



EXPECTATIONS ON AFRICAN CATHOLIC YOUTHS IN THE YEAR OF HOPE AS GATHERED OR UNGATHERED AGENTS OF FAITH

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Abstract

Youth is an age grade, a flowing fountain of fruitfulness, thus it is a timeline of activity, integral development and growth to adult life. The Catholic Church in Africa and at the global level, mentors and engages the youths. This is decisive and deliberate to form them by using modern technics which are transformational. By the use of psychology harness the treasure inbuilt in them, this essay uses existential method to explore their potentials. Through various layers of education, pastoral and biblical methods, the Church do use correct strategy as instruments of service to guide youth formation in parishes, dioceses and schools, like in Veritas University, Abuja. Ethical values are employed to propel a drive for excellence in learning, doctrine and to build faith. Through SECAM and various Episcopal Conferences, proper attention are given to the youth members in the 21st century to receive and be nurtured in the faith. This drive promotes wholistic community's orientation, well-being, this can lead to fruitfulness. The Catholic Church by choice have trained youths on modern agricultural methods to increase food production, how to generate ICT skills, how by socio-cultural interactions, they are rooted in the African culture. The youth are the catalyst of evolution to greatness, the strength of families, communities, Churches and Mosques. Despite the threats of Artificial Intelligence, the Church must intensify its drive in ethical, spiritual and moral formation to build a strong base in the Year of Hope 2025.

Keywords: African, Catholic, Youths, Faith, Hope

Introduction

To be youthful is to have vision and energy to work, study, play, pray and transform self, family and the human society at large. So, to cast the dice, we intent discussing an urgent and crucial issue that can serve as guide to enhance the quality of pastoral effectiveness in the 21st century - evolving a clear ministry for *gathered and ungathered youths in Africa*. To properly examine the causes of cultural divisions, the curve that creates ill-social



stratifications, the ugly face of religious bias and false classifications of youth group in Nigeria into Christians or Muslims, Catholics or Pentecostals, North or South. These stratifications and innuendos demand deep heart searching questions to de-classify these orientations, to offer the *Gospel of Hope*, for unity, peace and development. The quest to embark on surveying the dynamics, the effective methods and to employing basic strategies needed in handling the issues of *gathered and ungathered youths* needs patience, but basic training in the Church in this Year of Hope, 2025. We are careful to plan the felt needs of youth groups to provide mentoring skills and to further proffer steps toward developing pastoral and technical approaches. These efforts will craft talents and invoke interests in our Catholic Youths in Africa toward seeking occupational jobs and skills to expand felt needs of entrepreneurial development for self-development.

To asset the obvious, the time is now to begin building a positive orientation for the Youth in the Church; the Catholic Bishops, Priests and Religious need to understand that we are called to active and effective ministry like Jesus Christ did over 2000 years ago. We are in the world of daily digital change, thus we must declare openly "THE JESUS REVOLUTION"¹ timeline. Though in Nigeria as elsewhere in the remaining 53 African countries; the socio-economic and even the political timeline may be scary, complicated and sophisticated, laden with millions of troubles of terrorism² and woes that causes disorder, disorientation, giving to rise to massive youth migration to Europe at their peril, with maximum risk of their lives and family. Currently it cannot be denied the ugly side and the high rise of the waves of suicide (Lagos) that we are experiencing, due to the displacement of families. None the less, there is no better time to hope in the Supremacy of God to remedy the cause of our lives than now.

