

GHANA



NIGERIA



Justice



Peace



Integrity of Creation

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JPIC Ghana-Nigeria

EDITORIAL NOTE

Malachy Oleru, M.Afr

Greetings of a happy and prosperous New Year 2012, to one and all. We, the JPIC team present to you this edition of JPIC Newsletter. It was conceived to be born in 2011. For some technical reason, it remained in gestation till now. Some of us spent more than nine months in our mothers' womb. No wonder we came forth strong. We therefore can understand!

This edition is strong. The contribution of **James** from the Nigeria Section, testifies to this. Ours is a Province of two Sections: Nigeria and Ghana. A project like JPIC team is meant to reflect this unity- not uniformity- of Sections of the same Province.

We also have three contributions from our formation house in Ejisu, Kumasi Sector. While **Jean Patient Lunda** shares his experience of "one man making a difference" through the Revelation Children's Home, and **Charles**, his experience of JPIC in St Martin's, **Emmanuel** brings home the 2011 Social Forum in Dakar, as experienced by him and Gilles.

And André, from Tamale Sector, narrates his school-girl experience, and further questions in another article, our interest in 'I.C.' (Which one?). Being invited to celebrate the World Day of Peace could be an 'exalting' experience! And **Clenerius** is here to witness to that, even as he challenges us all to apply the pill of 'performance appraisal' to make the JPIC team sit-up (that is, if one thinks that the team is lying down!).

No permission was sought from Rome, or rather, the Society's JPIC-ED henchman, **Richard**, to publish here his articles regarding the Assisi experience. We hope he won't mind. He also proposes a practical way of doing the Inter-religious 'thing'. Perhaps those who are not at home with one aspect of JPIC can be inspired by another kind, called Encounter and Dialogue(E.D.). They might begin to gather together the 'Children' of father Abraham and mother Africa. We believe in ONE God!

From Rome, we return home, to our backyard where **Bishop Vincent Sowah Boi-Nai , SVD**, of Yendi Diocese, takes us on a trip to the camp for women and men accused of witchcraft; an interview he gave to a German journalist. This international article might first have appeared in the JPIC newsletter before elsewhere...that is the advantage of being at the 'source'! (sh!sh!). The JPIC team is also networking with other justice- conscious, peace-loving, creation's integrity- minded, religious women and men in Ghana. That is what **Malachy** tries to share in a report already presented to the National Body last March, about how things stood in the Zone three (Northern Zone). As you know, poetry can be a simple way of expressing 'compound' experience. In one piece of his poems, Malachy pleads with God to bring healing to some of these experiences.

The JPIC Newsletter is all about experiences. Experiences, when shared and reflected upon, can be the best teacher. The Newsletter is not a magazine, journal or erudite write-ups on JPIC. It is a simple forum of sharing, by simple men dealing with complex issues of society and Church. Taken from this angle, it certainly is everyone's business. Thank you for sharing, reading.

JUSTICE, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE COMMITTEE IN PARISHES

2011 ANNUAL REPORT – James Ngahy, M.Afr

Introduction

Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) of the Archdiocese of Ibadan has been mandated by His Grace, the Archbishop of Ibadan, to establish Justice, Development and Peace Committee in all the Parishes. In view of this, Fr James Ngahy, M. Afr., was assigned to its effectiveness.

Rationale behind the Formation/establishment of JDP Committee in Parishes

The major reason for the JDP Parish committee is to promote Catholic Social Teaching amidst Catholic Church members in the Archdiocese. The knowledge of the Church's Social Teaching aims at directing parishioners to translate their belief into action; hence, concretise Gospel values.

The establishment and the presence of JDP Committee is also a way of conscientising parishioners to get involved in public discussion on issues that concern justice, development and peace. It is indeed a way of encouraging them to participate actively and objectively in knowing, acknowledging and actualizing their rights as citizens.

JDP Committee acts as liaison with the Archdiocesan JDPC as well as with the people at the grassroot level in their respective parishes. This will enable parishioners and their environs to benefit from the various development programmes which are already established by JDPC.

How it is done

Each parish is expected to have a group of volunteers who are willing to sacrifice time, energy and knowledge for the benefit of all parishioners and the entire community where the parish is located.

The Committee is not an organisation or society. It is an independent committee working directly under the Church Parish Council (CPC). Members are to meet, design and decide on the programmes for the benefit of the parish. The Parish Priest is carried along and he acts as the guide and chaplain of the committee.

2011 Activities

The exercise of the formation of JDP Committee in the Parishes was launched in April 2011 by JDP Parish team through visits to the parishes, training, seminars and workshops. Thus far, the team has successfully reached most of the parishes in the Archdiocese, although the establishment of the JDP Parish Committee is almost 50% by the end of year 2011.

“A fair Exchange??”

André Schaminée, M.Afr.

On Sundays I always go to celebrate the Eucharist at the Tamale Girls' Senior High School, located a few kilometres on the Tamale-Yendi road. The school now counts more than 1.500 students. The majority are Muslims, but there are also around 350 Catholics and an unknown number of other Christians.

Sometimes after Mass one or the other girl wishes to have a word with me, and as expected most of the time, it is about money problems. On that particular Sunday, a girl approached me with a money problem, but of a special kind. She told me that she had an outstanding debt with the school of almost Ghc. 100.00, and unless she settled that bill before the following Wednesday, she would be barred from the semestral exams. She explained that her father was dead since long and her mother could not cope with the education expenses of all her children. Other relatives were not interested in helping her either. But, she added, she had a way to solve her problem. She had approached one of the (male) teachers for help, and he had made it abundantly clear that he was willing to help her, on condition that she spent a night with him in a hotel. She immediately rejected this 'fair deal', mainly because she felt that it was the wrong thing to do, and also because she did not want to take the risk of getting pregnant and so jeopardise her education. "Father, I don't know what to do next, I don't want to have sex with him, it is not good, so I decided to come to you to present my problem to you".

