

African Journal of Contextual Theology
 SIST, Attakwu – Enugu
 P.O. Box 9696, Enugu, Nigeria
ajct@sistenugu.com

Subscriptions

The *African Journal of Contextual Theology – AJCT* – (ISSN 2141-3037) is published annually. The subscription price is the following:

Nigeria: N500 per issue

Foreign: US\$20.00 per issue (including postage)

Payment may be made in cash or by cheque, payable to:

Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu
Enugu, Nigeria

The issues are available from Spiritan International School of Theology (cf. address above).

Permissions

For information on how to request permissions to reproduce articles / information from this journal, please visit www.sistenugu.com / SIST Journal.

All editorial correspondence should be sent to:

The editor-in-chief

African Journal of Contextual Theology

Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu

P.O. Box 9696 Enugu, Nigeria

e-mail: nwachukwums@gmail.com ; editorajct@yahoo.com

Advertising

Enquiries about advertising and requests for review of Books should be sent to:

The Editor – Advertising

Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu

P.O. Box 9696 Enugu, Nigeria

e-mail: ajct@sistenugu.com

Journal Logo: the logo of the Journal is the map of Africa and the SIST logo, with the symbolic depiction of the Holy Spirit and the book. The Holy Spirit inspires our studies (the book) and the context (Africa) in which we do theology.



All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means without prior written permission of Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu – Enugu, Nigeria.

Typeset, by SIST Publications.

Printed and bound by
Real Images
6 Bishop Ayogu Street,
Uwani – Enugu
08038814020, 07057422314

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE FUTURE OF CATHOLICISM IN AFRICA

Shabayang, Barnabas Sama'ila, Ph.D.

1. Opening Remarks

There is a strong perception that the Holy Spirit is visibly present in all peoples, human cultures and civilizations. Being the pivotal instrument of God's presence in persons and cultures, its activities predate the arrival of Christianity in Africa. Its dynamic presence, movement and massive activity in the lives of people reflected in the high record of conversion to Christian practice amongst the baptized Christians in Africa are not only impressive but also reveal the marvels of God's love for our dear continent. The projection to the future, of what massive positive results to be recorded and expected in the conversion of souls to God, in the development of Christian centres of worship, in the transformation of lives as the result of genuine faith commitments, in the renewal of lives shattered by violence and wars, injustice and manipulations, especially of those marginalized and oppressed by colonial powers, tribal warlords, and political divides *are amongst the agenda of the Holy Spirit*. This is a great mystery, beyond our visions as shepherds and flock in the vineyard of the Lord. From the foregoing, it then means that the equilibrium which decides what serves as the departing point of the agenda of the Holy Spirit need be in consonance with what will be our daily commitments. In this lies the expectation to unfold what ought to be the future of Catholicism in Africa: to vindicate, teach and direct all people on

the power of God to save the down trodden, to liberate the oppressed, and salvage the prisoners of conscience. It is then a conviction that the Holy Spirit is not just the *Hope* that comes from God, but is the *Hope* itself; *It* is not just the teacher, but perfect God who teaches all peoples, cultures and nations. Finally, the Holy Spirit is not just the medicine, but the consolation and the justice of God to those disposed in grace.

2. The Paradox of Africa in the Light of History

Africa, as a people and culture, pre-dates scientific maps, European and American exploration. From the measurement to ascertain the population of Africans to the Western weighing scales of objects and the discipline of psychological assessment of manners sometimes ravaged by conflicts, communal clashes and wars, "Africa is seen today in the world community as a continent of misery. Many statistics trumpet this reality."¹ All these (Western statistics) are geared towards the articulation of belief system or of what seems to be the geometric measurement of ethical behavior of a given people that produces a standard to classify them - lower beings. Laurenti Magesa wrote: "We must remember that God has always had witnesses everywhere in the world,"² in our case, the Holy Spirit. As such, we should avoid the pitfalls of arriving at irrational conclusions by deciding what might constitute a narrow and a subjective standard that seems to mark the final point of where Africa and Africans *are* at the moment. It is more likely that beyond words one can say that

¹Uzukwu, Elochukwu E., *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1996, 1.