In this essay, the parameter of classifying the youth groups as *Gathered and Ungathered* is necessary, as there are youth that are literate and those who are not, youths that are employed, and yet those who have finished various stages of educational and skillful training who cannot find work or jobs, youth who are children of politicians, who have access to the best life can offer, and yet, children who cannot even eat a meal a day. This essay seeks to provide a platform for nurturing a common interest in these negligent youths, who though qualify but are not opportune in society to gain employment due the stratification of society. It is a deliberate choice we are

¹Dunning James B., *Ministries: Sharing God's Gifts*, Winona, Minnesota: Saint Mary's Press, 1980, p. 35

²Horgan, John, *The Psychology of Terrorism*, London and New York: Routledge, 2005, pp 1, 23



set to mobilize the powers that be, develop strategies and further evolve instruments of persuasion to enable us capture all youths into the Kingdom of God. In the structure provided by the Catholic Bishops' Conference in Nigeria for example, the youths are classified and gathered in parishes and dioceses as: Catholic Youth Organization (CYON), Catholic Cadet, Men of Order *et cetera*, and the ungathered youths group *are a sea of non-active*, who are seen on the streets begging for food, out school children, some are orphans and rejected yet we need to create a pathway of hope.

The final motif is to develop decisively the vehicles of cohesion to motivate and made available the instruments of engagement to mentor *faith-oriented-youths* who can demonstrate moral-social-religious behaviours that are explicit actions for God in the 21st century. More so, in our parishes, schools and universities, as a faith-based organizations at the universal Church, it is our collective dream to improve on specific ministry of salvaging our youths. Our campaign must *build think thanks* targeted at mentoring, engineering and re-engineering our youth, based on attractive faith praxis like forming youth drama clubs, youth communicators club for *Catholic Television Station (CTV)*. The primary motif must be clear: Jesus Christ must always be the center of motivation by what He came about – salvation.

The life of Jesus Christ as the central source of Youth activity: In classic Christology, Jesus Christ is the *signature* of God. Thus, according to James B. Dunning who wrote and asserted that: "In our Christian faith we draw even closer to Jesus because there, God's Word reaches its crescendo."³ The New Testament openly testified that in Jesus Christ, "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1: 14). Even as Saint Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles later taught that in Jesus Christ is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1: 15). Dunning further illustrated the point vividly as he wrote: "Jesus is not the first image. Jesus is not the first in whom the Word became flesh. In our faith, Jesus is the ***"Image of images,"*** the Word received and proclaimed as never before or since, a Word which has become, in Rahner's words, "the poetry of God our Father," the enfleshment of his wildest dreams, his delightful wonder, his most vivid imagination."⁴ We therefore use these powerful theological illustrations and metaphors as above to further confirm what our youth need to know on the personality, faith on the center stage Jesus Christ in Veritas University, Abuja, as well as in the other eight Catholic Universities in Nigeria. It must be clearly affirm, that Jesus Christ occupies the most central position in the

³Dunning James B., *Ministries: Sharing God's Gifts*, p. ³⁰

⁴Dunning James B., *Ministries: Sharing God's Gifts*, ³⁰



heart of the youths in the world; so as to enable them to search for symbols to hold, as we submit that if they hold on Him, He becomes for them a specific character and faith. Even yet, if they accept Jesus Christ into their lives, if they allow the fire of His Spirit to catch them young, they will totally be enveloped by His love and become instruments of illumination at home and in schools. It is a mystery that divine transmission leads to gathering of resources and the big pull towards conversion (c.f. Acts 2: 12-32). It is on scriptural testimony, that as St. Peter preached after the spectacular descend of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost), afterwards many adults and youths, who were gathered and ungathered were converted to the Lord, (C.f. Acts 2: 12-32).

It must however be known that Jesus Christ began his public ministry at the age of thirty, and died a painful death three years after, haven fulfilled the greatest goal ever achieved by any youthful person on earth, the redemption of humanity on the cross of Calvary is salvific as much as it is an attraction to the youth. It causes Robert J. Fox write: "The person of Jesus, as eternal Son of God ... Jesus is the one mediator between God and man, between heaven and earth."⁵ The central issue in youth ministry is positive engagement; it is cardinal as it constitutes what forms the point of departure to guarantee a deep interaction with our Youth in daily extensive ministry in search and to catch them young for God in the 21st century.

