasy Jesuits have many schools, spiritual centers, and social apostolates which were originally intended exclusively for

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<sup>168</sup> Kaitlyn McCarthy Schneiders, "Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism Needs to Be Priority for Society, Jesuit Says," *National Jesuit News*, November 11, 2011, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.jesuit.org/blog/index.php/2011/11/interreligious-dialogue-and-ecumenism-needs-to-be-priority-for-society-jesuit-says/>.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

Catholics (Apostolate for the Workers, University and Hospital chaplaincies, etc.), these centers can serve as powerful vehicles for fostering dialogue and relationships with every type of person or group in Madagascar. This will enlarge *fhavanana* beyond family, clan and national circles.

As noted previously, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue are two important ecclesial commitments that Church leaders in Madagascar need to take into serious consideration. It is no longer an option because these two movements are the best, if not last, option for gathering together every person who lives in Madagascar so that all may feel “at home.”<sup>171</sup> Such an effort can advance *fhavanana* at the national level and perhaps, the international level as well. Everyone is invited to seek out those who long for unity as they endeavor to avoid and mitigate occasions of division. Because misunderstanding leads to prejudice and prejudice to violence, the creation of interreligious studies is an imperative. Reminded of the call narrative in the Gospel of John, the Malagasy people must promote a sense of inclusiveness and help to contribute to a new community founded on love which is the guiding principle for ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. We must never forget that love has the power to enlarge and transform Malagasy *fhavanana*.

#### **4.6 The Impact of Jesus’ Call**

One of the characteristics of Jesus’ call in the Gospel of Saint John is its inclusiveness. Jesus calls everyone to come to him. Jesus first calls Andrew, then Philip and later the Samaritan Woman. This means that Jesus calls every nation, even the Samaritans who were considered enemies of the Jews at that time. Tod D. Swanson states:

The clearest passage to this effect is Jesus’ announcement to the Samaritans that true worship would no longer take place ‘on this mountain [Mt Gerizim, the center of Samaritan identity], nor in Jerusalem [the center of Jewish identity], but ‘in spirit’ (4.21-23). That statement is provocative because it posits the place-bound character of ethnic

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<sup>171</sup> Cf. *Statistics of Religion in Madagascar*, p. 5 above.

identity as something to be overcome in the newly opened placeless place of Johannine worship.”<sup>172</sup>

To make this point clearer, it is worth returning to the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman once again. Jesus calls everyone in a special way: male or female, Jew or Samaritan, teacher of law or gentile. What matters is one’s openness to receive the gift of God through Jesus. Gail R. O’ Day says that one point we learn about Jesus in the course of Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman is that Jesus crosses boundaries between male and female and between the chosen and rejected people, demonstrating that the grace of God is available to all.<sup>173</sup> Teresa Okure confirms that the gift of God which is available to all is given to us as Jesus offers the Samaritan woman living water, a symbol of the gift of God that he represents (3:16), and also of the new life of the Spirit that God gives to us in Christ (7:37-39).<sup>174</sup> At the same time, the Samaritan woman did the same as Jesus did. She crossed boundaries and desired to have and to accept the gift of God. She even became the bridge of God’s gift between Jesus and the Samaritan town.

It is true that the Malagasy people have a sense of hospitality, which is good for building up *fihavanana*. However, it is very often limited within a particular ethnic group due to nostalgia for the past, the claim that one is of Indo-Melanesian or African descent, or the tension between highland and coastal peoples due to the domination of the Merina kingdom, which was worsened by the colonial and post-colonial political systems. Therefore, the experience of division is real, even if it is veiled in the name of *fihavanana*. One tangible example of this fact, among others, is

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<sup>172</sup> Tod D. Swanson, “To Prepare a Place: Johannine Christianity and the Collapse of Ethnic Territory,” in *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power*, ed. Musa W. Dube and Jeffrey L. Staley (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 14.

<sup>173</sup> Gail R. O’Day, “John” in the *Women’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol Newsom & Sharon Ringe (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 295.