I praised her for her principled stand and encouraged her to always respect her own body and not to let it be up for grabs for whatever reason! I was deeply impressed by her honesty and sincerity. Obviously I felt I should help her out. In this way at least one immoral act was fortunately prevented. But I asked myself, "how many girls in the school and in the country are in a similar situation and have no other choice but to 'sell' their bodies so as to be able to write their exams"?

REVELATION CHILDREN'S HOME:

The experience, the vision and the energy of one man making a difference.

-JEAN PATIENT LUNDA (M.Afr Student, Ejisu)

Every Saturday in St Martin of Tours, Ejisu, everybody is interested in going out for the apostolate. We go to different places and each one of us seems to be happy with his own place. I go to Revelation Children's Home in Sekyere a village in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. It is a house which looks after a number of children of all ages; some of them are physically challenged. It is a special house; a home whose history is based on the experience, the energy and the vision of one person. This is the story of this Home, its founder, its history, and how it is making an impact on children's hope.

The Revelations Children's Home was founded by Nana Yaw Addo, who hails from Sekyere in the Ashanti Region. He lived with his mother and later with his aunt who took care of him when he was in the Middle School in Kumawu. In 1976, he completed his Middle School. He later migrated to Nigeria in 1978 and later to Cote D'Ivoire. Having found no job in these African countries, he turned his attention to Europe. He made several attempts to enter Europe and after many failed attempts and deportations, he listened to an advice and returned to Ghana.

Back in Ghana in 1990, he decided to learn a trade and qualified as a tailor in Kumasi. One day in Kumasi, he observed a crowd running away from the rains. Among the crowd was a helpless cripple. Nana took pity on the cripple and helped him to get a shelter from the rain. From this experience, he had passion to care for the physically challenged. Having learnt from his mother to share the little he has with those who do not have, not because one is obliged to share but because sharing itself is a value that must be upheld, he had a dream to fulfil in his home town. He dreamt of those children and people in need who always went after him for help. When life became difficult in Kumasi, Nana Addo went back to his village.

One day, he learnt that Sarah, an epileptic woman in his village, was left to herself to burn in the farm. The other members of her family looked on unconcerned for fear of contracting Epilepsy. Nana visited the woman; her situation confirmed the information he had. Another day, the woman asked for an orange and Nana got her the fruit. She also asked Nana to send her to the Hospital. Nana had no Money to take her to the hospital but mobilized some people in the village and got some money. He took her to the hospital. At the hospital, some expensive medicines were prescribed. Nana could not afford the medication. Nevertheless, he sought help from other people. In the process of getting help, he was advised to refer her to the Social Welfare department of the District Assembly. After some initial hesitation from the Assembly, the case was later accepted; and Nana was made responsible for her rehabilitation. Unfortunately, Sarah's Case worsened, she was sent back home. She died on the way back to the village. Sarah had left two children fathered by a mentally unstable man who took

advantage of her situation. Thanks to Nana, the children were adopted by an American woman called Liza, into the Ofinso Children's Home.

Advised by Liza, Nana established a Rehabilitation Centre for physically challenged people, which he called Sekyere Rehabilitation Centre. He started a project of Soap Making with some few beneficiaries of the centre. Later, he widened the scope and brought in the needy children. In all this, the Social Welfare Department of the District supervised Nana's activities.

To help Nana, the local community turned a local post office into a school and a workshop. In addition to the soap making, the Children also learnt shoe making and tailoring. When the people got interested, the number grew from 20 to 120, among them were 30 orphans. Because of these numbers, the Centre needed a new place. With the help of philanthropists from the Netherland, Finland and a donation of land from the Chief, SRC developed into a preparatory school for the people in the community. In 2005, a house for the orphans was built since there was still a need to house the orphans. But the same year, the government introduced free education for primary school and junior high school and so, the school collapsed. Today, the orphanage is providing a stable and loving home for at least 17 children under the care of Nana and His wife Margaret. The house aims at preventing and eliminating poverty and providing care for the children in need of family. These need a provision of food, water, sanitation, cloth, medicines, etc. Nana has a number of volunteers from abroad as well as Ghanaians who assist him in responding to the needs of the children.

It is in the sense of helping those children and also based on the will and generosity of the Society of the Missionary of Africa, of which I am a student, that my colleagues and I go every Saturday to this house and provide what we can. While some may be playing with the younger children, others are giving some extra classes to the older ones. We also wash their clothes and weed with them in the farm. Our presence in the house is not a waste of time. When we get there, the children will come and welcome us, jumping on us and dirtying our clothes. This proves to me that we provide a kind of joy which sometimes is missing in the children. Not only we provide something for them, but they also give something to us. I left my family far from Ghana, but any time I am in the home I feel being in my own family. I left my brothers, and found them here. In my formation process, being with those children seem to prepare me for my future life as a missionary. Today I participate in building justice and peace just by being with those children. Let's imagine what will become of those children if they were to be left for themselves. Sleeping and learning from the street, they would be potential bandits, etc. The lesson for the society in general is that, it would be useless to fight crimes and injustice if we do not care for those potential bombs lying in the streets.

In conclusion, Revelation Children's Home is and will remain a house with a difference. An exemplary attestation to the fact that, from one person, Nana, we can learn that a whole town, region or country can be saved from future crimes, wars, injustices and even corruption. From one person, we can learn to save the world.

OUR WAY FORWARD DEPENDS ON A GOOD PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

- Clenerius Mutale Chimpali

In view of being open to this God's wisdom, individuals need to be transformed and be examples to others. This call for personal conversion is demanded if we are to progress in bringing about social transformation or social justice. If we work in solidarity, the injustices which divide us in terms of race, class, etc, will crumble and we will relate to each other as God desires, with dignity, justice and peace.