²Magesa, Laurenti, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa*, Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa/Daughters of St. Paul, 2014, 189.

sometimes the negative insinuations as discussed above seem to have set the barometer of the historical departures; they also seem to have limited the measuring line that seems to negate the position of who we are as Africans as *adjudged* by Western religious scientists, historians, journalists, archeologists and even Christian missionaries as facts that pertain to the African continent. But curious as it seems, we are in the mysterious agenda of the Holy Spirit; it is when it is worst that it becomes better each time.

The mystique that constitutes the African palaver is a paradox. "For instance, we, the African people, have a rich and proud cultural and religious history; we are a homogenous race. We are strong-willed people, brave warriors, productive workers in all spheres of life, religiously zealous and ever linked to the cult of our ancestors; but yet we are stricken by hunger, illiteracy, communal conflicts and war. Nevertheless, the negative indices do not deter us from looking forward to the mysterious activities of the Holy Spirit in shaping the future of Catholicism in Africa, as this is an instructive venture in the better planning of what will be the eschatological hope of evangelizing the people on the true doctrine of God. Since most scholars agreed that history is the handmaid of theology, it then becomes very pertinent to cite the erudite statement made by *Al-Birumi* (937-1050): "It is our duty to proceed from what is near to what is distant, from what is known to that which is less known, to gather the traditions from those who have reported them, to correct them as much as possible and to leave the rest as it is, in order to make our work

help anyone who seeks truth and loves wisdom."³ The dice has been cast: the paradox of history as the unfolding of past events into the mainstream of the present happenings in order to brighten the future is becoming or/is meant to shape human destiny. Thus, the very act of recounting the progression of Christianity as it grew from its infancy in Africa to what it is now is to set the records right; doing that is to harness the interplay venture of projecting the majestic presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the gamut of events that lie ahead of us on the prospect of intensive evangelization of the African continent which is so much to be desired.

The paradox of the history of Catholicism in Africa (14th– 16th centuries) was once again cast in the negative light in series of rage, conflict and senseless wars that ensued in the 1990s. Uzukwu wrote: "In Rwanda and Burundi ethnic strife makes it impossible for the BaHutu and BaTutsi to live in peace. Machetes, den-guns, and automatic rifles are freely used in the barbaric massacre of hundreds of thousands of children, women, and men."⁴ Incidentally, this happened when the Holy Spirit was lightening the face of the African continent at the commencement of the First African Synod (1994); later to be followed by the Second Synod (2009) on reconciliation which recorded the human agenda of a people seeking the face of God, who had turned their faces and had entrusted and bequeathed the African mission of the expansion of the Christian faith as the sole

³Birumi, quoted in LaminSanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact*, New York: Orbis Books, 1994, 1.

⁴Uzukwu, Elochukwu E., *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, 1.

agenda of the trinity, being propelled by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

3. The Holy Spirit directing African Ancestry in search of Roots of Christian Faith

Upon reading the accounts of the early Church, one directly encounters visible presence of the role and the pivotal directions of the Holy Spirit in nurturing the 'elders in Faith' of African origin. In the first instance, it is recorded that the birth, public life and the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, which evidently abound in the New Testament pages contain the rich activities of people with African extraction. *Ab initio*, Jesus Christ did not only have contacts with people of African extractions as recorded in the Gospels, His parents took flight with him to Egypt when they were afraid of the wicked Herod (c.f Matt. 2: 13-15). In his otherwise admirable account of African Christianity among modern Egyptian Christians, Laurenti Magesa, quoting John Baur (1994:21) expresses, "A *spurious* tradition goes as far as pointing out the palm tree which Our Lady embraced during childbirth. Other legends affirm that the Holy Family spent some time in the mountains of Ethiopia."⁵ Instructive as these historical accounts may seem, they are a smoke pointing out that there exist a mystery fire beneath the breath of God in Africa - the Holy Spirit, who has ever remained the undercurrent that nurtures and illumines the dark continent of Africa with the bright presence of Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer.

In view of the above, it caused Magesa to further remark: "Do not these traditions, *naive as they are*, reveal the conviction that

⁵Magesa, Laurenti, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa*, 135.