As African or Nigerian youths, it is critical to examine what we take into our culture, time and civilization even as it appears obvious that there is massive influence of European or American structured life on our youths in African. They seem to be copy-cats, virtually, adopting wholistically, the pattern of their dressings, hair-do, naked music dance, these mostly negates our values and faith-based convictions. Other negative vibes include, tattoo paintings, having massive and mainly negative influences on the internet, music, films, social media. Sadly to say, that our Nigerian/African youths are mostly misguided by what they consumed of the screens of television, YouTube, Yahoo, Facebook, Instagram. The youths are being pulled and led-by-the-nose to believe that Western cultures are the ultimate. The group dynamics (*mainly illuminati*⁶ *Satanic cults*) are fast and negatively eating up our cherish Afrocentric life values. There is no gainsaying that Africa is not be compared to the Eurocentric or American Capitalism, but simply

⁵Fox, Rev. Robert J., The Catholic Faith, Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., ¹⁹⁸³, p.⁴⁰

⁶The acts of seductive dance initiates of youths via music sound tracts, dance, visions and peer group competitions, is not only endemic, it is evil and a cultic Satanic and magnetic, access these details on the internet, www.illuminatiofficialwebsite.co.za/ Accessed on 17/04/2017



must be access in the context, ethics and structure, this is because our cosmic reality is built on: '*Together we stand*' syndrome. This works better when our bishops, priests and religious work as a team, and do have a pull on the resources of youth's spirit to pave determining directions our youth's actions and energy are expended. It is evidential, that the First and Second Synods⁷ on the African Church had addressed some grossed negative behaviours that are destroying our Youths, if care is not taken, it might affect the morality of our youths, thus are ever determined irrespective of classification of Gathered and *Ungathered* youth to offer a roadmap.

Ab initio, Jesus' focus on his public ministry was to gather the ungathered youths based on establishing the Kingdom of God on earth: For he started in His preaching by saying 'repent for the Kingdom of God is near...' c.f. Mark 1: 14ff. Thus, He set out to establish the existential truth that the act of salvation, reconciliation, justice and peace are paramount. (c. f. Lk 4: 18ff. So too, at each point in time, the Catholic Church which is universal in character, faith and content of belief, have urge our African or Nigerian youth that they must stay focus, be oriented and stick to Jesus Christ; the author and finisher of our faith. (e.g. Eph....).

Jesus Christ is mentor of the Youth per excellent, His creative intelligence and healthy psychology of relation and relational behaviour with persons of all walk of life which He exhibited during his earthly ministry was a masterpiece thus has always remained a point of reference and has continued to create a new world order. He dealt with *issues* of corruption of the mind, heart and body, not people's shameful self-image, c.f. the Gospel of Matthew Chapters 5 -7. He dealt with practical issues that separate individuals from God, best portrayed in the parable of the Prodigal Son (c.f. Lk 15: 11-32); Jesus further handled the issue of focusing his preaching on the eschatological spirit of conversion, freedom of worship and sincerity of religious practice and not viewed life loosely on flimsy assumptions, hatred, and Xenophobic mal-behaviour as vividly discussed by Saint John in 4: 5-42. The ministry of the African Catholic Priest⁸, the Male and Female Religious, must be a complete departure from just the regular public preaching, or philanthropic and social engagements which are often exhibited by employed, social and voluntary workers - we must be Christ-centred in giving our ministry to the Youths' development.

⁷St. Pope John Paul II (April ¹⁹⁹⁴) and Pope Benedict XVI (October ²⁰⁰⁹) respectively convened the two Synods on

Africa, ecclesial and Trinitarian faith received at baptism

⁸Shabayang, Barnabas Sama'ila, African Catholic Priest as Elder, Reconciler and Mediator: A Reflection of

Christ's Kenosis in the teachings of St. John Paul II and the African Bishops, Kaduna: Benwood Graphix, ²⁰¹⁷, p. ³⁵⁵



