

**THE CHURCH OF THE YOUTH AND THE YOUTH OF THE CHURCH:
A PLEA FOR THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF CHRISTIANITY**

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ABSTRACT

If we consider the average age ratio of the population, the Church of Africa is also a young Church with many young people. She can even be said to be the Church of the youth. But on the ecclesiological, pastoral, political, economic and social side, there can be some concerns and uncertainties to question and address, for the youth to be the present and future of Christianity in Africa. How can the African youth be the present and the future of the Church? This is the main question treated based on the two African synods held so far.

Keywords: Church, youth, education, transmission, future of Christianity, holiness and witness, African humanities and antiquities.

INTRODUCTION

If we consider the nineteenth century as the time frame of the modern age for the systematic Christian mission and evangelisation all over Africa, it can be said that the African continent is entering its third century of Christianity. Comparing to Europe, which has two millennia Christianity, African Christianity is still very young. Besides, if we consider the average age ratio of the population, the Church of Africa is also a young Church with many young people. She can even be said to be the Church of the youth. For “Young people make up the majority of Africa’s population.”²

According to the UN’s Population Commission Report, there is an immense population growth in Africa. As for the statistic of The World Bank, the population of people living in cities in Africa will double in the next 25 years reaching 1 billion in 2040, and tripling its current population by 2050. In 2017, for instance, 60% of the

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² Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Exhortation *Africae munus* On the Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace (Vatican City: Libreria Edictrice Vaticana, 2011), 60.

population in Africa was under 25 years of age. By an estimated projection, in 2100, Africa will be 4.2 billion people, representing around 80% of the global population.

Looking only at this African population rate, through the games of number and quantity, it is good news to have such a Church in Africa made up, in the majority, by youth. The match, in terms of the future, is then already won. But on the ecclesiological, pastoral, political, economic and social side, there can be some concerns and uncertainties to question and address. How are the youth of that African Church? Do young people really have the feeling of belonging to their Church? Are they fully integrated and participative in the life, action and mission of the Church? What does that mean to be young in the Church today? In the context of African political, economic and social poverty, how can a Church be built for the youth and the youth for the Church?

Our aim is to propose some suggestions for the building of a Church for the youth or the youth for the Church as being the present and future of Christianity. It is not an easy task. In engaging this issue, our reflection consists mainly of re-reading the two African synods on the parts concerning the youth in the Church of Christ. It is to see the concern for and the call up of the youth in the teaching *magisterium* so far, so as to prospect new provisions and focuses for the betterment of the Church's young men and women in the twenty-first century.

In the first part, we shall speak of the two synods of the young African Church as way to state their contents regarding the youth. The second point shall address some worrisome problems of the youth today, in the socio-political and economic context. In other words, being a young Church and young people in the young African Church has some challenges. The question of the youth as the present and the future of the Church shall our concern in the third part. For the youth to be the present and the future of the Church, we need a certain theology of the youth, of their education in the Church and a good ecclesiological and pastoral program for the care of the youth. That is why, in the four parts, we speak of patrimony, transmission and reception. The last part of our reflection proposes an integral human education for our youth, with an attention to ecology, African history, antiquities and humanities.

TWO SYNODS FOR THE YOUNG AFRICAN CHURCH SINCE VATICAN II COUNCIL

The Youth in the Magisterium of the African Synods

Despite the fact that, Africa is said to be the future of the humanity,³ since Vatican II Council (1962-1965), only two synods of Bishops were held in Africa. This is a sign of her neglect by the elder and mother Church. The first synod was held in 1994, on mission and inculturation. The outcome was this famous apostolic exhortation: "The Church in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission Towards 2000". The second synod took place 15 years later, in October 2009 under the theme justice,

³See Abdou Diouf, "Afrique, le Continent du Futur", in René Dumont, *L'Afrique Noire est Mal Partie* (Paris : Seuil, 2012), Préface, x.

peace and reconciliation. The post-synodal exhortation outcome was: *Africaemunus* or The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace. "You are the salt of the earth ...You are the light of the world" (Mt. 5: 13-14)".

