

Dialogue and Religious Harmony in Nigeria

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1. Introduction

Today, religion is seriously under attack from within and from without, therefore, anybody who believes in God and professes faith in any particular religion is already challenged not to make religion an object of ridicule. It follows that the ministerial priesthood, the common priesthood and the Church is crying for protection and sustenance. We are living in an era of anticlericalism which is partly caused by the sacred ministers in words and actions. Even the Nigerian government believes that dialogue today is indispensable in a situation where some political and religious leaders use religion to perpetuate their selfish ambition in God's name. On the 20th of October, 2011, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, called an extra ordinary meeting of the Nigeria Inter-religious Council (NIREC) at Abuja to appeal to religious leaders to seek ways of using religion to restore peace and promote peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. This meeting explored the relationship between religion and politics. While religion is presumed to create peace and harmony, it can also be used as a deadly tool in the hands of those who want to cause chaos. In a similar way, politics which should be used to create peace and order through governance can also be used for selfish reasons to cause conflict. Provocative statements of politicians or religious preachers can send hearts and a nation ablaze. In times like these, all who care about life and the attendant human dignity stand a better chance to bring sanity and peace to the society by prevailing on everybody to promote peace in place of anarchy. Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish Islamic scholar teaches that, "Religion focuses primarily on the immutable aspects of life and existence." Consequently the dignity of life and the joy of heaven should be the focus of every religion. All these call for internal cleansing of religion whereby the religious leaders must transform themselves and then clearly see it as an obligation to call to order, their followers who preach and promote violence. We are more than ever before seriously in need of all forms of dialogue, namely, dialogue of life, dialogue of religious experience, dialogue of social engagement and dialogue of theological exchange. Before we can even approach these four forms of dialogue we may need to critically examine the various forms of conflicts that immediately call for resolutions, management and transformation.

2. What is Conflict?

Conflict is a disagreement between two parties whose objectives are perceived to be incompatible. It may appear neutral, natural and normal. It could be a danger or create opportunity for growth and better understanding depending on the response by the conflicting parties. It involves two or more parties. It has to do with the behaviour we observe and it expresses the way we put our system in place. The levels and stages of conflicts are:

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* Intra personal conflict – This is a conflict within a person. This could be a battle of inherited syndromes and phobias acquired by a person at birth that have been allowed to grow without proper debriefing. This could give rise to split personality. Failure in an examination or election of an over ambitious person can lead to this conflict. The patient can become schizophrenic like Lady Macbeth after persuading Macbeth to kill Duncan in William Shakespeare, “Macbeth”. The demoniac in the Gospel of Mark expressed a split personality when he said: “I am legion for we are many” (Mk. 5, 9) in response to Jesus' question: “Who are you?” Other symptoms of internal conflicts are: insomnia, high blood pressure, hypo cardiac exhaustion and lost of value for life. Among the causes of intra personal conflicts are: inferiority complex, guilt, abnormal traits inherited from birth and lack of parental care. This kind of conflict calls for intra-personal dialogue whereby the person goes deep into the castle of his / her inner heart to discover his / her real self. This is however difficult hence the need of an expert in this process of debriefing and healing of memories.

* Intra group conflict – This is the conflict that happens within the community. This conflict creates disharmony within the village, society, parish, diocese or institution. This conflict if not resolved can lead to insurrection. Some of the causes of intra group conflict are: struggle for power, family land, fish ponds, inheritance, excessive authority and greed. This conflict is very common in a monarchical system where the king or community leaders misappropriate what belong to the community. It can also happen in the hierarchical context of the Church where a bishop has no respect for the priests and the parish priest has no regard for his assistants and the parishioners. This may, to some extent explain the oil conflicts in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria where some traditional rulers and leaders of the community deny the communities access to the dividends of oil grants by the oil companies.

* Inter personal conflict - This is the conflict between two persons. It is a flow of the internal conflicts in the heart of a person. It leads to a blunt refusal to be each other's keeper (Gen 4, 9) like the case of Cain and Abel. Some of the causes of inter personal conflict are: jealousy, ugly image from birth, greed, selfishness, wickedness, contempt for the other person and unhealed bitter memories.