As ordained priests and religious, we must know that we are fully employed by God to exhibit Trinitarian love by our baptismal character in the pastoral area where as the late Cardinal Yves Congar once said: "The Wide World is My Parish."⁹ It then means that a retrospective reading of pastoral activities engaged by European and American missionaries must be improve henceforth in our parishes and dioceses; we are to incorporate cultural dynamics in order to advance beyond what the Europeans and American missionaries bequeathed to us. We are to employ micro-economic, eco-spirituality and spiritual dynamism in Youth-Priest relational engagement; we must evolve a deep seated socio-cultural, an economic master plan in each and every parish in our country Nigeria. This initiative is capable of generating a mature youth group that will be highly creative and futuristic in nature as mapping out a discipline goal oriented life. It will form a vision that is capable of creating economic as well as moral wealth; a vision that is capable of generating a healthy youth group that can be self-employed, dependable and self-reliant; Dr. Seligman firmly asserted that: "Research suggests, however, that more happiness actually causes more productivity and higher income"¹⁰. It is important to emphasize here clearly African/Nigerian adults, teachers, mentors, pastors of souls (ministers of God) and above all, parents must ensure that they generate and motivate their children as adolescents and growing youths to be happy by character formation or by having healthy disposition most of the time.

Developing the Socio-economic genius to anchor Gathered and Ungathered Youth Group: In the Nigerian Church, through the efforts of Caritas Nigeria, (a charitable and developmental arm of the CBCN), Justice, Peace and Development agency, couple with the entrepreneurial projects of dioceses and especially, the initiatives of the Celestians of Don Bosco, in Nigeria, through their four Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics, they are creating wealth. Generally, Youths are specially trained in modern ICT, solar and electrical technology, tailoring and fashion, building engineering, catering and computer skills. These are sources of creating the genius and providing initiative in all ecclesial circles, parish centers and basic inter and intra-communities. The Catholic Church in Nigeria, is specifically targeting faith-based platforms, using Archdiocesan, Diocesan and Congregations Magazines, News Papers, especially that of the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria to promote an agenda

⁹Congar Cardinal Yves, *The Wide World is My Parish: Salvation and its problems*, London: Darton, Longman &

Todd, ¹⁹⁶¹, p. ⁵

¹⁰Seligman, Martin E. P., *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*, p. ⁴⁰



that is capable of developing a strong and virile Socio-economic basis by which the *Gathered and Ungathered Youth* can function and unleashed their full potential. This is a spectacular agenda of Hope for Youth empowerment and resourcefulness in the Year of Hope.

Agencies of Hope in Nigeria are visibly at work. The Kukah Centre, and Institute of Psycho-spiritual, funded and promoted by Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah and Fr. Dr. George Ehusani, are testament of Youth development and creating platforms and visibility in the global space. Added to the above, the United Nations in the cause of promoting human rights and the dignity of the human person in whatever location one finds him/herself invited functional organizations to develop the spirit of work and craftsmanship to sustain life and acquire property. Thus, under this charter, the United Nations had clearly taught: "From the dignity of the human persons, there arises the right to carry on economic activities according to the degree of responsibilities of which one is capable."¹¹ To this end, all adults responsible for *Gathered Youths* in cultural, social, intellectual and spiritual settings and spheres as well as those within the domain of unarticulated assemblage as '*Ungathered*' youths ought to invest energy, resources, talents and time to harness, cultivate and nurture them to adult life. The discipline even to unearth and wake up these sleeping giants does not come easy because the spirit of developing and building up strong Ecclesia communion in both urban and rural setting is mandatory and has always been the orientation of the Catholic Church from its early history till now. In a particular and passionate plea, the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria¹², have at varied conferences engaged the Federal, States and Local Governments to create gainful employment for our teeming youths, some bishops have gone ahead to create small scale businesses and created platforms of acquiring entrepreneurial skills in classified centers in their dioceses throughout the country. Clear examples are: Diocese of Ikot Ekpene developed since 1985 carpentry skill training centre; and the Diocese of Orlu, set up a computer training center for training her youth, *et cetera*. Principally, these centers dedicate a good portion of her curriculum to character and spiritual formation, even as they focus on skill acquisition.