Ecclesia in Africa, the very first post-synodal exhortation, given at Yaoundé on the 14th of September 1995, is made up of 144 paragraphs. It contains 21 times the word "young", among which 12 pertains to the youth. Seven times we have the words "youth". Only number 93 is devoted to young people.

Africae munus: post-synodal exhortation given at Ouidah, in Benin Republic on the 19th of November 2011. Even though shorter in length compared to the first post-synodal exhortation, it is a made up of 177 paragraphs. Of the whole book, 5 numbers are devoted to the youth (nos. 60-64). The exhortation counts 4 times the term youth and 27 times the term "young", among which about 24 are related to the youth. This already shows, since then, less consideration for the young or the lack of a proper theology on the young, in the teaching magisterium of the Church. Added to this is the age rank of Cardinals. Though we are having more and more young bishops, it is not the case among the Cardinals, especially regarding African Cardinals.

In fact, after the consistory of 28th June 2018, the Church counts now 224 Cardinals among which 124 are electors and 100 non electors. Of these 124 electors, 16 are from Africa representing 13%. Fifty three from Europe representing 42%, 13 from North America representing about 10%, 16 from Asia representing about 13%, 22 from South, Central America and the Carrabian Islands representing 17%, and 4 from Oceania representing 3%⁴. None of the 124 Cardinal electors, is less than fifty. The youngest is Cardinal Dieudonné Zapalainga from Central Africa Republic, who is 51; followed by Konrad Krajewski (55 years of age), and Soane Patiti Paini Mafi from Tonga, Oceania, who is 57. The majority of them are above 70. This configuration does not really favour the youth in the Church, in terms of age, nor does it favour the ecclesiology of justice and communion, in terms of their apportionment per continent.

For an African Council

In fact, because of the Global South, that is, the global shift of the gravity's centre of Christianity from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern Hemisphere,⁵ Africa is not only the crib of humanity, but now also the present and future of Christianity. In regard to this, there is a need today for the universal Church, for Rome (the seat of the Roman Catholic institutions) to invest in the Church in Africa. This demands to cast a deep look into African political, social and economic predicaments for the sake of the universal Church. In the context of neoliberal capitalism, with the flames and smokes of secularism, de-christianisation and

⁴ See "Composition actuelle du collège Cardinalice," https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composition_actuelle_du_Coll%C3%A8ge_cardinalice (accessed September 10, 2018).

⁵Cf. Jean-Marc Ela, *Repenser la Théologie Africaine* (Paris : Karthala, 2003), 164 ; *Ma Foi d'Africain* (Paris : Karthala, 2009), 148 ; Walter Kasper, *L'Église Catholique* (Paris: Cerf, "Cogitatio Fidei", 2014), 58.

atheism, somehow fostered and carried out under the wind of globalization, the Church's survival and revival lies in the Global South, mainly in Africa, Latino-America and some parts of Asia. It is especially for young people of Africa that the horizon and zenith of the Church is shining, so as to rekindle the world of Christianity and the Churches of old Christendom, in Europe and North America, gravely marked by the post-Christian age of secularisation.

On this, we address a new appeal not only for other significant African Synods, but especially for an African Council (Africa I Council), in order to respond to this sign of times in the universal Church; to listen to this new wind of Pentecost of which this global shift is about. This appeal for an African Council was already launched in the seventies by theologians like Eboussi-Boulaga⁶, supported by Pierre MeinradHebga, and some other theologians following the dynamic of reflections inaugurated under the impulse of AliouneDiop.⁷This council, if accepted and held, will help us to re-organize the Church and the battle of survival and revival of the entire Church from the South. Pope Francis' papacy is under what he called: a poor Church for the poor, meaning a great new beginning of mission and evangelisation, no more from the centre, but from the peripheries⁸ or from the "underworld", the less privileged and the marginalized.