Inter group conflict – This is the conflict between two different communities. This can lead to ethnic, tribal and religious conflicts. Some of the causes could be: different ideologies, beliefs, territorial boundaries, inter personal conflict of some leaders who will get the whole communities involved etc. Usually, conflict starts with a little disagreement.

Looking at the history and chronology of violent events in Nigeria, one can conclude that what is needed today more than ever is dialogue. The fundamental question however is how many people want dialogue, reconciliation and peace building in the face of the syndrome of “might is right” and in a situation where no one blames oneself. Whether the answer is in the positive or negative, the point remains that the world today needs intra-personal dialogue, inter-personal dialogue, inter-ethnic dialogue and inter-religious dialogue. We need to be proactive in the sense that we cannot rest in the pursuance of religious harmony and peaceful coexistence even in the absence of conflicts between Christians, Muslims and the traditional worshipers in our region. Our people say: “Prevention is better than cure”. Many Christians,

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Muslims and adherents of African traditional religions (ATR) in many parts of the world do not see the need for dialogue because of mutual suspicion and the wounds many people are bearing as a result of religious intolerance and violence. On the other hand, there are many places in Nigeria where Christians and Muslims live in peace and harmony. These people avail themselves of dialogue to heal the broken hearts and ugly memories caused by religion in the past and the present. To further look at this problem critically and proffer objective solutions, let us have a brief look at the history of religious rivalry in Nigeria. This may assist us to be more proactive in ensuring that the existing peace in our environment is maintained and sustained.

3. A Brief History of Religious Rivalry in Nigeria.

We may begin this enquiry from 1900-1915 when there was a rivalry between the Roman Catholic and Protestant Missionaries in the Igbo South East of Nigeria.¹ This is an indicator of conflict even within the same Christian religion. We can also investigate the effect of the political, religious and economic strategy of Lugard who divided the Niger area into North and South protectorates as one of the roots of religious rivalry between the North and South of Nigeria. “Frederick John Dealtry Lugard, (22 January 1858 – 11 April 1945), known as Sir Frederick Lugard between 1901 and 1928, was a British soldier, mercenary, explorer of Africa and colonial administrator, who was Governor of Hong Kong (1907–1912) and Governor-General of Nigeria (1914–1919)”. His political strategy did not take cognisance of the cultural, ethnic and religious differences in the different parts of Nigeria.

In 1912, Lugard returned to Nigeria as Governor of the two protectorates. His main mission was to complete the amalgamation into one colony. Although controversial in Lagos, where it was opposed by a large section of the political class and the media, the amalgamation did not arouse passion in the rest of the country. From 1914 to 1919, Lugard was made Governor General of the now combined Colony of Nigeria. Throughout his tenure, Lugard sought strenuously to secure the amelioration of the condition of the native people.²

Part of these conflicts has its ontology on the missionary methods that created unhealthy rivalry between Christianity and African Traditional Religion.³ These same reasons are couched in Chinua Achebe's “Things Fall apart”. One is tempted to think that conflicts and violence are foreign vices that were imported to Nigeria. For instance, Othman Dan Fodio's method of evangelization through jihad to propagate Islam did not paint the true picture of Islam that believes in persuasion. Although Nigeria had witnessed religious intolerance in the past but since the phenomenon of the Islamic sect popularly called Boko Haram in 2002, Nigeria has been counted as a terrorist country. Boko Haram in Nigeria claims to have a link with the Osama Bin Laden Al Qadar group. We can group the conflicts in Nigeria as follows:

- * Christian / ATR Conflicts
- * Christian / Muslim Conflicts
- * Political related Conflicts

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3.1 Christian / ATR Conflicts

Nigeria has witnessed conflicts between the Christians and the adherents of the traditional religions. This could be a conflict of the culture of Africa and the culture of Europe that accompanied the gospel message of the missionaries. Let's take a look at the chronology of religious conflicts between Christianity and the traditional religions in some parts of Nigeria.