¹¹United Nations Charter on Human Rights, (no. ²⁰), quoted Agnostoni, Tarcisio, Every Citizen's Handbook,

Limuru - Kenya: Paulines Publication in Africa, ¹⁹⁷⁷, p. ¹¹³ c

¹²Cf. Catholic Bishops of Nigeria (CBCN), Pastoral Letters and Communiqués of the Catholic Bishops' Conference

of Nigeria ¹⁹⁶⁰⁻²⁰⁰² - The Voice of the Voiceless, Peter Schineller S.J, ed. Ibadan, Nigeria: Daily Graphics ²⁰⁰².



The Message of Pope Francis to all Christians and the Youth in 2025: As the Vicar of Christ in the World, Pope Francis on the eve of Christmas 2024, open the Door at St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City, to commence the celebrations of the Jubilee of Hope. Pope Francis' speech opening the Year of Hope, also known as the Ordinary Jubilee of 2025, emphasis the importance of hope in our lives. Here are the key points:

- *Hope does not Disappoint:* Pope Francis begins by referencing Romans 5: 5, “ Hope does not disappoint,” highlighting the central message of hope in our Christian faith.
- *A Journey of Hope:* The Pope describes the Christian life as a journey of hope, guided by the light of Christian hope, which illuminates every man and woman.
- *Signs of Hope:* Pope Francis encourages us to recognize the signs of hope in our world. Including the desire for peace, the enthusiasm for life, and the readiness to share it with others.
- *Peace and Reconciliation:* The Pope calls for peace in our world, urging world leaders to resolve conflicts and work towards lasting peace. He also emphasizes the importance of reconciliation, citing the example of Jesus' ministry.
- *Supporting Families and Life:* Pope Francis highlights the importance of supporting families and promoting a culture of life; encouraging responsible parenthood and openness to new life.
- *Hope for Prisoners and the Marginalized:* The Pope expresses his concern for prisoners and the marginalized, calling for initiatives aimed at restoring hope and dignity to those affected.¹³

Every Youth must endeavour to study of psychology and sociology, anthropology and ethnology, as these disciplines clear the wave lane of ignorance and provide principles and methodology of engagement with the wider society at large. These disciplines help to classify and specify human behaviour, articulating human capabilities, give precise hints on healthy sustainers and even directs one to know when one deviates in negative tendency and becomes paranoid to excesses that could lead to stress and mal-behaviour. Seligman captured in the following words what was and now inspiring psychological variables in building up good character amongst youth groups:

That there is a human "nature" - (it is cardinal to the youths to be reminded of this core reality in their daily interaction.)
That action proceeds from character - (youth must

¹³Pope Francis, *Spes non confundit* – Bull of Induction of Ordinary Jubilee, www.vatican.va



have proper self-consciousness).
That character comes in two forms, both equally
fundamental - bad character, and good or virtuous
("angelic") character.¹⁴

It is explicitly clear from the foregoing that formation of good character is bed-rock to assembling youth in Nigeria. Thus, for our youth at home, schools, football clubs, churches and mosques circles to function effectively in the 21st century, discipline and virtuous life is indispensable. This comes either as youth gathered under a religious group or ethnic umbrella and for those who are left ungathered, thus are loosely floating in the society or even as found currently in Internally Displaced People's (IDPs) camps. Bishop Stephen Mamza of the Diocese of Yola and Bishop Oliver Dame of the Diocese of Maiduguri have done and are continually doing enormous work in these camps scattered in Adamawa and Borno states, by it they are building up good character cut across youths of different religious-cultural groups, which is a laudable achievement, is too a core value of Positive Psychology.

