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Topic

**PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SECOND SPECIAL ASSEMBLY FOR AFRICA
OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS IN THE LIGHT OF INCREASING INTRA-STATE
CONFLICTS**

Event

Year 2012 Annual St Paul Lecture organised by the National
Missionary Society of St Paul, Seminary, Gwagwalada, Abuja to
commemorate the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul

Venue:

National Missionary Seminary, (NAMISEM)Gwagwalada, Abuja

Date:

21st January, 2012

Gratitude

It is with a great sense of humility and honour that I accepted the invitation extended to me by the Committee for the Annual Lecture Series of the St. Paul Missionary Seminary Gwagwalada, sent in November, 2011 through Father Olusesan Raymond Aina, the ACADEMIC DEAN for me to present the year 2012 St Paul Lecture. Initially, I considered the invitation with trepidation, even though something of a routine, since I receive many such invitations to give lectures and indeed up to five within each month, many of these extended from levels within and beyond the shores of Nigeria. I try to respond and act in responsibility within my limitations and possibilities to do what is humanly possible and edify the Will of the Lord.

My thoughts and actions at such occasions have often been guided and inspired by one of the greatest sons of Africa, a holy man and formator of priests, my teacher, director and Bishop, now at peace and rest in God, the Most Reverend Michael Ugwu Eneja (1919 - 2008, RIP). He once advised me thus: *"Obiora, like St Paul the Apostle, do not reject calls to present lectures or serve the people of God in any capacity, no matter from where and on what topic if you can, for this is part of the Mission to evangelise, a call that is a privilege to be graciously used and thus making Christ present"*.

I was therefore not willing to turn down the lecture from the NAMISEM, yet, the date proposed bordered on the fringes of my lecture series in Cologne Germany which I had earlier accepted for mid January 2012 on the theme of *"Boko Haram, Religious Conflicts and Peace Building in Nigeria"*. As many of you may agree, this is a topic of critical relevance for Nigeria at this time.

I looked again at the dates of both exercises and discovered to my great delight, that the lecture in Germany would end on the 19th of January and if I caught a flight on the 20th, I would fulfil the demands of the invitation kindly extended to me by Fr Olusesan Aina and the Committee of the National Missionary Seminary for the 21st of January, 2012. Thus, without hesitation I accepted.

I have in the past read various essays and well researched articles in journals within Africa, written by Fr. Raymond Aina, particularly in the GABA publications and the Africa Ecclesial Review (AFER) and shower hereby my profound respects for this son of the Church who works hard and uses his many talents to serve and share.

Section One:

Expanding the challenges and scope of Reflection

Permit me to begin this Lecture with a critical appraisal and overview of the **First Synod of Bishops on Africa** held in 1994 on the theme of "*Evangelisation and renewal of the Church in Africa: You shall be my witnesses (Acts 1:8)*". I desire to expand the scope of the current presentation with a critical historical focus on the preparation, implementation, reception, shortfalls and challenges of the First Synod. This would offer a cursory background, understanding and appreciation of the efforts made at the Second Synod of 2009 (fifteen years after the first); the lessons learnt and progress made; the impact created and current challenges facing **Africa** in view of the many problems of humanity at this time, and there are indeed many problems.

At the First Africa Synod in 1994 in Rome, Hyacinth Cardinal Thiandoum in delivering the *Relatio ante Disceptationem* said of Africa and its many challenges and problems: "*In a continent full of bad news, how is the Christian message good news for our people? Where lies the hope and optimism which the Gospel brings?*" (Thiandoum, H; RAD, nr 2, 1994). The Blessed Pope John Paul II himself in rendering the *Apostolic Exhortation "Ecclesia in Africa"* following the First Synod, found similar words to describe the challenges on the continent when he said: "*Africa is a continent where countless human beings - men and women, children and young persons - are lying, as it were, on the edge of the road, sick, injured, disabled, marginalised and abandoned. They are in dire need of the good Samaritan who will come to their aid*". (JP II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Nr. 41). What has happened since that First Synod? Did the situation improve?

My host at this occasion, the very Reverend father Raymond Aina had in an earlier reflection in the African Ecclesial Review shared thought on these issues in his inquiries thus: "Do we really need another Synod devoted to us in Rome? How many of our people have even heard of and appropriated the first African Synod? Theologically, one speaks of the "reception" of a Church event/document. How many of our people have "received" the first

"African Synod"? The first African Synod remains for many, a fundamental event in the life of the Roman Catholic Church in Africa. And as the Yoruba people say: "A kii kan 'ju l'abe gb'ona" - "one does not hurriedly lick a hot soup". The First Africa Synod is a "hot soup" that we need to lick with relish and space so that we can soak in its nourishment, aroma and energy". (Father Aina Raymond Olusesan, in AFER, Vol 49, Nrs 3 and 4, 2007, published by Amacea, Gaba Pastoral Publications, Eldoret, Kenya, p. 161.)