1977-1980: The institution of “Okuku Onye Uwa” connected with traditional belief in reincarnation led to the conflict between the Christians and the Traditional worshippers in Awka.⁴

1989-1991: Conflicts between the Christians and the Traditional worshippers over the institution of the traditional masquerade in Northern Igbo especially in Aku. Omaba, Akatakpa and Oliokpa masquerades generated conflict in Nsukka and its environ.⁵

1993 – 1996 - Conflicts over traditional burial rites and customs associated with them. This included not allowing a woman to view the corpse of the late husband.⁶

1999 April 25 - Conflicts in Owerri over the uprooting of Ikenga Statue by some Christian fanatics who replaced it with a white cross. The Ofo na Ogu – symbols of justice and innocence – mounted at Cherubim junction on Wethedral Road, Owerri was demolished.⁷

2000 September– In Ogidi town, Idemili Local Government of Anambra State, Christian youths who claimed that the root cause of their stagnation in progress was the offensive deities and shrines in the town went on rampage and destroyed many traditional shrines with their valuable cultic sacred symbols and images.⁸

2002 February – Neke community in Enugu State was in disarray over traditional worship and rites in a shrine alleged by Christians to be consuming human victims as sacrifice.⁹

3.2 Christian / Muslim Conflicts

It is argued by some people that there is no conflict between Islam and Christianity in Nigeria. But some causes of violence and operations in the Northern part of Nigeria seem to negate this position. Some Christians report the difficulty of acquiring land to build Churches in the Northern part of Nigeria whereas the Christians in the South not only give land but assist the Muslims to build their mosques. The Muslims in the Southern part of Nigeria also give Christians land to build Churches and even contribute to the development of the Church. We can highlight the following as moments of conflicts between the Christians and Muslims.

1980 - 1984 – Maitatsine revolts in Kano, Bauchi, Katsina

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1985 – 1986 – The Christian Cross standing to the east of the newly built Muslim Mosque in the University of Ibadan became the bone of contention between the Moslems and the Christians.¹⁰

1991 – Many Muslims and Christians died in the Zango Kataf riot in Southern Kaduna.

2002 February - About 100 people were killed in Lagos in the clashes between Hausas from mainly-Islamic north and ethnic Yorubas from predominantly-Christian Southwest.

2002 November - More than 200 people died in four days of rioting. This was caused by some Muslim fanatics over the planned Miss World Beauty Pageant in Kaduna in December. The event was relocated to Britain.

2004 May - State of emergency was declared in the Central Plateau State after more than 200 Muslims were killed in Yelwa. This was as a result of an attack by some Christian militia. There were revenge attacks launched by Muslim youths in Kano.

2006 February - More than 100 people were killed as a result of religious violence in mainly-Muslim towns of the north and reprisal attack in the southern city of Onitsha when the bodies of the Easterners killed in the North reached Onitsha.

2009 July - Maiduguri police stations were stormed by Boko Haram Hundreds died in North Eastern Nigeria after the Boko Haram Islamist movement launched a campaign of violence in a bid to have Sharia law imposed on the entire country. Security forces stormed Boko Haram's stronghold and killed the movement's leader.

2010 January - About 149 people were killed during the two days of violence between Christian and Muslim gangs in the central city of Jos.

2010 March - More than 120 people were killed in clashes between Muslims and Christians in the flashpoint city of Jos.

2010 December - Christmas Eve bomb attacks near central city of Jos kill at least 80 people. Attacks claimed by Islamist sect Boko Haram sparked clashes between Christians and Muslims. Some 200 killed in reprisal attacks.

2011 December 25 - Multiple bomb attacks on Christmas Day killing many people.

2012 January 21 - Boko Haram killed more than 140 people during a series of bomb blasts, including a suicide bombing, and shootings in Kano. The police and immigration buildings were also targeted.

2012 March 11 – Bomb blast in St. Finbarr's Catholic Church killing about 8 people.

3.3 Political related conflicts

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It is becoming obvious that a lot of the violence that are named religious conflicts have political undertone. The following chronology is just an indication of how some politicians use religion to cause violence and fuel their selfish ambition.

2009 July – Many members of Boko Haram were killed when Maiduguri police stations was stormed. Mohammed Yusuf, their leader was captured and killed.