Christianity existed early in Africa and that deep in their hearts Africans are truly Christians?"⁶ The great biblical and historical events recorded prove that the promptings of the Holy Spirit is beyond the scope of human historical intelligence, even as the popular saying holds sway: "We live in time, but God lives in eternity, we err, but God is perfect, as He is the master planner." God, through the agent of the Holy Spirit is the *Only Being* that follows consistently, "the road less travelled,"⁷ and that road is often found in the African continent. In tracing the rich and dependable ancestry tradition of the African people, Benezet Bujo wrote: "In the Christian tradition, there are fixed times for the worship of God; but the African ancestor-cult is not organized around celebrations of this kind. The individual is not obliged to unite with others in order to honour the ancestors, for they are honoured in every good deed which a man performs in the course of his daily life."⁸ This socio-cultural constituency leads the African person to unveil his/her intimate, deep and spiritual connection to God even as Bujo further writes: "Africa knows no distinction between individual, social and political life; but life can only be enjoyed in its fullness when the ancestors are remembered and honoured."⁹ It is on this rich platform then that the Holy Spirit is crafting out the pathway that leads souls of Africans to salvation through and by the zealous means of

⁶Magesa, Laurenti, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa*, 135.

⁷Dunne, S. John, *The Road of the Heart's Desire: An Essay on the Cycles of Story and Song*, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002, ix.

⁸Bujo, Benezet, *African Theology in its Social Context*, Trans. John O'Donohue, Kenya: St. Paul Publications - Africa, 1992, 23.

⁹Ibid.

missionary enterprise, from the womb and humble beginnings of great African theologians up to now, our time in the 21st century.

4. **Crafting the Soul of Missionary Evangelization in Africa up to the 21st Century**

The Holy Spirit, being the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, is God. *Ab initio*, the Holy Spirit is one of the agents of creation, as contained in the story of creation of the earth. As regards this, St. Pope John Paul II wrote: "At the beginning of time, as God's Spirit moved over the waters, he began to communicate something of his goodness and beauty to all creation."¹⁰ Truly, Christianity has always taught that the beauty of God is explicitly manifested in the activities of Jesus Christ in the Paschal Mystery and that of the Holy Spirit; by creation, by wisdom, by expansion and by the mystery of fruitful growth. In tracing the story of the cradle of African prosperous advance and the fast growth of the Catholic faith in the continent which was firmly built on the strong faith and the great missionary spirit of some Europeans who sacrificed their lives and wealth to bequeath faith and to provide education and health care delivery system; it is quite worthy to examine what the German Scholar Walbert wrote: "The founders of the two greatest missionary institutes in Africa, *Fr. Libermann and Cardinal Lavigerie*, gave their missionaries very modern-sounding instructions; Libermann for instance, said, 'Do not judge at first sight and do not judge by what you have seen in Europe. Free yourselves from Europe, from its customs, from its spirit! Become Negroes with the Negroes. Do not form

¹⁰ John Paul II, *The Mystery of God's Spirit*, Address to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders of Austria, November 29, 1986, in AAS 79 (1987), 973-975; Origin, 16-26 (1986), 473-475.

them in a European way, but leave to them what is their own."¹¹ By this we have seen the classic spirit of integrating the faith in the culture and charism of the African people; thus, a strong indication that the Holy Spirit is always crafting the affairs of human inspiration. The role of the Holy Spirit is behind the success of the missionary enterprise in Africa. It is clear that the Holy Spirit is the principal evangelizer, which means that it has always arisen in the world, great men/women of faith to preach the Christian faith on a firm and rooted ground. It was in the same vein that Lavigerie wrote: "You should let the elders tell all the old legends, the whole history of the tribe, the origin of mankind and of the world, the original revelation and, in general, everything which the Christian doctrine of the unity of the human race could confirm."¹² These were essentials and still are explicit dynamics of transmitting the truth of the Christian faith in the African continent now and in the future; a clear task in vogue by African bishops in the First and Second Synods.

These two well-timed synods have served as pointers and great departures of the African descent into what seems to be a master plan of the agenda of the Holy Spirit into new frontiers of crafting indigenous missionary leaders that will usher the Catholic Christian faith into the 21st century with new vistas. On expecting the African clergy and lay faithful to do more in the areas of *Holiness and Mission*, the First Synod (1994) charged: "The Synod reaffirmed that all the sons and daughters of Africa

¹¹ Fr. Libermann, in Buhlmann, Walbert, *The Missions on Trial: A moral for the future from the archives of today*, New York: Orbis Books, 1980, 74.