This, among other compelling reasons would be the reason to deepen thought and our spiritual origins on the Africa Synod. The theme of evangelisation which was discussed in the first Synod under the broad themes of Proclamation, Dialogue, Inculturation, Justice and peace and the means of Social Communication would be expanded in the Second Synod, socio-pastorally, scripturally and theologically with an intensity of knowledge and depth in one of its five major but very relevant topics, namely: *"The Church in Africa in service to Justice Reconciliation and Peace - You are the salt of the earth, You are the light of the World"*.

Excellencies, Fathers, Sisters, Brothers, distinguished ladies and gentlemen!

1. Our mandate to preach the good news and transform the world:

We have gathered for the annual St Paul Missionary lecture here at Abuja as responsible members of the Catholic Church from various parts of our country, to share our faith and strong hope in witnessing to what the good Lord has done and continues to do for the Church in our continent and for the African peoples in Nigeria.

We saw our nation in the last weeks slide into anarchy; the deaths of many compatriots; economic sabotage and fuel scarcity with overall increase in the living costs of peoples; the hardship and insecurity posed to peoples personal and collective lives; the infliction of the consequences of corruption on the poor; the breakdown of law and order; the lack of statistics in government ministries; the horrendous mis-governance of a people by its leaders; religious fanaticism; labour unions strikes and civil society calls to Nigerians to stand up for their rights and insist on a better deal founded on the right order of doing things.

As we write, the atmosphere seems to have relaxed but the origins of the problems have not been solved. Somehow, in my humble estimation, we have only shelved the crisis and its potential negative consequences. But for the special grace of almighty God, we would be into greater turmoil, hardship and anarchy now.

This explains one of the reasons for this annual lecture, focusing on the role of Church in society, the relevance of the Social Teaching of the Church for radical and drastic change in the consciences and lifestyles of people; the demand for

accountability for the common good to emerge; the need for education towards self reliance and the importance missionary awareness in the local Church of Nigeria in the light of the Gospel.

Like the great Apostle Paul, a man who obeyed the voice of the Lord, under whose heavenly patronage this seminary at Gwagwalada is named, we desire to give our response to the call of the Holy Spirit to us who are responsible agents working within the institutions of the *"Ecclesia"* to heal the wounds and tackle the challenges posed on our country and continent by horrendous poverty, senseless wars, tribalism and ethnicism, religious intolerance and fanaticism, injustices and conflicts at all levels, lack of good governance imposed through dictatorships, unfair international trade, the oppression of the black race in international discourse and the negative consequences of globalization, violence and inhumanity worldwide.

We desire to preach universal Love in a world that is divided and full of hatred, like the prophets of old, believing in the powerful and liberating message of the Gospel, *that "God is love and those who worship Him must worship him in Spirit and in truth"* (John 3).

This truth is found in the living traditions of the Church which traverses a world full of contradictions by calling on people of all nationalities to conscience, compassion and creative action. At a time when humanity faces fundamental questions of life and death, of lack of meaning and disorientation of values, of war and peace, abuse of the environment and the scandal of poverty in the midst of plenty, a world that has grown complex in technical, social, economic and political sophistication, answers that are sustainable are sort and humanity faces difficult challenges finding these answers.

For us who are Christians, our faith encourages us to live on hope and courage because our God is near. Our faith tells us never to give up but to calm down in the midst of difficult challenges and believe God in whose name we live and move and have our being (St Paul).

Our faith makes us to bow down in prayer and adoration because God answers our prayers. Faith is a gift and its call helps us to look up to the mountains from where our help comes and to stand up with prophetic courage, armed with ethical, moral and spiritual strength to give hope, serve those in need, pursue peace, defend life, dignity and the rights of all peoples and maintain a fundamental option for the poor and the most vulnerable in society. This is a call that is deeply biblical as found in the life and example of the incarnate Word himself, Jesus Christ, who came *"that all may have life and have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10). This social mission is inspired by the passion for Justice

(Amos 5: 24); shaped by Catholic Social Thought and lived by the people of God in everyday reality.

Pope John XXIII wrote in his Social Encyclical *Mater et Magistra* that the "Church owes the world the duty not only of preaching the Gospel and Social Thought, but also of Social Action" (Nr. 33). This explains partly the interventions the Catholic Church makes since the time of the Apostles at each age and circumstance, "to respond to the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel" (*Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican II, No.1) by working for peace and justice, freedom and reconciliation and to restore the image of God in all humanity.

2. Resonating The Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops (Africa Synod, 1994):

"The Church which is in Africa celebrated with joy and hope its faith in the risen Christ during the four weeks of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops. Memories of this event are still fresh in the mind of the whole Ecclesial Community. Faithful to the tradition of the first centuries of Christianity in Africa, the pastors of this continent, in communion with the successor of the Apostle Peter and members of the Episcopal College from other parts of the world, held a Synod which was intended to be an occasion of hope and resurrection, at the very moment when human events seemed to be tempting Africa to discouragement and despair". (John Paul II; Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation - *Ecclesia in Africa*, no.1).