<sup>174</sup> Teresa Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission* (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988), 96-98.

the murder of Colonel Ratsimandrava<sup>175</sup> and the burning of the palace of the king in the capital city.

Mindfulness of the way that Jesus called his disciples (Jn 4) enables every Malagasy to imagine that it is Jesus who called them, whatever their origins may be, and brought them together on the same island. There is nothing to be gained by saying that one belongs to a particular race and therefore is superior or inferior to others. The Letter of St. Paul to the Romans helps us to intensify our understanding of the need to welcome one another, not only because Malagasy people form one nation, but because Jesus Christ receives everyone without exception: “Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God” (Rom 15:7). It is indeed the duty of the elders/leaders to provide an example when it comes to welcoming one another, without exception, as Jesus has called everyone to be his disciples.

The call of Jesus and the response of people to his call contribute to the formation of Christian community. Jesus’ call is very special in that the one who was first called brought another person to Jesus. Through the testimony of John the Baptist, Jesus found his first disciple from among the Baptist’s disciples. Then, Jesus called Andrew and from his testimony, Andrew was able to bring Philip to Jesus. A true community is built on the desires of everyone who, mindful of his or her own particular identity, seeks to achieve the same goal in life, and to be led by someone who embodies wisdom and is able to communicate it to everyone. This is why, according to John’s gospel, the decision to be a disciple is inseparable from one’s understanding of Jesus’ identity. As each new disciple comes to Jesus, the decision to follow Jesus is made in response to a statement about Jesus’ identity (1:41, 45). The Malagasy people need to know the identity of their leaders who can lead them (or not) to the true life, able to say yes or no. This

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<sup>175</sup> Wenche Hauge, “Madagascar between peace and conflict—domestic capabilities for peaceful conflict management,” in *Conflict, Security & Development* 11, no. 5 (November 2011): 518-519.

situation reminds us of the attitude of the man born blind, who was faced with the questions posed by the authorities in the synagogue. “The man born blind speaks in the light of what he knows even when this costs him his place in the community (9:31-34).”<sup>176</sup>

To illustrate this point further, consider once again the Samaritan woman who finally comes to faith and who brings others to embrace unity (one God, one faith and one people). One key lesson to be learned from this story is the way that this woman developed her tentative faith.<sup>177</sup> Despite this tentative faith, she is moved by the presence of Jesus and eager to share the good news, wanting her friends to encounter him too. This woman embodies one of the primary marks of discipleship in John: bearing witness to Jesus. She even becomes the true bearer of the main message of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel: making Jesus known so that the people may know his Father. Viewed in the light of this passage, we discover that the tentative faith we have shared with others not only confirms our faith, but also gives hope to those who seek for salvation.

Some exegetes doubt the inclusiveness of the concept of love in the Gospel of John. Jürgen Becker, for example, claims that it is a reading that not only offers a sociological interpretation of the Johannine ethical concept but also implies a negative moral judgment.<sup>178</sup> In the same line, David Rensberger understands the Johannine ethical limitation of love as being in accordance with the extent of God’s own love.<sup>179</sup> As such, these exegetes and many others suggest that the concept of “love” works in the Johannine literature to create a sectarian group

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<sup>176</sup> Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John’s Gospel*, 190.

<sup>177</sup> Gench, *Gospel of John*, 37. Gench considers the historical faith of this woman as tentative.

<sup>178</sup> Jürgen Becker, cited in Jan G. Van der Watt & Ruben Zimmermann, ed., *Rethinking the Ethics of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 23-24.