The world is turning the more and more its attention to Africa, often quoted as the continent of the future. It is one of the reasons why some rich countries's economic programs are organized considering human and natural opportunities found in Africa. What they are doing at the political and economic levels are also possible at the ecclesiological and Christian ones. The universal Church should also be involved.

YOUTH, POLITICS, ECONOMY AND SOCIETY: SOME WORRISOME PROBLEMS

African Youth: inheritances of debts, poverty, and misery

Since the year of independences in the sixties, the political and economic mismanagement of the African nations' affairs brought about discouragement of young people in political commitment, and a total despair in the future. Since the dawn of the years 2000, great are the numbers of African young people whose dream is to travel oversea, so as to flee from misery and poverty in their own nations and continent. Many of them landed in the Mediterranean Sea, where they died and were buried, as they could not cross. Between 2000 and 2015, about 23, 000 people

⁶Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga, *A Contretemps. L'enjeu de Dieu en Afrique* (Paris : Karthala, 1991), 71.

⁷See Jean-Marc Ela, *Repenser la Théologie Africaine*, 392.

⁸This was already the intuition of Jean-Marc Ela in the eighties and nineties. See Jean-Marc-Ela, *Ma Foi d'Africain*, 188-193 ; *Innovations sociales et renaissance de l'Afrique noire. Les défis "du monde d'en-bas"* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1998).

died when trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe⁹. Among them were about 3, 000 African young people, exiling from hunger and misery. Indeed,

The economic situation of poverty has a particularly negative impact on the young. They embark on adult life with very little enthusiasm for a present riddled with frustrations and they look with still less hope to a future which to them seems sad and somber. That is why they tend to flee the neglected rural areas and gather in cities which in fact do not have much more to offer them. Many of them go to foreign countries where, as if in exile, they live a precarious existence as economic refugees. With the Synod Fathers I feel the duty to plead their cause: it is urgently necessary to find a solution for their impatience to take part in the life of the nation and of the Church.¹⁰

More than twenty years after the first African Synod, this situation has not changed. It has become even worse, with civil wars, wars of minerals,¹¹ wars of petroleum, of political and economic interests like those of South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Côte d'Ivoire, not to mention more others. Besides the secular trauma and the after-effects of the slave trade, imperialism, the apartheid, colonization and the post-colonial dictatorial regimes, there is a raise of new forms of political and social oppressions and enslavement all over Africa coming from the West and from within Africa itself. This is why the second African post-synodal exhortation stated: "Africa's memory is painfully scarred as a result of fratricidal conflicts between ethnic groups, the slave trade and colonization. Today too, the continent has to cope with rivalries and with new forms of enslavement and colonization."¹²

Worthy of note, the African youth of today and tomorrow has, as their main inheritances: sorrows, worries, wars and their inherent consequences of exile, constant transhumance, historical wounds and memory's wounds, debts, etc. African political rulers have eaten their daily bread and stolen that of the future generation. They have stolen and kept for themselves alone the public goods and resources of their people. They have handed on as legacy to their youth debts to pay for years.

Being Young in an Impoverished and Very Indebted Continent

Somewhere else, young African people are the prey for religious fanaticism like Boko Haram, Al Shabab, Daesh or ISIS where they are often recruited for terrorist and kamikaze missions. Part of the reasons for this can be listed out as: the unemployment, the lack of good education, social integration and fittings for self-development; malnutrition, the lack of health care and social services, the

⁹See Cardinal Woelki, "Allemagne: les Cloches Sonnent pour les Réfugiés Morts en Mer," <https://fr.zenit.org/articles/allemaigne-les-cloches-sonnent-pour-les-refugies-morts-en-mer/> (accessed June 18, 2015).

¹⁰John Paul II, Post-synodal Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* on the Church in Africa (Vatican City: Libreria Edictrice Vaticana, 2015), 115.