With these words, the great and beloved Pope John Paul II of blessed memory gave back to Africa on African soil in Yaounde Cameroun, (at the feast of the triumph of the Holy Cross, on September 1995) what Black Bishops and representatives of the Church of Africa went to Europe to discuss in Rome, the Vatican from 10th April 1994 until 8th May, 1994. Pope John Paul was so optimistic of his vision for Africa and belief in her people and destiny when he added: *"indeed, this continent is today experiencing what we can call a sign of the times, an acceptable time, a day of salvation. It seems that the hour of Africa has come, a favourable time which urgently invites Christ's messengers to launch out into the deep and to cast their nets for a deep catch"* (Luke 5;4; EIA, no. 6). Continuing his tour to Kenya, on the hill of the Resurrection Garden Complex in a country setting outside Nairobi on 16th September 1995, the Holy Father announced in clear words to the multitude of pilgrims: *"The Synod has just begun"*.

No other event or activity affecting the life of the Church in entire Africa since the time of the historical Jesus has had such an impact, interest, worldwide attention and respect as the Africa Synod of 1994 in Rome did. For over four weeks, Africa remained at the positive centre of the media, standing tall to be

acknowledged, respected and looked upon as the "future of Christianity worldwide".

In their own concluding message to the world, the Church and to the African peoples whom they shepherd, the Synod Fathers in a 71 point Nuntius (Message), gave a communiqué that announced with profound significance the event as a "Synod of Hope", "Synod of the Resurrection", saying with full encouragement: "At this very time when much of fratricidal hate inspired by political interests is tearing us peoples apart, when the burden of the international debt and currency devaluation is crushing them, we, the Bishops of Africa, together with all the participants in this holy Synod, united with the Holy Father and with all the brothers in the Episcopate who elected us, we want to say a word of hope and encouragement to you, Family of God in Africa, to you, the Family of God all over the world: Christ our Hope is alive; we shall live" (Message of the Synod, no. 2). With the words of Paul VI, "Africa is the new fatherland for Christ" and "our whole being cries with joy and thanksgiving to the living God for the great gift of the Synod" (Nuntius, no.3).

3. Why this great hope and optimism on the 1994 Africa Synod?

There is no doubt that the first ever Africa Synod in Rome in 1994 raised expectations, enthusiasm and hope. What else could people in need and want expect for in their search for meaning and the truth which the Church represents? Despite all modernization and colonial tendencies and attempts and the erosion of African culture and traditional institutions in some aspects, there is still to be observed, that all over the continent, there exists a generally deep desire for the religious content and an admiration for the services rendered by the Church and missionary groups and the place of Jesus Christ amongst believers.

Yet one asks whether the Synod participants were too optimistic of what they had achieved or were they realistic in the title they chose? Was the "Hope" referred to that of the Church in Africa or of the African continent as a whole or of both? Did the hope refer to the experience gained by the Synod delegates, the final document awaited, the implementation of the message to come or to an expectation of another African Council which was the initial clamour of the theologians, starting from the colloquium of 1977 in Abidjan, Cote D'Voire on the theme of "Black Civilisation and the Catholic Church" when Jesuit priest Fabian Eboussi Boulaga suggested an African Council as the only way of getting the Church rooted in Africa, which suggestion was accepted as the Conference recommendation and eventually finding its way into the SECAM, EATWOT and the Pontifical Agenda for Africa?

No one would doubt the basis of this hope, the euphoria and the developments in the world at this time. Worldwide in the late 1980s into the decade thereafter until the Twin Towers in New York became object of terrorist invasion in year 2001, there was a

sense of newness and rebirth following the fall of the communist era, the growth of democracies in various countries, the successful democratic elections in Rwanda and elsewhere, the expectations on the new millennium the much talked of magic year 2000 and its jubilee sentiments. More so, the fact that apartheid as a political ideology had been dismantled at this time (early 1990) and President Nelson Mandela had just emerged from prison after over two decades in South Africa to be sworn in as a black President of that great country, without a war and in a spirit of reconciliation and overwhelming spiritual greatness, ending violence and speculations of war in South Africa while the Synod lasted. The reasons for hope were realistic and touchable, thus, the Synod of Hope had a definite historical setting on the global scene.

4.a) Critical overview and challenges of certain aspects of the First Africa Synod – Inadequate participation:

I shall show in this paper with a few examples how some inadequacies emerged around the first Synod of 1994. Furthermore, I shall show that the Second Synod of 2009 showed remarkable improvement both in the preparation and in the efforts towards implementation.

Around the middle of May 1994, I was visiting one of the local seminaries in Nigeria on a pastoral function. I still remember a lively discussion with the rector of the seminary on the various pastoral initiatives going on in the diocese and the hope that the ongoing Africa Synod would give to these initiatives. It was rather surprising and baffling for me to respond to a question this priest had asked: *"Father, when will this Africa Synod take place? Will it still hold in Rome as I overheard someone say last time?"* Little did he know that the event had already ended a week earlier and the participants back to their various countries". One may wish to doubt the veracity of this story. However, it is not just a live event, it does represent in a broad sense, the general ignorance among many lay faithful, catechists, priests and some young people concerning the questions and roll out of that very important event.

