

**Aquinas Institute of Theology**

**PREACHING PEACE IN A CULTURALLY  
AND POLITICALLY DIVIDED CONTEXT:  
CHURCH MEDIATING PEACE IN CAMEROON**

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To Julius, Evaristus and Kate Basebang. May their souls rest in peace.

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## ABSTRACT

### **PREACHING PEACE IN A CULTURALLY AND POLITICALLY DIVIDED CONTEXT: CHURCH MEDIATING PEACE IN CAMEROON**

Langeh, Jude Thaddeus, C.M.F., M.A., D.Min. Aquinas Institute of Theology, Saint Louis, Missouri, 2023.

We live in times of strife, especially with the cultural division and polarization in many countries, and many look to the church for solutions. Even though our faith summons us to Christian unity, our churches remain tragically divided along ethnic, tribal, religious, and political lines. This thesis project developed and tested the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon preaching methodology to help equip the preachers in Cameroon to mediate peace.

Chapter 1 presents the project's genesis, ministerial context, and the scope of the problem it seeks to address. Delving into the theology of reconciliation, chapter 2, which is the project's theological framework, lays the groundwork for a biblical and theological understanding of the nonviolent preaching that emerges in the project's interdisciplinary framework in chapter 3. The project's homiletic foundations presented in Chapter 4 discuss the sermon-dialogue-sermon method to empower preachers to preach well in a divided zone.

The training of two priests and a lay person who, in turn, conducted the sermon-dialogue-sermon method in their different contexts tested its hypothesis before twenty men and nineteen women who had deliberative dialogue with them. Chapter 5 discusses the training and the sermon-dialogue-sermon method in detail and the qualitative and quantitative data obtained through the insider, outsider, and researcher used in the intervention. Chapter 6 describes the thesis project's identifiable findings through narrative and data analysis, concluding that the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method is proper for the Church to mediate peace in Cameroon. This chapter also discusses the recommendations, lessons learned, and areas for further study. It delves into the research's possible future use and development, including the publication and expansion of the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method.

## Chapter 1

### An Overview of the Project

For he (Christ) is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

—Ephesians 2:14-18

#### Introduction

We live in times of strife, especially with the cultural division and polarization in many world countries, be they developed or underdeveloped, in Africa, Europe, or the United States of America. Unfortunately, Christians and their leaders share the same hostility as the larger culture. Even though our faith summons us to Christian unity, our churches remain tragically divided along ethnic, tribal, religious, and political lines. Considering Cameroon's divided and polarized current state, it is audacious to ask, "Can we all get along?" This phrase introduces why it is so difficult for decent people to get along. Politics, morality, and religion are vexing and divisive aspects of human existence. Our conflict-ridden world urgently needs to break the cycle of violence, strengthen relationships, build a peaceful environment, and repair broken bridges that can help create a sustainable, harmonious society.

Despite the nation's polarization, our Church in Cameroon can bring about genuine harmony. The Church is a conversational community, with the pastor as a

conversational leader and God as a conversation partner. There can be peace and forgiveness within such a conversational context. As these social chasms widen within and without the Church, the preacher's role becomes preeminent. On this note, reconciliation becomes a significant word and action that can redress harmful attitudes and induce peace.

### Genesis of the Project

I was born in Bamenda in the Northwest Region of Cameroon. I had my primary and secondary education in the English part of the country, with English as the official school language for my primary, secondary, high school, and first-degree programs. I then studied in Cameroon's capital, Yaoundé, in the Center Region, using French for my novitiate and theology degree programs as a Claretian Missionary. After my ordination to the presbyterate in 2010, I served two years as co-pastor and youth chaplain in a small parish on the outskirts of Douala, Littoral Region (French-speaking). In 2012, I was transferred to Yaounde to serve as Superior of our Seminary Community and member and secretary of the leadership council of the Claretian Missionaries in Cameroon. In Yaoundé, I helped the anglophone communities in our two parishes within the city. Cameroon has almost three hundred distinct groups and over three hundred languages. There are generally two distinct regional cultures with the influence of colonialism, Anglophone and Francophone, primarily speaking English and French and using different legal systems. Cameroon has ten Regions (provinces, states). Two of the regions, the Northwest and the Southwest, are English-speaking. These two regions are called the "Anglophone Regions" or the English-speaking part of the country. Due to political, religious, cultural, and tribal polarization, fractions are increasing in Cameroon.

Antagonisms are causing mounting tensions, with the “anglophone war of independence” variously known as the Anglophone crisis, the Ambazonia war being the consequence—with the Church caught in the middle.

As a Church leader, the religious context of the Church of Cameroon challenges me to analyze how church leaders can preach in this situation of a great divide. This divide influences the way we think in all spheres of life. The Church, of course, is not limited to a building or the clergy. How can the Church, both laity and clergy, mediate peace, justice, and the reign of God in the socio-political realm of Cameroon? The genesis of this thesis project lies in this background. As a preacher in a church leadership position, I want to contribute my quota to help preachers preach peace amidst my country’s cultural and political divisions.

I conceived this project within the context of my country’s crises, which escalated in 2016 and have gradually led to the unfortunate situation we have now in the anglophone regions of Cameroon. The problem has aggravated in some areas, with no schools due to the inherent violence, kidnapping and killing of people, and burning of houses stemming from disgruntled youths known as the “Amba Boys” and the excesses from the official government military. In the context mentioned above, preachers are caught in the middle. Any preaching that favors the separatist group’s plight will be seen as a betrayal of loyalty to the government and can earn the preacher a jail sentence. Any implied preaching with a tendency to support the government against separatist groups can lead to the kidnapping and eventual killing of the preacher. I myself was abducted alongside four other Claretian Missionary team members on November 23, 2018, when we went on a food rescue mission to the parishioners of Saint Dominic’s Parish in the

Diocese of Buea, in the Southwest/English region of the country. We went with food and medication supplies to save the lives of our parishioners who had lost their homes and sought refuge in the forests. Some youths who had lost houses, property, and loved ones became members of the separatist groups claiming to defend the people and the territory. Claretian Missionaries have served in this parish for over ten years and followed the Christians to the bush.

After being kidnapped, I knew how dangerous it would be to dare prophetic preaching in the divided zone. On this note, my thesis adviser encouraged me to continue when I discussed changing my proposed Doctor of Ministry thesis topic in Spring 2019. He introduced me to Leah Schade's *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, which gave me the basis of prophetic preaching in a divided context. I will provide details on Leah Schade's method in Chapter Four. I decided to maintain my research project on preaching peace in a divided Cameroon.

### Ministry Context

The ministry context of this project is Cameroon in its cultural and political divisions. I trained two priests and one lay faithful to preach prophetically in three different political and cultural contexts of Cameroon. They used the sermon-dialogue-sermon process, which I will explain in Chapter Four of this thesis project.

Cameroon is a country in West/Central Africa and one of Africa's most diverse countries. Jean-Germain Gros attests, "Like many of its neighbors, a wide diversity of ethnic identities is present. They animate intra- and inter-group relations in the country. It has regional differences whose topography and natural resource endowments vary, affording grasslands, forests, and petroleum products. Regional variations also include

distinct religious, ethnic, and political orientations.”<sup>1</sup> In addition to this, Cameroon “has one of the most complex colonial histories, having been colonized and/or administered by three European powers—France, Britain, and Germany.”<sup>2</sup> Diversity, in this case, should be an advantage. However, in Cameroon, this has not been the case.

Cameroon faces several internal issues that cause a significant religious, cultural, and political divide. Terrorism linked to the *Boko Haram* insurgency in the country’s Far North Region causes much insecurity and the displacement of many.<sup>3</sup> In this thesis, I will focus on the armed conflict in the English-speaking regions of the country. Since October 2016, Cameroon has witnessed unrest, violence, and separatist armed conflicts, especially in the country’s North West and South West Regions. Many people from English-speaking areas have moved to French-speaking areas to attend school because separatist groups trying to fight government forces had opposed the reopening of schools. The immediate cause of the problems is the strike organized by the Anglophone Lawyers and the Teachers’ Trade Unions of the English Sub-system of Education. However, these tensions go back to the colonial period. A brief survey into the history of Cameroon will account for the inherent cultural and political divisions within the ministry context. From 1884, Kamerun (German for Cameroon) became a German territory with borders fixed in 1894 by an agreement that Germany concluded with France and England. On this

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Germain Gros, *Cameroon: Politics and Society in Critical Perspectives*. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003), x.

<sup>2</sup> Gros, *Cameroon: Politics and Society in Critical Perspectives*, x.

<sup>3</sup> Boko Haram, officially known as Jamā’at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da’wah wa’l-Jihād (Arabic: جماعة أهل السنة للدعوة والجهاد, lit. ‘Group of the People of Sunnah for Dawah and Jihad’), is an Islamist militant organization based in northeastern Nigeria, which is also active in Chad, Niger, northern Cameroon, and Mali. Wikipedia.org.



note, Harry Rudin attests that “Germany’s brief connection with the Cameroons began in 1884 when Bismarck changed his mind about colonial matters and decided to give Germany’s overseas trade the kind of protection that domestic trade had been given by the protective tariff of the late ‘seventies.”<sup>4</sup> Before 1884, however, there were settlements and organized tribal kingdoms in different parts of Cameroon. The name Cameroon traces its origin to the exploration of River Wouri by the Portuguese in 1472.

When the Portuguese arrived in the coastal areas, which Europeans called the Cameroons in the fifteenth century, they became impressed with the immense trading possibilities. They established contact with the coastal natives, who were the Dualas. The name Cameroon was begun by the Portuguese. When they entered the Wouri estuary (the Cameroons River), they found a variety of prawns in the region.... They called the river *Rio dos Camaroës or River of Prawns*.<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted, therefore, that before German colonialization in 1884, there were different tribes and cultures in Cameroon. The groups were population movements due to migration, jihads, intertribal wars, slave trade, searching for fertile land for grazing and food cultivation, etc. This accounts for the diversity and multiplicity of the indigenous population of Cameroon.<sup>6</sup> Victor Ngoh identifies them as follows: “the Bum,

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<sup>4</sup> Harry R. Rudin, *Germans in the Cameroons, 1884-1914: A Case Study in Modern Imperialism*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 414. Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) was known as the “Iron Chancellor”. He served as Chancellor of the newly united German Empire from 1862 to 1890.

<sup>5</sup> Victor Julius Ngoh, *History of Cameroon since 1800*. (Limbe: Pressbok, 1996), 45. In discussing Cameroon’s History, an orthographic note at the beginning seems in order, given that authors of different cultural backgrounds spell ‘Cameroon’ differently, each spelling being correct. English-speaking authors spell Cameroon or Cameroons, French ones spell Cameroun, and German ones spell Kamerun. Cf. Asombang Raymond Neba’ane, *Bamenda in Prehistory (The evidence from Fiye Nkwi, Msi Crater and Shum Laka Rockshelters)* Ph.D. Thesis; University of London, 1988, 5.

<sup>6</sup> To get these facts, I interviewed erudite historians, sociologists, and anthropologists from Cameroon who are university professors: Prof. Walter Gam Nkwi, Prof. Efuotnkeng Stephen Denis Fomin, and Prof. Henry Kam Kah. Dialoguing with these professors gave me an appraisal of the history of Cameroon. They identified migration, intertribal wars, jihads, and the slave trade as the major causes of the diversity of cultures found in Cameroon. While accepting these as the causes of divisions, Prof. Nkwi asserted vehemently that the transition from Kamerun, one country, to the French and English colonialization portrayed how a united country became divided. Till today, brothers see themselves as rivals. This unfortunate phenomenon has eaten deep into the country’s politics, sociology, and religion. Cameroon, thus, is divided and in need of healing. Prof. Gam Nkwi was my history professor in the minor

Kom, Bali and Bafut from the Bamenda Grassfields; the Bamileke and Bamun from the Western Grassfields; the Ngaoundere Lamidat from Northern Cameroon; and the Fang-Beti, Pygmies, Duala, Bakweri and Bakossi from the Southern Forest Region.”<sup>7</sup> The process of migration involving raiding, subjugating of neighbors, forcing them to migrate elsewhere and even the intensified Islamization “created animosity between powerful and weak kingdoms.”<sup>8</sup> This accounts for the cultural divisions and animosity that exist today among the different ethnic groups in the country.

Preachers need to take cognizance of this. Our churches continue with this. In most parishes, Masses are divided across cultural and linguistic groups. In Saint Charles Lwanga Parish, Nkolbisson, the Church where I often preach, masses are organized according to the different ethnic groups. The parish has many families from the Anglophone and Francophone communities. There are two Masses on Saturday evening (5.30 p.m. in French for the youths and 7.30 p.m. in a group known as the Neocatechumenal Way). Everyone knows that the 6.15 a.m. Mass is for the Bamelikes and the Mbamois because the language of the mass canon is French. Two choirs animating the Mass are from those ethnic groups and sing in those languages. The 7.30 Mass is for the autochthones (Ewondos). Everything from the canon to the songs is done in the Ewondo language. In the parish hall, at 7.30 a.m., there is Mass for those from the North of Cameroon. Even though the Mass is in French, the songs are in

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seminary more than 20 years ago. Staying with him during my research time in Buea from August 17 – 26, 2023, he introduced me to the other professors mentioned above and directed me to access primary sources at the National Archives in Buea. He also directed me to interview the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church to get a more ecumenical view on the task of the Church to mediate peace in Cameroon.

<sup>7</sup> Ngoh, *History of Cameroon since 1800*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Ngoh, *History of Cameroon since 1800*, 1.

Fulfude and other northern languages. The 11 a.m. Mass is in French, and the choir sings in French. Children attend that Mass. The 5 p.m. Mass is in French, but the choir sings in the Bassa language for those of the Bassa ethnic group who attend the Mass. So, every weekend, there are eight Sunday Masses, of which one (9:30 a.m. Mass) is in English. Although English is the standard language for the Anglophone community, the congregation has many divisions according to tribes. Others speak English or are coming to learn English but do not hail from the two regions of the country that speak English. In the same community, some people have intermarried with the Francophones. However, the central divide within the Anglophones is within the two Regions: North West Region and South West Region.

The First World War ended in Germany's defeat, and as a consequence, Germany lost all its African colonies, including Cameroon. Historian Victor Julius Ngoh attests: "The German control over Cameroon, however, ended in 1916, by which date, the combined British and French forces had succeeded in defeating the Germans in Cameroon during the course of the First World War."<sup>9</sup> England took control of one-fifth of Cameroon, and France took over four-fifths of Cameroon. The partition of Cameroon into French Cameroon and Southern (English) Cameroon, administered independently by France and England, did not freeze the movement of people and goods. Animosity and divisions heightened at the partitioning of Cameroon. Professor Nkwi observes, "The partition of Cameroon into French and English suddenly saw people look at themselves as enemies and to a larger extent, strangers."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Victor Julius Ngoh (ed), *Cameroon from a Federal to a Unitary State 1961-1972: A Critical Study*, (Limbe: Design House, 2004), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Prof Walter Nkwi in Buea on August 22, 2023.

French Cameroon became independent of France on January 1, 1960. Southern Cameroon chose to reunite with the Republic of Cameroon, forming the Federal Republic of Cameroon on October 1, 1961. With each region becoming a state in the Republic of Cameroon, the former Republic of Cameroon took the name of Eastern Cameroon, and the former Southern Cameroon became Western Cameroon. This federal experience lasted only eleven years. On May 20, 1972, the people formed the United Republic of Cameroon by an overwhelming vote.<sup>11</sup> Then, on February 4, 1984, President Paul Biya renamed the United Republic of Cameroon the Republic of Cameroon. In effect,

It is worth noting that he consulted the National Assembly before carrying out this constitutional modification. Although he consulted the National Assembly, most of the Members of Parliament were/and had been elected on a single list, which meant that their number could not decisively influence the decision. That constitutional modification went a long way to fuel the sentiments of the Anglophone elite.<sup>12</sup>

It may not be surprising that what is now called in Cameroon “the Anglophone problem” reflects the feeling of marginalization of the Anglophones in the face of a longstanding Francophone majority. The latter feel marginalized by the majority French Speaking, while the former sense the minority group feels much entitled. In this situation, it sometimes becomes challenging for some people to cohabit in the same area. Prof. Walter insists, “One of the topics of contemporary Cameroon history which, since the mid-1980s, has attracted the attention of historians, sociologists, anthropologists, political

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<sup>11</sup> Some scholars attest that after the vote, President Ahidjo unilaterally changed the name of the country from Federal Republic of Cameroon to United Republic of Cameroon. Victor Julius Ngoh (ed), *Cameroon from a Federal to a Unitary State 1961-1972: A Critical Study*, (Limbe: Design House, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Walter Gam Nkwi, “The Anglophone Problem” in Victor Julius Ngoh (ed), *Cameroon from a Federal to a Unitary State 1961-1972: A Critical Study*, (Limbe: Design House, 2004), 185.

scientists, religious leaders and ordinary Cameroonians has been the ‘Anglophone Problem.’”<sup>13</sup>

Accounting for the Cultural and Political Divisions in Cameroon  
In a bid to account for and trace the history of the inherent divisions in Cameroon,

this study led me to interview Prof. Walter Gam Nkwi. Prof. Nkwi is an acclaimed scholar specializing in history and anthropology. His interdisciplinary research focuses on pre-colonial, colonial, and modern African historical periods. The scholar’s research centers on the intricate connection between mobility and communication technology (specifically concerning pre-colonial African technology). He lectures at the Institute of History, Faculty of Humanities, Leiden University, the African Studies Centre Leiden, and for the Bachelor International Studies, The Hague Campus, where he coordinates the African section. Dr. Nkwi was named a visiting Professor in March 2022 at the University of Kwazulu Natal, South Africa.