¹¹Mgr François-Xavier Maroy, "Aidez l'Afrique à Combattre les Causes des Migrations", in *La Documentation Catholique* no. 2528, Octobre 2017, 126.

¹²Benedict XVI, *Africae munus*, 9.

widespread deterioration in the standard of living,¹³ and some other settings for poverty and misery. Young African people are today also the easy prey for opportunism, careerism, and some cultic societies and cultic practices like homosexuality for which they are conditioned to get jobs and offices of little or great scopes.

There are still some other factors added; like: nepotism, non-respect of constitution, election rigging, corruption of politics and economy, neo-political and economic colonization of some western and now Asian countries. "Against the background of widespread poverty and inadequate medical services the Synod considered the tragic scourge of AIDS which is sowing suffering and death in many parts of Africa,"¹⁴ especially among young people. As such, one can have some concerns. What is the political, economic and social future of the young people, when some African leaders and governors were born in power, gets hold of the power and do not want to release offices for the youth? What is the political, economic and social future of the young people in Africa, when many of their corrupt elders have misused and embezzled public funds and national resources? How can they be youth in a Church living within so poor and very indebted countries?

With regard to this, *Ecclesia in Africa* stated some twenty three years ago: "In the present world order, the African nations are among the most disadvantaged."¹⁵ She is one of the most disadvantaged continent and yet the most rich continent in the world, in terms of natural resources. Thus, it is wrong to consider Africa as a very poor and indebted continent. Rather it is good to say a continent impoverished and indebted by some inhumane agents of human destruction. Due to the world's political, economic and social injustices, Africa is still like a feast's cake enriching other nations and continents to her own detriment. At the first African Synod, Africa was compared to the young man whipped, robbed, stripped and abandoned half dead (cf. Lk 10: 30-37).¹⁶ Some rich countries of the West with the complicity of some African leaders maliciously support and favour Africa's underdevelopment rather than her real development.

In Africa many youth are not scholarised. Those who went to school and even graduated are unemployed. Those who are employed are not paid accordingly. It was against this background that the second African Synod for Bishops stressed on the questions of justice, reconciliation and peace. For the future of the young generation is sacrificed at the altar of injustices, wars, dictatorship, corruption, theft, embezzlement and similar predicaments. Hence, there is a need for a just order in African Nations, and between Africa and western Nations concerning the politics, economic relationships and social affairs.

"In the first place it involves working for improved socio-political relations among nations, ensuring greater justice and dignity for those countries."¹⁷ Secondly,

¹³See John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 114.

¹⁴John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 116.

¹⁵John-Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 114.

¹⁶See John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 41.

¹⁷John-Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 114.

it involves a new generation of African leaders arising from the youth with a new way of politicizing, with a focus stretched on the pursuit of common good, social justice, equity, human dignity and integral human development. In this regard, we propose education and conversion of mind and life; a proper theology of the polis and of citizenship as one of the ways out of these challenges. Today, the hope and the restoration of hope for the future of this continent lies mainly on the African youth, if only they are well oriented, trained and empowered to carry out their responsibilities regarding challenges for which they are called to accept.

YOUTH: THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

The Church of a Young Man: Christ

At the start of what would become the Church was a baby named Jesus, Emmanuel, Son of God and Son of man, born for the world from a young Virgin called Mary (cf. Lk 1:26; Ga 4:4). The Baby-Son-of-God and Son-of-Man grew up. He established the Church (cf. Mt 16: 16), loved her and gave himself for her as a spouse to his beloved (cf. Ep 5: 23-30). Jesus was about thirty when He started his ministry (cf. Lk. 3:23). Companions He chose to help out his mission were also mostly young, many of them still living with their parents (cf. Mk 1: 19-20; Mt 4: 21-22; Mt 20:20).