This is not to underscore the magnificent good and hard work done over the years at the preparatory stages by the competent authorities both in Africa and in the Vatican following the announcement by the Holy Father in January 1989 that there would be a Synod for Africa in 1994, a good five years time for preparation.

Father John Waliggo, a son of Africa and theologian from Uganda has commented on this saying: *"It needs to be said and loudly too, that the preparation of the Synod, despite affirmations to the contrary, was inadequate. It failed to actively involve the very people who make up the Church in Africa, namely the laity. Yet, the impact of the Synod depended on their active participation"*.

(Cf. John Waliggo, article titled: "*The Synod of Hope at a time of Africa's crisis*" published in "'Towards an indigenous African Church'" edited by Ike, Igboaja and Ani, Cidjap publishers, Enugu 1996, p. 37).

He gives examples of a factual study in Uganda where of the 16 dioceses in the country, memoranda was received from 13 dioceses noting that they were but purely technical responses to the questionnaire contained in the Lineamenta and given by the pastoral coordinators and pastors in charge with a few experts and immediate co-workers to guide them on the desk in those dioceses with filing their responses and on time. It did not involve a people's movement and orientation that is inclusive and grassroot. Father Waliggo mentions that of the several Catholic institutes and religious bodies in Uganda, only 2 major seminaries submitted memoranda, alongside association of religious women, brothers of the Christian Instruction and at the very last moment, a group of Catholic Youth (Ibid). When we talk of involving the people of God in the process, certainly we do not mean to limit ourselves to Bishops, priests and perhaps the religious. The people of God include all the baptized and all men and women in our society.

If the family is the domestic Church, and the most basic unit of the Church, it is therefore here that the entire process should have begun and moved upwards towards the diocesan, national, regional and continental levels. The Catholic Church stands above other institutions as the best in class of organizational structures. It did not fully utilize this quality of mass mobilization in the First Africa Synod.

The myriads of catechists, academics, scholars, medical professionals and other professionals, women, seminarians, monks, traders, non-Catholics on the ecumenical dimension, youth, various movements and associations, the workers, children, rural farmers, urban poor, refugees, the sick, old people, priests in there manifold organized associations, many indigenous religious congregations, the civil society, the State and its organs to mention but a few were not empowered enough to speak out their deep-felt sentiments, views and positions.

The facts on ground show (and this represents the general level of the people of Africa), that despite all efforts, there still existed lack of adequate information flow, general ignorance, a hijack by the experts, a certain apathy, non-involvement and other sociopolitical and cultural factors, economic crisis in some cases, wars in other areas, lack of material and its translation in the local vernacular for people to read, actions which pose certain problems for an African milieu known for openness, sharing, "*palaver*" and the art of consensus building and sharing in any dialogue.

The Church as Family of God on Mission - is the model and theology of the First Africa Synod. Any Synod in the future must work hard to overcome lack of involvement of all stakeholders, especially on the level of the local Churches where the actual action takes place in its implementation. It should be seen as a great omission if this event did not give the sense of really being in touch with Africa and its people as the official positions held might portray. That is what the Post-Synodal Exhortation has aimed to overcome.

These points are mentioned to clarify five basic points namely:

i) The Church is not simply the Hierarchy: The Second Vatican Council strengthened the understanding of the notion of Church as family of God. This theological orientation is yet to be rooted and gain ground in many places including Nigeria. Many local efforts particularly of the Bishops Conference of Nigeria through its document: "Church in Nigeria - Family of God on Mission" (2002) is yet to be fully entrenched. Some efforts of many local pastoral agents continue to take place but the results are far from expected. There is always and constantly the notion of the Church as the hierarchy. We must change from a clerical notion of Church to Church as Communion, a people of God in which every member has both rights and duties, including active involvement in what goes on in the Church which the Synod actually noted in its communiqué and the Holy Father emphasized.

ii) Participation of the Laity is critical: The active role of the laity in the church can only be enhanced through encouraging participation of each and every baptized person in the identification of issues to be discussed, the decision making itself, the implementation and evaluation. It is one thing always to talk about the need for lay participation in the Church and quite another to give effect to that invitation through concrete processes as the Africa Synod. There is therefore real need to develop an ecclesiology of communion in the true African sense. We need to strengthen all structures and institutions for democratization, consultation and deliberations within the Church. Everyone matters.

iii) Consensus Building makes implementation easy: The coincidence of the Africa Synod with democratization events in many African countries at the same time is a useful lesson. If the civil organs would receive hundreds of thousands of memoranda for their call to peoples opinion on whatever matters the policy executives wished for the various national constitutions such as in Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa, Zimbabwe, one would expect the same strategy to be used by the Church to receive peoples opinion on the Synod issues, more so, that these Synod issues are crucial, important and concern the lives of people in a very fundamental way.