The Ghana/Nigeria JPIC committee have embarked upon building collaboration with others or rather networking. It is our humble wish and prayer that our connection with other collaborators may bring about a real transformation in our society. Like childbirth, a radical stance and new methods of work is needed. JPIC team welcomes your contribution even if it is to touch our shadows.

The JPIC team intends to make a performance appraisal so that we may learn from our past and bring in new air for the vibrant Ghana-Nigeria JPIC. "The winds of change are blowing strongly in many parts of Africa, and people are demanding even more insistently the recognition and promotion of human rights and freedoms. In this regard I note with satisfaction that the church in Africa, faithful to its vocation, stands resolutely on the side of the oppressed and of the voiceless and marginalised peoples. I strongly encourage it to continue to bear witness". (Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*).

Confreres, one way we can participate and make JPIC ministry our own is by identifying ourselves in this wind of change. An open frank talk is open for you to say freely as you have seen JPIC work in the Province. Our request is that, come out with honest and transparent criticisms, appreciations and bring your own suggestions. Help us to have a proper performance appraisal regarding JPIC ministry and let us make JPIC ministry our own ministry. Many admirable things have been done and also many failures have been witnessed. Performance appraisal creates a room to challenge ourselves in the spirit of evaluation and amendment.

Therefore, we wish to see many confreres come up with their point of view, how they have seen this ministry in Ghana-Nigeria Province. It does not matter, if there are positive criticisms or not. We are all fragile human beings in need of corrections and support.

Our hope and prayer are that Ghana-Nigeria Province of the Missionaries of Africa, will always be identified with the prayer below, as written by Dr David Kailemu. This prophetic prayer expresses our confidence in God's power and inspires us to break down the structures of sin. This prayer demonstrates the vision of a prophetic Christian and, ultimately, a prophetic Missionary Society and Church.

"God of peace and justice, you give us the capacity to change, to bring about a world that mirrors your wisdom; create in us a desire to act in solidarity so that the pillars of injustice crumble and those now crushed are set free. Amen".

“J.P. and Integrity of Creation”

André Schaminée, M.Afr.

The terms, Justice and Peace(J.P) and Integrity of Creation(I.C.), are very popular these days. Look, for example, at our own 2010 Chapter Documents, or at the Vatican’s Department headed by “our” Cardinal Peter Turkson. Indeed, every self-respecting Diocese or religious Congregation loudly proclaims that issues to do with J.P. are of top priority, though in some cases it is, unfortunately, nothing more than “lip-service”! J.P. has almost become a slogan, and unless you join the choir singing loud praises for its objectives, you are simply not “with it”. Fair and well. I have no objection. Great work has been done and is being done, also in and through our Society, and only truly dull minds will fail to be ‘conscientised’. Furthermore, I do wonder whether and to what extent the I.C. in J.P.I.C. is taken seriously. This abbreviation, as already mentioned, stands for *Integrity of Creation*. It is a dimension of J.P.I.C. that is unconsciously often pushed into the background. If we *really* would promote I.C., we would probably have to change a lot in our own behaviour, according to the adage, ‘*preacher, practise what you preach*’.

For instance, our surroundings are saturated with plastic rubbish: shopping bags, water sachets and bottles, to name but these two. What do we do, what do I do, when we see people just dumping these items wherever it is convenient for them, and do I do anything to make people aware of the long-term damaging consequences this has on the environment? Is I.C. given its rightful place in the Diocese’s or Parish’s JPIC-programmes? Do we teach people, and especially the youth, about it?

I.C. is, however, not only the concern of the Church. Thank God, more and more people are beginning to address this issue. The story below is just one of those efforts, namely the *Tuma Viela Project*.

THE TUMA VIELA PROJECT or PLASTIC WASTE RECYCLING In early February, I heard about it and by pure co-incidence a few days later the Daily Graphic of February 8th 2011 also reported on it under the title ‘*Plastic waste recycling project yields results*’. The project was started in August 2010 by a Dutch lady resident in Ghana since 2004 by name of *Ellen Seldenthuis* (who prefers to be called Ibrahim Salimatu). With the help of Dutch sponsors, she has set up a ‘workshop’ in Dagbondab-ba-Fong, a suburb of Tamale. It is housed in a metal container and it provides employment to 13 people. There, dumped plastics are being recycled and transformed into beautiful shoulder bags. To stimulate children to collect the stray empty water sachets and other plastics, they are given a free school bag in exchange for every 250 empty water sachets they bring. In just over five months since the project commenced, more than half a million empty water sachet bags have been gathered by a total of just over 2000 children!

The recycling process goes through a number of long and cumbersome stages: once the bags are collected, they are cut open, thoroughly washed and dried in the sun. Then they are straightened, and sewn to one another to make long strips, which in turn are used to produce the bags. I have seen some of these bags myself, 'and believed' what is indeed an almost incredible achievement! Such projects, though not financially self-supporting, deserve to be encouraged and stimulated, because there are many great advantages: the recycling of waste material contributes towards environmental sustainability and sanitation; children are made aware of the harmful effects of plastic rubbish and are rewarded for helping to rid the environment of these unfriendly items; the project has created employment for a number of people.

Surely, such a project should be emulated and inspire other ecologically friendly initiatives. Otherwise, Mother Earth will find herself one day in another kind of I.C., (yes, in Intensive Care!!)

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM, DAKAR

Emmanuel Adebo, M.Afr

Gilles Effiyo and I represented the Ghana/Nigeria Province at the World Social Forum that took place in Dakar from the 6th to the 11th of February 2011. I met Gilles in Virgin Nigeria at the Kotoka International Airport and we travelled together to Dakar, arriving there in the wee hours of the morning of 6th February. We were warmly welcomed by the Sisters of Joseph of Cluny, who graciously offered us food and lodging throughout our stay in Dakar.