It is very clear to us that the New Testament presented facts that Jesus Christ had several groups and audiences who followed him, historians and evangelists classified them as disciples, Jewish Leaders (Saduccess, Pharisees, Elders of the Sanhedrin, Zealots *et cetera*), the crowd (unclassified or ungathered youths.) Each followed Jesus Christ from their point of interest, want, curiosity, needs, intentions (love or conflict). The character of gathered youths - those who followed Jesus Christ to achieve a set goal or gain from His message, some wanted to be healed, some to receive his message of eternal life, were recorded as beneficial and redeemed group; while, those who were ungathered maintained the statuesque by remaining unrepentant, malign and evil towards Jesus Christ, consequently ending up as enemies of the cross Cf. John 3: 17. What obviously makes a difference in each of the divide are the intentionality and point of interest that leads to increase positive capacity of production and fruitiness; it caused John Craig to assert vividly that:

A man who remains all his life shifting boxes in a factory has achieved real success in his work if he has done the work as well as he could and has made its conscious offering to God. We cannot all hope for that feeling of pride which the artist experiences in his

¹⁴Seligman, Martin E. P., *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*, p. ¹²⁵



masterpiece, the scientist in some great discovery, the ploughman in his straight furrows. Still whether we work in shops, offices or factories, if we do our own particular job to the best of our ability we get satisfaction out of it. Moreover, we know the purpose of work, the possibilities it offers its redemptive power when it is done in union with Christ, the humble worker of Nazareth.¹⁵

Every generic group of youthful persons must have a clear intention, interest and at the end of each piece of work, derived satisfaction physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

Nurturing in Youths the spirit of work ethics and capacity building:

Nurturing the spirit of "Hard work does not kill,"¹⁶ and crafting positive psychology of work, to propel personal efficiency and developing the spirit of inventing personal motivating motto of life philosophy like: "What is worth doing is worth doing well," can help gathered and ungather youths in forming data of personal efficiency, developing a discipline plan time table of study and even business. These if put together with other self-motivated projects, sustains and grows the incorporating spirit of gathered youths and fires the nerves of ungather youths to omega point. During our time in the Secondary School in the late 70s to the early 1980s, our Indian English teacher, Mr. Koren taught us clearly that "procrastination is the thief of time," and clearly demanded hard work, punctuality and consciousness of being on duty.

Consulting youth as *Gathered Group* (Catholic Youth Organization, Choir, Football or Drama or Social club) on what constitute point of interest amongst them will automatically help in fashioning a formidable team spirit. The youth can always willingly do what is of interest to them, what comes from their initiatives, labour, contributions and participation. J. Maurus affirmed strongly: "Commitment to contribution is commitment to efficiency."¹⁷ So, fire the spirit of each youth person you encounter in life to contribute his/her quota to a discussion, to a piece of work, to an act of feeding in the family, to the prospects of contributing to church or mosque project.

¹⁵Craig, John, quoted in J. Maurus, *How to win Personal Efficiency*, Bombay: St. Paul Society, 1988, p. 91

¹⁶Shabayang, Barnabas Samaila, had always used this motivational cliché to pull up achievable goal in the lives

of Major Seminarians striving for the priesthood in Good Shepherd Major Seminary, Kaduna

¹⁷J. Maurus, *How to win Personal Efficiency*, p. 17



In the 21st century, there are obvious challenges that must be made by our youth groups, whether they are assembled or scattered in the city or country side. The quintessential process of youth formation is the training that gives them clues to face challenges and even suffering without running away for a cover. Eugene Kennedy wrote:

If you find that your challenges balloon out when you think they should be diminishing; if you feel you are too tired to get up again but realize that life never lets you sit down for very long; if maturity, or the best you can make of it, is not exactly what you expected and life is even less fair than they warned you it would be; you are probably healthy and normal. For these are the symptoms of maturity: not fewer problems but more of them, and more responsibility for solving them; not for a time of reflective contemplation after a race well run but a steady grind marked by a few frenzied pit stops. Yes, and to make it all worse, mature persons have a deeper sensitivity to what is happening to them; they feel life's strain more than the immature.¹⁸

Expressly stated above, our youth at home, in our schools, in the community, in our churches or mosques, must be properly mentored to earn their dignity by sticking out to face challenges, grow to squarely handle responsibilities personally and in the society at large.