iv) Participation means co-responsibility; The wisdom of our ancestors and Common Sense often teach us that people participate better in things they were part of and contributed from the beginning and therefore keep the agenda going for a longer time. They develop a sense of love and concern for them since they feel themselves responsible. It is rather difficult to involve people in the implementation of an agenda they were not part of initiating. It takes much longer time even explaining to them the rationale and the reasons why such actions should be pursued in the first place. One has to begin with convincing explanations on why they had been left out in the preparation itself.

v) Process is Progress: Last but not the least, there is wisdom in involving people in a process such as the Synod if we want real progress. Definitely, the Synod Committee in Rome and in various African countries may have seen and identified theoretically with this wisdom. Involving people however means putting financial resources, materials, equipment and logistics at their disposal. This is the crux of the matter as many dioceses are poor and cannot even afford to pay their employees upon whom they expect voluntary services. Poverty becomes part of the problem of logistics. Someone would have to be employed as full time animator in some dioceses to travel round with a car and go from parish to parish doing this work. It means the purchase of a vehicle and enough financial resources for the books, its translations into the local languages and the required correspondences. Because many dioceses do not consider this a priority or there is really actual lack of funds, theory is not marched by action.

4 (b) The Methodology

In today's socio-economic and ecclesial reality, the methodology for any major endeavour such as the first Africa Synod is as important as the content and event itself. This is so because the methodology used in an enterprise affects the outcome and results. Paulo Freire's methodology and pedagogy of education was effective in Latin America towards people oriented mobilization and education. Methodologies can be developed which assist even children through drama and illiterates to be involved and contribute to such an important process as the Synod. A theme such as reconciliation, conflict, justice and peace is not something reserved for experts. It could be approached with an encompassing methodology so that all are involved and are eager to see that the implementation and reception is positively concluded. Having noted these, and it does seem that the Second Synod actually did, we shall still mention some five flaws observed hereunder in the methodology adopted by the first Africa Synod, whether willingly or unwillingly.

i) Firstly, most bishop delegates came with prepared and written interventions. These were not printed and offered to all before the Synod. The first two weeks were for listening to these

interventions, often found to be repetitive. The logistics for a delegate to modify his already prepared written intervention or to come out with an entirely new one were not foreseen and indeed inadequate. Thus instead of each delegate who made an intervention on a topic such as Dialogue for example adding onto what others have said before, he would simply repeat the same points written down. New ideas are not added. Forging ahead becomes cumbersome.

ii) Secondly, by summarizing the themes of the Synod under only five sub - themes, important and all encompassing as they may seem, free discussion was stifled as presenters were already tele-guided to follow a particular pattern, making innovation, creativity and ingenuity rather difficult. Evangelization is such an ocean of rich theological and ecclesiological validity that it cannot simply be straight-jacketed into five sub-themes, even where the method had not intended to ignore the discussion on the very theme of evangelization. Evangelization includes: proclamation (**kerygma**); service (**Diakonia**); witness (**martiria**); worship (**leiturgia**); building community and solidarity (**koinonia**). It concerns all human endeavour and permeates all facets of life, be they religious and therefore spiritual, moral and therefore ethical; cultural and thus educational; political and hence involving the economic; physical which is then linked and extends into the environmental, just to mention but a few.

Everything is evangelization properly understood because the incarnate Word desires to reconcile all things unto himself for the glory of God and the salvation of entire creation. To consider the theme of evangelization, one sways into the arena of family, community, clan, the ethnic group, village and the nation and extending to the entire human family of nations. Evangelization includes the message, the pastoral methods and needs, the animating theologies, the interaction, the special situations and the vision for the future.

Evangelization means concrete plans and strategies to share the Good news of Christ with children, youth, adults, men and women, the old and the sick, physically challenged and disabled people, workers and the unemployed, leaders and their followers, politicians and professionals, the poor, displaced people, prisoners and refugees, rural farmers and urban dwellers, the academia and scholars. Clergy and religious, even prophets and persons of other Christian beliefs extending to traditional worshippers, Muslims, and non believers. In summary, Evangelization is all embracing. To simply reduce it to five sub-themes ahead of the debate and contributions of the participants and in the absence of a free general discussion of the theme does very much affect the content and conclusions of the Synod itself. It is limiting an ocean.

iii) Thirdly, a Synod such as the Special Assembly of the Bishops of Africa in 1994 did not deserve too much shrouding in secrecy or

be closed in. The theme of Social Communications was one of the sub-themes, but despite the advertisement and attention which the mass media gave to this great African event, the media were often shut out of the deliberations and were rather given a daily press briefing summarized by someone and handed over to them to announce. The media were not in the details and concrete knowledge of the actual events to report on the mood, tension, enthusiasm, emotions, relaxation, debates and participation. They were often shut out of the Aula except for the open celebration of the Holy Mass which was aired fully by the media. A deeper participation of the media and direct reporting on the events would have enhanced the participation of many who may not have been in the Synod Hall. People have in their hands, the conclusions, communiqué and statements. But what was the mood in which it was said? This would have given a great impetus to those at home to be part of the event.

iv) Fourthly, time was too short to digest the entire Synod process. Unlike the good models and examples of various Councils in the Church particularly the Second Ecumenical Council (Vatican II) which broke into several sessions and breaks over three and a half years, the Africa Synod, the first in 2000 years of Christianity was a straightforward event, time-framed to begin and just end like that, without an intervention for the participants to go home, share their experiences with their people at home, organize debates and return back to the Aula for the process and the conclusions.