For many people, the Forum started with a March in the afternoon of 6th February. For us who are Catholics, the Eucharistic celebration of that Sunday morning was the official opening of the Forum. The Mass took place in the parish church of the Martyrs of Uganda parish and was presided over by the Cardinal Archbishop of Dakar, assisted by two other Bishops and a number of priests including some confreres. The message of the Cardinal that morning was simple and clear: "You are the Salt of the Earth", a message that was reminiscent of the theme of the Second Synod for Africa - *The Church in Africa at the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace* - "You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world" (Mt 5:13,14)."

The media estimate that about ten thousand people took part in the March and opening ceremony of the forum. Among these people was Evo Morales, the President of Bolivia, who gave a good account of his trade unionism and student activism in his message of solidarity.

By the time the March moved from the centre of the city of Dakar to the University of Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD), the venue for the Forum, the main theme of the Social forum

was clear: “*Un autre monde est possible*”. Yes, it is possible for Africa to grow enough food to feed all her citizens. It is possible to have another world where democratically elected governments can be held accountable. It is possible for people of different faiths and cultures to live together in peace.

The week long forum can be divided into three parts: a place for experience sharing and exchange of ideas, an opportunity for networking and alliance building and an opportunity for advocacy.

Experience Sharing and Exchange of Ideas

Various events and panels were organized at the social forum to highlight the most pressing issues facing our world today. Panellists included ordinary citizens with experiences on the ground as well as professors and people from the academic world who provided the theoretical analysis of the cases under study. Some of the topics discussed include Corporate Land grabbing, Food and Human security, Democracy and Good governance, Peace and Non-violence education etc.

One of the enlightening workshops that I attended was about how Africa can engage the emerging economic powers to create a new economic order. It was highlighted that there was a renewed scramble for Africa by the BRICS countries. BRICS is an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It was agreed at this session that Africa has been treated unfairly by the West and there was need to critically evaluate the new trade deals that the Continent was signing now. It was cautioned that Africa should be careful when it embraces the so called Chinese miracle. According to the panellists, Chinese fishing activities have left hundreds of thousands of poor farmers and fishermen in tears in Cameroun. In DR Congo, China has bought and deprived rural populations of fertile lands to grow crops, not for food, but for bio fuels. In Nigeria, thousands of workers have lost their limbs or have died while working under unsafe and sub-human conditions in factories run by Chinese, Koreans, Malaysians, Lebanese and Indians. In short, there is a need for African governments to articulate their own interests before signing partnership deals with external stakeholders.

Networking with Allies

Some Organizations such as Dignity International, Secours Catholique and CARITAS, held workshops and panel discussion together with their partners and allies, where as other Organizations used the World Social Forum as an opportunity to meet and network with their collaborators. There was a whole afternoon set aside for that.

On that afternoon, all of us Missionaries of Africa participants at the Social Forum, along with other Religious, met with representatives of Africa Europe Faith Justice Network (AEFJN). We were over a hundred people. Our confrere Wolfgang Shoenecke, was one of the representatives from AEFJN.

Wolfgang and his colleague explained that AEFJN promotes economic justice between the European Union and Africa so that the people of Africa may have a better future. AEFJN’

work involves gathering, sharing information, campaigning and lobbying at national and European levels on the underlying causes of poverty, and on the impact of EU policies on Africa. They also respond to crisis situations and offer suggestions for action. From 2010-2012, AEFJN's main areas of concentration are: Food Sovereignty, Corporate Justice, Access to Quality Medicines, Small Arms Control, Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAS) and Climate Change.

AEFJN are our collaborators and they rely on us for information about what is going on the ground in Africa. We can contact them to learn more about their work and how they are representing Africa's concerns at different European forums. For more information about them go to www.aefjn.org or contact them at aefjn@aefjn.org.

Advocacy at the World Social Forum

Another interesting feature of the World Social Forum was that it was an opportunity for various groups of people to make their concerns known to the world. For instance, a group of Nigerian women demonstrated at the forum against the activities of oil multinationals operating in the Niger Delta region of their country. The women who said they had been suffering in silence for years, chose to go to Dakar and seize the opportunity provided by the World Social Forum to cry out to the rest of the world over injustices, denials, killings, oil spillages and other environmental pollution that the over ten million women in the oil rich region are made to face.

The women were wailing and raising their fists in solidarity and shouting slogans: "Shell! Chevron! Elf.... Get out of our land! Shell! Chevron! Elf....Stop the environmental pollution.....Shell! Chevron! Elf.... Stop killing our women and children."

The women from Nigeria were not the only group that demonstrated. Even Senegalese university students took the opportunity to have their own peaceful demonstration and presented petitions to their university authorities. As Missionaries of Africa, we did not have our own stand or concerns to present to the world. But our presence and interest gave a moral support to a group such as the Niger Delta women from Nigeria. By the contributions and questions to the panel discussions on various subjects at the World Social Forum our name was heard and recorded. Our Ignatian approach of meeting at the end of every single day of the forum to evaluate and share experiences among ourselves was exemplary. In fact, it was so attractive that a passerby who heard us sharing begged to join us and to also make some contributions.

Conclusion

The forum started off rather slowly and with some logistical challenges. For instance, participants could arrive at the University classrooms for workshops and panel discussions as directed by organizers only to find students having lectures in those halls. There was no clear communication about the theme and the programs of the Forum. Nobody knew who was really in charge of affairs there. However, once we were able to manage these challenges, the

Forum became interesting and life-giving. The fact that we were together as a group of Missionaries of Africa was a great support to each other. The topics at the workshops were relevant to countries such as Nigeria and Ghana. But can such a big international forum have an impact on the ground? Perhaps, we need to consider having the Ghana and Nigeria National Social Forums.