Being young, the years of his ministry were also very short: three years organized around three Jewish Pasch (cf. Jn 2: 13; 6:4; 12: 1; 19: 28, 31). With this at hand, it is neither pretentious nor fallacious to state that the Church was founded by a young man of about 30-33 years old, who loved her and died young because of her. Being a young founder of the Church and to later on die for her, is very significant to the youth of today, in terms of identification with the Church and commitment to her mission. The Church belongs to a young man, the eternally young man,¹⁸ Christ, just as young people belong to Christ.

In this sense, Christ's exhortation and command that we should let the children come to Him (cf. Lk 18: 16) also connotes that we should allow the youth to come to Him. The fact that "young people make up the majority of Africa's population"¹⁹ is, therefore, an important opportunity to seize, in terms of theology and ecclesiology of the youth, in the universal Church. "This youthfulness is a gift and a treasure from God for which the whole Church is grateful to the Lord of life. Young people should be loved, esteemed and respected."²⁰

We are accustomed with the saying that the youth are the future of the world and the society. In claiming this, it is as if, we are excluding and depriving them from the present. Yet they also belong to the present. Young people are not only the future of the Church and of the world. They are the present of the Church and of the world, insofar as the future starts with the present. "The Church in Africa knows well that youth are not only the present but above all the future of humanity."²¹

¹⁸See Paul VI, "Message aux Jeunes," in *Vatican II: Les Seize Documents conciliaires*, (Montréal/Paris: Fides, 1966), 653.

¹⁹ Benedict XVI, *Africae munus*, 60.

²⁰ Benedict XVI, *Africae munus*, 60.

²¹ John-Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 93.

Ecclesiology of the Youth and the Youth in Ecclesiology

Through the youth of the Church, the Church is, though old, forever young. If not for the youth, the Church would never have had any hope in history. With her youth, the Church is old or older regarding her past, yet like a baby in a crib, a young person regarding her present and future. Through and with her youth, the Church has a vocation of constant renewal. A “renewal within tradition”²², that is, a renewal of continuity in the tradition she carries along with her.²³ Just like a tree which constantly renews its leaves and rejuvenates itself through them, so does the Church with her young people.

Our duty is to awake in young people the image of a Church that ensures, and shows them the way which gives meaning to their lives. The future of the Church and of Christianity should be prepared with the youth, insofar as they are to the Church like the spring’s bud to the threes. They constitute the new leaves and leaven for the mission and growth of the Church in the world. Thus, we should not put them aside from the decision making of the Church as we usually do. They should be part of the decision making of the Church at the lower and higher level, in their parishes and in their dioceses, in diocesan curia just as in the Roman curia. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to call that Rome should create a sacred congregation for the youth of the Church with a young cardinal as prefect. If it is impossible to have an entire congregation fully dedicated to the youth, we should at least create a pontifical council for youth.

The youth of the Church are in view to rejuvenate her and her institutions. That is why we speak of the ecclesiology of the youth and the youth in ecclesiology. For if the youth is the future of the Church, the Church also is the future of the youth because of her enduring patrimony; and because of Christ her Head, who “is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Heb 13:8).

PATRIMONY, TRANSMISSION AND RECEPTION: FROM ONE AGE TO ANOTHER

Patrimony and Transmission

The Church’s Crypt: The past of the Church is not obsolete or out of use. The Church’s crypt contains an enduring treasury for an everlasting age, because Christ is an ever ancient, an ever new and an eternal treasury in the Patrimony of the Church He transmitted to the Apostles. This treasury has been handed on through ages. That is why, at the inaugural Mass of his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI called upon the youth to have the courage of accepting Christ and to give up everything to Christ. He said: “Dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing

²² Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering, *Vatican II. Renewal Within Tradition* (Oxford: University Press, 2008).

²³ Benedict XVI, “A Proper Hermeneutic for the Second Vatican Council,” in Matthew L. Lamb and Matthew Levering, *Vatican II. Renewal Within Tradition*, ix-xv.

away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life.”²⁴ Christ gives everything, because He Himself is everything good a human being can need and long for; He gave all because He is all.