The First Africa Synod was a straight event that had an opening and a close, all within a specific time and date of about four weeks (opening 11th April and ending 8th May), such that some bishops were already weary of Rome, the food, the accommodation, the lack of usual comfort at home, many were eager to return to their home dioceses sooner to carry on their pastoral and official duties. If the Synod had been broken into phases, people would have refreshed their thoughts, consulted more widely at home, shared their opinions and dialogued further with their people towards a more broad based consensus. They would have returned to the final sessions with determination to do a better and more lasting contribution. Besides, one may not have held all the Session in Rome as some regions may have continued the dialogue on those regional or national platforms where palaver is possible in freedom and usual atmosphere, but with decisions taken coming from the heart, head and soul.

v) Finally and fifthly, the negative attitude meted out to theologians of the SEDOS groups who did the supportive work of engaging the press, the larger society and the academia while the Synod lasted was not necessary. African cultural values are indeed open and all inclusive and any person or group who has a positive contribution to make for the success of a dialogue or enterprise was often welcome. Cola nut was never denied anybody just because

he or she did not belong. Once present during the breaking, the person participated as is found in Igbo culture. This corresponds to the theology of Church as family which the Synod desired to develop deeper. How could a group of experts and theologians for that matter be considered unwelcome for an event where they had spent their lives urging and pushing for its implementation and practice.

The example of the Vatican II is best understood if one knows that the theologians were the key actors who assisted the bishops in the intensification of the required debate and sharpness surrounding the topics of that great kairotic event. As we implement the phase of the Synod, it is necessary to develop attitudes which appreciate pluralism and the unique contribution of every group. That is in fact a valid way, but also the best way to allow the Spirit space to lead the people of God on Mission and the Church as the place for the realization of this Mission of preaching Jesus Christ to a world that is in dire need of the Gospel

4 (c) Social analysis of Church and Society:

One other important aspect the First Synod missed during the preparation was a serious and scientific social analysis of Church and Society in Africa. There was need for the Synod to be preceded by well planned and researched social analysis of the situation of the Catholic Church in Africa in order to better evaluate and critically analyze the pastoral methods used, the areas of success and those of failure in evangelization. Such analysis would have examined the social and cultural milieu in which evangelization has taken place, the process of conversion, the interaction and response and the spirituality and Christian maturity of African Christians.

It would have been from such study that the relevant important themes for the Synod would emerge. Another similar study would have been made on the African society with the aim of discovering the main areas which need deeper evangelization and the nature of dialogue and relationship demanded of the Church in Africa today. Such studies would have given a rich historical and contextual background for the greater success of the Synod. It is hoped that having missed this process in the preparatory stages, that the implementation phase does still need to undertake such social analysis or in the least confront the issues of Church and Society in Africa. This is what the Second Special Assembly has tried to take into consideration as the theme of Justice, reconciliation and Peace on the continent and in clans, families and nations continues to bother on the collective existence of the social group. It is relevant, urgent and existencial.

4 (d). Composition of the Synod:

The current trend in ecclesial and social affairs also peddled by the belief in democracy is the promotion of inclusive, not exclusive strategies. With all good will and understanding, people have commented that majority of the Synod participants were Bishops and Roman officials, with a few priests, theologians and regional representatives of Episcopal bodies. These were often elected or appointed by virtue of the posts they occupy. One wonders how the attendance of some lay faithful (Catechists) who were not elected by their groups but were simply appointed to attend would be understood as representative of the group of Catechists for example. The same could be said of religious congregations.

How come that many local congregations were not present in an event that concerned their continent and the practice of faith in it, but international religious congregations were present who may not even be working on the continent. It is necessary that just as the bishops were appointed as delegates by their respective Conferences, so also it would been a better composition and smooth idea if the few lay persons who attended were appointed or elected by their groups on a representative at the least democratic basis.