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL PARISH, TAMALE, CELEBRATES WORLD PEACE

-Clenerius M. Chimpali

I felt exalted on 24th September when I received a representative of Justice and Peace committee of Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Education Ridge Tamale who came to greet me and invite me for Sunday Mass to mark the International Day of Peace which was on 21st September. This was a gesture to show our partnership between Missionaries of Africa JPIC and Sts Peter and Paul Justice and Peace Committee.

The tree was planted as a symbol to remind us of our need for co-existence, and the importance of treasuring our diversity and invitation to be tolerant to one another. During the peace-tree planting, the Youth Chaplain of the Tamale Arch-diocese, Fr. John Baptist, made this reflection: *This is a peace tree. For it to bear fruit of peace, it needs to be watered and nurtured well. It is our hope and prayer that as people, we shall grow together like the peace tree by being peace promoters and peace lovers until the tree [becomes] green and offers us shade to rest in, fruit to eat and at the end we shall live in harmony side by side with all.*

The International Day of Peace ("Peace Day") provides us an opportunity as individuals, Justice and Peace groups, and all peace lovers to reflect, pray, and encourage one another to be peace makers. It was wise for the UN to come up with the resolution to establish the International Day of Peace. International World Peace day started in 1981, but that day it was not marked (in 1981) because it coincided with the opening of the UN General Assembly. Therefore, first International World Peace Day was celebrated in 1982 and was held on the third Tuesday of September each year until the year 2002.

In 2002 it was declared that September 21 became the permanent date for the International Day of Peace and will be celebrated annually. It is always good to remember this day in our parishes, communities and wherever we may be; to do something for peace in this particular day.

Since its inception, Peace Day has offered us peace lovers an opportunity to reflect and encourage ourselves to be the people of shalom.

I give thanks to the Justice and Peace committee of Saints Peter and Paul, for remembering this day and for all that they are doing in promoting Justice and peace.

THE PLACE OF JUSTICE AND PEACE IN OUR FIRST PHASE FORMATION IN EJISU

-Charles A. Ijimdiya

In St. Martin of Tours Formation House, Ejisu, our apostolate is of two dimensions, namely, youth and underprivileged apostolate. In performing our duties, we are divided into two major groups, one for Saturday and the other for Sunday. On Saturdays, we reach out to children homes, orphanages and rehabilitation centres such as Kumasi children's home, Sekyere orphanage, and Cheshire home. On Sundays, our mission is mainly to the youth in parishes and outstations like Abankoro, Abira, Tikrom and Baworo. We do not carry with us anything special for the apostolate but the love and peace which Christ lavished upon us.

When Jesus was sending his disciples for mission, he instructed them not to take with them anything for the journey. So, too, we visit our places of apostolate, bearing in mind, the words of Cardinal Lavigérie; "be apostles, nothing but apostles." We try to bear witness to Christ's gift of peace and love to the world by attending to the marginalised and underprivileged. In the words of St. Peter's to the lame man at the beautiful gate (Acts 3:6-7), silver and gold we have not but in the name of Jesus (...) we carry love to wherever we go. Love is all we need, especially, the marginalized, the needy and the downtrodden in society. Mother Theresa affirmed this when she said, "there is more hunger in the world for love and appreciation than for bread." The least act of love can do much more than millions of food offered to the marginalised and underprivileged. Unlike material things, love lasts for eternity. It heals the wound of stigmatisation and bridges the gap between people. Our experiences show this. We clean the children, wash their wounds and clothes, and dress them.

We perform nothing special or extraordinary but our mere presence and the corresponding appreciation of our presence by the youth and children as revealed in their closeness to us, says it all. They are always happy to have us around them and to mingle with them. We try to restore or inculcate in them the feeling of belongingness and of being loved. That gives us the strong conviction again, about the words of mother Theresa; "anytime you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing." You can't imagine the depth of wounds that gentle smile alone can heal.

The love of God is a free gift to all humanity. Of this love, everyone is a shareholder. In our apostolate, therefore, we are glad to be the medium through whom God transmits this love to the underprivileged and the marginalized in society. Our little understanding of justice leads us to found it in our act of sharing this love of God equally among his children, particularly, those ignored in society. We take it up as a duty to cater for the youth, especially the orphans according to Lavigérie's instruction, not forgetting the sort of affection he (Lavigérie) had for his orphans in Algeria.

The love we bring is not only abstract but practical in our apostolate. Once every year, we invite the youth to our community where we organise entertainment programmes such as quiz and dancing competitions, football and volleyball matches. In the same way, we invite and organise programmes for our friends from the children's homes, orphanages and rehabilitation centre. During each visit, we eat and drink and have fun with them. Furthermore, any proceeds, like clothes and money, generated from our Lenten fast, are channelled to supporting the poorest places of our apostolate, chiefly, the orphanages.

We see, in our apostolate, a clear picture of our future task as missionaries, one of which are of service to the underprivileged and marginalized in society. On that note, we see ourselves as instruments through whom the attention of society is drawn to the plight of the underprivileged and marginalised.

Through the record-keeping of our weekly experiences, we are able to weigh the amount of enrichment we derive and to see how well we can prepare ourselves for similar tasks in future. According to mother Theresa, “the miracle is not that we do this work, but that we are happy to do it.” We feel fulfilled in our service to humanity, especially, the poor. We could, in the same way, sense the feeling of satisfaction and appreciation for what we do, from the people we attend to. Through our acts of love, we radiate the love of Christ which goes a long way in curing the wound created by stigmatisation imposed on the underprivileged and marginalised by society and we help restore their human dignity and inner peace.

CAMPS FOR WOMEN ACCUSED OF WITCH CRAFT

-MOST REV. VINCENT SOWAH BOI-NAI, SVD

(CATHOLIC BISHOP OF YENDI, NORTHERN REGION, GHANA)

We have five camps for women accused of witchcraft in our Diocese. In one of our witch camps in Gnani community, the rough estimates show that the women are about 350 with about 280 men. At present I have no available data for the rest of the witch camps.