In the interview with Professor Nkwi, the latter identified migration, intertribal wars, and the jihads as the three leading causes of cultural division: “Geographical mobility of people from place to place as individuals or as groups is essentially horizontal, potentially limitless, and generally motivated by the desire and ambition to take advantage of new opportunities for self or group advancement. This mobility is the basis of grasslands’ communities in Anglophone Cameroon and beyond,” he argued.<sup>14</sup> He recommended that I should visit the National Archives in Buea. Even though some files

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<sup>13</sup> Gam Nkwi, “The Anglophone Problem,” 185.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Prof Walter Nkwi in Buea on August 22, 2023.

were destroyed, Professor Nkwi arranged for me to consult numerous files written mainly by the British Colonial Administration.<sup>15</sup>

Accounting for the cultural divisions in Cameroon, scholar Shirley Ardener opines that “Cameroon is a meeting ground for a wide diversity of cultures and polities both native to Africa and intrusive from Europe.”<sup>16</sup> For example, in the “grassfields” of Cameroon, we notice a

multiplicity of political communities predicated on heavily stressed linguistic singularity, varying modes (and extent) of centralization of powers and the seemingly idiosyncratic parceling up in individual polities of elements from a common core of cultural forms and practices. While not unique, this multiplicity of fiercely independent and linguistically distinct groupings is clearly distinct from other broader and more homogeneous ethnic blocks such as the Yoruba or even the Tikar ... from whom, paradoxically, many grassfields dynasties claim origins. The political and linguistic diversity of grassfields societies susceptible to differing interpretations.<sup>17</sup>

Conflicts in Cameroon have been throughout history, and these clashes have led to many communities’ divisions. Churchill Ewumbue-Monono, explains the situation, especially with the Bamileke tribe spread over Cameroon, in these words:

In Cameroon there have been over 60 low-intensity conflicts emanating from conflict of interests between host and settler communities. The dynamic of Bamileke settlers for instance have clashed with many groups throughout the country. In 1956, there were clashes between the Bamilekes and the Bulus in Sangmelima. In 1960 there were clashes between the Bamilekes and the Bamouns in Bamendji in which over 100 people were killed. Another clash occurred in

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<sup>15</sup> The National Archives, Buea ( NAB) was established in 1959 through the efforts of two British Anthropologists: Edwin and Shirley Ardener. The Archives building in Buea holds more than 20,000 files, which are not stored in the best conditions. British authorities compiled tm information for administrative purposes. Cf. Walter Gam Nkwi, *Kfaang and its Technologies. Towards a Social History of Mobility in Kom, Cameroon, 1928-1998*. (Leiden: African Studies Center, 2011), 25.

<sup>16</sup> Shirley Ardener, “The Catalyst: Chilver,” in Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn (eds), *African Crossroads: Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon*, (Oxford, Berghahn Books 1996), ix.

<sup>17</sup> Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn, “The Grassfields and the Tikar,” in Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn (eds), *African Crossroads: Intersections between History and Anthropology in Cameroon*, (Oxford, Berghahn Books 1996), 1.

Douala between the Bamilekes and the Doualas in 1960, killing some 19 people. Finally, in December 1967, a clash occurred between the Bamilekes and the Bakossis in Tombel, leading to over 250 deaths.<sup>18</sup>

### The Problem

The issue addressed in this thesis project is that preachers almost always try to avoid prophetic preaching in divided contexts, preach to please the hearers, and avoid truths that can help bring change. Many will ask why the Church should address “politics.” In this sense, politics is from the Greek word *polis*, which refers to “community” and “citizens.” As a people of God, we live in Cameroon, under severe social and political crises, and need peace and reconciling mediations. Our identity as the people of God should aim at the common good of living together in peace as a community.

In the churches where I preach, especially in Yaoundé, the country’s capital city, we have Anglophones who have either fled the political unrest in their regions or migrated here for jobs and schools. They have formed themselves into anglophone communities inside parishes. As a bilingual preacher, I minister in churches with both Anglophones and Francophones. The present situation has put preachers in a very complex situation or a divide. It is a great challenge to preach in cultural and political divisions. The Church, while trying to handle these issues, is herself divided.

Comparing the Cameroon situation to Rwanda, Tatab Mbuy attests of this division:

If anything of the Rwandan Nightmare shocked people; it was the unfortunate and active involvement of some religious men and women. In Cameroon, the local

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<sup>18</sup> Churchill Ewumbue-Monono, *Indegenous Minorities and the Future of Good Governance in Caermroon: An Inquiry into the Politics of Local Governance in the Local Councils of Fako Division 1866-2001*. (Buea, CEREDDA Publications, 2001), 14-15.

Church cannot say that it has been spared the backlash of tribalism, ethnicity and regionalism. Some years ago, a group of priests of the Archdiocese of Douala, submitted a memorandum to the Holy See protesting what they considered a discriminatory choice of bishops in Cameroon only from among the so-called ‘graffi’ and ‘Anglo-Bamis’. Many devout lay Christians and the rest of the clergy were stupefied that such thinking could come from the ranks of people who should know better. Almost all right-thinking Cameroonians condemned this memorandum, even some of the signatories on second thought! Today, one wonders whether those priests should not be congratulated for their boldness in openly expressing sentiment that many are now expressing in bathroom whispers. Christians these days, even devout ones, want ‘their own bishops’, a phrase which means someone from their own ethnic and tribal origin.<sup>19</sup>

The issue at hand is that people no longer appear to value vocation or expertise.

They determine a candidate’s qualification or disqualification solely based on their origin. Consequently, the Church is in peril of being divided along tribal or regional lines.

This is extremely regrettable. In effect, Tatab Mbuy insists:

When Regionalism is not rocking the peace and unity of the country, tribalism surfaces very strongly. And Cameroon is riddled with sporadic fatal inter-tribal conflicts. The case of the arab-choa and Kotoko in the Far North and the eternal land disputes in the North West are only publicized ones that have claimed many human lives and property. But there is an inherent hatred and tension between many of our tribes.<sup>20</sup>

Where did all this begin? Consulting the Assessment reports in the Buea National Archives, one sees information like: “The Bansos are essentially a race of warriors and

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<sup>19</sup> Tatab H. Mbuy, “Assessing the Impact of Tribalism and Regionalism in the Development of Cameroon;” in Paul Nchoji Nkwi and Francis B Nyamnjoh, *Regional Balance and National Integration in Cameroon: Lessons Learned and the Uncertain Future*, (Bamenda: Langaa Research and Publishing, 2011). 177.

<sup>20</sup> Tatab H. Mbuy, “Assessing the Impact of Tribalism and Regionalism in the Development of Cameroon;” in Paul Nchoji Nkwi and Francis B Nyamnjoh, *Regional Balance and National Integration in Cameroon: Lessons Learned and the Uncertain Future*, (Bamenda: Langaa Research and Publishing, 2011). 186. In effect Tatab Mbuy throws more light in this when he says that In the South West Province, the Bakweris think that the Bayangis and the Bakossis are getting far too much; the Bissos and the Bassas in the Littoral could hardly become bed-fellows. In the Centre every arrow is aimed at the Beti while the Pygmies of the East feel neglected and exploited. In the North West the Balikumbat-Bafanji violence is just cooling off. The Oko and Mbessa people have sucked each other’s blood for years. In the Western Province the Squabbles are within the same ethnic Bamileke Group. It matters here wheter one is Bamileke from Bayangam, Mbounda or Dschang. The impact of these conflicts tell on the development pattern of Cameroon.”



indulged in tribal wars with all their neighbors save those on the Babungo plain and those adjoining Bikom.”<sup>21</sup> Many stories flood the assessment report as to the invasions of the Fulani, the jihads, and the Chamba people. The Assessment of the Ndop people shows this clearly:

Until the last quarter of a century, i.e., since the coming of the EUROPEAN, inter-clan raids and wars were the rule rather than the exception, and the fracas between Babungo and Baba which took place some few months ago was but an echo of the state of affairs before the EUROPEAN’S arrival. Only in the event of attack by some powerful neighbour such as BAMUM, or in the raids of FULANIS and BALIS did the clans make any sort of federation and then only a temporary, though necessary, alliance against a common enemy.<sup>22</sup>

Concerning the political division in Cameroon, there are several theses. Prof Nkwi would insist that the one Cameroon under the Germans suddenly became divided by the British and the French. Victor Ngoh insists instead that “The elimination of the federal system in 1972 has given rise to historical revisionism, and the result has been the lack of objectivity in presenting, analyzing and comprehending topical issues in Cameroon historiography during the life-span of the federal system.”<sup>23</sup> Tatah Mbuy, on his part, thinks that the introduction of multipartyism not only increased animosity but drew more lines of division based on tribe, ethnicity, and relation. By 1990, he notes:

The reintroduction of multi-party democracy in Cameroon has seen the resurgence of 117 registered political parties. Multi-party democracy as an ideal probably provides the best guarantee for the respect of fundamental human rights. But the experience we have lived in Cameroon since 1990 is far from convincing anyone that we opted for the right form of democracy. There has been horrifying

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<sup>21</sup> Ab 12, File Ep 4461 Assessment Report, Bansa District Cameroons Province 1923, Presented by E. G. Hawkesworth ADO, Bamenda 17th February 1923.

<sup>22</sup> AB 22, File number EP 1282 An Assessment report on the Clans of the BANDOP Area in the Bamenda Division of the Cameroons Province, By J. C. Drumond-Hay, A.D.O, Date Registered January 1925, Paragraph 3.

<sup>23</sup> Victor Julius Ngoh (ed.), *Cameroon from a Federal to a Unitary State 1961-1972: A Critical Study*, (Limbe: Design House, 2004), vii.

suffering hatred even among members of the same family, calculated and wanton violence, looting, rape and arson, torture and horrendous murders.<sup>24</sup>

Tatah Mbuy pushes the argument further by insisting that multipartyism has instead encouraged tribalism:

For all our noise about multi-party democracy, we have only succeeded in heightening and bringing to light latent tribal, ethnic and regional differences. People are more aware and cling more together as tribe, ethnic group and members of the same region. This was never as public and serious before. The country is the poorer for it. Cameroonians, who are in true African spirit, felt free everywhere at home, now have to think twice before entering some territories of the country. Even those who were never conscious of it, now have to remember that they are either Anglophones or Francophones; North West or South West; Beti or Bamileke. Some chiefs and fons who are traditionally the high priests, custodians of cultural values and the unifying force in the tribe, are now known to be dividing their subjects because of party affiliation.”<sup>25</sup>

Seeing this situation, one would expect the Church to mediate peace. The situation in Cameroon has been a challenging one. Many have faced wounds from the slave trade, intertribal wars, jihads, colonialism, interreligious conflicts, and the ongoing socio-political instability. It is a call for all stakeholders to take action. We live in a chaotic world of conflict, which has inflicted many wounds on people. At some point, there is a need for a value-oriented system that can break the chain and spiral of violence and conflict. There is an urgent need for strategies to reconcile the human race personally and in the community.

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<sup>24</sup> Tatah H. Mbuy, “Assessing the Impact of Tribalism and Regionalism in the Development of Cameroon;” in Paul Nchoji Nkwi and Francis B Nyamnjoh, *Regional Balance and National Integration in Cameroon: Lessons Learned and the Uncertain Future*, (Bamenda: Langaa Research and Publishing, 2011). 186.

<sup>25</sup> Tatah H. Mbuy, “Assessing the Impact of Tribalism and Regionalism in the Development of Cameroon;” in Paul Nchoji Nkwi and Francis B Nyamnjoh, *Regional Balance and National Integration in Cameroon: Lessons Learned and the Uncertain Future*, (Bamenda: Langaa Research and Publishing, 2011). 187.

Going through the history of Cameroon, we laud the efforts of true harbingers and preachers of reconciliation. His Lordship Jules Peeters, Catholic Bishop of Buea, in his Christmas Message in 1966, called on Christians to “learn to see the good things in one another” and to love the things of value in each tribe:

The whole idea of Christmas is to bring peace... Christ comes every year into each Christian family to bring peace and to bring mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters together again in happiness and love. This is also the message of Christ to the people of Cameroon. He wants to bring love and happiness to every tribe in the country so that all will live as brothers so that there will be no more quarreling and no more suffering. Every one of us is different; every tribe has its own Customs. The East is not the same as the West, nor the North the same as the South. But each person, each tribe, each nation has something of value and these characteristics can blend together in a rich harmony. We must learn to see the good things in one another to love the things of value in each tribe. The love of Christ will blend together all these things of value in each tribe. The love of Christ will blend together all these things of value in each person and tribe into a beautiful harmony and make a reach unity out of great diversity. So that they may be one, as I and the Father are one.” This is my prayer for you that you may be one.<sup>26</sup>

In this same vein, many bishops have made many efforts through writing and primarily through preaching. Peace has always been the language of the Church. After each sitting, the Catholic Bishops of Cameroon would write messages calling people to peace. In an interview with the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the Buea Synod Office, I also dialogued with directors of several offices, especially the peace office. The Moderator insists that the Church has always mediated peace in Cameroon at the national and international levels. The work is not only for the Catholic Church. The Protestant churches are working so hard. The Church participated in the grand national dialogue

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<sup>26</sup> Bishop Jules Peeters, “The message of Christmas ‘Is Peace and Harmony’” in *Cameroon Times*, (Vol. 6, No. 129, Saturday, December 24, 1966), 6.

and, in all its preaching, has insisted on peace and justice. However, the Church remains caught between the hammer and the nail.

### Purpose and Hypothesis

This project aims to equip Cameroonian preachers with the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method of Prof. Leah Schade to address a gospel message of reconciliation in the context of Cameroon's socio-political divide.<sup>27</sup> My goal is for priests, deacons, religious and lay persons to preach well with words and actions of justice without taking sides out of fear or tyranny. I wish to make the method of civil discourse called "deliberative dialogue" a resource to encourage and equip preachers to address the vital justice issues of our time. The project will help the preacher become aware of the difficulties of prophetic preaching and learn tested strategies and prudent tactics for dialogue grounded in biblical and theological foundations.

I hypothesize that by applying Rev. Dr. Leah D. Schade's type of civil discourse called "deliberative dialogue," preachers can engage in a sermon-dialogue-sermon process of civil discourse with their congregations to meaningfully preach unity in the culturally divided Cameroon without compromising truth and justice. I am constantly confronted with the question: how can I address controversial issues like justice for all with nonpartisan and biblically centered approaches in a culturally and politically divided church in Cameroon? Preaching a prophetic invitation to dialogue allows preachers to open dialogue space. I understand that Schade's "purple zone" describes the red-blue

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<sup>27</sup> Dr. Schade is Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship at Lexington Theological Seminary in Lexington, Kentucky. She is an ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church with M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees from Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary). Her book, *Preaching in the Purple Zone: Preaching in the Red-Blue Divide*, explores how clergy and churches address controversial issues of public concern using nonpartisan, biblically-centered approaches and deliberative dialogue, as inspired by the National Issues Forums initiative of the Kettering Foundation.

divide of the political situation in the United States and the preaching challenge of ministering within this political spectrum. There is no red-blue divide in Cameroon, but rather multiple divides according to language, culture, politics, religion, etc. In this project, I wish to see whether Schade's sermon-dialogue-sermon method and "purple zone" principles can translate to a context beyond America's "purple zone"? Thus, the hypothesis to be tested is that with appropriate attention to cultural context, biblical exegesis using the "dialogical lens," and coaching from those who have used deliberative practices, the "purple zone" preaching-dialogue-preaching methodology can be effectively applied in Cameroon.

#### Basic Assumptions

My thesis assumes a need for reconciliation at all levels in a culturally and politically divided zone like Cameroon. Reconciliation can be brought about through the state, traditional kings, non-governmental organizations, and religious denominations, to name a few. However, the Church's mission is to preach reconciliation concretely in the context of the current socio-political strife in Cameroon. Christian identity, by baptism, requires some measure of interruption within the existing political, national, ethnic, or racial formations. Cameroon's new political future is possible because its citizens adhere to national reconciliation and opt for a new sense of belonging.

Preaching for reconciliation must be grounded in reflective dialogue within the faith community. As a faith community, the Church has been and can be efficacious in promoting and advocating reconciliation in a divided society. The Church must break the walls of division among people of different cultural heritages (Eph. 2:14). Through preaching as a social act, the preacher becomes a social being in the community of faith

by preaching for reconciliation. The unity and diversity within the Church enrich the church community. On this note, the Church is the instrument of reconciliation in the world (2 Cor. 5:19). Therefore, the ministry of reconciliation lies at the center of the Church's being, thus making it a unique instrument of God's mission to heal and reconcile creation.

### Definitions, Delimitations, and Limitations

The sermon-dialogue-sermon process mentioned above is a comprehensive method by Leah Schade that can bring the social gospel of Christianity into congregational dialogue. This process helps preachers and congregations engage on issues of public concern in productive, healthy ways. This method has a four-part sermon sequence ending with a deliberative dialogue: First, a "rooting" sermon, also known as an adult forum, treats "the need for addressing issues of public conversation in the church based on biblical and theological precedent."<sup>28</sup> Second, a "prophetic invitation to dialogue sermon" encourages participation in the upcoming dialogue by justifying the need for a conversation on the specific issue. Third, a "deliberative dialogue" includes guided discussion sessions. Finally, the "communal prophetic proclamation" sermon gathers the congregation's experiences and perspectives on the subject, connecting congregational experience to Scripture, especially "with an eye toward the biblical precepts of justice and righteousness."<sup>29</sup> The culturally and politically divided zone I will be talking about is Cameroon. Today, Cameroon suffers from divisions at many levels.