<sup>179</sup> David Rensberger, cited in Jan G. Van der Watt & Ruben Zimmermann, ed., *Rethinking the Ethics of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 24.

identity.<sup>180</sup> However, Michael Labahn states: “Surely, the Johannine view of God’s love for the world must have carried some meaning for believers in his sent Son, and therefore would carry moral value in consideration of their relationships to people outside the Johannine group.”<sup>181</sup>

After selecting all passages in the Gospel of Saint John in which the word “love” is present,<sup>182</sup> Labahn notices that: (i) the love St. John talks about is an inclusive love of the Father for Jesus and for the world (chap. 3); (ii) Jesus brings the same love to different audiences such as groups of people or individuals to make known his Father. In other words, the love that Jesus shows to different audiences was grounded on the Father’s love for the world: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). Therefore, Jesus’s love does not limit itself to a particular community or group of people. It has a universal dimension for the fact that everyone who believes in Jesus shares the same love, which comes from the same source, the Father. It is a mutual love as it is written: “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:34-35). The example of mutual love based on lived experience (i.e. the washing of the feet) among friends (Jesus and his disciples) can be a model of a possible and a new relationship between the Malagasy elders/leaders and citizens.

As Mira Stare says: “The relationship between Jesus and his followers is not a master-slave relationship, but a relationship between friends. Jesus’ ethics does not have the markers of

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<sup>180</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, cited in Jan G. Van der Watt & Ruben Zimmermann, ed., *Rethinking the Ethics of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 24.

<sup>181</sup> Michael Laban, “It’s Only Love—Is That All?” in *Rethinking the Ethics of John*, ed. Jan G. Van der Watt & Ruben Zimmermann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 24.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.



lordship about it, rather, it is an ethics of friendship.”<sup>183</sup> Mutual love puts everyone on the same level of dignity, responsibility, and freedom. Finally true love unites the believers as it is written: “I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me” (Jn 17:20-21). The new relationship that the Malagasy people build on true love has the potential to bring about a true unity—a new unity, no longer by virtue of kinship, but rather by virtue of all believers (Christians, Muslim, Traditional religion) which was not previously there due to all kinds of nostalgia for and prejudices from the past. Stare explains this possibility as follows:

The unity of the believers has its model and fundament in the oneness of Jesus and the Father (“reciprocal immanence”). Believers will be accepted into Jesus’s relationship with God. The life of the followers and the unity between them has a missionary function. Through it the world is to be motivated to come to know Jesus and to believe in him.... A life based on the new commandment also has a missionary relevance. It should lead others to the knowledge of Christ.<sup>184</sup>

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

To sum up, the call narrative in the Gospel of John is good tool for a Christian ethicist to address the nostalgia of the Malagasy people for the past as well as the tension between the highland and coastal peoples which hinders peaceful unity, the real objective of *fihavanana*. To believe that Jesus calls every Malagasy person to live together in Madagascar just as he called everyone to be his disciples, is a powerful tool for creating a new understanding *fihavanana* based on Jesus’ way of leading his disciples to form a new community. This has the potential to address all kinds of fear and marginalization that prevent the Malagasy people from flourishing individually. *Fihavanana* has to be built on love—and true love is Jesus and his love is for the

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<sup>183</sup> Mira Stare, “Ethics of Life in the Gospel of John,” cited in Jan G. Van Der Watt & Ruben Zimmermann, ed., *Rethinking the Ethics of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 226.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

entire world: “I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly” (Jn 10:10b). This kind of love should also be the guiding principle for the Malagasy people to make *fihavanana* relevant to the post-colonial era, by extending it to persons of every religious tradition in Madagascar, where the Malagasy people are longing for their rights embracing their duty to the future.

## General Conclusion

The objective of this thesis is to reimagine *fihavanana* in post-colonial Madagascar. To allow such a reimagining, *fihavanana* must be seen in the light of its current implications in society, including unjust social structures, racism, and division. By shining a light on the dark corners of *fihavanana*'s past, and opening it up to the global sphere, the Malagasy people are more able to feel at home as free and responsible people, more able to contribute to the common good, and better able to bring about the desired unity and diversity.

Such a heartfelt project arose from the thirst created as both a Malagasy citizen and Christian ethicist. Thirst, in this instance, demands seeking to find the root cause of political instability in Madagascar. Thirst also leads to an appreciation of the cultural value of *fihavanana* through its evaluation. Finally, as part of the Church, thirst means recognizing her failure in 2009 and remaking her as an agent of change to the Malagasy people.