¹² Cardinal Lavigerie, in Buhlmann, Walbert, *The Missions on Trial: A moral for the future from the archives of today*, 74.

are called to holiness and to be witnesses to Christ throughout the world. The lesson of history confirms that by the action of the Holy Spirit evangelization takes place above all through the witness of charity, the witness of holiness."¹³ For sure, wherever the Holy Spirit has his imprint, he does not only transmit vision, but even the power to re-create, regenerate and produce fruitfulness for the ripe harvest of souls for God's Kingdom on earth; and there is no other continent where this obvious manifestations are emerging than the African continent.

Prior to the convocation of the First African synod, on the Ecumenical front, the devised work of the Holy Spirit was already felt on the African continent amongst Christians in general. Most African religious leaders and even baptized members are aware that the Holy Spirit is at work in the continent, as testimony of faith records that the Divine Spirit crafts and unfolds God's masterpiece of evangelization on the continent beyond European actors to African zealous missionaries as cast by Adrian Hastings who wrote on this progressive truth:

The fifth assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Africa, in Nairobi during November 1975, proclaimed by its very location, still more by a large proportion of its participants and the theme of many of its discussions, one simple and significant fact - 'the Christian Churches are today thriving in Africa as almost nowhere else. The era of 'missions', in which Christianity in Africa was seen as a plant which had

¹³John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, n. 136, (September 14, 1995): *AAS* 88 (2 Januarii 1996), 5-82.

hardly taken root, which needed constant care from outside, which it was a duty to instruct but to which one who certainly not expect to listen' - that era is over.¹⁴

Surely, the era is gone by, and historical records can only serve as evidence of references to European pioneering work. This is because Africa as a continent is, in the 21st century, fast becoming a fertile ground for nurtured and grounded faith communities. We have reached an age of re-discovery of our potentials through the efforts of our great sons and daughters who are scientists, philosophers, geographers, historians, theologians. Particularly, the clergy and the laity have awoken from sleep after the first (1994) and second synod (2009) on Africa to the point of self-actualization. In classic terms and in the language of theology, the *aggiornamento* in Africa is occurring through the instrumentality and work of the Holy Spirit. Radcliffe wrote that as Christians: "Surely, there must be some experience of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but the most profound experiences are not necessarily dramatic."¹⁵ Thus, we are to work by the Holy Spirit's agenda, which renews and enlightens, which transforms and directs to greater maturity of life. This can be attained in the life of a baptized Catholic as one engages in *Life in the Spirit Seminar*; by engaging in weekly Bible Study; an evolution of moral and spiritual maturity surfaces which nurtures the individual's spiritual growth in an impressive way and leads to evangelization of the African

¹⁴Hastings, Adrian, *African Christianity: An essay in interpretation*, London & Dublin, Geoffrey Chapman 1976, 1.

¹⁵Radcliffe, Timothy, *Take the Plunge: Living Baptism and Confirmation*, London: Bloomsbury, 2012, 163.

continent. Crafting the genuine Divine Spirit in Africa has been very much propelled in the 20th and now the 21st century by the visits of the last four popes. The clear reasons why Blessed Paul VI (1969), St. John Paul II (1980-2002), Benedict XVI (2010-2011) and Francis (2015) paid encouraging apostolic visits to Africa were to sustain the faith and assist its growth to greater maturity so that it will flourish from its local roots to the enviable level of integrating into its universal character.

In Catholic theology, every baptized person is a missionary par excellence. So in order to craft the course of this Christ-centred mission, remember those words of Meister Eckhart: "Even if you cannot conceive of yourself as near to God, you should still regard God as near to you."¹⁶ By this, we ought to know that the activities of the Holy Spirit go beyond inspiration to actualization of virtues. It caused Radcliffe to write a caution against internal purging of the *Body of Christ* going on in our Christian communities in Africa as he said: "If one counts a vivid experience of the Spirit as the only valid sign that one is sharing the life of God, then when there are arid periods, as always happens, one can easily become disillusioned. The tragedy is that so many Christians who leave their own Churches and become Pentecostals eventually cease to believe in anything at all."¹⁷ These are unfortunately the gradual heretical viruses that are fast eating up the strong base of the Christian faith in the African continent: the roots are obvious, the urgent quest for wealth/

¹⁶Talks of Instruction no. 17, quoted in Woods, Meister Eckhart, *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises and Defence*, ed., and Trans. New York: B. McGinn and E. Colledge, 1981, 163.