With this regard, rejuvenate the Church does not mean changing or destroying her root and source. The leaves rejuvenate a tree without cutting off its roots. Thus, what we need, is to have the wisdom of the past, the realism of the present and the intelligence for the future. In short, being the present and the future of the Church means renewal within tradition, renewal in continuity and permanence of the Source. It is an arm against the spirit of *tabularasa* of modernity and of the denial of all that was before hand.

In fact, modern people have the temptation to start everything fresh, as if the world just began with them. Yet, according to Alfred de Musset, we came and were born later in a so old world.²⁵ In other words, the Church did not begin with us and shall not cease after us either. She has a very long and furnished *curriculumvitae* (life’s profile) throughout the ages and human history. She has an everlasting history, which can trace back to God Himself through Christ, her alpha and omega, her beginning and ending (cf. Rev 1: 8; 21:6; 22:13). The present youth of the Church have to write their own history after the footsteps of all the saints of the Church counted in thousands of thousands. Thus, being young in the Church does not mean ignoring the root and source of the Church; the root and source we all come from as Christians.

However, young people cannot transmit what they do not receive, nor forward very well what they have not be well forwarded. That is why there should be an intergenerational policy, both in the Church and in society. Some African countries and some African dioceses fall into crises after the passing away of their heads of state or the retirements of their bishops respectively, just because the succession was not well prepared.

As noted by Ela, “the future belongs to those who shall know to hand on to the present generations the reasons to live and to hope.”²⁶The youth of the Church can properly effect this only with a life of witnesses and witnessing of Christ’s life and Gospel, as the Saints did. Christ, the Owner and Founder of the Church, was very young. He was and is “the companion and friend of youth.”²⁷Following and imitating Him in His apostolic life and holiness, young people can make changes and transformations in the Church and the world. That will be the youth’s own way to renew and refresh the Church from within.

With regard to this, the recent papal exhortation is calling to holiness as way of happiness and freedom.²⁸ Preaching the Gospel in its radicality, today, means to join holiness to our words. Holiness has authority and power in the preaching and transmitting process. We cannot be a preaching men and women of God if we are

²⁴ Benedict XVI, *Africae munus*, 64.

²⁵See Alfred de Musset, “Rolla”, in *Poésies Nouvelles* (Paris : Charpentier, 1857).

²⁶ Jean-Marc Ela, *Ma foi d’Africain*, 194.

²⁷ Paul VI, “Message aux Jeunes,” 654.

²⁸Francis, *Gaudete exultate* (Vatican City: Libreria Edictrice Vaticana, 2018), 100-102, 108.

not ready to sign up our preaching with holiness. Being ready for holiness, in today's context of terrorism and Christian persecution, also means to face and suffer martyrdom, individualism, secularism, indifference, relativism, refusal to social commitment and some other plagues mutilating the heart of the Gospel proclaimed.²⁹

As the Church, we cannot be, or claim to be, cantors of tradition and transmission, but being absent from the web's world of digital communication and information. Young people are a great opportunity to mark the Church's presence in this new world's media of digital technology, which constitute another means for transmission and education.

AN INTEGRAL HUMAN EDUCATION OF THE YOUTH

To Prepare the Present and Future: Teaching the Youth

In the address to the youth at the closing of Vatican II Council, it was said:

It is you who are to receive the torch from the hands of your elders and to live in the world at the period of the most gigantic transformations ever realized in its history. It is you who, receiving the best of the example of the teaching of your parents and your teachers, are to form the society of tomorrow. You will either save yourselves or you will perish with it.³⁰

Preparing the present and future of the Church means teaching the Youth. If we teach the youth today, we are preparing their future and ours. We are preparing the future of the Church. Even when they are still delinquent and prodigal, we still need to implore God's mercy upon them and strive for their education. They are hardened of heart and wasteful today, just as tomorrow they might become blessed heralds of the Gospel and heroes Church.