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<sup>28</sup> Schade. *Preaching in Purple Zone*. 121.

<sup>29</sup> Schade. *Preaching in Purple Zone*. 120.

The Church must preach true reconciliation in this divided zone and define a new political future for Cameroon based on peace studies and the theology of reconciliation.

The need for peace and reconciliation applies to many places beyond Cameroon. However, I am limiting my thesis intervention to my context in Cameroon. We are tackling a dangerous process that has potential danger for those involved. I am neither an expert nor a licensed professional. Through this thesis project, I wish to offer a *theological* and *homiletic* response to ongoing socio-political crises claiming many lives in Cameroon and dividing the country.

### Chapter Outline

The overview of the thesis project above serves as its first chapter, focusing on the ministerial context from which I engage this topic, addressing why Cameroon is divided and needs reconciliation. Furthermore, as outlined above, this chapter describes the project's problem, purpose, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and definitions.

Chapter Two develops the thesis project's theological framework, the theology of reconciliation as a preaching tool for any preacher in Cameroon, a divided zone. In effect, amid the culturally and politically divided Cameroon, this chapter explores the possibilities of a biblical and theological understanding of reconciliation. This chapter develops a Christian perspective on the necessity of reconciliation for Africa and the world. I will dialogue with three theologians who can initiate a theology of reconciliation that will bring about enduring peace. Robert J. Schreiter views reconciliation as a strategy and spirituality rooted in the Bible and founded on the risen Lord's experience. Emmanuel Katangole concurs with Schreiter that a Christian perspective on reconciliation is necessary while arguing for a "new we" approach. The 2009 convening

of the African Synod of Bishops by Benedict XVI, which resulted in the publication of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*, will shed more light on the need for the Church to be the sentinel and herald of reconciliation, justice, and peace.

Chapter Three addresses the thesis project's interdisciplinary framework, nonviolent preaching as a pathway to peace. The chapter focuses on how preachers may utilize the pulpit to work nonviolently for peace and justice by discussing the idea of nonviolence and how great personalities have employed it. After introducing nonviolence, the chapter will discuss how it has led to peace through the works of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. Preachers will learn how to share the nonviolent Word of God peacefully made manifest in Jesus Christ. Preachers may use love and welfare to create a peaceful community by studying nonviolence. This chapter will state that the Church can mediate peace through nonviolent communication and actions through the pulpit.

Having explored the importance of preaching reconciliation through nonviolence, preaching in a divided zone is a significant challenge for preachers. Because of this, many shy from controversial topics and need to be more prophetic and relevant in their context. Chapter Four presents the thesis project's homiletic framework, discussing the sermon-dialogue-sermon method to empower preachers to preach well in a divided zone. This chapter explores the sermon-dialogue-sermon method to empower preachers to preach well in a divided zone. I will show how this method has worked for me and how preachers can use it in different contexts. I will first dialogue with Dr. Leah Schade and navigate with her through the meaning of prophetic preaching and its challenges. Then, I



will explore her “sermon-dialogue-sermon” process, apply it to my context, and prepare to recommend it to other preachers.

Chapter Five describes the thesis project’s ministerial intervention in detail. It focuses on the training I gave to two priests and one layperson. The chapter will outline the intervention process and the research instruments used. It describes how the preaching collaborators carried out the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process in their peripheries. Concerning data collection, this chapter discusses the insider, outsider, and researcher multiple data-collection techniques used for this intervention and reviews the project’s ethical and data analysis procedures.

Chapter Six describes the thesis project’s identifiable findings through narrative and data analysis, concluding that the sermon-dialogue-sermon method is proper for the Church to mediate peace in Cameroon. This chapter also discusses the recommendations, lessons learned, and areas for further study. It delves into the research’s possible future use and development, including the publication and expansion of the sermon-dialogue-sermon method.

## Chapter 2

### Theology of Reconciliation as a Steppingstone to Preaching Peace in a Divided Zone

And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.  
—2 Corinthians 5:18–20 (NABRE)

#### Introduction

Nowadays, reconciliation has become a popular notion. We hear about it much in the political realm, especially in countries where there is oppression, division, hostility, and the pursuance of nation-building and new societies. We are in modernity where “murder, massacre, extermination, world wars, the unimaginable absurdity of the Shoah, the Genocide ... in Rwanda give the measure of the world’s inhumanity.”<sup>30</sup> To this litany of woes, I will add the current *Boko Haram* insurgency plaguing some parts of Nigeria and Cameroon and the deploring socio-political crisis in Cameroon’s North-West and South-West English-Speaking Regions. We live in a chaotic world of conflict which has inflicted many wounds on people. Though our focus will be on the social order, we recognize that “there are many other kinds of situations that cry out for reconciliation in our societies: reconciliation between spouses, in families, among races.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Mgr Jean-Bosco Ntep, “Preface” in *Pour la voie africaine de la nonviolence*, Yaoundé, Cle, 2009, 12, translation is mine).

<sup>31</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1992), 2.

Reconciliation is “the process of making two people or groups of people friendly again after they have argued seriously or fought and kept apart from each other or a situation in which this happens.”<sup>32</sup> Seeing the almost unending concatenation of violent events and stories in the world and especially in the African continent, we must find a need for a value-oriented system that can break the chain and spiral of violence and conflict. There is an urgent need for strategies to personally and in the community to reconcile the human race. Policies and strategies have been put in place in the political realm, but most have failed because human efforts are futile if they do not hinge on God. Consequently, this calls for a more spiritual approach to reconciliation. Our world needs a Christian view of reconciliation rooted in the scriptures and sustained by the church.

This chapter develops a Christian view of reconciliation necessary for Africa and the world. I will refer to three theologians who can set the ball rolling for a theology of reconciliation that will bring lasting peace. Robert J. Schreiter sees reconciliation as a strategy and spirituality rooted in the scriptures and based on the experience of the risen Lord. Schreiter discusses the vertical and horizontal implications of reconciliation arising from the soteriology of Saint Paul and leading to the essential elements and principles in a Christian understanding of reconciliation. Emmanuel Katongole agrees with Schreiter on the need for a Christian view of reconciliation. Focusing on 2 Corinthians 5:17<sup>21</sup> and telling stories of different initiatives taken in the African continent, Katongole opines for a “new we” approach to reconciliation. Dialoguing with this author will help contextualize this thesis to Africa. Finally, Benedict XVI’s gathering of the African

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<sup>32</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/reconciliation>. It is also the process of making two opposite beliefs, ideas, or situations agree.

Synod of Bishop in 2009, which resulted in the publication of the Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Africae Munus*, will throw more light on the need for the church to be the sentinel and harbinger for reconciliation, justice, and peace.

### Robert J Schreiter and the Theology of Reconciliation

Robert J. Schreiter is a theologian and professor of systematic theology at the Catholic Theological Union of Chicago. For twenty-five years, he has exploited the area of reconciliation, accompanying church leaders in reconstructing and healing societies after durable conflicts. Schreiter is interested in the relationship between faith and culture, the mission of the church, and factors shaping World Christianity today. He is also the author and editor of many books and articles. Two of his *chefs-d'oeuvre* fit well into this study: *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (1992) and *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (1998).

In Schreiter's reading of Scripture, reconciliation is at the heart of God's plan of salvation. God created the human person in God's image and likeness (Gen 1:26). After the fall and entry of sin into the world, one would expect to hear that all is lost; however, God promised to crush the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). In effect, God's promise here is to reconcile God's self with the human race. Though the Old Testament does not employ the word reconciliation expressly, one understands the Great Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) as implying reconciliation between humans and God through the priest's intercession.

In the New Testament, “reconciliation is at the heart of the Gospel.”<sup>33</sup>

Reconciliation refers to the relationship between Man and God. Jesus explains:

“Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Mt 5:23-24). Though sparingly used in the New Testament, the idea of word *reconciliation* is inherently part of Paul’s theology.

Schreiter attests: “Paul is the principal resource in the Bible for the concept of reconciliation. Some form of the ‘to reconcile,’ *katallassein*, occurs just 13 times in the authentic and Deuteropauline writings.”<sup>34</sup> In effect, “All but one of the occurrences of the word ‘reconciliation’ in any of its forms is to be found in the Pauline corpus.”<sup>35</sup> To better understand Paul’s thoughts about reconciliation, four passages are necessary: 2

Corinthians 5:17-21, Romans 5:6-11, Colossians 1:20-22, and Ephesians 2:14-17.

Schreiter will use 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 and Romans 5:6-11 to demonstrate reconciliation’s verticality and horizontality.

Borrowing, therefore, from Gregory Baum’s thoughtful reflection on diverse Christian understandings of reconciliation, Schreiter affirms that there is a Protestant and a Catholic view of reconciliation.<sup>36</sup> I was thrilled to read Schreiter’s article on the Catholic Peacebuilding Network (CPN) website. Schreiter distinguishes vertical

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<sup>33</sup> Emmanuel Katongole. *The Journey of Reconciliation. Groaning for A New Creation in Africa*. (Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2017), 5.

<sup>34</sup> Schreiter, *Reconciliation, Mission, and Ministry in a Changing Social Order*, 42.

<sup>35</sup>[https://cpn.nd.edu/assets/243450/2010\\_robert\\_schreiter\\_the\\_distinctive\\_characteristics\\_of\\_christian\\_reconciliation.pdf](https://cpn.nd.edu/assets/243450/2010_robert_schreiter_the_distinctive_characteristics_of_christian_reconciliation.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> “A Theological Afterword,” in Gregory Baum and Harold Wells (eds.), *The Reconciliation of Peoples: Challenge to the Churches* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 184f.

reconciliation (Protestant) and horizontal reconciliation (Catholic) in this article entitled “The Distinctive Characteristics of Christian Reconciliation.” For him, “Vertical reconciliation is the reconciliation God works so as to restore humankind to communion with God. Horizontal reconciliation draws upon vertical reconciliation in order to bring about healing in human relations, either between individuals or between groups of human beings.”<sup>37</sup>

### *Vertical Reconciliation*

The main Pauline text for vertical reconciliation is Romans 5:6-11:

For Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps one might even find the courage to die for a good person. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since his blood now justifies us, how much more then will we be saved through him from the wrath. Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will his life save us. Not only that, but we also boast of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Stemming from the above, “There is an emphasis on reconciliation as the result of Christ’s atoning death and the justification by faith. By focusing on the atoning death, this position has the advantage of seeing reconciliation in continuity with the saving acts of God through history, especially in a theology of covenant.”<sup>38</sup> The implication is that since we are justified by faith, then we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Jesus Christ, we have received access to this grace in which we now stand; and we, therefore, can boast in the hope of sharing the glory of God. The good

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<sup>37</sup><https://cpn.nd.edu/assets/243450/2010>.

<sup>38</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 14.

news is that God proves his love for us because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Reconciliation then is “God’s initiative, mediated to us through Jesus Christ, that has brought us to be able to be in communion with God once more.”<sup>39</sup> Communion with God gives us human beings the ability to restore fellowship with one another.

Schreiter insists, “If there is a classic location for a Protestant theology of reconciliation, it is Romans 5:6-11.”<sup>40</sup> Though identified with protestant theology, “It is this reconciliation that the church celebrates ritually in the sacraments of baptism, eucharist, and reconciliation. There God’s reconciling action is re-enacted for our sakes. When the Church tradition and most Church documents ... speak of reconciliation, it is this vertical reconciliation they have in mind.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, Schreiter identifies the more Catholic view of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, also known as horizontal reconciliation.

### *Horizontal Reconciliation*

The main Pauline text for horizontal reconciliation is 2 Corinthians 5:17-21:

So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

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<sup>39</sup><https://cpn.nd.edu/assets/243450/2010>.

<sup>40</sup> Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies*, 14.

<sup>41</sup><https://cpn.nd.edu/assets/243450/2010>.

Commenting on the above citation, Schreiter shows the transition from vertical to horizontal reconciliation in these words:

Here we see, first of all, the elements of vertical reconciliation. The initiative and power for reconciliation come from God through Christ, where God engages in reconciliation despite our transgressions. What is significant here is that God has now entrusted this message and ministry of reconciliation to us. We act as ambassadors of Christ, carrying out and forwarding this ministry of Christ's behalf. Placed in this light, reconciliation becomes not only a possibility, but a mandate for us. The ministry of reconciliation is for us not an option, but a necessity.<sup>42</sup>

Vertical reconciliation, as presented above, is with God, and it is a process mediated by the death of Jesus Christ. Through his death, Jesus gave us access to a relationship with God. Conversely, the principal concern of horizontal reconciliation, according to Schreiter, entails:

repairing the damage that has been done between and among human beings. Here the dynamics may not be appearing at first to be as wide-ranging or even cosmic as those portrayed in the Letter to the Romans, but closer examination will reveal that they often have to reach as far. That is because we are often faced with the almost unimaginable scale of damage that certain acts have done.<sup>43</sup>

It, therefore, follows that our divided humanity into races, tribes, gender, and social status has left us with much damage. For example, how can one make things right and talk of true reconciliation after a genocide? Do some mistakes and transgressions range so wide and run so deep that one cannot forgive them?

In my own experience, I wondered how to make things right to heal the damage caused to me through the kidnapping I went through at the hands of separatist groups known as the "Amba Boys" in my country, Cameroon. Vertically, I reconciled myself

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<sup>42</sup> <https://cpn.nd.edu/assets/243450/2010>.

<sup>43</sup> <https://cpn.nd.edu/assets/243450/2010>.



with God in the sacrament of reconciliation. However, I was still left perplexed horizontally and asked how I could ever think about reconciliation after being tortured and almost killed. So, the message of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 makes me understand that reconciliation is a mandate given by God and not only an option. Horizontal reconciliation reminds us that we are ambassadors, carrying out the ministry of reconciliation on behalf of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Vertical Horizontality and Horizontal Verticality in Reconciliation*

From above, we may deduce that Romans 5:6-11 is the classic location for a Protestant theology of reconciliation that emphasizes vertical reconciliation, while 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 represents a Catholic emphasis on horizontal reconciliation.<sup>44</sup> “Reconciliation is the work of God, who initiates and completes in us reconciliation through Christ.”<sup>45</sup> In both Romans 5:6-11 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, we understand verticality and horizontally, the term reconciliation.

While an evangelical reading of Roman 5 sees reconciliation vertically between God and human beings, Haddon Willmer, a professor of theology at the University of Leeds, feels that “Paul’s words and actions show that he also expected reconciliation to be practiced horizontally between human beings.”<sup>46</sup> Instead of concentrating on the vertical in isolation or doing readings of the horizontal alone, we should refuse to be one-dimensional. Managing the potentially dichotomic language of vertical and horizontal is a

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies*, 14.

<sup>45</sup> Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies*, 14.

<sup>46</sup> Haddon Willmer, “Vertical’ and ‘Horizontal’ in Paul’s Theology of Reconciliation in the Letter to the Romans,” in *Transformation*, July & October 2007, Vol. 24, No. 3/4 (July & October 2007), 151.

cumbersome task. That is why Willmer opts for vertical horizontality and horizontal verticality:

God's action in Christ (II Cor. 5.21) is an all-round comprehensive sustained movement, in which what may be seen by us as distinguishable vertical and horizontal elements are in God, simultaneous and in harmony. So, when we look for words to reflect God in Christ as. Truthfully as we can, perhaps following the clue of the Chalcedonian definition making distinctions without separation or opposition, we might well speak of vertical in its horizontality or horizontal in the vertical; of vertical horizontality or horizontal verticality.<sup>47</sup>

Apart from Romans 5:6-11 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Paul's theology of reconciliation is also found in Colossians 1: 22-23 and Ephesians 2:12-16. A sum of all these citations sets the ball rolling for a Christian view of reconciliation. Schreiter has been influenced by theologian Jose Comblin.<sup>48</sup> In effect, Comblin suggested that a theology of reconciliation can be discerned on three levels: "a Christological level, in which Christ is the mediator, through whom God reconciles the world to himself; an ecclesiological level, in which Christ reconciles Jews and Gentiles; and a cosmic level, in which Christ reconciles all powers in heaven and on earth."<sup>49</sup> After analyzing the three and exploring the New Testament texts on reconciliation, Schreiter presents five essential elements and principles in a Christian understanding of reconciliation.

*Reconciliation is the work of God, who initiates and completes in us reconciliation through Christ.* This principle insists that God is the author of reconciliation, and we participate in the work of God. Ultimately, "reconciliation is not a

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<sup>47</sup> Willmer, "Vertical' and 'Horizontal', 151.

<sup>48</sup> José Comblin (1923-2011) is one of the most important representatives of Latin America's liberation theology.

<sup>49</sup> José Comblin, "O Tema Da Reconciliação E a Teologia Na América Latina." *Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira* 46, no. 182 (1986): 272.

human achievement, but the work of God within us.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, reconciliation is not human work because the initiative of reconciliation comes from God.

*Reconciliation is more a spirituality than a strategy.* Reconciliation “cannot be reduced to a technical, problem-solving rationality. What undergirds a successful reconciliation process is a spirituality, a view of the world that recognizes and responds to God’s reconciling action in that world.”<sup>51</sup> For reconciliation thus to be successful, it has to be a way of living based on a certain spiritual orientation. Schreiter uploads and brings to light Easter appearance narratives of the resurrection of Jesus to present theology and spirituality of reconciliation based on the experience of the Risen Lord. Reconciliation thus is the fruit of the resurrection. Schreiter offers to the world a “spirituality that will sustain Christians in their efforts to collaborate with others in that process.”<sup>52</sup>

*In reconciliation, God makes the victim and the wrongdoer a “new creation.”* This principle of “new creation” directly references 2 Corinthians 5:17. Reconciliation is not just a restoration of some *status quo ante* but takes us to a new place “where we have not been before.”<sup>53</sup> It comes as something of a surprise. In effect, “the fact that the outcome of reconciliation is so often a surprise, both for victims and for entire communities, is an experience of that ‘new creation.’ Victims find themselves in a new place, often with a vocation to heal others. Communities find themselves also in a new

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<sup>50</sup>Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies*, 14.