5. The positive contributions of the first Africa Synod - Implementation and Reception:

The theme of Church as Family of God is relevant for Africa and a good model for the world of today. The theme of Evangelization is crucial to the essence of our mission - everything has to be imbued with the light of the Gospel

- **Proclamation**-Jesus Christ remains the complete and true man for all peoples and for all ages. We must make him relevant as a man for this time and for all times.
- **Inculturation**-A faith that is not inculturated is a faith that is not received. Inculturation is an agenda and this is the beginning of Africa's cultural rebirth.
- **Dialogue**-Building bridges with entire humanity through dialogue is the sure path to peace, a need that Nigeria as other countries could cherish and learn from.
- **Justice and Peace**- If there is no justice, there shall be no peace. Linking Globalization to African self determination is a clarion call as the impact of global trade and unfair international business congtnines to impoverish the continent. Empowerment programmes for women youth and men are necessary. Placing the poor at the centre of our ministry is a socio-pastoral challenge. Good governance and the promotion of

development leadership is a key to the progress of African nations; The involvement of the Church in public affairs is an essential dimension of the Gospel; The promotion of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) in schools and seminaries is an urgent intervention including the setting up centres of CST in various African countries as the CIDJAP model tries to take the lead; This includes further action in inter African networking; the expansion of the African Peer Mechanism (APRM); and an appeal to the rest of the world especially Europe, Asia and the USA to allow Africa be its identity and soul without remoulding Africa in any other continents image or likeness.

- **Means of Communication**- preaching the Good News needs education of the media and its personnel. Every modern means of communication is useful and the Church must go into the mass media and evangelize it. This can be done through the training of personnel and local capacity with investments in the methods and means of social communication so that they become veritable tools for their work of Evangelisation. How can they be converted except someone preaches to them? (St Paul).

Section Two:

Practical implications of the Second Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops with reference to Intra-State Conflicts

1. **The Background:** The Second Special Assembly of the Synod of bishops held in the Vatican in September 2009 and was presided over by His Holiness in person, Pope Benedict XVI. The Holy Father took passionate interest in the deliberations, listened carefully and attended including intervening at times to give his own contributions on the topics as they developed. The Second Synod on Africa and its organisation took upon itself to reflect on one of the very vital and relevant topics affecting the human family and the African continent in particular, namely the theme of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation. On 19th November, 2011, Pope Benedict himself came to Cotonou in Benin Republic of West Africa to present the post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "**AFRICAЕ MUNUS**" to the peoples of the world and of Africa in particular. The document contains two sections in five chapters with practical implications for solution to intra state conflicts within Africa by the church and her agents. The essence of the post Apostolic Exhortation is to encourage the Church in Africa in the service of Justice Peace and Reconciliation on the continent. The Church has come of age, so Pope Benedict and has reached the maturity to offer of its own contributions, not only to the continent

but to the universal human family as a whole. In this paper, we shall mention some of the elements referred to during the Synod and summarised at the Apostolic Exhortation which serve the practical applications and implications demanded of this lecture as the Church offers its services to Intra-State conflicts and divisions within the human family and in the community of persons. The recent events of fuel increases in Nigeria was a test case of the Church mediating role in crisis.

2. The reality of Broken Communities, States and Economies:

No one with enough knowledge of the needs of humanity and the African continent at this time would doubt the prophetic wisdom and theological depth of the Church in making the theme of the Second Plenary Assembly on Justice Reconciliation and Peace one of urgency and in need of deliberation by the sons and daughters of the continent. Events worldwide especially the tumult in the whole of North America with the bubble-burst of the subprime economy and the failure of capitalism including the banking sector and the market showed that what mattered most was not Gold but God. In late 2009, just immediately after the Synod, scandals of the evils of capitalism (greed, materialism, egoism and pride) and its repercussions manifested in countries of the West, the East and the South. Bank failures and insolvencies increased at an alarming rate. Institutions believed to stand fell down and crumbled like a simple package of pie and governments and economists ran from "pillar to post", unsure of what to do. Pope John Paul II had earlier prophesied in "*Centessimus Annus*" (1991) the end of capitalism and called for a Social Market Economy which guaranteed safety nets for all. He pleaded for an inclusive, not exclusive economic agenda as propelled by capitalism but did not receive enough listening ear. With the publication of "*Caritas in Veritate*" by Pope Benedict in year 2008, the same message was carried through to a world audience that was both deaf and dumb.

The crash of the economy made the alert real and people ran into panic. Job losses, failed States, bailed banks, the crash of the Stock Exchange, unnecessary wars, panic in the market, insecurity and the need and search by many of a better solution and sustainable future. The Synod theme was both adequate and exact in its scope, measures and depth.

3. Breakdown of States and Governance Structures:

In Africa, the problems dealt big blows to dictatorships often described as the Arab Spring which started in Tunisia. In essence, it was the search for Justice, reconciliation and peace which motives challenged the leadership of virtually every nation under heaven to sit up. From Tunisia into Egypt, Lybia, Morocco, then Algeria before moving into the Middle East and virtually every Arab nation, including targeting Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran and indeed even Europe and China, the challenges remained the same.

Establish Justice and Have Peace. Build bridges for reconciliation and become free.