The question of education was boldly highlighted in the two African synods. Education is the key to the present and future of each human institution and society. If you teach your child, s/he will teach the future. But if he or she remains uneducated, similarly his/her future too will remain uneducated. He or she will make the future analphabetic.

In a great number, the poor of the future will mostly be counted among those who did not go to school, to the true school of integral humanism. Many of them are found in Africa. Yet, it is through education that we hand over patrimony received. Hence, there is a link between education and transmission, education and tradition. In other words, without the education of young people, the Church cannot pass on the treasure of revelation received from Christ to the coming generation.

To succeed in this, "young people need witnesses and teachers who can walk with them, teaching them to love the Gospel and to share it, especially with their peers, and thus to become authentic and credible messengers."³¹Hence, the famous statement of blessed Paul VI is still current. "Modern man [or woman] listens more

²⁹Francis, *Gaudete exultate*, chapter three.

³⁰ Paul VI, "Message aux Jeunes," 653.

³¹ Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* on the Word of God (Vatican City: Libreria Edictrice Vaticana, 2010), 104; and *Africae munus*, 61.

willingly to witnesses than to the teachers, and if he [or she] does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."³²

Catholic schools and education should be at the fore-front of education as proposed by *Ecclesia in Africa*.³³ Many of the first African leaders were trained by the missionaries. In training them, missionaries did not only transmit intellectual and moral education, but also that of spirituality and theology, a certain integral human formation. But today, missionary schools are among the most expensive schools in Africa. The poor cannot afford tuition in Catholic schools today, whether at the primary, secondary or higher levels. If, for example, the very first batches of African leaders freely benefited from Catholic education in the sixties and seventies, today, with neoliberal capitalism, it becomes difficult, especially for the Catholic schools, to train for free as it was formerly. The Church is challenged by a growing materialistic society, with its dictatorship of money that makes the cost and standard of life beyond the reach of the poor. Catholic schools of or for charity become less and less possible, and the poor are the first victims.

An Integral Human Education of the Youth

The education of the youth has to be holistic and integral. It should be considered according to a wholly human dimension. It should be an integral human education bringing together the intellectual, moral, technical, economic, social and spiritual aspects of education. In fact, the youth of today are living in a cosmopolitical environment. The Nations of this global world are more and more interdependent. The destinies and problems, concerns and joys of different people are also interconnected.³⁴

In this regard, the youth should be taught human ecology, in which the dignity of the human person is rediscovered and valued in the image of God. They should be taught interreligious and ecumenical dialogue. They are called to the culture of political, religious and cultural differences, especially within the context of tribal and ethnic groups which, sometimes, bring about tribal and ethnic violence in some parts of Africa. For about three decades now, there has been an escalating growth of wars and violence. As such one may call the youth of these decades the generation of war and terrorism. But the culture of diversity and complementarity, in a global and multipolar world, might arm them against religious intolerance, fanaticism, and terrorism, not without shaping in them the spirit of human pacific coexistence. In fact, given the prevalence of violence and barbarity of their time, some young people praise more a warrior's victor than a peace-doer. Therefore,

The *pastoral care of youth* must clearly be a part of the overall pastoral plan of Dioceses and parishes, so that young people will be enabled to discover very early on the value of the gift of self, an essential means for the person to reach maturity. In this regard, the celebration of World Youth Day is a privileged instrument for the

³² Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* on the Evangelisation (Vatican City: Libreria Edictrice Vaticana, 1975), 41.

³³ See John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 102.

³⁴ Cf. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 114.

pastoral care of youth, which favours their formation through prayer, study and reflection.³⁵

In his “seven necessary wisdoms for educating the future”, Edgar Morin speaks of teaching the human condition which is complex, multiplex or multidimensional.³⁶ For him, integral human education also underlines the question of teaching human earthly identity,³⁷ which demands to take into consideration the question and planetary destiny of the human being, so that it should have a global and planetary consciousness. Human earthly citizenship signifies to study and comprehend humanity as planetary destiny.³⁸ Indeed, ecological and planetary crises gush forth from a certain lack of sufficient understanding of the human global and earthly identity.