2010 December - Boko Haram bombed Jos, killing 80 people.

2011 January 1 - Bomb blast in Abacha Barrack in Abuja

2011 May – Post election violence in some states in the Northern part of Nigeria

2011 June - Police Head quarter (HQ) was bombed in Abuja

2011 August – United Nations Head Quarters (UN HQ) was bombed in Abuja

2011 September – Muslim fanatics freed hundreds of prisoners from Maiduguri jail

2011 November - Co-ordinated bomb and gun attacks in Yobe and Borno States

4. The Need for Dialogue.

The above chronology of conflicts and violence has awakened the consciousness of many to the need for dialogue as a lasting solution to violence. Some Muslims are feeling embarrassed that Islam is now associated with violence and terrorism because of the violence of Boko Haram who claim to be an Islamic sect. The international Communities are becoming interested in assisting Nigeria to fight terrorism through dialogue. In November 18-19, 2011, The UFUK Dialogue Foundation organized an international conference at the Transcorp Hilton, Abuja with the theme: Establishing a Culture of Coexistence and Mutual Understanding. On March 3, 2012, the Canadian Embassy called a meeting of a few scholars to a discussion on what the Canadian Government can do to assist Nigeria in fighting terrorism. The theme of the discussion was: Religious Freedom. On March 6, 2012 United States Commission on International Religious Freedom had a meeting at the Transcorp Hilton, Abuja with some religious leaders on what America government can do to help Nigeria achieve peaceful coexistence and promote human dignity. The department of Mission and Dialogue of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) has created a forum for dialogue between Catholic and Muslim Women. The department has also initiated dialogue between Catholic and Muslim Youths. A lot of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are springing up and seeking recognition by the department of Mission and Dialogue. Series of attempts have been made by government to dialogue with the Boko Haram sect.

Within the context of the definition of dialogue as a “conversation between two or more persons especially of a formal or imaginary nature; an exchange of views in the hope of

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ultimately reaching agreement;”¹¹ Dialogue has been used in Nigeria to help people resolve long-standing conflicts and to build deeper understanding of contentious issues. Dialogue is not about judging, weighing, or making decisions, but about understanding and learning. Dialogue dispels stereotypes, builds trust, and enables people to be open to perspectives that are very different from their own.¹² Dialogue is one sure way to heal memories and wounded hearts.

In dialogue, understanding is the key word. Nigerians have gone through many faces of violence, slavery and colonialism to the extent that the value of trust has been replaced with prejudice, preconception and mutual suspicions. These, call for education, debriefing, healing of memory, mental reconstruction, reconciliation and compassion. According to John Wesley: I have no more right to object to a man for holding a different opinion from mine than I have to differ with a man because he wears a wig and I wear my own hair. We think and let's think. In other words while we think, we should let others think their own way. According to T.R. Glover: Remember that whatever your hand finds to do, someone thinks differently! According to Fethullah Gülen:

In the modern world the only way to get others to accept your ideas is by persuasion. He described those who resort to force as being intellectually bankrupt; people will always demand freedom of choice in the way they run their affairs and in their expression of their spiritual and religious values.¹³

For Godfrey I. Onah, Inter-religious dialogue is first a dialogue between human beings before being a dialogue between religions. It is an encounter between human beings in order to share with one another, things that concern them intimately as human persons in their relationship with God, with the world, and with one another.¹⁴

In spite of the present challenges in Nigeria, there are areas where dialogue has worked in Nigeria. In the aspect of Dialogue of Life, many Muslims, Christians and traditional worshippers in Nigeria live in the same family, attend the same school and work together in the same office and other places of work. These are avenues and occasion for some Nigerians to share life together in love and peaceful coexistence. In the Dialogue of Social Engagements, Some people of different religions in Nigeria often meet in different life situations, like ceremonies, trade and even join together to fight injustice and diseases. This collaboration between Christians and people of other religions have promoted the integral development and liberation of people in some parts of Nigeria. In Nigeria some Muslims and Christians have issued joint statements to condemn the menace of Boko Haram and other forms of social ills. In the Dialogue of Theological Exchange, scholars of different religions in Nigeria organize seminars and workshops to discuss theological issues. In the Dialogue of religious experience, people of different religions in Nigeria sometimes use any given opportunity to share their religious experience and dreams. This sharing of testimonies and narration of what God has done in their individual life has led others to be converted interiorly. This was my personal experience when I was in Fatima College, Auchi, Edo State, Nigeria when my friend through my testimonies gave up hard drugs.