1. Some men are also accused of being witches and so they end up living in the witch camp. Some come with their wives and children to the witch camps.
2. Our people are not so much interested in the question ‘what’ as compared to the question ‘why’. The question ‘why’ has to deal with philosophical, cultural and theological explanations.
3. No person is accused in a vacuum. Witch craft accusations are always linked with issues of jealousy, suspicion, hatred, etc.
4. The role of the ‘witchdoctor’ is as follows:

to make sure that new arrivals to the camps are settled down, i.e., that they have rooms to stay, land to farm, etc; that he has the power to neutralize the powers of the witches so that they do not cause harm to anybody; he performs the necessary sacrifices to the traditional gods protecting the people in the village; he has to see to it that basic rules and regulations are observed by everyone in the camp.

5. Why does the belief in witchcraft still persist?

- Because it forms part of the traditional belief and practices.
- Because of illiteracy.
- Because of the belief that everything needs explanation. By explaining, one is able to control or contain the situation. By containing or controlling the situation, one is able to predict or foresee what happens depending on the circumstances.
- For the traditional people, witchcraft accusation is one way of explaining an unfortunate event.

6. Who are those often accused?

- Those that are poor and cannot defend themselves
- those that have certain peculiarities – a woman who has no child, a person who behaves 'abnormally' due to mental illness, a person who has an ulcerous sore, etc.
- Those that are wealthy can be suspected to have acquired their riches by means of witchcraft but very often people are afraid to accuse them publicly.
- Old people who are still alive while younger people are dying.

7. The role of Pentecostal churches as well as Evangelical movements:

- ❖ Some Pastors claim to have the power to exorcise witchcraft and associated works of the devil. Some people flocked to these Churches for healing and deliverance.
- ❖ Some of these Evangelical movements also have prayer camps where the alleged witches can stay and pray for deliverance
- ❖ While some pastors speak against the belief in witchcraft and stress on the power of God; others perpetuate the belief by pointing fingers to others who want to use spiritual means to harm others.
- ❖ Many pastors also stress the need for education. Hence many schools have been opened where children are going to school and becoming more aware of alternative ways of explaining events.

8. What the Catholic Church is doing to help the alleged witches?

- At Gnani, we have a witch camp. The Catholic Church does ministers to the alleged witches
- Provide them with food, clothing and medicine.
- We have drilled a borehole for the people in the witch camp.
- During the dry season we do repairs on their huts with thatch roofs
- They take part in social gatherings organized by the parish

- They come to Church regularly and they receive the spiritual support they need. The Church does not discriminate. The Priests visit them regularly and those who are sick are taken care of.

9. Is the problem of witchcraft getting worse?

- ✓ In the towns and cities, the problem is less. First of all, people are not closely knit together; hence everyone minds his/her own business. In the villages people know each other, live in extended families, hence suspicion, jealousy, etc give cause to witchcraft accusation
- ✓ Today, there are more schools in the villages. As the young ones become more educated the less people will accuse each other as a way of explanation.
- ✓ Again, there are many socio-economic programs being put in place to help people out of their poverty.
- ✓ There are people who are afraid to accuse others knowing that they could be taken to Court to prove their case.
- ✓ In some of the witch camps, some women who are young get married and raise children. As the camp expands people will come to see it as another village and no longer a witch camp.
- ✓ Today there are many organisations calling upon the Government to do away with witch camps. Such Organizations believe that witchcraft accusation is outmoded custom.

THE SPIRIT OF ASSISI

- Richard Nnyombi, M.Afr

On October 27, 1986, John Paul II realized a great dream: he invited representatives of world religions to Assisi so that a single song of peace might be sent to the one God from many hearts and in many languages. This invitation was accepted by 70 representatives of major religions. They offered hope for a different world: renewed, profoundly fraternal and truly human. The event itself carried an important message: that the desire for peace is shared by all people of good will; but taking into account the situation of the world and the relationship between peoples, real peace can only be achieved through an intervention by God.

The meeting was one of prayer. The prayer arose in the spiritual context of each of the religions that was present. It invited the participants to touch their own interiority in freedom, carrying the prayer of all humanity and raising it up to God. They recognized that human beings on their own are not able to achieve the peace that they are seeking.

It seems that the climate of universal fraternity found in the city of St. Francis filled people from the most diverse of origins. This experience came to be called the *Spirit of Assisi*, and in the 1987 message for the World Day of Peace it was also called the "Logic of Assisi". During the first meeting, in front of the chapel of the Portiuncula, John Paul II said that he chose the "city of Assisi as location for this day of prayer due to the special significance of

the saint venerated here, St. Francis, who is known by many all over the planet to be a symbol of peace, reconciliation and brotherhood." So the Pope decided to promote this initiative in the name of St. Francis, the man who breaks down barriers, who knows how to open doors and who is brother to all.

The community of Sant'Egidio, involved in the initiative from its beginning, has organized similar meetings every year since in European and Mediterranean cities. In January 1993 the event came back to Assisi during the time of the Balkan war. John Paul II, facing extreme violence and the incapacity of the countries of ex-Yugoslavia to make peace, affirmed that "only in mutual acceptance of the other and in the consequent mutual respect, deepened by love, lies the secret to a finally reconciled humanity."

As plans for the celebration of 2002 got underway, the Pope once again invited religious leaders to come to Assisi. The invitations went out as the twin towers were still burning and bombs were going off in Kabul. The situation highlighted for the world the destructive forces of hate and terrorism which can explode in any corner of the world. The Pope asked world religions to turn themselves into instruments of peace because hate and violence generate nothing except more hate and violence.