Developing a focused leadership training of Mentor/Mentee of Youths in Nigeria

It is mandatory that all Religious Leaders form leadership training of our youths on the basis of mentor/mentee. This is because modern learning encourages democratic principles: thus the utility of psychology to facilitate easy and quick learning, interaction, encounter, dialogue and friendship are gradually emerging as indispensable and acceptable variables and strong elements for youth formation at home, churches, mosques, and school, to say the least, even in cultural outings and at large in societal engagements.¹⁹

The act of mentoring for leadership is as old as the human person, God used it in the Garden of Eden (c.f. Gen. 1:); great ancient civilizations have used it, the more reason we are called to use it in the formation of our youth

¹⁸Kennedy, Eugene, *The Pain of Being Human*, Bandra, Mumbai: Better Yourself Books, ¹⁹⁹⁸, p. ³⁵

¹⁹The drive for enhancing the principle of leadership in the 21st century encourages the basis of Mentor/Mentee relational behaviour. Further reading: on mentor/mentee relationship, <https://www.joe.org>, joe; See also, <https://www.amtamassage.org>, mentor Accessed ^{14/04/2017}



as *gathered and ungathered species of God's creation in the 21st century*. Mentoring is a refining process, a medium of altitudinal training upgrade, the act of formation in the science of human conduct, discipline and behavioral development is an act of training for love, for the purpose of the future. It is vital and central to the formation of youth at home and worship centers, to ministry, to schooling, to camping, in that it produces effortlessly conscientious leaders in our society who are trained to turn-inside-out their potentials, to release their energy for change, to be dynamic and matured in their decision making as it espouses them to become leaders of conscience.

Ab initio, the process of creating a healthy vision in order to build positive dreams on the staircase of collective and team work spirit must be cultivated and ought to exist between the *mentor* and *mentee*. This is an indispensable asset to *gathered and ungather youths* in our churches and mosques in Nigeria in the 21st century. Anthony A. D'Suozza wrote: "A vision directs us towards the future, but it is experienced in the present. It focuses on the future, but it is rooted in today's reality. It creates the tension that is aroused from comparing the image of the desired future with the present state of things."²⁰ Well expressed, the socio-cultural; politico-economic stench that has continued to cripple the trust our youths have on adults/elders in Africa and especially in Nigeria is fast eroding; this is simply due to the flamboyant live styles of the adults and elders, this leaves more to be desired even in our worship centers.

On the need to creating a generative mental and religious leadership, D'Suozza continued: "Vigorous engagement in visioning is at the very heart of the leadership role."²¹ Thus, the decisive role of the *mentor* to the *mentee* is to create a hunger for selfless, kenotic leadership (c.f. Phil. 2: 5-11). James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, in *The Leadership Challenge*, stated the obvious: "There is no freeway to the future. No paved highway from here to tomorrow. There is only wilderness. Only uncertain terrain. There are no road-maps. No sign-posts. So pioneering leaders rely upon a compass and a dream."²² So clearly illustrated as above, every religion cut across the Nigerian society, is saddled with the onerous task and responsibility to evolve in our youths, but *gathered and ungather persons* the need of them seeing in us being the "Good Shepherd" out in search of the "lost shepherds" of conscience, of character, of believing in God.