The youth of today is or has to be concerned with the questions of climate change and ecological challenges. It is to echo this that Pope Francis speaks of “ecological education and spirituality.”³⁹ This education has in view an alliance or connectivity between humanity and natural environment.⁴⁰ This earth is humanity’s first fatherland or motherland. It is part of human condition, because of what it provides. Human global and planetary consciousness would help us to avoid some predicaments related to racism, ethnicism, xenophobia, contempt, hatred and many other discriminatory acts in human relations and interrelationship.⁴¹ What is at the root of these plagues is human incomprehension. So, in fostering and teaching human mutual comprehension, humanity as body would live and trek towards a true pacific coexistence.

Rediscovering and Teaching African History, Humanities and Antiquities

As much as possible, African humanities and antiquities should be rediscovered and taught to young African people, so as to build and boost African and national patriotism; to help them love and value their numerous and rich cultures.⁴² Gustavo Gutiérrez calls it a liberation by faith, in order to drink from one’s well.⁴³ In fact, it is a holistic liberation, which will rise up from a deep African conscientiousness intake or undertaking, that our future and destiny is not in the past, present, values and culture of other people,⁴⁴ no matter how beautiful and better they might be.

Apart from the poor political, social and economic contexts in Africa, the tragic flux of African youth to Europe and for ventures of fortune and hazard, all

³⁵ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 93.

³⁶ See Edgar Morin, *Sept Savoirs Nécessaires Pour l’Éducation du Futur* (Paris: Unesco, 1999), chapter 3, in <http://www.agora21.org/unesco/7savoirs> (accessed March 18, 2018).

³⁷ Morin, *Sept Savoirs*, chapitre 4.

³⁸ Morin, *Sept Savoirs*, chapitre 7.

³⁹ Francis, *Laudato si*, chapter six, 202-246.

⁴⁰ Cf. Francis, *Laudato si*, 209-215.

⁴¹ See Morin, *Sept Savoirs*, chapitre 6.

⁴² Read on this Jean-Philippe Omotunde, *Manuel d’Études des Humanités Africaines*, volume 1 (Paris : Menaibuc, 2007).

⁴³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *La Libération par la Foi. Boire à son Propre Puits*, 2^{ème} édition (Paris : Cerf, 1988), 22.

⁴⁴ Fabien Eboussi-Boulaga, *A Contretemps*, 13.

over the world, are also due to cultural alienation and a certain lack of African self-esteem. *Ecclesia in Africa* has already made an appeal in that direction to the youth: "Dear young people, the Synod asks you to take in hand the development of your countries, to love the culture of your people, and to work for its renewal with fidelity to your cultural heritage, through a sharpening of your scientific and technical expertise, and above all through the witness of your Christianity."⁴⁵

CONCLUSION

The Church is the Church of the youth. She belongs to them as their mother, as the house for the Kingdom of God in which young men and maidens together, old men and women, children are called to praise and worship (cf. Ps 148:12). The youth are the youth of the Church. They belong to the Church as her children, the bud for her present and future. The Church cannot survive without the youth, nor the youth without the Church.

To build a Church with the youth means to look into some worrisome problems at political, economic and social levels, such as corruption, bad governance, dictatorship, war, social justice, unemployment, etc. African leaders should not transform the political office as their sick bed and grave, to the detriment

⁴⁵ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 115.

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of the young generation. This is why there is a need for justice, in politics, economy and society; and the politics, the economy and society of justice with common good, human dignity and human divine vocation as its focal point.

Finally, for youth to be the present and future of the Church and of the world, integral human education should be fostered and implemented in the formation of the youth. This presupposes rediscovering and teaching African history, humanities and antiquities. As such, if the youth is the present and the future of the Church, the Church also is the present and the future of the youth.