On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the *Spirit of Assisi* in 2006, Benedict XVI underlined the timeliness of the initiative saying that though the world has changed there is still a great need to search for ways to build peace, noting that "...the third millennium opened with scenes of terrorism and violence that show no sign of abating." Though it sometimes seems that religions fuel conflicts rather than work to resolve them, the Pope affirms: "When the religious sense reaches maturity it gives rise to a perception in the believer that faith in God, Creator of the universe and Father of all, must encourage relations of universal brotherhood among human beings. In fact, attestations of the close bond that exists between the relationship with God and the ethics of love are recorded in all great religious traditions."

In 2011 we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the first gathering of the *Spirit of Assisi*. It will be held at the original sites in the city of Assisi. A message of peace is needed as much today as it was 25 years ago, along with a concrete commitment to build peace in our world. As Benedict XVI stated five years ago, the world has changed since the first celebration. Religions are not only asked to dialogue among themselves, but to reach out to all people whether they are believers or not. Even more, they are now being challenged to reach out beyond humanity, because violence is being visited on God's creation as well. There is an ever-growing consciousness in all religious traditions that respect and peaceful relations must be fostered between people and between people and all creatures as well.

It was only because of his strong relationship with the Father that St. Francis was able to see all people and creatures as his sisters and brothers. The very spirit of the expression *Spirit of Assisi* will help us to become actively involved in promoting peace among human beings and beyond.

If we come together in the *Spirit of Assisi* and pray as believers in the way our respective religious traditions have taught us, we will be strengthened to commit ourselves to concrete actions that will allow us to work together to confront the threats to peace and to the environment that we face in our world today.

ASSISI DECALOGUE FOR PEACE

- Richard Nnyombi, M.Afr

1. *We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic Spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism.*
2. *We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures, and religions.*
3. *We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples, for these are the premises of authentic peace.*
4. *We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity, and to form freely a family of their own.*
5. *We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognizing instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.*
6. *We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, and to supporting one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace.*
7. *We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and the helpless, to speaking out for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.*
8. *We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we desire to make every effort possible to offer the men and women of our time real hope for justice and peace.*
9. *We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.*

10. We commit ourselves to urging the leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice.

*“Missionaries must first of all be initiators,
but the work that lasts must be done by Africans,
when they themselves become Christians and apostles”*

Charles Cardinal Lavigerie.

INTERRELIGIOUS GATHERING (A PROPOSED PRACTICAL APPROACH)

Richard Nnyombi, M.Afr

Where there is the possibility of bringing together the followers of the world’s great religions, monotheistic or not, to dialogue in peace about peace, perhaps it is possible to pray together for peace. Our model in this should not be Elijah and the prophets of Baal (cf. 1 Kgs 18) but Jesus himself, who accepted the other as brother or sister, sought common ground and encouraged their faith and upright living.

We offer you some hints for preparing a multifaith (interreligious) gathering, which are extracted from the Guidelines for the parishes and agencies of the Archdiocese of Melbourne (Australia) to assist in the promotion of interfaith relations in general and especially in the preparation of interfaith gatherings.

1. Initiative

While civic leaders may initiate a multifaith event, the appropriate religious leaders are responsible for its structure and content. Given this basic premise, the religious leaders will maintain due regard for the intentions of the initiators and their legitimate role.

A balance needs to be maintained. Although one denomination or religious tradition should not dominate, neither may there be time in the celebration for every tradition to have a public role. The selection must be done in a spirit of wisdom and service lest the event be in fact counterproductive.

These events may involve Christians from a number of denominations: indeed multifaith gatherings are preferably undertaken on an ecumenical basis.

2. Location

Any place can be used since a venue is made holy by the spiritual character of those who use it. It may sometimes be more acceptable to use a neutral location such as a hall. It may also be possible, depending on the wishes of the leaders organising the event, to use a mosque or synagogue or church or temple. It should be noted that images, whether paintings or statues, may be offensive to some participants.

3. Timing

There are very many religious festivals. In planning the gathering it is important to find a time-slot that is suitable. (It is best to agree on a date and time with the potential invitees before issuing the invitation.).

4. Language

Terms such as 'prayer', 'worship', 'God', 'faith', 'minister' etc. do not necessarily apply in all traditions. Preference should be given to more inclusive terms. At the same time, distinctions should not be blurred.

5. Ritual

A symbolic act or ritual can be more expressive than many words. Flame and water, flowers and bread, have a universal significance so that participants can attach their own meaning to the act and not feel constrained by any one interpretation.

6. Hospitality

The Jewish tradition requires food to be kosher; the Muslim tradition requires it to be halal. Hindus may insist on vegetarian food. Some Buddhists, in addition to dietary needs, may also have requests concerning timing of a meal. Participants vary greatly in attitude to the dietary requirements of their religion. It is best to seek advice.

7. Format

There can be many formats. However, the following listing reflects the pattern of the 'Ceremony for Peace and Collaboration among Religions' held in St Patrick's Cathedral, East Melbourne, on 11 June 2000, during the Great Jubilee.

1. The participants are greeted and welcomed; and the reason for the gathering is given.
2. There may be value in indicating at some point that the statements of faith made by some do not involve the assent of all, Participants can agree to disagree while at the same time coming together in harmony and mutual respect.

3. The various religious traditions make their distinctive contribution, which may be in the form of readings from the sacred texts, poems, teachings etc.
4. Music or song from the various traditions.
5. Periods of silence may be interspersed between the various contributions, during which participants transcend expressions and arrive at their source.
6. One or other leader may give some reflections appropriate to the occasion.
7. The term 'prayer' does not suit every tradition. Intentions or hopes, however, may be stated and agreed upon by means of some appropriate acclamation.
8. An element of ritual, carefully chosen to reflect the purpose of the event, may be incorporated.
9. A commissioning or blessing may be appropriate, sending the participants forth to live out the values of the interfaith experience.