The first chapter explained the origins and background of Malagasy *fihavanana* and its internal problems. It also provided an overview of different understandings of solidarity starting from a more general sociological perspective and then focusing on a more Catholic point of view. The common ground among these viewpoints is that solidarity is meant to foster a relationship among persons or groups of persons that is rooted in a common interest or concern. The uniqueness of the Catholic point of view on solidarity is its foundation which is based upon the love of God and the love of neighbor. Next, the chapter provided an examination of *fihavanana* and revealed its key internal problem namely, social inequality which does not allow individual flourishing.

After discussing the internal difficulties of *fihavanana*, the second chapter focuses on some of the external problems of *fihavanana* and examines how they arose by looking at the

origin of the Malagasy people and the political system in the country. Some Malagasy people still claim purity of race, especially those who believe themselves to be of Indo-Melanesian decent, even though history and the latest research have verified that the Malagasy people are a mixed race of Indo-Melanesian-African descent. This mentality has introduced a kind of racism in Madagascar. The tension between the highland and coastal peoples, due to political systems from the monarchical period to the present day, divide the Malagasy people. By evaluating and examining the Malagasy political system, it becomes apparent that such division came from the domination by the Merina kingdom over other kingdoms (including the coastal kingdoms) and the colonial system, which was perpetuated by the elite. The churches, through their leaders, were always involved in solving these political problems by using *fihavanana*. However, in 2009, their appeal to *fihavanana* proved to be a total failure, due to their partiality vis-à-vis political powers and ideological movements. In the process, two major problems of *fihavanana* were discovered: an unjust social and political structure as well as racism and divisions between the highland and coastal people.

The third chapter proposes solutions to the historical and contemporary problems undermining *fihavanana*. Christian ethics provides insights into how the Malagasy people can be inspired to act according to their conscience, to fight against all oppressive situations with a sense of universal co-responsibility, and to utilize their reason and faith. Evaluating such issues according to Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching provides the Malagasy with a lens through which to see such problems as they truly are: social sin. Through such analysis and evaluation, solutions emerge, including an awareness of the need for individual and collective changes to the social structure, recognition of the impact of social sin, and the presence of an active claim of every individual Malagasy to his/her human rights which are dependent upon fostering peace and

unity in concrete social situations of chaos. Prudently, church leaders provided pastoral directives to the elders and leaders, rather than to individual citizens in order to avoid demonstrations. Next, SECAM was viewed as a possible resource for addressing the problems at a continental level, precisely because this African Conference has proven to be a powerful authority in denouncing unjust African leaders. SECAM proposed that leaders seriously take into account the true meaning of leadership: service to their people. In addition to the work of SECAM, this chapter underscored the reasons why all Catholic justice organizations, including *Justice and Peace* and *Justice and Faith*, must collaborate more closely, reorganize their leadership to include credible individuals, and form the laity to assume leadership positions. Currently, such organizations are charged with helping the FFKM to properly conduct its work of reconciliation and forgiveness in Madagascar. Finally, the chapter concludes with a critical reflection on a genuine dialogue in the Gospel of St. John that provides an example for FFKM, one which enables the Malagasy people to envision a just society and an upright social structure.

In seeking out solutions to racism and directives to ease the tension between the highland and coastal peoples, the fourth chapter proposes an understanding of the universal fatherhood of God and fraternity in Christ as a foundational way for understanding why everyone must be guaranteed equal rights and dignity. On a philosophical level, *Bergsonian* “intuition” is viewed as a helpful concept. This method, which allows everyone to have direct knowledge or understanding of the other, diffuses many different prejudices. It is noted that the state has a significant role to play in this situation by facilitating activities that affect the Malagasy people. In addition, the role of religion and the importance of both ecumenism and interreligious dialogue in the process of building unity is stressed. A recommendation is made that focuses on an ecumenical movement, the FFKM. Thus recommendation stresses the need for the FFKM to

go return to its *raison d'être*, which is unity, and re-examine its involvement in socio-political situations, conscious of the fact that the way to participate in the struggle for justice and peace includes an energizing of specific activities that serve to promote unity, including baptism and mixed marriages, so that ecumenism can become a tool for unity among all Christians.