¹⁷Radcliffe, Timothy, *Take the Plunge: Living Baptism and Confirmation*, 163.

miracles/instant reward/spiritual gratification via long and noisy prayers. In the 21st century, in order to craft out the soul of missionary enterprise; one needs to know that one does not really dwell on counting large numbers of baptized members (even as Pentecostal Churches do), but it so much relies on the grace of God through the Holy Spirit in the manifestations of quality life of Christian witnessing - growth in God's grace.

But on the flip side, what seems to have slowed down the full manifestation of the activities of the Holy Spirit in the African continent are the craze and direct quest for spiritual/instant material gratification, which the Nigerian Bishops as well as SECAM have unequivocally condemned.¹⁸ Despite the abuses, the creative presence of the Holy Spirit which crafts the soul of God's self-communication to persons and nations, manifested in acts of evangelizing and renewing the earth is ever dynamic. Furthermore, this is attested to the fact that the presence of the Holy Spirit was visible at the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan, that it was visibly present at the Pentecost, where persons of African descent were present as noted by Luke in Acts 2:1-11. This drive has ever continued to the present in the 21st century, the perspective by which the Holy Spirit is being viewed as the pivotal instrument and Star of evangelization.¹⁹ It then shows that the dynamism and unique fire enkindled by the Holy Spirit at the baptism of each person has always served as the engine room

¹⁸C. f. CBCN, on *Guidelines for the Healing Ministry in the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, in *The Voice of the Voiceless*, ed. Peter Schineller, Ibadan: Daily Graphics Nigeria Limited, 2002, 335.

¹⁹Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, (8 December 1975), 14: *AAS* 68 (1976), 13; See also John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 55 & 56, *AAS* 88 (1996), 34-35.

that drives the making of converts in the African continent enviable. As the creative soul of the Holy Spirit discharges its full potentials, it infuses and creates new events as can be found already through the functional Small Christian Communities of East African sub-region, and through the enigmatic *Life in the Spirit Seminar* of the Catholic Charismatic Movement in Nigeria and in many other African countries. For by it, the actions of men and women who bear testimonies by spoken words, exemplary deeds and courageous witness, have borne positive fruits; as soon as these acts are recorded, they soon become chronicles and annals of history over the passage of time, thus becoming faith tradition that constitute our mileage stone. It is then wise to state that in the African continent of the 21st century, there are high prospects to expect the growth and development of the Catholic faith.²⁰ Perhaps these clear efforts pose as means of helping us to assess our consciences as Africans and plan well for the future drive towards evangelization.

5. The Holy Spirit as the Agent that mirrors Human Conscience in Africa

The pivotal role of the Holy Spirit in nurturing the growth of Catholic faith in Africa is a positive mystery; yet this manifestation of God's goodness is being recorded daily by the high increase of indigenous Clergy and Religious men and

²⁰See the comments of Allen, L, John, who discusses at length the future of Catholicism in Africa (with Latin America and Asia) to be the hot spots "where many important theological and pastoral currents originate." Stating that these other cities have traditionally taken the lead: "Paris, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Toronto, to say nothing of how Rome – continue to be important centers of Catholic thought and life," See *The Future Church*, 432.