**NATIONAL INTER-CONGREGATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR JPIC, GHANA, ZONE THREE .
REPORT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR 2010**

(Presented to the national Body, in march 2011)

Malachy Nwanalobi Oleru, M.Afr

The year 2010 witnessed a lot of movements on the part of some of the members of the Northern zone, otherwise known as zone three.

What the picture portrays is that these movements made it difficult to carry out an effective work of coordination in our zone and made meeting practically impossible. You can also add the geographically diverse and extensive nature of our zone. In addition to these, is the fact that the National Executive could not reach nor be reached by the zonal coordinator as minutes of previous meeting and addresses and phone numbers were not made available.

However, the beginning of the year 2011 paints a different picture for the zone. Getting settled in Yendi, I made frantic efforts to get addresses and phone numbers of some of us in the zone. By share dint of luck or Providence, I ran into Sr Vilma SSpS, in Saboba Parish of Yendi Diocese, during the blessing of the Sisters' convent. We were able to reconnect and she later gave me a brief update of this year's activities. She also sent me by email, the minutes of the previous meeting and notification for the years programme.

The first task for me was to get in touch with the various Congregations in Yendi

Diocese. The occasion presented itself during celebration of a day for the Religious. I was able to meet with some community leaders who became aware of the existence of this Body. That day we sat together after our official business and agreed on a date to meet in the Bishop's residence. Unfortunately, on that date, 26th February 2011, only two congregations in Yendi turned up for the meeting. Rather fortunately too, the two happened to be enthusiastic, namely Srs Vinzentia of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit SspS (Sr Kamila SSpS, sent her excuses), and Marcelina of the Sisters of the Mary Immaculate (SMI). They made my work easy and rewarding. The two congregations sent their representatives with me today and will share with you what they have been doing in the area of JPIC. I also received phone messages from two Congregations who could not attend that meeting as a result of ill health. They are the FMM sisters in the person of Sr Clothilda and the JMJ sisters in the person of Sr Sahaya. To my knowledge, the Almighty has granted them speedy recovery from malaria.

MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

The M.Afr continue with their usual yearly JPIC programme carried out by a team of four confreres. This includes meetings, networking and the specific tasks of producing a 'Guidelines Regarding Missionaries of Africa Employees' for the use of M. Afr communities. We have already produced a draft of this document, invited an 'expert' from the civil society to review it with us. In our upcoming Provincial Council meeting, we shall present the draft document to the Council for approval and dissemination. Then we shall organize before the end of the year, a workshop on this topical issue. We also have plans to produce a News Letter: a medium of sharing and exchange from various communities of our Society on members' engagement on JPIC.

SISTERS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The SSpS sisters continue to work with the women, especially widows, and girls of Saboba Parish of the Yendi diocese in the area of skill acquisition. Sister Vincenzia/Kamila, present today, will share with you their engagement in this area.

SISTERS OF MARY IMMACULATE

Sister Marcellina SMI is engaged with the risky task of helping young girls escape the scourge of being given away in exchange and early marriage among the Kokombas of Yendi Diocese. She also runs a vocational centre to allow girls learn skills for life. She too will have time to share her story.

CONCLUSION

Whether we are producing a document that will ensure an equitable balance between service, relationship and remunerations, or engaged in liberating women and girls and widows from oppressive power practices and helping them rediscover the power within

them, we are focused on the vision of our Association, trying to attain our goal as we “address specific concerns of marginalization, degradation and abuse...” and thus “promote human development.

FINAL OBLATION

- *Malachy Oleru, M.Afr*

<i>Heal me Lord</i>	<i>Those who hand me over</i>
<i>For the sake of your betrayal</i>	<i>Into the hands of pagans</i>
<i>Denial and sell-out</i>	<i>Parochial profiteers</i>
<i>Passion. Crucifixion. Death.</i>	<i>Enraged allied witnesses</i>
<i>Of these ‘brothers’ of mine</i>	<i>and vain imaginings</i>
<i>Those who abandon me</i>	<i>Elders of plots and</i>
<i>Those who sell me out</i>	<i>Nocturnal contrivances</i>
<i>Those who deny me</i>	<i>Jacob. Deceit. Subterfuge. Usurpation.</i>
<i>Those who choose Barabbas</i>	<i>Silent conspiracy of remote-controlled</i>
<i>Instead ...</i>	<i>drama rehearsed</i>
<i>Those who call out for my crucifixion</i>	<i>Obsessive stranglehold of</i>
<i>Smearing campaign stench of hearts</i>	<i>Misappropriated mission</i>
<i>projected</i>	<i>Devoid of vision...</i>
<i>Scripting writs of sins of kangaroo courts</i>	<i>Heal Lord</i>
<i>Like their Master, the</i>	<i>The Victim</i>
<i>Accuser of the brethren...</i>	<i>The Priest</i>



A statue of Jesus, Gethsemane, Mt of Olives, Jerusalem (Photo: Malachy Oleru)



The 'New' Ghana-Nigeria Provincial JPIC Committee in a pose with Richard Nnyombi and Dominic Apee: L-R standing: Patrick (Treasurer, Wa) Jean-Bosco (Secretary, Navrongo-Bolga), Emmanuel (Kumasi) Andre (Consultor), Malachy (Newsletter, Tamale), James (Nigeria);

Stooping: Clenerius (Provincial Coordinator) Dominic (Provincial), Richard (Rome)

Cover photo:

Natural Stone-rock map of Africa found only in Bunkpurugu. (Photo: Malachy Oleru)

Development...

“INVOLVES THE PROCLAMATION OF THE TRUTH OF CHRIST

WHO EDUCATES CONSCIENCES

AND TEACHES THE AUTHENTIC DIGNITY OF THE PERSON AND WORK”

- Pope Benedict XVI