There remains, though, a need to go beyond ecumenism. Interreligious dialogue is necessary as well. This particular commitment becomes, then, another religious tool for building unity in Madagascar. Again, the FFKM, as a representative of Christian churches, plays an important role in interreligious dialogue by continuing to be open to other religious traditions as well as by partnering with the Malagasy religious traditions and Islam through authentic dialogue. Creating a structure and method for interreligious dialogue is necessary for the Catholic Church. Also, Malagasy Jesuits must recognize that they too have an important role to play in this dialogue by energizing their all of their public apostolates.

In trying to better understand the major internal and external problems of *fihavanana*, an effort has been made to make *fihavanana* broader in scope (from the family, to the clan, to the nation), so that this principle of unity may open the pathway to universal solidarity in which all people are considered brothers and sisters in the promotion of peace through ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. By shedding new light on the past failures of Church leaders, it is hopefully possible to restore their credibility as true peacemakers in Madagascar.

Four key lessons can be drawn from this thesis: (i) The Malagasy people must be able to learn from the past, including mistakes that were made, so as not to repeat them again. Only in doing so can they truly serve the needs of the next generation. (ii) In such a complicated context, it is important that Church leaders undertake a study of the history of Madagascar, study applicable social sciences like anthropology and sociology, and collaborate closely with

theologians and lay persons who can provide diverse insights into the situation. (iii) If Church leaders are to address the needs of the Malagasy people, they must understand and profess the connection between the tenants of *fihavanana* and Gospel values. Only in doing so will *fihavanana* remain a rampart of Malagasy culture. (iv) Prudence is a virtue for Church leadership. Prudence in the Malagasy context includes remaining free to serve those in need and a preference for the poor rather than for any particular political leader or party.

## Post Script

By attempting to discover the root cause of the successive political upheavals in Madagascar and attempting to find practical solutions to the root problems, this paper seeks to help fellow Malagasy citizens to see the reality of our situation and to help them to reflect, discern, and act in the light of reason and faith.

Using our Catholic faith is an important part of this process. As a Jesuit, thinking “with the Church” allows this work and its recommendations to acknowledge the humanity and failings of Malagasy Church leaders while also maintaining a strong grounding in the Gospel.

In many ways, *fihavanana* acts as a last rampart in the quest for unity among the Malagasy people. If, as a rampart, *fihavanana* is to bolster our people, then we must be able to discuss it and evaluate it in light of post-colonial Malagasy society and culture. This discussion and evaluation is especially difficult since many in Madagascar use *fihavanana* for their own purposes, manipulating the concept at a whim to help meet their needs, rather than the needs of the people, as true unity would call for.

In this thesis, practicality is key. Providing theoretical solutions can only go so far; providing the Malagasy people with realistic options which take into account social realities can accomplish much more. To accomplish this, it was necessary to look at the human sciences, including history, anthropology, and sociology as resources to locate the root cause of the problems facing Madagascar. Doing so allows the Church leaders to move beyond theology and into the realm of action. Through these suggestions, the laity are also empowered to use their intellect and will for the good of the country. Hopefully, such work can contribute to the unity of the Church leadership and the laity of Madagascar.



Going forward, this work will need to be translated into Malagasy so as to enable as many people as possible to take inspiration and hope from it. The Society of Jesus in Madagascar is also in a strong position to help with the overall goals of this project. By encouraging them to become more involved, the Society can act as an agent of change through the study of human sciences to raise awareness of the inequality, racism, and division present in the culture. Finally, this work can be adapted to provide a background for future work in both primary and secondary schools in Madagascar with the hope that it might help to implement among the youth a starting point for reimagining *fhavanana*.

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