<sup>51</sup>Schreiter, *Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order*, 60.

<sup>52</sup> Schreiter, *Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order*, vi.

<sup>53</sup> Schreiter, *Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order*, 60.

place where they had not expected to be.”<sup>54</sup> This new creation concerning both victim and wrongdoer is a sign of God’s to renew the victim’s humanity after the painful experience of violence. Father Emmanuel Katongole will, later on, expound on the New Creation.

*The process of reconciliation that creates the new humanity is to be found in the story of the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:10-11).*

Schreiter calls this the “master narrative” of divine reconciliation for Christians.<sup>55</sup> By placing their suffering in the story of the suffering and death of Christ, Christians are making suffering a means of forging something better and more robust than was there before. This act is not an act of patriarchal sadism but “as an act of solidarity with suffering humanity, in which only by going into the maw of suffering, violence, and death can these be overcome.”<sup>56</sup>

#### Reconciliation as a Spirituality

*The reconciliation process will be fulfilled only with the complete consummation of the world by God in Christ.* This consummation has an eschatological character. Complete reconciliation will happen only when all people and all things have been reconciled at the end of time, in Christ in heaven and on earth (Cf. Colossians 1:19-20 and Eph 1: 9-10) at a point when God will be “all in all,” (1 Corinthians 15:28).

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<sup>54</sup> Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies*, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies*, 18.

<sup>56</sup> Schreiter, *Reconciliation, Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order*, 61.

The significant input of Schreiter to the theology of reconciliation has to do with moving it from mere strategy to spirituality. Schreiter uses Easter appearance narratives of the resurrection of Jesus to present theology and spirituality of reconciliation. He, therefore, opines that the story of John 21:1-17, treating the appearance of Jesus and his provision of breakfast provided by Jesus at the Seashore, is a model for the ministry of reconciliation<sup>57</sup>. Schreiter further insists that there are four steps in that ministry: “accompaniment, hospitality, making connections, and commissioning.”<sup>58</sup> Jesus accompanies the disciples who have gone fishing. He offers them hospitality by preparing breakfast on the shore and reconnecting them (especially Peter) to himself and the community. Then he commissions Peter to Feed His Lambs. For Schreiter thus, reconciliation is the fruit of the resurrection, and we, as people of the resurrection, are ministers of reconciliation.

Insisting on spirituality is based on the fact that it will direct us to bring about the right strategies and appropriate means for effective reconciliation. Spirituality will help implement the best strategy for reconciliation. Once the strategy is not having a spiritual base, it ends up failing. The church then has a significant role in bringing resources and building communities that will be “spaces of safety, memory, and hope that help make reconciliation possible.”<sup>59</sup> On a lighter note, I laughed and shed tears when I read a story in which Schreiter insists on using the appropriate means to bring about reconciliation, taking cognizance of the culture of the people. He insists, “To import another kind of

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<sup>57</sup> Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies*, 83.

<sup>58</sup> Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies*, 94.

<sup>59</sup> Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies*, 128.

reconciliation process may not be effective; such a process might prove to be unintelligible in a giving setting.”<sup>60</sup> He further explains how in Rwandan refugee camps, children used crayons to draw their feelings of trauma. The children ended up eating the crayons. It was their first time seeing crayons, and they were hungry.

As a preacher, I have learned how to use the narrative method with stories to convey the message of reconciliation. Narrative method makes reconciliation a genuine concept and not just an abstract idea. I applaud Schreiter for his insights that are original, concise, deeply rooted in scripture, pastoral, and applicable across cultures. Emmanuel Katongole will further continue with this narrative method of storytelling to convey his message on reconciliation.

#### Emmanuel Katongole and the Stories of Creating a New We

Emmanuel Katongole is a professor of Theology and Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame who specializes in politics and violence in Africa, the theology of reconciliation, and Catholicism in the global South. He is a Catholic priest and core faculty member of the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. He served as associate professor of theology and world Christianity at Duke University, where he was the founding co-director of the Duke Divinity School’s Center for Reconciliation. Katongole is the author of many books and articles on the Christian social imagination, the crisis of faith following the genocide in Rwanda, and Christian approaches to justice, peace, and reconciliation.

Professor Katongole directed my elective study on the theology of reconciliation and opened my mind wide to realities in Africa that I ignored. Dialoguing with Emanuel

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<sup>60</sup> Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality & Strategies*, 107.

Katongole will help us contextualize our work and see reconciliation through the African lens. He is the author of several books and articles. I can call Katongole the storytelling theologian of reconciliation. The special touch he gives in his writings is a storytelling narrative method that mirrors and x-rays the reality he wants to show. Emmanuel tells the story of the church and society of Africa and engages his readers to deduce the need for reconciliation. He attests: “When we step back, two things come clear: first, God’s life-giving vision grows out of a story; and second, that story is about a quieter revolution.”<sup>61</sup> Katongole aims to define a “new we” identity for Africa in particular and for the world in general. He makes the clarion call for a new creation arising from the Pauline theology. Before delving into this, he tells the horror stories of the genocide in Rwanda.

#### The Genocide stories and the Mirroring of the Church in Africa

A mirror is an object which reflects an image. For this to be possible, light that bounces off a mirror will show an image of whatever is in front of it. We use the mirror for many reasons: to see ourselves, to drive, and for many other reasons. Katongole uses this common instrument as a metaphor to talk about the church’s identity: “I talk about Rwanda as a mirror to the church. As we might look in a mirror to see what we look like, Rwanda can help the church in the West see itself more clearly.”<sup>62</sup> Katongole x-rays the Rwandan society and does not mince words to point accusing fingers at the church for participating in the genocide. The terms used were direct, without ambiguity, painful, and

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<sup>61</sup> Katongole, *Reconciling All Things*, 43.

<sup>62</sup> Katongole, *Mirror to the Church*, 25.

poignant. He insists, “We cannot look into the mirror of Rwanda without noting its deep contradictions.”<sup>63</sup>

Katongole outlines the deep contradictions of how a Christian country will engage in genocide in the heart of the celebration of Easter. The worst is that the church did not protect those who fled to her for refuge. Mirroring the church reveals harrowing but true stories of a Christian nation that became polarized into a country defined by tribal and ethnic affinities of Hutus and Tutsi, which surpassed the ideal Christian identities. The stories show that the church committed many wrongdoings during the genocide by not being one family but killing each other. To make matters worst, even church leaders in front of the pope’s representative accepted that the blood tribalism is thicker than the waters of baptism.<sup>64</sup>

In what follows, we shall present three stories: the first is about the beginning of the genocide, which took place during Easter Octave. The second is the shameful complicity of the church in the testimony of Rwamasirabo, and the third is the heroism of Sister Felicitee, from which Katongole shows that there is room for a new creation and not based on tribe, language, or political affinity but on the one baptism we all receive.

*The Horror Story of the Genocide during the Easter Octave*

The first story we bring here is the shameful horror story that happened during the most important period in the church’s calendar.

The slaughter that lasted for a hundred days in the spring of 1994 began on April 7, the Thursday of Easter week. In a country that was over eighty-five percent Christian, almost everyone gathered on Easter Sunday to remember the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just a week before the genocide began,

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<sup>63</sup> Katongole, *Mirror to the Church*, 18.

<sup>64</sup> Katongole, *Mirror to the Church*, 22.



Rwandans celebrated Maundy Thursday. Maundy comes from the Latin *mandatum*, which means “command.” On the Thursday before Jesus was crucified, Christians remember how he gathered with his disciples in the upper room, washed their feet, shared a meal, and gave them a “new command.” Jesus looked at his disciples and said, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:34 – 35). That is the new commandment Christians remember on Maundy Thursday—the command to love one another, even to the point of laying down our own lives. But one week later in 1994, Christians in Rwanda took up machetes, looked fellow church members in the face, and hacked their bodies to pieces. It is strange enough to think that the 1994 genocide began during Easter week. But it is yet another contradiction that it happened in Rwanda. If you read Christian mission journals and textbooks from the 1980s, Rwanda is often held up as a model of evangelization in Africa. Nowhere else on the continent was Christianity so well received.<sup>65</sup>

Theologians agree that at the heart of the Christian Gospel is what came to be known as the *Paschale Sacramentum* (*Paschal Mystery*), the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. In effect, Easter is the most important Christian festival. Saint Paul attests: “If Christ has not been raised, then empty too is our preaching; empty, too, your faith. Then we are also false witnesses to God, because we testified against God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if in fact the dead are not raised. (1 Corinthians 15:14-15)”. Implicitly for Rwandans and all Christians, therefore, without Easter, there would be no Christian Faith without the Resurrection of Christ. In Rwanda, before Genocide, Easter was when families would celebrate Jesus’ resurrection. Easter was indeed a holiday period.

Rwanda was a very flourishing Christian Church that participated in the genocide in which people killed one another. Katongole speaks the bitter truth without coating it and raises an accusing finger at the church, which is supposed to be a light to the world

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<sup>65</sup> Katongole, *Mirror to the Church*, 18-19.

but did not protect those victims who came shelter and escape the killings. This truth is seen in the testimony of Rwamasirabo.

*Rwamasirabo's Testimony of the Shameful Complicity of the Church*

Visiting Rwanda in the summer of 2007, Katongole and thirty-one pilgrims prayed in the different genocide sites in Kigali and Murambi. They met and talked with survivors, some who had lost entire families and others who only narrowly survived. The testimony of Aloysius Rwamasirabo in the genocide memorial site of Nyambe goes thus:

When the killing started in Nyange on April 12, many people took refuge in the church. They closed and locked the doors. Soon the militia surrounded the church and started throwing grenades and shooting through the windows. They tried to burn the church, but because the walls were made of stone, they did not succeed. According to Rwamasirabo, that's when the priest, Father Seromba, and a businessman had a meeting. Soon workers brought two bulldozers to the church. One of the drivers asked Father Seromba whether he really wanted him to destroy the church. Father Seromba gave him permission to go ahead, saying that the Hutus were many. "We should be able to build another church," he told the man. The bulldozers demolished the church, killing nearly three thousand people inside.<sup>66</sup>

Katongole continues the story from here to talk about how Rwamasirabo survived and his present vision of the church.

Rwamasirabo survived because he had sneaked out of the church the night before. For two months, he was hidden by some Hutu friends. That is how he survived. But his two children perished. One of the children survived the initial collapse of the church, crawled from the ruins, and went to the parish house to ask for water. But one of the priests notified the militia, and they came and killed the boy. Rwamasirabo's eldest Son was at school when the church was demolished. He was later able to reunite with his mother, and the two hid in a bush. But they were later discovered by the militia and killed. His entire family was destroyed, and Rwamasirabo alone was left to tell us the story. Listening to Rwamasirabo, I felt tears welling up in my eyes. I was disturbed not only by the pain of the demonic madness that led to the loss of so many lives, but also by the church's betrayal. The church betrayed victims like Rwamasirabo and his family who perished at Nyange. But we also betrayed the perpetrators — the militia and interahamwe — to whom the church offered no better story than the one they perpetuated. I asked

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<sup>66</sup> Katongole, *Mirror to the Church*. 160-161.

Rwamasirabo if he still came to church. His answer was, “No. I do not want to believe anymore in religion and in priests. But I do believe in God.” Rwamasirabo keeps the keys of the ruined church, which has now been made into a genocide memorial.<sup>67</sup>

In the church of Ntarama, approximately five thousand people were killed on August 15, 1994. People fled to the church for safety and were betrayed by their church leaders who succumbed to hatred and violence by participating in the genocide. This onerous act, among many, has disfigured the face of the church. The church of Ntarama is now one of six major memorial sites in Rwanda.

Can the church be an element of reconciliation? Katongole will seek to defend the fact that reconciliation needs a Church. There is always a bright light at the end of any dark tunnel. The following story is also a horror story. But this time, a story of triumph and heroism in the face of genocide.

*The Story of Sister Felicitee, a Sad but Heroic Story of Hope*

Despite the appalling and disappointing stories concerning those who perpetrated the genocide, the beautiful stories of people and religious groups who did not participate in the genocide give much hope. The story of Sister Felicitee, though a sad one, is a spark of hope for a new Easter:

Sister Felicitee Niyitegeka was a member of the Auxiliaries of the Apostolate, a religious order of the Catholic Church in Rwanda. She was in charge of an orphanage in the remote town of Gisenyi, where she cared for children, most of whom were Tutsi. When news of the genocide spread to Gisenyi, Felicitee hid over thirty Tutsis in her home and helped many more Tutsis flee over the border into the Congo. Sister Felicitee’s brother, who was an army colonel, asked her to stop protecting Tutsis, but she refused. When the interahamwe came to Gisenyi, they told Felicitee that she would be spared because of her brother, but the others in her home would be killed. She answered that her household would have to stay together — in life or in death. In an attempt to make her recant and save her own life, the interahamwe shot each person in front of Felicitee. But she did not waver.

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<sup>67</sup> Katongole, *Mirror to the Church*. 161-162.

When all of her companions had been slaughtered before her, Felicitee asked to be killed. The militia leader told her to pray for him before he shot her. Sister Felicitee embodies the prophetic posture. In the midst of a genocide that seemed natural to so many, she improvised a powerful interruption. Sheltering Tutsis and helping refugees across the border, she negotiated political boundaries while at the same time refusing to accept their assumptions. She knew the moment when the interahamwe came that it was time for her to stand with brothers and sisters who had been marked for death. To the very end, she dared to question the line between her and the militia leader by praying that God would have mercy on him.<sup>68</sup>

The story of Sister Felicitee gives hope for a new Easter. Within the Easter season, the story of the slaughter of fellow brothers and sisters in Christ had turned Easter into a time of wailing. The Rwandan experience made Easter akin to the time of Rachel's weeping for her children, a text from Jeremiah 31:11-22 fulfilled in Matthew's Gospel with the death of the holy innocents (Matthew 2:17-18). Sister Felicitee conversely provides vignettes of African faith activists who, despite the suffering endured, were able to uphold hope for newness. In everything, Katongole still insists that the "African church is a unique gift to world Christianity."<sup>69</sup> The African church is a rich laboratory of hope despite the much pain and difficulties. On this note, there is "the hope that is able to erupt in the face of death, betrayal, and madness.... These stories point to a new Easter — a new resurrection that God can and does make possible in our time."<sup>70</sup>

Katongole and the Christian Vision of Reconciliation  
*Things Falling Apart in the World in Need of the Church for Reconciliation*

In William Butler Yeats' beautiful poem, *The Second Coming*, he scribes these beautiful words:

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<sup>68</sup> Katongole, *Mirror to the Church*, 117-118.

<sup>69</sup> Katongole, *Born from Lament*, 264.

<sup>70</sup> Katongole, *Mirror to the Church*, 168.

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold*<sup>71</sup>;

Reflecting on the above poem, one can ask: How can one live faithfully when the center cannot hold? How can one live in peace when our world is broken and divided into rich and poor, black and white, catholic and protestant? The horrible stories from Rwanda and the other many prevalent stories make us think that everything has fallen apart.

Katongole observes:

Though not all of us have experienced the large-scale trauma of war or the violence of brutal racism, we all know brokenness and division at some level, whether through divorce, abuse, social injustice, conflict in our community or right inside our own family. We live together in a broken world, and we do not have to live long to learn that we need healing. We need reconciliation. We know from experience that our world is broken and needs to be fixed. But our problem is even deeper than this. We've also seen enough to know that our attempts to fix the problems of this world further reveal the depths of our brokenness. The worst evils are committed not only in the name of evil but also in crusades in the name of fixing what is broken.<sup>72</sup>

Reconciliation cannot be reduced to simple theory, achievement, technique, or event. We see NGOs and state diplomacies trying to bring a solution. However, even in the church, once the Gospel is absent or disconnected from social efforts, all we see will be the same service as firefighting. We hear words like fire, water, hoses, ambulances, etc. The church becomes a mere ambulance driver while others put out the fire. On this note, secular models of reconciliation are insufficient to bring about a real solution. The simple reason is based on the fact that God's story is missing therein. We need a Christian version that goes "beyond" what the world offers and is based on God's story of a new

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<sup>71</sup> William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming," in *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (1989), <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43290/the-second-coming>.

<sup>72</sup> Katongole, *Reconciling All Things*, 23-24.

creation. It must be rooted in the scriptures and sustained by the church. The vision of reconciliation proposed by Katongole is the one that “needs a church where real and fragile people embody the Gospel.”<sup>73</sup>

The church is essential to obtain sustainable and durable reconciliation because of good leadership, which insists on loyalty to Christ’s lordship over all things. The Christian faith provides a better understanding of reconciliation. Reconciliation needs a Church that will not be just another NGO or a social Agency. The Church must become a place where “Christians learn what it means both to be reconciled and to be ambassadors of reconciliation.”<sup>74</sup> The church has the ministry to forgive. In effect, at the Last Supper, Jesus gave the church the ministry of the forgiveness of sins through the Apostles (cf. CCC, no. 1461). On this note, Katongole insists on Reconciliation as God’s journey of forgiveness.

*Reconciliation as God’s Journey of Forgiveness—The Story of Atyam*

One vital aspect that Katongole underlines in his theology of reconciliation is forgiveness. Katongole demonstrates the power of forgiveness through the story of Angelina Atyam. Atyam is a midwife, mother, and grassroots activist from northern Uganda. She founded the Concerned Parents Association after passing through the bitter journey of pain and advocating for all the children of northern Uganda. She is known for insisting that “Every child is my child.”