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5. The Mandate of the Church

The Catholic Church in the Second Vatican Council taught in *Nostra aetate*, (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions) that “We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God's image” (n. 5) To promote the reconciliation between man and God, Pope John Paul II called for the Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi on 27 October 1986. He convoked: “Day of Pardon ” in Rome on 12 March 2000. The day was described as the “purification of memory”. Pope John Paul II said: “The recognition of past wrongs serves to reawaken our consciences to the compromises of the present, opening the way to conversion for everyone”. Meetings in inter-religious dialogue do not of themselves remove the pains of the past or present. For reconciliation we have to recognize that our neighbours have been victims of our injustice, our anger, our exploitation. On the 24th of January 2002 he called for another day of prayer for peace in Assisi.¹⁵

At the beginning of his Pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI reminded believers in the following words: “We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.”¹⁶ And in his Message for the World Day of Peace in 2007 he reiterated: “As one created in the image of God, each individual human being has the dignity of a person; he or she is not just something, but someone, capable of self-knowledge, self-possession, free self-giving and entering into communion with others.”¹⁷

All this affirms St. John in his first letter: “Whoever says, 'I am in the light' while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness” (1 John 2, 9). Pope Benedict XVI appealed passionately at a traditional Christian prayer that:

In the world there is too much violence, too much injustice, and therefore that this situation cannot be overcome except by countering it with more love, with more goodness. This 'more' comes from God: it is his mercy which was made flesh in Jesus and which alone can 'tip the balance' of the world from evil to good, starting with that small and decisive “world” which is the human heart”.¹⁸

The Pope has said repeatedly that dialogue cannot be reduced to an optional extra. He wrote in his message for the XXth anniversary of

the first Assisi Meeting in 1986... Peace is not something only to be sought in halls of government, but also in the halls of our synagogues, our churches, our mosques, our temples, our pagodas, our gurdwaras, our atash berhrams, our schools, our workplaces, our homes and most importantly in our hearts”¹⁹

The Church in Nigeria is not left out in the mission of dialogue with other religions. The creation of the department of Mission and Dialogue in the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria is one of the responses of the Church in Nigeria to the mandate of the Second Vatican Council. The department coordinates and facilitates activities of the Catholic Bishops Conference of

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Nigerian (CBCN) in the area of mission animation and formation of Nigerian Catholics. The department promotes ecumenical dialogue within the Christian family and dialogue with other religious bodies. Thus the department operates under the committees of Mission, Ecumenism, & Inter-Religious Dialogue.

- * **Mission Committee:** Focuses on animation of priests, religious and laity and on creating awareness for full participation of the people of God in the universal mission of the Church. It operates with a National missionary Council which draws its membership from the clergy, Religious and laity. It coordinates the missionary activities of the dioceses and religious congregations, especially in the area of the mission ad gentes sending out missionaries to other dioceses and countries. It also collaborates with the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) in line with the recommendations of “Cooperatio Missionalis” (Instructions of the Congregation for the evangelization of peoples on Missionary Cooperation).
- * **Committee on Ecumenism:** Promotes Christian unity at human, political and religious areas. It aims at bringing the various Christian denominations in the country together to study and understand each other better, work together in identifying areas of agreement and deepening them, while seeking solutions to areas of disagreement.
- * **Committee on Dialogue:** The Committee for Inter-religious Dialogue of the Department of Mission and Dialogue of the Catholic Bishops Conference seeks to interact with other believers, especially of the African Traditional Religion and the Islamic Religion. Attempts are made to build bridges and to recognize and act as people who believe in the supremacy of God, to cooperate in the promotion of the good of all in Nigeria, and to cultivate the culture of respect for other people's religion. The Committee helps dioceses, parishes and Religious congregations in their own efforts at dialogue with other religious bodies at the local level.

The National Think Tank for Inter-religious Dialogue was inaugurated on Wednesday 20th August 2008 at the Conference Hall of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria, Abuja by Bishop George Dodo who was then the Episcopal Chairman for Inter-religious Dialogue. The Episcopal Committee for Inter-religious dialogue is the central body of the Catholic Church in Nigeria for the promotion of inter-religious dialogue in accordance with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council in general and *Nostra aetate* in particular. The function of the Think Tank is to assist the Bishops of the Committee on Dialogue in many areas especially in:

- * Monitoring and identifying potential hot spots for brewing religious intolerance and violence.
- * Preventing and managing Conflict.
- * Supporting people that are marginalized because of their religious identity through Advocacy and capacity building.