women. This mystery is guaranteed by the sustaining of God's love that fires the conscience of holy men and women, politicians and social workers to not only their existential reality; but also mirror the future of the Catholic faith in Africa by decisive choices as missionaries of charity and mercy. The ever invigorating presence of active men and women influences the societal development which is further strengthened by the visionary and illuminating power of the Holy Spirit that searches human consciences in order to sift out erroneous political and ill-spiritual practices. But in unique way, it is meant to stamp out in Africa, the hideous and grave evil done to millions of innocent people due to witchcraft and wickedness, due to tribalism and nepotism. It is in this perspective that the affirmation of Weigel holds credence: "Evangelical Catholicism is a call to constant conversion of life, which involves both the rejection of evil, and active participation in the works of service and charity."²¹ This proposal is very important for the Church in Nigeria, with particular reference to the Northern States of Nigeria, as well as Kenya, South Sudan, and Uganda where both ethnic and religious clashes and conflicts are still going on, destroying the very fabric of human mutual peaceful co-existence. As if to assert the massive hatred that do exist in some Catholic African communities, Katongole explicitly points to the presence and the existence of religious and communal hate, tension and crisis when he writes: "We have taken ... tribe, ethnicity, and national identity too seriously. In many places, it has become idolatry ... Unless we are defined by new identity, all our Easter celebration is nothing but haunted liturgy, with death, genocide, and betrayal

²¹Weigel, George, *Evangelical Catholicism: Deep Reform in the 21st-Century Church*, New York: Basic Books, 2013, 66.

lurking in its shadow."²² The new identity is expected that the Holy Spirit leads the way through the inspiration and insight of Catholic theologians. This action can unveil the agenda of the Holy Spirit, though a mystery, yet it is inexhaustible in the African continent; to help stop some notorious policies of Catholic political leaders like: President Paul Biya of Cameroon and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe who have been in power for 36 years, and who are perpetrating injustice and are responsible for killing of innocent people in their countries. We quite agree with Gula who wrote: "If we are ever going to grow in our loving relationship with God and neighbour, then we need to discern what is truly loving. Conscience is our capacity for making such discernment."²³ To ensure an effective growth of the Catholic faith in Africa in the 21st century, we actually need the continuous healing of memories that will purify our consciences.

6. Conclusion

The supernatural presence of the Holy Spirit is needed in Africa to heal and assist both the Catholic clergy and the lay faithful to mirror our human conscience so as to be guided by a superior Being, the divine power to command and lead the Church into a promising future. This can be guaranteed and embodied in the undisputable leadership of the Holy Spirit, who gives direction and pioneers our actions towards promoting the equilibrium that tunes societal harmony into promoting the *Common Good* and

²²Katongole, Emmanuel, ed. *African Theology Today*, Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2009, 157.

²³Gula, Richard M., Conscience, in *Christian Ethics: An Introduction*, Bernard Hoose ed., London & New York: Continuum, 2000, 110.

God's kingdom. As it is known, in African cosmology, the cult of our Ancestors and Elders occupies a strategic prime place in the socio-religious world view; in that there is no worthy African philosophy of religion that can afford to exclude this chronicle order. As it is believed amongst African scholars, just like St. Paul told the *Areopagus* in Athens (Acts 17: 16-21), the vision for the future is better captured through the powerful lenses of Our African Ancestors. They are custodians of both the faith and culture.

African Catholic theologians are gradually developing a paradigm shift of not only inculturating biblical virtues into the main stream of religio-social life but also carving out a positive pathway of placing side-by-side ecclesial teachings accommodating African thought pattern with core dogmatic teachings. In this periscope, it places the Holy Spirit on a vantage point to help envision what constitutes the morality of the African people, a venture that watches and points out the way forward for them in reality and in fact. This explicit role of the Holy Spirit of gathering all the sons and daughters of African descent into God's kingdom is prominently echoed in the proceedings of the First and Second African Synods held in Rome even as Okure adds:

The primary work of the Holy Spirit is, with Christ, "to gather in a unity all the scattered children of God" (John 11: 52). This, we say earlier, is why Pentecost is called the reversal of Babel. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to destroy the barriers of mis-understanding, separatism, tribalism, classism, sexism, racism, and all other obstacles that stand in the way of harmonious human

relationships (Gal. 3: 28). Recognizing the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives leads us to fight against all these divisions...²⁴

This is indeed a spectacular point of arriving at the omega point of fruitfulness of removing the obstacles that hinder the easy flow of the activities of the Holy Spirit of bringing the Catholic faith in its dynamic nature into the 21st century; a promising Church with high ideals.

²⁴Okure, Teresa, The Holy Spirit in the New Testament, in *Proceedings of the Fourth Theology Week of the Catholic Institute of West Africa*, ed. Augustine U. Nebechukwu, Port Harcourt: CIWA PRESS, 1993, 37.