In 1996, the Lord’s Resistance Army rebels in Uganda abducted Angelina’s 14-year-old daughter, Charlotte Atyam and 138 of her classmates from their high school to

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<sup>73</sup> Katongole, *Mirror of the Church*, 109.

<sup>74</sup> Katongole, *Reconciling All Things*, 142.

be forced into sex slavery. When they released 109, Charlotte was not among them. Atyam used to meet with the other parents of the abducted girls to advocate, fast, and pray for the release of their daughters. They found it difficult to go beyond the words “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” They were filled with anger and bitterness for their daughter’s captivity. Eventually, they learned to pray the prayers in full as they became convinced that they could not pray for the release of their daughters without learning to forgive the abductors. They were able to forgive even the rebels somehow. They shared this message of forgiveness with their community. It was only after six years that Charlotte could escape with the two children she bore while held captive. Eventually, Angelina and her husband were heartbroken and wondered if the rebels deserved such a gift of forgiveness. In effect, Angelina Atyam was bold enough to meet with and extend forgiveness to the mother of the rebel commander keeping her daughter in the bush.

Angelina Atyam’s story of forgiveness becomes an invitation into another kind of politics, politics, as participation in the self-sacrificing and reconciling righteousness of God. Forgiveness is a gift from God, and it is a decision that always begins with the victim. Atyam learned to turn again and again to God, who loves and forgives everyone.

Talking about her heroism in forgiving, Katongole goes on to write:

It is this “ontology of forgiveness” that seeks not simply the repair of social space rent by violence, but the restoration of all things, whether in heaven or on earth, unto God—which is to say according to their original purpose. This is the ontology within which Angelina Atyam stands and, like a true ambassador, seeks to invite others into its social and practical implications....<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Katongole, *The Journey of Reconciliation*. Kindle Edition.

While reconciliation can mean moving the journey through rough terrain, there is a need to forgive because when we forgive, “we claim the power to create: we create a new relationship.”<sup>76</sup> Being a victim of kidnapping myself, I have learned to agree with Martin Luther King Junior that “Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude.”<sup>77</sup> I know those who kidnapped me. I know how to get back to them. Atyam has taught me that I must get to them and forgive them. If not, I must understand that “he who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love.”<sup>78</sup> I now believe that Atyam’s story for me is an invitation into politics as “participation in the self-sacrificing and reconciling righteousness of God.”<sup>79</sup> This kind of attitude will create a “new we.”

#### *Reconciliation as Creating a “New We”*

Going back into Pauline soteriology, Katongole insists that reconciliation is a “gift and an invitation into another world.”<sup>80</sup> It is the world of a “new creation,” as portrayed in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. When average Cameroonians meet, they want to know one another’s tribe or ethnic group. This situation has led people to naively assume that “one’s national, ethnic, or racial identity is one’s ‘natural,’ and therefore, primary identity, on which one’s being Christian builds.”<sup>81</sup> With Aquinas’s dictum that “Grace builds upon nature” in mind, Katongole suggests that:

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<sup>76</sup> Desmond M. Tutu and Mpho A. Tutu *Made For Goodness*. (London: Rider, 2010), 151.

<sup>77</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love*. (Boston: Beacon Press). Kindle Edition, 33.

<sup>78</sup> King Jr., *Strength to Love*, 44.

<sup>79</sup> Katongole, *The Journey of Reconciliation*. Kindle Edition.

<sup>80</sup> Katongole, *The Journey of Reconciliation*, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Katongole, *Journey of Reconciliation*, 71.



Christian formation does not radically change or interrupt our natural identities but simply builds on these. But such formulations do not allow for the full political reality of Christian identity. For once it has been accepted that our biological, national, racial, or ethnic identities are our primary identities, then the best that Christianity might be able to do is to provide either inner spiritual dynamism to bolster those so-called natural identities or ethical guidelines to civilize and check the excessive tendencies of racism, tribalism, or nationalism, Christianity is left without any resources to question or interrupt the political goals and expectations toward which these so-called natural identities are directed.<sup>82</sup>

In other words, Christian identity has been confused with political identity and has become a sort of belonging, seeking to advance specific political visions of life and expectations. Preachers and church leaders are easily caught in this trap, thus the urgency to think about a new political future, a ‘new we.’ Preachers are to encourage Christians to accept the recommendations from Romans 12:2: “Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that you may discern what the will of God is, what is good and acceptable, and perfect.” Katongole’s paraphrasing of this exhortation is necessary for all. “Brothers and Sisters, do not be naïve about the politics of your nation; do not just fit within the forms of belonging as identified by your race, ethnicity, language or tribe, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you learn to negotiate what is perfect, true and good.”<sup>83</sup>

Katongole observes that God is determined to form a new people in the world. Christian identity seeks to create, realize, and reflect “Ephesian moments” of this movement in the world. There are many take-home messages from Saint Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians. God’s purpose in Christ was to create, out of many, “one new man” (Eph.

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<sup>82</sup> Katongole, *Journey of Reconciliation*, 72.

<sup>83</sup> Katongole, *Journey of Reconciliation*, 73.

2:15), so that Jewish and Gentile Christians now share “one Spirit” (2:18), “one hope” (4:4), “one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, (as they are all Children of) One God and Father of all” (4:56). The Christians in Ephesus, politically and culturally identified as Jews and Gentiles, are no longer separated. They are no longer “strangers or sojourners, but ... fellow citizens.” They have been brought together by Christ’s death, who breaks down the separation walls. As an “Ephesian moment,” they are no longer two separate communities; they are all members of one community in which they have a single body.

In *Sacrifice for Africa*, Katongole provides practical ways in which Christianity can help in building a new political future. Seeing that tribalism is eating much into the lives of many, church leaders can learn from the story of Bishop Paride Taban of South Sudan, who fought tribalism through his initiative of the Holy Trinity Peace Village in Kuron. Bishop Paride dreamt of a community where people from different ethnicities and religious backgrounds could live side by side in harmony, fellowship, and confidence. The Bishop sought to unite the people in peaceful cohabitation and set an example of peaceful cohabitation in war-torn South Sudan. Education and vocational training were great values of reconciliation for the peace village. The Bishop believed that children who studied together were less likely to kill each other as they grew up. The Bishop portrays an “ecclesiology, a vision of what the church is called to be”<sup>84</sup> in his peace village in which people from different tribes find a place. He thus succeeds in fighting tribalism in his small way.

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<sup>84</sup> Emmanuel Katongole, *The Sacrifice of Africa, A Political Theology for Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2011), 143.

Katongole has given us a huge lesson to follow. Although we may represent different ethnicities, tribes, and languages, we must recognize the urgent need to have a new Christian identity where we can live together, eat together, pray, and socialize together. This recognition will help break the walls of division and create forms of catholicity that reflect and reveal the very height of Christ's full stature. The new political future will be a mixture of all, portraying real ecclesial solidarity in which "our membership in the Body of Christ is our primary identity."<sup>85</sup> It is this hope that Pope Benedict XVI sought to give during his visits to Africa and in the African Synod of Bishops, which resulted in the Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*.

#### Pope Benedict XVI's *Africae Munus* as a Spark of Hope for Africa

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, born Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger, served the church as the 265th pope after Pope Saint John Paul II from 2005 until his resignation in 2013. He is a highly regarded theologian whose publications have shaped modern theology and are still very influential today. As pope, his first pastoral visit to Africa from March 17-23 was to Cameroon and Angola. During his stay in Cameroon, he issued the African Church the working document of the Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa, which took place in October 2009 in Rome, on the theme, "*The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: 'You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world.'*"

This section treats the high points of Benedict XVI's visit to Africa. This visit celebrated the life-giving faith in Christ that sustains and nourishes so many of the sons and daughters of Africa. The high points of his speeches will set the ball rolling for the

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<sup>85</sup> Katongole, *Journey of Reconciliation*, 78.

Theology of reconciliation. Particular emphasis will be given to the post-synodal exhortation *Africae Munus* which is a spark of Hope for Africa .

#### Pope Benedict's Pastoral Visit to Cameroon

During his first apostolic journey to Africa, Pope Benedict XVI was in Cameroon for the first three days. During this visit, he presented the *Instrumentum Laboris* in preparation for the Synod of Bishops which led to the document *Africae Munus*. On a very positive note, the pope began by expressing the glories of Africa by describing Cameroon as a “beautiful country,” “Africa in miniature,” a “land of promise, a land of glory!” Reporting on this visit, journalist Allen confirmed that “especially by the standards of West Africa, Cameroon is peaceful, tolerant, orderly, and relatively developed.”<sup>86</sup> The country has thus enjoyed long years of apparent peace and progress, and before November 2016, Cameroon distinguished itself in Central and West Africa as a paradise on earth.

Today, Cameroon suffers from division at many levels. His message was not only for Cameroon but for Africa and the whole world. On this note, we shall delve into the theology of reconciliation, tapping from the African Synod of Bishops and *Africae Munus* to provide a roadmap for effective reconciliation in Cameroon.

The pope came to Africa to hand over the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod:

I have come here to issue the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Second Special Assembly, which will take place in Rome this coming October. The Synod Fathers will reflect together on the theme: “The Church in Africa in Service to

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<sup>86</sup> John L. Allen Jr., “Benedict in Cameroon: a tale of two trips”, in *National Catholic Reporter Online*. (March 20, 2009) <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/all-things-catholic/benedict-cameroon-tale-two-trips>.

Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: ‘You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world’ (*Mt* 5:13-14).<sup>87</sup>

I was present as a seminarian when Pope Benedict XVI visited Cameroon. I followed all of his speeches and homilies keenly. His opening speech filled Cameroonians with joy. When Pope Benedict XVI spoke, he gave joy. He observes the glories of this *Africa in Miniature* in these words:

Cameroon is truly a land of hope for many in Central Africa. Thousands of refugees from war-torn countries in the region have received a welcome here. It is a land of life, with a Government that speaks out in defense of the rights of the unborn. It is a land of peace: by resolving through dialogue the dispute over the Bakassi peninsula, Cameroon and Nigeria have shown the world that patient diplomacy can indeed bear fruit. It is a land of youth, blessed with a young population full of vitality and eager to build a more just and peaceful world. Rightly is it described as “Africa in miniature,” home to over two hundred different ethnic groups living in harmony with one another.<sup>88</sup>

From the complements given by Benedict XVI, as mentioned above, one will think that he sees Cameroon as a citadel of peace without needing any reconciliation. The pope made a soft landing and made a clarion call on the need for reconciliation in Cameroon in particular and Africa in general. He presented Africa as groaning for reconciliation, justice, and peace. Benedict XVI said that Christians must speak out against corruption and abuses of power. “In the face of suffering or violence, poverty or hunger, corruption or abuse of power, a Christian can never remain silent. The saving message of the Gospel needs clear proclamation, so that the light of Christ can shine into the darkness of

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<sup>87</sup> Welcome Address of the Holy Father Benedict XVI at Nsimalen International Airport of Yaoundé. Tuesday, March 17, 2009, during the Apostolic Journey to Cameroon and Angola, March 17-23, 2009. [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/march/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20090317\\_welcome-yaounde.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090317_welcome-yaounde.html).

<sup>88</sup> Welcome Address of the Holy Father Benedict XVI at Nsimalen International Airport of Yaoundé. Tuesday, March 17, 2009.

people's lives”<sup>89</sup> This was a prophetic message for Africa that set off shockwaves to invigorate local church leaders.

The pope also warned that regional conflicts were not good and asked the church to offer Africa reconciliation, justice, and peace:

Regional conflicts leave thousands homeless or destitute, orphaned or widowed. In a continent which, in times past, saw so many of its people cruelly uprooted and traded overseas to work as slaves, today human trafficking, especially of defenseless women and children, has become a new form of slavery. At a time of global food shortages, financial turmoil, and disturbing patterns of climate change, Africa suffers disproportionately: more and more of her people are falling prey to hunger, poverty, and disease. They cry out for reconciliation, justice and peace, and that is what the church offers them. Not new forms of economic or political oppression, but the glorious freedom of the children of God (cf. *Rom 8:21*)<sup>90</sup>.

Benedict XVI prayed for reconciliation, justice, and peace should grow and take root in Africa and that the Holy Spirit may inspire the work of the Synod Fathers:

As I come among you today, I pray that the church here and throughout Africa will continue to grow in holiness, in the service of reconciliation, justice and peace. I pray that the work of the Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops will fan into a flame the gifts that the spirit has poured out upon the Church in Africa. I pray for each of you, for your families and loved ones, and I ask you to join me in praying for all the people of this vast continent. God bless Cameroon! And God bless Africa!<sup>91</sup>.

While leaving Cameroon after handing over the *Instrument Laboris*, which would usher in the Synod and later *Africae Munus*, Benedict XVI insisted again on the urgency of reconciliation in these words. “I urge you to seize the moment the Lord has given you!

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<sup>89</sup> Welcome Address of the Holy Father Benedict XVI at Nsimalen International Airport of Yaoundé. Tuesday, March 17, 2009.

<sup>90</sup> Welcome Address of the Holy Father Benedict XVI at Nsimalen International Airport of Yaoundé. Tuesday, March 17, 2009.

<sup>91</sup> Welcome Address of the Holy Father Benedict XVI at Nsimalen International Airport of Yaoundé. Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Answer his call to bring reconciliation, healing and peace to your communities and your society! Work to eliminate injustice, poverty and hunger wherever you encounter it ...!”<sup>92</sup> Benedict XVI observed that over a quarter of the population is catholic, and as such, “the Church is well placed to carry forward her mission of healing and reconciliation.”<sup>93</sup>

During the meeting of Benedict XVI with the Special Council of the Synod, he gave this address which showed the dire need for reconciliation in Africa:

In the Lord Jesus there is no more Jew or Gentile, man or woman (cf. Gal 3:28). In his flesh he has reconciled all peoples. In the power of the Holy Spirit, I appeal to everyone: ‘Be reconciled to God!’ (2 Cor 5:20). No ethnic or cultural difference, no difference of race, sex or religion must become a cause for dispute among you. You are all children of the one God, our Father, who is in heaven. With this conviction, it will then be possible to build a more just and peaceful Africa, an Africa worthy of the legitimate expectations of all its children.<sup>94</sup>

These same words will be reechoed again by Archbishop Nikola Eterović, General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, on the morning of October 5, 2009, at the beginning of the Second Special Assembly for Africa. “Be reconciled to God!” (2 Cor 5:20) will come up again in *Africae Munus*. This Synod took place in Rome from October 4-5, 2009, under the theme, “The Church in Africa in service to Reconciliation,

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<sup>92</sup> Farewell Address of the Holy Father Benedict XVI at Nsimalen International Airport of Yaoundé. Friday, March 20, 2009, during the Apostolic Journey, of the Holy Father Benedict XVI to Cameroon and Angola (March 17-23, 2009), [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/march/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20090320\\_farewell-yaounde.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090320_farewell-yaounde.html).

<sup>93</sup> Farewell Address of the Holy Father Benedict XVI at Nsimalen International Airport of Yaoundé. Friday, March 20, 2009.

<sup>94</sup> Benedict XVI, *Discourse to the Special Council for Africa* (March 19 2009), Yaoundé, Cameroon, *L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English*, March 25 2009, p.13. *On the morning of October 5 [2009]*, in the presence of the Holy Father, the First General Congregation of the Second Special Assembly for Africa took place in the Synod Hall. there were 226 Synod Fathers present. After president Delegate Cardinal Francis Arinze welcomed the Pope, Archbishop Nikola Eterović, General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, gave a report in Italian. The following is a shortened version of his report.

Justice and Peace.” I can remember the pope telling us here in Cameroon: “My heartfelt wish is that the work of the Synodal Assembly will contribute to an increase in hope for your peoples and for the entire continent; that it will help to inspire each of your local Churches with new evangelical and missionary zeal in service to reconciliation, justice and peace, according to the program given us by the Lord himself: “You are the salt of the earth ... you are the light of the world” (Mt 5:13-14).<sup>95</sup>

### *Africae Munus*, a Spark of Hope for the Nation

*Africae Munus* is the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation which means Africa’s Commitment. *Africae Munus* is the continuation of *Ecclesia in Africa*.<sup>96</sup> The document begins with the words, “Africa’s commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ is a precious treasure....”<sup>97</sup> This exhortation was given at Ouidah, in Benin, on November 19, 2011, in the seventh year of Benedict XVI’s pontificate. *Africae Munus* includes an Introduction (n° 1-13), Part One (n° 14-96), Part Two (n° 97-171), and a Conclusion (n° 172-177). Part one begins with the quotation “Behold, I Make All Things New” (Rev 21:5). In part one, there are two chapters: “Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace” and “Paths towards Reconciliation, Justice and Peace.” Part two begins with the quotation: “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor 12:7). It has three chapters:

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<sup>95</sup> Benedict XVI, “Publication of the *Instrumentum Laboris* - Final Words of the Holy Father Benedict XVI at Amadou Ahidjo Stadium of Yaoundé Thursday, March 19 2009”, in *L’Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, March 25 2009, 10.

<sup>96</sup> *Ecclesia in Africa* is the Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation published in 1995 after the first Special Assembly of Synod of Bishops held in April 10 – May 8 1994, in Rome. The theme was: *The Church in Africa and her Evangelizing Mission towards the Year 2000: You shall be my Witnesses (Acts 1:8)*.

<sup>97</sup> Benedict XVI, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Africae Munus*, (19 November 2011), (Cotonou: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2011) 1.