²⁰D'Suozza, Anthony A., *Leaders for Today Hope for Tomorrow: Empowering and Empowered Leadership*, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, ²⁰⁰¹, p. ⁹³

²¹D'Suozza, Anthony A., *Leaders for Today Hope for Tomorrow: Empowering and Empowered Leadership*, ⁹⁴



Creative Entrepreneurial spirit built on the ladder of Team work

Wealth is the state of the mind, it is generative and creative. The Hausa proverb states (*lafiya, umar jiki*) that means: "Health is Wealth," thus it can be categorically stated too that wealth creates health and mental order, which adds enormously to spiritual harmony of the body and the soul. Ekkehard and Wolfgang assertively taught that: "In the modern economic sciences economy is usually understood in principle as the divisions of scarce means among competing ends, and one assumes that people behave "economically", that they divide the scarce resources available for achieving certain goals in such a way that the use of these resources remain as small as possible.²³" Incidentally in Nigeria, it is not the goods that are scarce, it is the generative labour that can create the industries and thus initiate the work force that is lacking. If economy is understood to be what M. Harris wrote as: "the sum of all actions that are responsible for the provisioning of society with goods and services."²⁴ Though the creation wealth of a healthy economy is good; however, our youths in Africa and particularly in Nigeria must be taught to know that the quest for economic sovereignty includes the spiritual dimension *that the end does not justify the means*.

The point of departure in group dynamics is developing the discipline of nurturing a team spirit - sharpening the vision of together we win, we stand and succeed. It is in this light that we affirmed positively the contributions made at creating youth employment by our African bishops under the auspices of the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), the varied Regional Episcopal Conferences in the West, East, South, North and Central Africa, and particularly by various

²²Kouzes James M., and Barr Z. Poster, Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It. San

Francisco: Jossey-Bass, ¹⁹⁹³, p. ⁴⁵

²³Ekkehard W. Stegemann & Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century*,

trans. O. C. Dean., Jr, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, ¹⁹⁹⁹, p. ¹⁶

²⁴Harris, M., *Kulturanthropologie: Ein Lebrabuch*, S. M. Schnomberg Sheriff, trans. Frankfurt: Campus [ET -

Cultural Anthropology, 4th ed., New York: HarperCollins, ¹⁹⁹⁵], p. ⁵⁰

²⁵Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, SECAM, "The Message of the ¹¹th

Plenary Assembly of SECAM," Midrand, September ¹⁹⁹⁷, in *SECAM News Letter*, January ¹⁹⁹⁸, n. ¹⁶, ⁵⁻⁹;

See also, *African Enchiridion*, n. ³⁰²² (¹¹¹³); See also, AECAWA, "Formation of Youth," in a Communiqué

issued at the end of the ¹²th Plenary Assembly of the Association of Episcopal Conferences of Anglophone

West Africa (AECAWA) in Banjul, The Gambia, from ⁴th-⁸th August, ²⁰⁰⁹, titled: "Youth Migration in West

Africa." Accessed, www.aecawa.org, February ²⁷, ²⁰¹⁷



National Conferences of the 54 African countries; these have set machineries in place for youth empowerment programmes and education.²⁵ Parish priests and Religious men and women too have contributed through parish, schools, clinics and hospital apostolates to empower and have employed and still are employing our youths individually and as more so as gathered groups in our varied apostolates.

Conclusion

Easy interaction with youth members is human relational behaviour; it is not to be seen as a favour given to the *Gathered or Ungathered* youth groups in developing pastoral strategy, but as basic and fundamental engagement of pastoral service. Investing in building emotional as well as social contact; are not just expected, rather these are rudiments of leadership engagement, building trust, re-inventing the wheel to create wealth in persons and molding character to build a reservoir of talented leaders for tomorrow. Youth sustainability, self-awareness and generative love can only be built if each person we encounter in life is treated and corrected in love, is accepted as a human person with dignity, and if a vision is seen of him/her as a future leader. Thus, Daniel Webster eloquently said:

If we work upon marble, it will perish.
If we work upon brass, time will efface it,
If we rear temples, they will crumble to dust.
But if we work upon men's immortal minds,
If we imbue them with high principles,
With the just fear of God and love of their fellow man,
We engrave on those tablets something which non time can efface,
An which will brighten and brighten to all eternity.

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