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- * Advising and empowering for the provision of legal protection for those suffering from religiously motivated violence.
- * Investigating and reporting on religious tension
- * Working out strategies for collaboration in the support of human dignity and for the freedom of religion.
- * Advising the CBCN as appropriate.

To fulfil this function, the Think Tank networks with other relevant bodies and draws on the advice and insights of Catholics who are experts in the theory and practice of inter-religious relations particularly here in Nigeria. Through sharing their research, information and suggestions these experts help to draw up concrete and solid action plans. These action plans are implemented by four working committees, namely: Legal Committee, Conflict Prevention and Management Committee, Committee for the Promotion of Human Dignity and Religious Freedom, and Finance Committee.

6. Efforts of the Muslims

In Northern Nigeria, a lot of dialogue is going on between Christians and Muslims. The following are key indicators: Meetings of the Federation of Muslim Women Association in Nigeria FOMWAN and the Women Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria WOWICAN and Meetings of the Christian and Muslim youths. This dialogue has been beneficial to both religions. Things would have been worst according to Archbishop John Onaiyekan who also refers to similar international efforts like the famous letter on “A Common Word” by over 250 high level Muslim leaders from all over the world, the Christian-Muslim dialogue initiatives from Saudi Arabia and Jordan, the visit of the Saudi King to Pope Benedict XVI in the Vatican, to mention just a few examples. On April 28, 2004 AllAfrica.com posted a Daily Trust (Abuja) article that reported that "Secretary General, Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Dr. Lateef Adegbite and Kano State Governor Alhaji Ibrahim Shekarau has stressed the importance of dialogue in promoting peace and religious harmony.²⁰

The Nigeria Inter Religious Council (NIREC) came into being after the dawn of democracy in 1999 to serve as a platform for high-level dialogue between the leaders of Christians and Muslims in this country, thereby promoting public good.²¹ The major aim was to promote understanding, appreciation of one another and the generation of mutual respect between Christians and Muslims. It is made up of 50 members, 25 Christians and 25 Muslims. The Council is co-chaired by the Sultan of Sokoto and President-General of the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), and President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN). The Catholic Church has five representatives in NIREC.

6. Conclusion

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From the above exposition, we can conclude that the recent terrorism in Nigeria is very new but the search for peace and harmony is not beyond us. We must remain dedicated and proactive in our peace mission even though nobody would have ever imagined that a Nigerian could ever go to the extent of taking his own life just to kill as many as possible for whatever reason. We can affirm that the recent disturbances in the country have deeper motives than religion. On October 11, 2012, the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria had their 2012 annual October lecture at Shehu Yar'adua Centre, Abuja. Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama (President of CBCN / Catholic Archbishop of Jos) and Prof. Ibrahim Sulaiman (Centre for Islamic and legal Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria) were the guest lecturers. The theme was: "Religious Tolerance and Peaceful Co-existence. After the beautiful lectures, the recurring questions were: "where lies Nigeria problem? Where did we go wrong? Where is the missing link?" These same questions are relevant for us today as part of a thorough examination of conscience. Christians, Muslims and the Traditional adherents must therefore come together to pray and work against the enemies of progress and perpetrators of terrorist activities in words and deeds. No religion preaches violence, has become a jingle in all the channels of Nigeria television stations. Religion has been abused for selfish reasons. We must show the world that we have chosen the best option as Christians by the way we love each other and one another. We have no option but to continue the project of dialogue in the spirit of Africae Munus with the following exhortation:

As many social movements indicate, peace in Africa, as elsewhere, is conditioned by inter-religious relations. Hence it is important for the Church to promote dialogue as a spiritual disposition, so that believers may learn to work together, for example in associations for justice and peace, in a spirit of trust and mutual help. Families must be educated in attentive listening, fraternity and respect without fear of the other.²² One thing only is necessary (cf. Lk 10, 42) and capable of quenching every human person's thirst for eternity and all humanity's

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