“The Members of the Church”; “Major Areas of the Apostolate” and “Stand up, take your mat and walk!’ (Jn 5, 8)”.

The introduction, “addressed in a particular way to the Church in Africa,”<sup>98</sup> calling upon bishops, clergy, consecrated persons, and the lay faithful to dedicate themselves in service to reconciliation, justice, and peace. The introduction casts light on the prevailing situation in Africa and the world and suggests significant paths leading to reconciliation, justice, and peace. Also in the introduction, the Holy Father Benedict XVI identifies the *purpose of Africae munus*:

that of giving all the members of the People of God - bishops, priests, permanent deacons, consecrated persons, catechists and the laity - the precious treasure of “Africa’s commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ” (AM 1), giving “a new impulse, filled with evangelical hope and charity” (AM 3) to the Church in Africa that she may truly become salt of the earth and light of the world. The aim of this mission is to lead Africa” to explore its Christian vocation more deeply” by experiencing, “reconciliation between individuals and communities and to promote peace and justice in truth for all” (AM 1). Reawakening faith and hope, the church is called “to help build a reconciled Africa by pursuing the paths of truth and justice, love and peace (cf. *Ps* 85, 11)” (AM 2).<sup>99</sup>

#### *Part One of Africae Munus (n° 14-96)*

In this first part, Pope Benedict reminds us that it is the church’s task to bring the message of the Gospel and the light to the hearts of African societies. He exhorts:

I invite “the Church ... in Africa to *be a witness* in the service of reconciliation, justice and peace, as ‘salt of the earth’ and ‘light of the world’,” so that her life may be a response to this summons: “Arise, Church in Africa, Family of God, because you are being called by the heavenly Father!”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, 3.

<sup>99</sup> Nikola Eterovic, Presentation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*, in Ouidah, November 19 2011, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20111119\\_present-eterovic-ouidah\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20111119_present-eterovic-ouidah_en.html).

<sup>100</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°15.

He goes further to invite all to be authentic servants of the word who will obey the tenets of the Gospel and allow God to lead Africans towards reconciliation with Africans and with neighbors. This invitation entails “listening to and meditating upon the word of God means letting it penetrate and shape our lives so as to reconcile us with God, allowing God to lead us towards reconciliation with our neighbor: a necessary path for building a community of individuals and peoples.”<sup>101</sup> The pope thus makes it clear that the three principal elements of the theme chosen for the Synod, namely reconciliation, justice, and peace, have their source in Christ and need Christ to be true. Benedict XVI employs a Pauline soteriology and exhorts all: “Be reconciled with God” (2 Cor 5:20b). On this note, “authentic peace can be achieved through reconciliation.”<sup>102</sup> Therefore, all must work in the process of reconciliation to build a just social order, even political leaders. He then encourages the church most have concrete fraternal service and always be a sentinel.<sup>103</sup> There are some paths toward reconciliation, justice, and peace which the pope proposes.

#### *Paths towards Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace*

Here, the Pontiff identifies specific fields of action that are supposed to help Africa free herself from the strongholds that paralyze her. He hinges on the words of Christ to the paralytic: “Your sins are forgiven” and then “Rise!” (Lk 5:20, 24) The pope gives concrete guidelines and paths towards how one can achieve lasting reconciliation, justice, and peace. He identifies four areas:

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<sup>101</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°16.

<sup>102</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°21

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°24-30.

*Care for the human person (AM 32-41):* In order to care for the human person, there is a need for an authentic conversion, also known as *metanoia*. This conversion is possible through the sacrament of reconciliation, “which calls for particular attention so that it can serve as a genuine ‘school of the heart.’”<sup>104</sup> Africans are invited to experience the truth of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, and traditional African rites of reconciliation can be helpful if well studied.<sup>105</sup> Reconciliation helps one to live a true spirituality of communion. The gift of Christ in the Eucharist and the word of God bring families together into communion.

*Living in harmony (AM 42-68):* Reconciliation entails living in harmony. Here *Africae Munus* dedicates much space to the family, the elderly, men, women, young people, and children. With the dire need for general reconciliation across Africa, the role of the family is essential. In fact, “the family, as a natural and divine institution, has to be at the center of the church’s and the society’s attention. It must be protected and preserved from the plagues of modernity.”<sup>106</sup> Every member of the family ought to take up their responsibilities.

*The African vision of Life (AM 69-87):* The synod Fathers insisted that the African worldview includes the visible and the invisible world: “ancestors, the living and those yet to be born, the whole of creation and all beings.”<sup>107</sup> Reconciliation entails protecting life in every aspect from conception to death and respect for creation and ecosystem.

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<sup>104</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°32.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°33.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Thomas Bienvenu Tchoungui, “A view of the family in the light of *Ecclesia in Africa* and *Africae Munus*” in *Annals of St. Cyprian School of Theology- Ngoya*, (Yaounde, 2016) 198, translated by us.

<sup>107</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°69.

Africa also needs good governance to protect the defenseless, migrants, displaced persons, and refugees.

*Dialogue and communion among believers (AM 88-96):* Pope Benedict XVI rightly indicates that “peace in Africa, as elsewhere, is conditioned by interreligious relations.”<sup>108</sup> *Africae Munus* thus insists on ecumenism and interreligious dialogue<sup>109</sup>. This dialogue includes the African Traditional Religions and even Islam to seek “juridical and practical recognition of religious freedom, so that every citizen in Africa may enjoy the right to choose his religion freely and engage in worship and the right to freedom of conscience. Religious freedom is the road to peace.”<sup>110</sup>

*Part Two (n° 97-177)*

The second part of *Africae Munus* “addresses different sections of the church in Africa (bishops, priests, deacons, lay people, etc.), identifying priority areas of ministry and inviting each to promote reconciliation, justice and peace in the church and in society.”<sup>111</sup> In preaching this reconciliation, utterly everybody—bishops, priests, missionaries, permanent deacons, consecrated persons, seminarians, catechists, and laypeople—must consciously and actively make the church and Christ present to the world.<sup>112</sup> In effect, all of us are preachers of reconciliation.

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<sup>108</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°88.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°88-94.

<sup>110</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°94.

<sup>111</sup> Nikola Eterovic, Presentation of the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus*, in Ouidah, November 19 2011, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/synod/documents/rc\\_synod\\_doc\\_20111119\\_present-eterovic-ouidah\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20111119_present-eterovic-ouidah_en.html)

<sup>112</sup> Part II of *Africae Munus* spells out and elaborates the roles of each of these groups of people.

Referring to the healing of the sick man at the pool of Bethesda: “Stand up, take your mat and walk!” (Jn 5, 8), Pope Benedict XVI opines that “what Africa needs most is neither gold nor silver; she wants to stand up, like the man at the pool of Bethzatha; she wants to have confidence in herself and in her dignity as a people loved by her God.”<sup>113</sup> Through this encounter with Jesus, the Church in Africa must give bruised and wounded hearts the reconciliation, justice and peace they need. On this note, he gives some practical ways to achieve reconciliation.

*The Sacred Scriptures (AM 150-151):* The pope encourages Christians to promote the spirituality of reading, praying, and meditating on the word of God by means of *lectio divina*. Biblical Apostolate and Bible sharing in small Christian communities are also encouraged. The active role of Small Christian Communities (SCC) in the pastoral life of the church and in reconciling families of their host neighborhoods is a fiery witness to this.

*The Eucharist (AM 152-154):* Reconciliation fosters communion among the faithful of Christ. The Holy Father encourages commitment to the sacrament of the Eucharist as an authentic expression of this communion. In the eucharist, “this bond of fraternity is stronger than that of human families, than that of our tribes.”<sup>114</sup> Therefore, the eucharist fosters fraternity and the reconciliation of people from diverse origins, cultures, races, and ethnic groups is strengthened.

*Reconciliation (AM 155-158):* For the Pope, the wounds that Africa suffers must be brought to Jesus to be healed. Through the sacrament of reconciliation, the Lord will

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<sup>113</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°149.

<sup>114</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°152.

heal its wounds.<sup>115</sup> Reconciliation renews the broken links between the human person and God and restores the links in society. It is also the sacrament that educates hearts and minds to learn to live in a spirit of union, compassion, brotherly love, mercy, and the spirit of humanity. To do this, special place must be given to this sacrament on both the personal and community levels.<sup>116</sup> Because of the shortage of priests or other reasons, non-sacramental forms of the sacrament of reconciliation can be experienced, but they cannot replace the sacrament of reconciliation.

At the end of the second part of *Africae Munus*, the pope reminds Africans of the new evangelization. Going back to what Emmanuel Katongole said above, reconciliation needs church. The pope thus reminds the Church in Africa to rake up her task of “commitment to evangelization, to the *missio ad gentes*, and to the new evangelization.”<sup>117</sup> These will make Africans bearers of Christ, the true “light of the world” and the authentic “salt of the earth”. There is a need to be missionaries in the footsteps of Christ. The new evangelization “is especially concerned with the Church’s service to reconciliation, justice and peace.”<sup>118</sup> The pope revisits the Pauline soteriology of being ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor 5:17-21) and encourages Christians to “pursue or undertake with determination the path of holiness, and thus increasingly become apostles of reconciliation, justice and peace.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°155.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°156.

<sup>117</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°159.

<sup>118</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°169.

<sup>119</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°171.

*Africae Munus* ends with a call on the Church of Africa to “Take Heart; Rise, He is Calling” (Mk 10:49). Pope Benedict XVI insists that reconciliation comes through evangelization, and the Church of Africa must respond to this call to be ambassadors of reconciliation, justice, and peace.

### Conclusion

In a conflict-ridden world, there is an urgent need to break the cycle of violence, strengthen relationships, build a peaceful environment, and repair broken bridges that can help create a sustainable, harmonious society. On this note, reconciliation becomes a significant word and action that people employ to redress harmful attitudes and induce peace. The situation of our world since WWII calls for reconciliation. Andrea Strübind attests: “since the Second World War and the collapse of the totalitarian dictatorships, in particular with a view to the genocide of the Jews in Europe, questions of acknowledgment of guilt, the process of coming to terms with the past and reconciliation have assumed the primary focus of philosophical, political and social debate.”<sup>120</sup> In effect, reconciliation is a significant challenge that needs efforts from all spheres of life. It is necessary to work together and in synergy for genuine reconciliation.

Schreiter, Katongole, and Benedict XVI agree that reconciliation is necessary in our world. We have understood the theology and spirituality of reconciliation with solid biblical backing from them. Pauline soteriology has been very useful as it reveals to us that reconciliation is a gift from God (vertical) and challenges us to be ambassadors of reconciliation (horizontal). The true and harrowing stories of Katongole brought to the

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<sup>120</sup> Andrea Strübind, “Myths of Religious Reconciliation.” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 27, no. 2 (2014): 244.

limelight the situation of Africa. They challenged the church to be a harbinger of reconciliation and help all build a political future based on the new creation. Pope Benedict XVI's pastoral visit to Africa and the publication of *Africae Munus* Africa is a "historic and valuable contribution to the recovery of reconciliation as a unique gift and invitation—a way of living in the world"<sup>121</sup> Preachers have in their hands a valuable tool. "Evangelization today takes the name of reconciliation."<sup>122</sup>

This chapter has explored the importance of a theology of reconciliation for the church. The question now remains: How can preachers preach in a divided zone is a significant challenge for preachers. Because of this, many shy from controversial topics and end up not being prophetic and relevant in their context. Chapter three will explore the sermon-dialogue-sermon method to empower preachers to preach well in a divided zone. I will show how this method has worked for me and how to use it in different contexts.

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<sup>121</sup> Katongole, Emmanuel. *The Journey of Reconciliation*, 61.

<sup>122</sup> Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, n°174.



## Chapter 3

### Nonviolent Preaching as a Pathway to Peace

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: those who choose one shall eat its fruit.  
— Proverbs 18:21 (NABRE)

#### Introduction

Peace is essential for individual and community progress. Where peace is absent, there is violence. A severe examination of today's world, particularly Africa, reveals an intriguing phenomenon—a confluence of violence manifesting in various ways. This is a world where “murder, massacre, extermination, world wars, the unimaginable absurdity of the Shoah, the Genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda give the measure of the world's inhumanity.”<sup>123</sup> Helder Camara opines that the ‘spiral of violence’ is a symbol for the central problem of today's world—“the violence of poverty which keeps over two-thirds of the world's population in a sub-human condition, the violence of revolt when peaceful demands have no effect and the violence of repression with which the powerful try to crush the demands of the poor.”<sup>124</sup> It is within this culture of violence that we are born and nurtured.

Yet, each person longs to live in an excellent social atmosphere. If we want people to behave less violently, we must teach the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of

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<sup>123</sup> Mgr Jean-Bosco Ntep, “Preface”, in *Pour la voie africaine de la nonviolence*, (Yaoundé : Clé, 2009), 12, *translation mine*.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Helder Camara, *Spiral of Violence*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1971), <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/general/spiral-of-violence.htm>.

nonviolence. In this light, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, insists, “peace must first be developed within an individual.... Once these qualities are developed within an individual, he or she is then able to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony. This atmosphere can be expanded and extended from the individual to his family, from the family to the community and eventually to the whole world.”<sup>125</sup> In this light, Gandhi and other nonviolence propagators come in as great catalysts.

This chapter, which is the thesis project’s interdisciplinary framework, supports the idea that nonviolent preaching might bring peace to Cameroon. It will focus on how preachers may utilize the pulpit to work nonviolently for peace and justice by discussing the idea of nonviolence and how great personalities have employed it. After introducing nonviolence, the chapter discusses how it has led to peace through the works of Gandhi and King Jr. Preachers will learn how to share the nonviolent Word of God peacefully made manifest in Jesus Christ. Preachers may use love and welfare to create a peaceful community by studying nonviolence.

Michael Nagler attests that our world since the twentieth century has “left us a double legacy. On the one hand, it was a time of great cruelty and violence; on the other hand, and perhaps from that very crucible of violence, we saw manifestations of a new kind of power—or rather, new uses of an age—old power—that can lead humanity to a far better future.”<sup>126</sup> This power, Nagler identifies in the word nonviolence.

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<sup>125</sup> Quoted by Ravindra Kumar, “Education For Peace” in *Global Peace*, 12, no. 2 (December 2012), 4.

<sup>126</sup> Michael N. Nagler, *The Nonviolence Handbook, A Guide for Practical Action*, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2014), 12.

## An Overview of the Doctrine of Nonviolence

Defining nonviolence is not easy, yet people employ the term in diverse fields of life, including the socio-political and religious arenas. According to Robert Holmes, nonviolence is “the renunciation of violence in personal social or international affairs. It often includes a commitment (called active nonviolence or nonviolent direct action) actively opposed to violence (and usually evil or injustice as well), by nonviolent means.”<sup>127</sup>

Nonviolence is a pragmatic ideology of bringing about change in the political, religious, and personal spheres of life without using violence. It entails rejecting violence in favor of peaceful tactics to gain political or social objectives. The point here is that we must clarify what we mean by nonviolence. Therefore, in addition to ‘without violence’ or ‘rejecting violence,’ it must also be ‘against violence’. On this note, “It is not enough that an activity is carried out without the use of violence. To fulfil the criteria of being labeled nonviolence it must in addition be done with the aim of reducing or eliminating violence or oppression.”<sup>128</sup>

Mario López Martínez defines nonviolence as “a methodology, an ethical-political doctrine, a way to build peace that is oriented towards a coherent philosophy, seeking a love of knowledge, experimentation and life.”<sup>129</sup> However, Martínez underlines that any discussion concerning nonviolence, must specify how to spell the term.

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<sup>127</sup> Robert L. Holmes, “Violence,” *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed., Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 829.

<sup>128</sup> Jørgen Johansen, “Nonviolence More than the Absence of Biolence,” in *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, ed., Charles Webel and Johan Galtung (Oxon UK: Routledge, 2007), 150.

<sup>129</sup> Mario López Martínez, “Nonviolence in Social Sciences: Towards a Consensual Definition,” in *Revista de Paz y Conflictos* 8, no. 1 (2015), 63.

*Non Violence, Non-violence, or Nonviolence?*

There is a morphosyntax problem among scholars since, etymologically two words make up nonviolence: ‘non’ and ‘violence.’ How, then, should we write it? Is it better to separate the two (non violence), use a hyphen (non-violence) or combine them as one word (nonviolence)? Using non violence, “can easily be confused with relations or conditions ‘without violence’ of a physical or direct kind, or with *a-violence*...”<sup>130</sup> On the other hand, the version non-violence “owes its origin to the interpretation which the British made in reference to the forms of protest of Gandhi’s followers (India and South Africa).”<sup>131</sup> In the same vein, Nagler throws more light on the fact that “*Non-violence* implies that the real something, the default condition, is violence, and that nonviolence is just its absence—in the same way that many people still think of peace as merely the absence of war. They are turning truth on its head, and artificially limiting our options.”<sup>132</sup>

In this work, I prefer the combined term, nonviolence. The Italian thinker Aldo Capitini, in 1931, began to use it to refer to the ethical-religious concept of *ahimsa*, in addition to those struggles undertaken by Gandhi and his followers, identifying the term nonviolence with that of satyagraha, invented by the Indian leader. Capitini aimed to reduce the concept’s strong dependence on the term “violence.” Capitini, on coining the term nonviolence intended that it was understood not only as a “collection of techniques which renounce the use of arms and violence, but additionally, as a constructive and open

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<sup>130</sup> Martinez, 65.

<sup>131</sup> Martinez, 65.