The African continent in year 2011 suffered many challenges in its efforts at serving its people with developmental results and from country to country there emerged a great crisis of governance. The country known as Sudan was broken into two independent States after fifty odd years of irreconcilable differences with the death of over ten millions of its citizens during the years of war. The crisis of governance was felt and experienced in the Ivory Coast and in Guinea, in Liberia and in Burkina Faso, in the Gambia and Senegal, in the Spanish Sahara and Congo, in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ethiopia, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Somalia, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

Everywhere, the stories when retold sounded the same. Refugees, displaced people, jobless youth, assaulted women, workers owed salaries and their rights over years, corruption, the cult of mediocrity, impunity by the ruling classes, empty classrooms, dilapidated health institutions, high costs of living, rural migration, overpopulated cities, children without moral or family care, infrastructural decay, lack of adequate resources, polluted environment, religious clashes and ethnic differences to mention but a few.

If humanity continued to live outside of God's laws and statutes, if people continued to exclude some and allow only a few into the club of those who have means and belong, problems would not only remain, but would expand and affect everybody. The Second Synod took upon itself to explore the biblical meaning of Justice Peace and reconciliation and from these sources to search for solutions that were truly human, divine and therefore sustainable.

- a. The first step in this analysis is to undergo for each person, community of persons, religious group, Church, nation and State, a certain form of **internal conversion**.
- b. **Discover the obstacles hindering the Church's effective response to the problems of humanity at this time and purifying it from within to have the spiritual strength to carry out its evangelising mission** to the nations as an instrument of truth, justice, reconciliation and peace. Some of the obstacles hindering the effective services of the Church in sorting out serious problems facing mankind include the following:
 - **Lack of clear vision and understanding of the social mission of the Church** and undue fear in practicing reconciliation and the rebuilding of trust and durable relationships;
 - **Lack of integral spirituality** of justice and peace, leading to fear and shallow commitment;

- **Inadequate formation of agents of evangelisation**, laity, religious and clergy in the social vision of the Church and in its spirituality of justice,
 - **Inadequate social analysis** of the root causes of the problems;
 - **Poor witness of the Church in its own attitudes and structures**, wages paid to Church workers, treatment of women, lack of due process and respect for rights recognised by Canon Law;
 - **Lack of financial resources and bad management styles of meager resources**. This is a constraint which is likely to increase in the future, and at times the overdependence on outside support;
- c. **Healing from the roots:** Can one forget that the basic cause of the sad situation humanity finds itself at this stage is due to human weakness, wickedness and sin in the heart of men and women, often because of greed, egoism and pride.
- d. **Awakening Moral Consciences:** It is of paramount importance that the Church at all levels plays her role in the world by awakening the moral conscience of all peoples in view of healing the ills which afflict society. She does this by means proper to her mission, the teaching and courageous stand of her pastors; the living witness of the lay faithful and the prayers of the whole Church.
- e. **The necessity of Good Governance:** In more specific terms, the most serious social problems of the continent derive also from bad governments, economic mismanagement and corruption. Hence the importance of the political engagement of Christians: The Church in Africa has responsibility in this matter which it cannot abdicate without failing in her mission.
- f. **Denouncing Evil with prophetic courage** and acting as reconciler: The Church cannot fail in her prophetic role of denouncing and condemning in clear terms the social vices of the nation, especially of its leaders. In recent times, during major national crises in some countries, esteem for the and confidence in members of the hierarchy have led to some of them being called upon to act as impartial mediators and prudent peacemakers.
- g. **Promoting the Social Teaching of the Church:** The Social teaching of the Church contributes to the promotion of justice and peace as it contains content that has biblical foundations, the teachings of the early Fathers of the Church, theological insights, pontifical and magisterial pronouncements, contemporary events, moral guidelines that help humanity live as salt of the earth and light of the world.

- h. **Promoting Social Action:** Practical encouragement should be given to various individuals, institutions, local, national and regional initiatives which work for the articulation of these teachings. It is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. The several areas of the application of these teachings in Africa include the economy, democratic participation, development projects, infrastructural and regional planning, issues concerning women and gender, the youth, environment, themes bothering on the rights of the workers and the sanctity of life and human work, industrialisation, liberation, religious peace, interreligious dialogue, refugees, the burden of international debt, education, pollution and the environment, minority rights, just wage and culture.
- i. **Empowerment of the Laity:** The laity in general should be trained in the knowledge and practice of the Social teaching of the Church. In any case, direct involvement in the political arena is the proper duty of the lay members of the Church. What is the value of the participation of many Catholics in politics at all levels? It is not enough to count the members in key positions. They have to be engaged with Chaplains, trained, motivated, spiritually re-charged and equipped to promote Christ's kingdom of justice and peace in the community.
- j. **Solidarity at all levels;** Within the Churches in regions, nations and on the continent of Africa, there should exist levels of solidarity action through the sharing of information, materials and resources, mutual support, encouragement, increased ecumenical collaboration in social thought and action. The setting up of Advisory Councils and Elders Councils to mediate in peace missions and to have the voice to speak for the people in cases of crisis and to take up themes for the service of peace, justice and reconciliation may be useful.