<sup>132</sup> Nagler, *The Nonviolence Handbook*, 14.

program of a type of ethical-political, social and economic emancipation, which proposed to reduce human suffering to the minimum.”<sup>133</sup>

Johansen confirms this when he insists that nonviolence is more than the absence of violence. He insists:

When violence is used, it will often result in counter-violence and be the first twist in a violent spiral that can escalate out of control.... A long discussion within political movements is how the means influence the ends. Many of the most prominent figures within nonviolent movements have argued strongly that violent means result in violent ends.<sup>134</sup>

### *Nonviolence as an Antithesis to Violence*

Central to the doctrine of nonviolence is that inflicting violence in all forms is morally wrong and causes physical and psychological harm to human persons.

Nonviolence, thus, is an antithesis of violence. Violence is any action, direct or indirect, that inhibits an individual from reaching his or her full potential. We can identify direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence. Consequently, “Direct violence is harming others with intention. Structural violence is the harm done by sociopolitical structures and decisions that deprive someone of their access to basic needs necessary for fulfilling one’s full potential in life.”<sup>135</sup> Cultural violence is the cultural justification of direct and structural violence. It refers to “‘aspects of cultures’, not entire cultures... [meaning] entire cultures can hardly be classified as violent.”<sup>136</sup> Cultural violence supports the other two (physical and structural) by making them “look, even feel, right—

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<sup>133</sup> Martinez, 65.

<sup>134</sup> Johansen, 144.

<sup>135</sup> Johansen, 151.

<sup>136</sup> Johan Galtung, “Cultural violence.” *Journal of Peace Research* 27 no. 3, (1990), 291.

or at least not wrong.” For Johansen, each has its antithesis in the context of nonviolence. In this light, therefore we can distinguish between Direct Nonviolence, Structural Nonviolence and Cultural Nonviolence<sup>137</sup> as can be shown below:

*Direct nonviolence* involves using techniques to influence conflicts without using violence. People use direct nonviolence to confront decisions, laws, and systems that do not treat all humans on equal bases, especially during the abolition of slavery, decolonization, removal of patriarchal structures, and resistance against wars and imperialistic policies. It is effective against illegitimate powerholders, armed police, and military forces.

*Structural nonviolence* “consists of those structures in our society that promote cooperation, reconciliation, openness, equality and peaceful actions in conflict situations.”<sup>138</sup> A nonviolent societal structure results from societal structures promoting inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability. Resources, freedoms, and rights will be distributed equally in such cases. Peace becomes the direct consequence of such a society. Where there is structural violence, there is a need for many sorts of mediation to obtain conflict transformation and reconciliation and give birth to a structural nonviolent society.

*Cultural nonviolence* “includes those parts of our culture that transmit traditions of nonviolent behavior and which commemorate and honor nonviolent values and qualities.”<sup>139</sup> When nonviolence becomes a way of life, we can ascertain that we have a

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<sup>137</sup> Johansen, 151.

<sup>138</sup> Johansen, 151.

<sup>139</sup> Johansen, 151.

culture of nonviolence. All efforts to promote peace, create an environment for dialogue and discussion, and the bid to find solutions to problems all help in creating a culture of nonviolence. Nonviolence denotes a whole class of activities, attitudes, and lifestyles. Nonviolence adherents and activists debate whether nonviolence is a principle or a technique.

### *Principled versus Pragmatic Nonviolence*

Scholars identify two approaches to contemporary nonviolence: *principled nonviolence*, where the emphasis is on human harmony and the moral rejection of violence and coercion, and *pragmatic or strategic nonviolence*, which identifies conflict as normal and the rejection of violence as an effective way of confronting power. There are points of convergence and also points of divergence.

Pragmatic and principled nonviolence converge when both approaches view nonviolence as an effective and ethical means of resolving conflicts and political disputes because it seeks to minimize harm and casualties. Similarly, both approaches agree that nonviolence is useful for reformist/revolutionary purposes, promoting social change, such as different nonviolent actions/uprisings, and preventing undesirable change. Failure to distinguish between the two streams can undermine the effectiveness of nonviolent action and confuse the public. Katerina Standish throws more light on this distinction in the following way:

While pragmatic nonviolence aims to transform conflict socially, principled nonviolence ... results in a transformation of self. Principled nonviolence is associated with pacifism and ethical constraints against violence. In contrast, pragmatic nonviolence refers to a distinctive set of political practices that do not require actors to adopt pacifism.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Katerina Standish, "Cultural Nonviolence: The Other Side of Galtung," in *Global Journal of Peace Research and Praxis* 1, no. 1 (2014), 52.

Recognized leading exponents of principled nonviolence are Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. The probably best-known protagonists of pragmatic nonviolence are Gene Sharp, Adam Roberts, Brian Martin, Robert Burrowes, Jean-Marie Muller, and Theodor Ebert. Gene Sharp advocates nonviolent action as relevant for pragmatic rather than religious or ethical reasons. However, confusing principled nonviolence with pragmatic nonviolence clouds our understanding of the theory and practice of nonviolence in our personal, social, religious, and political lives.

Rather than discussing divergence and convergence, the two are rather complementary. The difference between the two approaches may be ideological rather than empirical since they can point to alternative paths for the pilgrim who does not want to use violence. Our interest is to understand the dynamics of nonviolent preaching as a pathway to peace.

#### *What is Nonviolent Preaching?*

Nonviolent preaching is a form of religious or spiritual discourse that promotes nonviolence as a means of conflict resolution and social change. It is rooted in the principle of nonviolence, which holds that violence only begets more violence and that peaceful means are the most effective way to bring about lasting change.

Nonviolent preaching can take many forms, including sermons, speeches, or other forms of public discourse. It can be directed at individuals, communities, or even entire nations and may address discrimination, social injustice, or political conflict.

The effectiveness of nonviolent preaching lies in its ability to inspire and motivate individuals and communities to take action toward peaceful solutions. By promoting nonviolent attitudes and behaviors, nonviolent preaching can create a culture of peace



and reduce the likelihood of violence and conflict. Nonviolent preaching is not limited to any one religion or spiritual tradition. Anyone who believes in the power of nonviolence to create a better world can practice it.

Nonviolent preaching often draws on the teachings of religious or spiritual figures who espoused nonviolence, such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. These teachings emphasize the importance of compassion, empathy, and understanding to resolve conflicts rather than aggression or force. Mahatma Gandhi stands out as one of the greatest figures of our time who has moved nonviolence from a principle of life to bring about pragmatic changes in the world.

#### Gandhi's Doctrine of Nonviolence

Gandhi is one of the twentieth century's most respected spiritual and political leaders. He was a lawyer, politician, activist, ethicist, and writer who helped free the Indian people from British rule through nonviolence. Indians honor him as the father of the nation; as such, they call him Bapu. Gandhi was Mahatma (great soul), and this title has been confused with his name. The world respects Gandhi for achieving political and social progress through the doctrine of nonviolent protest (satyagraha). Gandhi's autobiography, *'The Story of My Experiments With Truth,'* presents incidents of his life that shaped his beliefs and developed his concept of nonviolence.

Mahatma Gandhi is the acclaimed world father of modern-day nonviolence. His prophetic voice reaches beyond the boundaries of nation-state, race, and religion. In effect, Gandhi's adherence to the principles and practice of nonviolence provides the world with a litmus test for anyone who advocates for peace. Gandhi's life story and his view of nonviolence will help us understand building a peaceful culture.

### *Biographical Information*

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in Porbandar on October 2, 1869, and died in Delhi on January 30, 1948. In May 1883, when he was thirteen years old, Gandhi married the fourteen-year-old Kasturbai in an arranged marriage. She remained his wife until she died in 1942, and they had four children. Gandhi left in 1888 for London to study law. During his second year of studies in England, he met two theosophist brothers who made him read the English edition of the Bhagavad-Gita (the Song Celestial). Gandhi explains how the Gita influenced him: “The book struck me as one of priceless worth. The impression has ever since been growing on me with the result that I regard it today as the book par excellence for the knowledge of truth. It has afforded me invaluable help in my moments of gloom.”<sup>141</sup> Gandhi also met with a good Christian from Manchester in a vegetarian boarding house which made him read the Bible. The Old Testament did not make a good impression on him. However, the New Testament, especially the Sermon on the Mount, appealed to him the most, and he saw parallels with his religion.

After three years in England, he returned to India in 1891 to practice as a lawyer. With his return to India, one can divide Gandhi’s activities into three periods: “from 1893 to 1914; its field was South Africa; from 1914 to 1947, India under British rule and lastly, from August 1947 to January 1948, a very short period in independent India.”<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with the Truth*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 2006), 76-77.

<sup>142</sup> J. R. Kokandakar, *Gandhian Thought* (Nagpur: Central Techno Publications, 2014), 7.

In 1893, Gandhi went to South Africa as a legal advisor or “paid lawyer of a business firm, Dada Abdulla and company.”<sup>143</sup> He discovered how Blacks and Indians suffered deprivation of many civil rights and were victims of intolerance and racism. He met his first racial prejudice when asked to remove his turban in court. However, that was just the beginning of more shocking experiences. On a journey to Pretoria, he was traveling in a first-class compartment, and in Maritzburg they asked him to cede his seat to a white man who entered. When he refused, they threw him out into the cold winter. Amidst this extremely bitter cold, Gandhi made a decision that was a turning point in the history of satyagraha:

It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. ... I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process. Redress for wrongs I should seek only to the extent that would be necessary for the removal of the color prejudice. So I decided to take the next available train to Pretoria.<sup>144</sup>

Gandhi spent twenty-one years in South Africa working for their rights. He developed a method of action based on the principles of courage, nonviolence, and justice, which he called satyagraha. In effect, from South Africa, Gandhi developed satyagraha as a powerful ‘weapon’ for counteracting social, economic, and political injustice and violent suppression of individual and national freedom: “Satyagraha is a priceless and matchless weapon, and those who wield it are strangers to disappointment or defeat.”<sup>145</sup> Gandhi left South Africa in July 1914 for England and returned to India in

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<sup>143</sup> Kokandakar, 20.

<sup>144</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 125-26.

<sup>145</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa*, 312.

January 1915. Within fifteen years, he had become the leader of the Indian Nationalist Movement.

On January 9, 1915, Gandhi received a national hero's welcome when he returned to India. The Nagar Sheth of Jetpur, Shri Nautamlal B. Mehta (Kamdar), used and bestowed "Mahatma"<sup>146</sup> (Great Soul) for Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi on January 21, 1915, at Kamri Bai School, Jetpur, India. From then on, Gandhi was known as Mahatma Gandhi for the rest of his life. Gandhi traveled to acquaint himself with the people and their tribulations. He founded Satyagraha ashrams, religiously oriented communal farms where he, his family, and his followers lived. He also launched a campaign to obtain economic independence in the face of the impoverishment of the population and the destruction of local industry, a consequence of British colonial policy. But his campaign of civil disobedience was a failure. The British government arrested him for subversion in 1922 and released him in 1924. From 1930 onwards was a peak period for Gandhi.

He spearheaded nonviolent protests to suppress taxes in India, notably through the Salt March. Later, he fought to eradicate the caste system and equal rights for "untouchables" (Harijans), even starting a newspaper with that name. With India's partial independence in 1935, he advocated for local Indian principalities' unity. With Jawaharlal Nehru,<sup>147</sup> he led the Congress Party to India's independence. He also launched "Quit India" (Hind Swaraj). He led India's freedom movement through satyagraha.

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<sup>146</sup> Many credit Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature winner, for giving Gandhi this name and publicizing it. The title represented the feelings of the millions of Indian peasants who viewed Gandhi as a holy man.

<sup>147</sup> (1889–1964). Indian statesman, prime minister 1947–64, known as Pandit Nehru, Nehru was elected leader of the Indian National Congress in 1929.

India gained independence in 1947 and split to become India and Pakistan. Subsequently, riots broke out between Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi called for a united India in which Hindus and Muslims lived peacefully. On January 13, 1948, aged 78, he began fasting to end the bloodshed. More than once, Gandhi used fasting to convince others of the need to prevent violence. Five days later, rival leaders promised to stop the fighting, and Gandhi broke his fast. Twelve days later, on January 30, 1948, a Hindu fanatic, Nathuram Godse, who opposed Gandhi's tolerance program for all religions and beliefs, assassinated Gandhi.

Thoreau, Tolstoy, Ruskin, and most of all, Jesus Christ influenced Gandhi. The Bible (especially the Sermon on the Mount) and the Bhagavad-Gita shaped his doctrine. He sacrificed his life for his beliefs. Gandhi's peaceful campaign for human rights influenced freedom and civil rights movements worldwide, especially for blacks in North America. How did one man succeed in doing all these? Albert Einstein said of Gandhi: "Generations to come will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth."<sup>148</sup> In the lines that follow, we will express that.

#### *Gandhian Definition of Nonviolence*

To better define nonviolence, Gandhi translated into English the Sanskrit term *ahimsa* (sometimes spelled *ahinsa*), which is common in Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist literature. In effect, the great law book of Hinduism, Manu Smriti, says, "*Ahimsa Paramo Dharma*: ahimsa is the highest law."<sup>149</sup> Etymologically ahimsa is derived from the

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<sup>148</sup> <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/452888-on-the-occasion-of-mahatma-gandhi-s-70th-birthday-generations-to>, consulted on April 04, 2023

<sup>149</sup> Kokandakar, 43.

Sanskrit verb root ‘*han*,’ which means to kill. The form ‘*hims*’ means ‘desirous to kill’, ‘to strike.’ The word *himsā* implies the desire to harm, kill or inflict violence or injury on a living being. The prefix *a-* is a negation. So, *a-himsa* means literally ‘lacking any desire to kill, non-harming or nonviolence. Stemming from the etymology, ahimsa is thus the recognition, subjugation, domination, and transformation of the violent spirit in man, which leads him to the desire to repel, exclude, eliminate, and injure another person.<sup>150</sup> For Gandhi, nonviolence is not primarily a mode of action, but an attitude, a look, a look of kindness and benevolence towards another human being, especially another human being, who can be the stranger, the intruder, or the enemy.

Nonviolence then defined as ahimsa is the total absence of violence and bad will towards all living things and the presence of goodness, kindness and benevolence towards all living things.<sup>151</sup> There needs to be an ideal weapon to oppose violence, and that weapon is nonviolence. Ahimsa denotes complete nonviolence, with no physical or passive harm. Gandhi translates *shimsa* as love. Arun Gandhi explains this in an interview as follows: “He (Gandhi) said ahimsa means love. Because if you have love towards somebody, and you respect that person, then you are not going to do any harm to that person.”<sup>152</sup>

Nonviolence, according to Gandhi, is the most powerful force at humanity’s disposal. It is more powerful than any nuclear bomb. It outperforms brute force. It is a

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<sup>150</sup> Jean-Marie Muller, « Apprendre la langue de la non-violence », in *Diogène* (2013) 3-4, n° 243-244, 11.

<sup>151</sup> Muller, 12.

<sup>152</sup> Arun Gandhi, “Interview,” in *The New Zion’s Herald*, (July/August 2001), vol. 175, issue 4, 17.

living force of strength, and no one has ever been able to estimate its bounds or extent. Gandhi's nonviolence is a quest for the truth. Truth is the most essential part of Gandhi's nonviolent philosophy. His whole life has been "experiments of truth." It was through this quest for truth that Gandhi discovered nonviolence, which he elaborated on in his Autobiography: "Ahimsa is the basis of the search for truth. I am realizing that this search is vain, unless it is founded on ahimsa as the basis."<sup>153</sup>

Nonviolence must begin with the mind to be strong and effective; otherwise, it will be weak and cowardly nonviolence. When confronted with a risky or unpleasant circumstance, a coward lacks bravery and attempts to escape it. A man cannot practice ahimsa while still being a coward.

Having defined ahimsa, Gandhi now used it to bring change to the world. How did he do that? Gandhi effectively brought about change. But how? He began by changing himself before moving to change the world.

#### *Gandhi's Threefold Approach to Changing the World*

Gandhian applied nonviolence comprises three essential elements or three main parts: the improvement of the individuals in their own lives and ways of living, a constructive program to begin building a new social order even as the old one still exists, and the practice of various forms of nonviolent action against specific evil ways. Here, Gandhi applies his originality in the satyagraha, representing a roadmap to an integral form of nonviolent revolution.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup>Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 254.

<sup>154</sup> Moore-Backman C., *The African American Freedom Movement Through the Lens of Gandhian Nonviolence*, Master's Degree Thesis submitted in Lesley University, (May 2011), 26.

*Change at the Personal Level or Personal Transformation.* Eknath

Easwaran<sup>155</sup>exposed how one man changed himself to change the world. Gandhi did all he could to dominate his passions, reduce his needs and avoid being negatively conditioned by family, caste, or public opinion. Very often, he would bind his resolutions with private vows. He did not teach people things he never tried on himself. Gandhi recognized the individual as the fundamental and most basic agent. Gandhi preached by his exemplary lifestyle.

Among the vows taken by Gandhi for his personal transformation we can note: Truth, *ahimsa* (nonviolence), *asteya* (nonstealing), *aparigraha* (non-possession), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), control of the palate, bread labour, fearlessness, equality of religions, *swadeshi* (self-reliance), and non-observance of untouchability.<sup>156</sup> All the above was anchored by a disciplined prayer practice and was always geared toward service of others, especially the suffering poor. These constituted the fundamental underpinnings of the Gandhian recipe for personal transformation. Only through this personal change could Gandhi bring change to the world. Three years before his death, Gandhi wrote: “I can indicate no royal road to the social revolution, except that we should represent it in every detail of our lives.”<sup>157</sup>

Gandhi’s constructive program lays the foundation of a platform where inner change in the individual should simultaneously go with societal change. In Gandhi’s mind, the establishment of a just social order depended on personal transformation and

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<sup>155</sup> Author of the Book *Gandhi the Man*, (California: Nilgiri Press), 206.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. M. K. Gandhi, *Vows and observances* (Berkeley: Berkeley Hills Books,1999), 29-33.

<sup>157</sup> Louis Fischer, *The life of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), 340.



the collective embodiment of the characteristics he championed for individuals: self-reliance, discipline, service, and nonviolence.

*Constructive Program:* Gandhi saw the need to strengthen certain weaknesses in the Indian social structure. The constructive program refers to a set of pragmatic and social actions that would give India real economic freedom and free her from extreme poverty. The constructive program represented the societal means, in the form of specific social reform projects, by which such qualities could be developed, independent of the dominant order's exploitative systems and institutions. Gandhi devoted himself to the country's social, economic, and spiritual regeneration and felt the people's efforts would achieve this. Gandhi, therefore, emphasized what he had initially conceived as "spiritual socialism," the positive counterpart of non-cooperation and civil disobedience, and eventually called the constructive program.

Gandhi felt the only truthful and nonviolent way to win independence would be through constructive action. Gandhi, therefore, thought that the constructive programme may otherwise, and more fittingly, be called "construction of *Poorna Swaraj* or complete independence by the truthful and nonviolent means".<sup>158</sup> It means getting involved in finding constructive solutions to problems. We usually ward our responsibilities on someone else's shoulders, usually the government's shoulders. The constructive program was the greatest means to economic development for a poor country like India. Mahatma Gandhi felt strongly that the constructive program was another form of satyagraha that could bring about a nonviolent agrarian revolution.

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<sup>158</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Constructive Programme, Its Meaning and Place*, (Ahmedabad: The Navajivan Trust, 1991), 7.

Gandhi did not consign the constructive program to the realm of theoretics. He drew up a concrete working plan with a total of eighteen projects to be undertaken across the nation. Gandhi encouraged people to contextualize these. The following are the various constructive programmes listed by Gandhi: (1) Nurturing communal unity, (2) Removal and abolishing of untouchability, (3) Prohibition of alcoholic drinks and drugs, (4) Popularisation of *Khadi* (promotion of hand-spun, hand-woven cloth), (5) Other village industries for self-sustenance, (6) Village sanitation, (7) New or basic education, (8) Adult Education, (9) Upliftment, emancipation or liberation of women, (10) Education in health and hygiene, (11) Promotion of provincial languages, (12) Propagation of *Rastra Basha* (National Language), (13) Economic equality, (13) Service of *Kisans* (peasants or farmers), (15) Organising Labourers, (16) Service of the *Adivasis* (aborigines), (17) Service of lepers, (18) Service of students, and improvement of cattle.<sup>159</sup> As Bondurant would insist, the constructive program gave “content to the Satyagraha framework and applied Gandhian principles in the Indian conscience.”<sup>160</sup>

After transforming oneself and putting in place a good constructive program, we are like the bow in the hands of a warrior ready for action.

*Political Action (Satyagraha):* Political action entails the practice of various forms of nonviolent action against specific evil ways. Gandhian satyagraha imposes itself as the principled-revolutionary nonviolence. Put succinctly, satyagraha means ‘truth force,’ ‘soul force,’ or ‘love in action.’ Satyagraha has often been defined as the

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<sup>159</sup> Cf. M. P. Mathai, *Mahatma Gandhi's World-view* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 2000), 255-256.

<sup>160</sup> Joan Valerie Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence, the Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict.* (Los Angeles: University of California Press), 172.

philosophy of nonviolent resistance most famously employed by Mahatma Gandhi, in forcing an end to the British domination. Gene Sharp did not hesitate to define satyagraha simply as “Gandhian Nonviolence.”<sup>161</sup>

Satyagraha means devotion to truth, remaining firm on the fact, and resisting untruth actively but nonviolently. Since the only way for Gandhi to get to the truth is by nonviolence (love), satyagraha implies an unwavering search for the truth using nonviolence. Satyagraha, according to Michael Nagler, means ‘clinging to truth,’ and that was exactly how Gandhi understood it: “clinging to the truth that we are all one under the skin, that there is no such thing as a ‘win/lose’ confrontation because all our important interests are really the same, that consciously or not every single person wants unity and peace with every other.”<sup>162</sup>

South Africa and India were laboratories where Gandhi tested his new technique. Satyagraha was necessary for Gandhi to work in South Africa and India. Louis Fischer attests that “Gandhi could never have achieved what he did in South Africa and India but for a weapon peculiarly his own. It was unprecedented indeed; it was so unique he could not find a name for it until he finally hit upon satyagraha.”<sup>163</sup> South Africa is the acclaimed birthplace of satyagraha. Here satyagraha was employed to fight for the civil rights of Indians in South Africa. Gandhi applied satyagraha in his socio-political milieu in India and carried out several acts of civil disobedience, culminating in the Salt March.

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<sup>161</sup> Thomas Weber and Robert J. Burrowes, “Nonviolence: An Introduction,” in *Peace Dossier* 27, no. 2 (February 1991), 2.

<sup>162</sup> Michael N., Nagler, *Hope or Terror?* (Minneapolis: METTA Center for Nonviolence Education, 2009), 7.

<sup>163</sup> Louis Fischer, *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World* (New York: Mentor Books, 1954), 35.

Another wonderful way of seeing satyagraha in action is through the fasting of Mahatma Gandhi. Fasting was part and parcel of his philosophy of truth and nonviolence. Gandhi was an activist—a moral and spiritual activist. And fasting was “one of his strategies of activism, in many ways his most powerful”<sup>164</sup>. Seeing the world in this way, Gandhi brought about change. He brought about *Hind Swaraj* or what we can call Indian Rule. Through his personal life, organization of his community and political action, Gandhi preached the message of peace and nonviolence. His preaching pulpit was any opportunity he had to bring about social change through a nonviolent way. His conviction when preaching was simple: nonviolence, empathy and kindness can win all battles, even war. A personal question remains, did Gandhi succeed? Has his proposal been of any relevance to India in particular and the world at large? Gandhi’s tenets have been used by so many today. One prominent figure is Martin Luther King Jr, whom we shall treat below.

#### Martin Luther King Jr: Preacher and Nonviolence Activist

Martin Luther King Jr. was a social activist who transformed America through nonviolence. King, however, started as a preacher and continued to preach passionately throughout his life. Given this, it is even more amazing to pay attention to his sermons, which expressed his religious convictions and influenced the civil rights movement he led.

King’s importance as a political and moral leader stemmed significantly from the sermonic quality of his public discourse or rhetoric. King was, first and foremost, a

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<sup>164</sup> Stanley E. Jones, *Gandhi, Portrayal of a Friend* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1948), 108.

preacher, a giver of sermons. Whether speaking before his congregation on Sunday morning, writing a public letter, or giving an interview to the representatives of the Mass media, he was sermonizing, actively striving to craft what he called a “beloved community” from the key values of the Christian and democratic traditions of American society.<sup>165</sup> In light of this, we can better comprehend why our research exhorts the preaching Church of Cameroon to work for peace in the country’s divided society.

Mahatma Gandhi had a great influence on King. King credited Mahatma Gandhi’s legacy of nonviolence for the effectiveness of his own campaigns in areas such as integration and voting rights. In embracing Gandhi’s Satyagraha as a method of struggle for the emancipation of blacks in America, he became Gandhi’s greatest disciple. In his own words, King attests:

Then I was introduced to the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. As I read his works, I became deeply fascinated by his campaigns of nonviolent resistance. The whole Gandhian concept of satyagraha (satya is truth which equals love and graha is force; satyagraha thus means truth-force or love-force) was profoundly significant to me. As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi, my scepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time that the Christian doctrine of love, operating through the Gandhian method of nonviolence, is one of the most potent weapons available to an oppressed people in their struggle for freedom. At that time, however, I acquired only an intellectual understanding and appreciation of the position, and I had no firm determination to organize it in a socially effective situation.<sup>166</sup>

### *Biographical Note*

Martin Luther King Jr., also known as Martin King Jr., was a Baptist minister and social activist who led the civil rights movement in the United States from the mid-1950s

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<sup>165</sup> Carolyn Calloway-Thomas and John Louis Lucaites, eds.ed), *Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Sermonic Power of Public Discourse* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1993), 10.

<sup>166</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love* (Boston: Beacon Press), 161. Also Martin Luther King Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom, The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1958), 96.

until his assassination in 1968. He was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia, and died in Memphis, Tennessee, on April 4, 1968.

King grew up in a comfortable middle-class home. His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all Baptist preachers. He enrolled at Morehouse College in Atlanta at 15 as part of a unique wartime program designed to increase enrolment by accepting deserving high school students like King. King preferred studying law and medicine at Morehouse, but in his final year, he followed his father's advice and entered the ministry. The college president, Benjamin Mays, a social gospel warrior whose brilliant oratory and progressive views had a lasting effect on King's father, was King's mentor at Morehouse. Mays, who was committed to fighting racial inequality, accused the African American community of complacency in the face of oppression, and he prodded the Black Church into social action by criticizing its emphasis on the hereafter rather than the here and now. It was a call to service that the teenage King did not miss. In 1948, he graduated from Morehouse College.

King spent the following three years at Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, learning about Mohandas Gandhi's nonviolent philosophy as well as the ideas of current Protestant theologians. In 1951, he received his Bachelor of Divinity degree. After graduating from Crozer, King attended Boston University. He researched man's relationship to God and got a doctorate (1955) for a dissertation titled "A Comparison of the Conceptions of God in the Thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman."

Dr. King spearheaded a nonviolent movement in the late 1950s and 1960s to attain legal equality for African Americans in the United States, drawing inspiration from

his Christian faith and Mahatma Gandhi's peaceful teachings. While some advocated for freedom via "any means necessary," including violence, Martin Luther King Jr. used the power of preaching and peaceful acts of resistance, such as protests, grassroots organization, and civil disobedience, to attain apparently insurmountable aims. He went on to spearhead similar efforts against poverty and international violence, always adhering to his ideals that all men and women, regardless of race or creed, are equal members of the human family. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" address, Nobel Peace Prize lecture, and "Letter from Birmingham Jail" are very popular orations. His achievements are taught to kids of all races today, and his teachings are studied by researchers and students worldwide.

#### *The Nonviolence Doctrine of Martin Luther King Jr*

Martin Luther King Jr begins by identifying the triple evils of racism, excessive materialism (leading to poverty), and militarism, which are the root causes of violence that keep the human person in a vicious circle. They are interconnected, all-encompassing, and serve as impediments to our existence in the "Beloved Community." To combat the triple evils, King encourages everyone to cultivate a peaceful mindset through a revolution of values, which he proposes as the "Six Principles of Nonviolence."<sup>167</sup> In an address delivered at the National Conference on New Politics August 31, 1967, Luther identifies the three evils plaguing our society:

We are now experiencing the coming to the surface of a triple prong sickness that has been lurking within our body politic from its very beginning. That is the

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<sup>167</sup> This is found in Chapter Six of Martin Luther King Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1958), 90–107.

sickness of racism, excessive materialism and militarism. Not only is this our nation's dilemma it is the plague of western civilization.<sup>168</sup>

*Racism:* For Martin Luther, “racism is still that hound of hell which dogs the tracks of our civilization.... Racism can well be, that corrosive evil that will bring down the curtain on western civilization.”<sup>169</sup> He clamors that we must fight the violence of racism because:

Racism is a philosophy based on a contempt for life. It is the arrogant assertion that one race is the center of value and object of devotion, before which other races must kneel in submission. It is the absurd dogma that one race is responsible for all the progress of history and alone can assure the progress of the future. Racism is total estrangement. It separates not only bodies, but minds and spirits. Inevitably it descends to inflicting spiritual or physical homicide upon the out-group<sup>170</sup>.

*Materialism/poverty:* Though born into a well-to-do family when compared to the negroes in his time, King did not lose sight of the violence of poverty due to excessive materialism. He insisted that:

Excessive materialism blinds us to the human reality around us and encourages us in the greed and exploitation which creates the sector of poverty in the midst of wealth.... The way to end poverty is to end the exploitation of the poor, ensure them a fair share of the government services and the nation's resources.<sup>171</sup>

Instead of materialism, he clamored for the inevitable decision between materialism and humanism, insisting on investing in children's education and impoverished people's health as we do in car maintenance and constructing gorgeous, magnificent hotels. There

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<sup>168</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., “The Three Evils of Society,” address delivered at the National Conference on New Politics (August 31, 1967), <https://youtu.be/6sT9Hjh0cHM>, consulted on January 10, 202

<sup>169</sup> King Jr “The Three Evils of Society.”

<sup>170</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here* (New York: Beacon Press, ), 74.

<sup>171</sup> King J.,r “The Three Evils of Society.”



is a dire need to wage war against the cankerworm and violence of materialism and poverty.

*Militarism:* One of the areas that King criticized the government for was the heavy militarism, especially in the war of Vietnam. For him, “Nothing more clearly demonstrates our nation’s abuse of military power than our tragic adventure in Vietnam.”<sup>172</sup> He warned that “a nation that continues year after year, to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”<sup>173</sup> War is also a platform of discrimination against the negro: “We are willing to make a Negro 100% of a citizen in Warfare but reduce him to 50% of a citizen on American soil.”<sup>174</sup> War floods the nation’s home with orphans and widows, injects poisonous medications of hate into the veins of otherwise good people, and leaves troops physically and mentally damaged after returning from dark and terrible battlefields. Seeing the threat posed by the triple evil, King Jr. calls for a true revolution of value.

#### *A Clarion Call for True Revolution*

After depicting the violence of the triple evils, King called for a true revolution of values: “For the evils of racism, poverty, and militarism to die, a new set of values must be born. Our economy must become more person-centered than property- and profit-centered. Our government must depend more on its moral power than on its military power.”<sup>175</sup> Contrary to the three ills, three value revolutions are necessary.

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<sup>172</sup> King Jr., “The Three Evils of Society.”

<sup>173</sup> King Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 199.

<sup>174</sup> King Jr., “The Three Evils of Society”.

<sup>175</sup> King Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 142.

- A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. We are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's roadside, but that will only be an initial act.
- A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast between poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look at thousands of working people displaced from their jobs, with reduced incomes due to automation, while the employers' profits remain intact and say this is not just.
- A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war: "This way of settling differences is not just."<sup>176</sup>

"America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world", King said, "can well lead the way in this revolution of values."<sup>177</sup> This revolution of values can be seen in Martin Luther King Jr's Six Principles of Nonviolence.

### *Principles of Nonviolence*

In fighting the violence caused by the triple evils of society, Martin Luther King Jr. proposes six principles which are fundamental tenets of his doctrine of nonviolence. These were influenced from the philosophy of Gandhi. following six principles to be embraced as a lifestyle.

1. *Nonviolence is for courageous people.* Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people and not a method for cowards. In effect, "If one uses this method because he is afraid or merely because he lacks the instruments of violence, he is not

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<sup>176</sup> King Jr, *Where Do We Go from Here*, 198-99.

<sup>177</sup> King Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here*, 199.

truly nonviolent.”<sup>178</sup> As such, it is not passive but active nonviolent resistance to evil. Nonviolence, thus is aggressive spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.

2. *Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.* Nonviolence leads to redemption and reconciliation. Nonviolence “does not seek to defeat or humiliate the opponent, but to win his friendship and understanding.”<sup>179</sup> Nonviolence aims to create the Beloved Community, while the aftermath of violence is tragic bitterness.

3. *Nonviolence Seeks to Defeat Injustice, or Evil, Not People.* Nonviolence acknowledges that evildoers, like victims, are not evil people. Nonviolent resistance tries to defeat evil rather than individuals. For example, if he is opposing racial injustice, the nonviolent resister has the vision to see that the basic tension is not between races.”<sup>180</sup>

4. *Nonviolence believes that suffering has the power to teach and transform.* Nonviolence tolerates pain without revenge. Undeserved pain is redemptive and has enormous educational and transformational potential. The nonviolent resister is willing to turn the other cheek “to accept suffering without retaliation, to accept blows from the opponent without striking back.”<sup>181</sup>

5. *Nonviolence chooses love Instead of Hate.* Nonviolence opposes both spiritual and physical violence. Nonviolent love is unplanned, uninspired, selfless, and creative.

This love is the Greek *agape*. King insisted:

*Agape* is not a weak, passive love. It is love in action. *Agape* is love seeking to preserve and create community. It is insistence on community even when one

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<sup>178</sup> King Jr., *Stride Towards Freedom*, 102.

<sup>179</sup> King Jr., *Stride Towards Freedom*, 102.

<sup>180</sup> King Jr., *Stride Towards Freedom*, 103.

<sup>181</sup> King Jr., *Stride Towards Freedom*, 103.

seeks to break it. *Agape* is a willingness to sacrifice in the interest of mutuality. *Agape* is a willingness to go to any length to restore community.<sup>182</sup>

6. *Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice.* The peaceful resister has a strong belief that justice will prevail in the end. Nonviolence believes that God is a just God. Consequently:

The believer in nonviolence has deep faith in the future. This faith is another reason why the nonviolent resister can accept suffering without retaliation. For he knows that in his struggle for justice he has cosmic companionship. It is true that there are devout believers in nonviolence who find it difficult to believe in a personal God.<sup>183</sup>

#### *Six Nonviolent Steps for Social Change*

The steps for Nonviolent Social Change are founded on the nonviolent campaigns and teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that stress love in action. By the time he wrote the Letter from Birmingham Jail, King attested that in any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices are alive, negotiation, self-purification, and direct action.”<sup>184</sup> From all his writings and actions, the Six Principles of Nonviolence are identified as a summary of Dr. King’s ideology of nonviolence, guiding these processes for societal and interpersonal transformation.

*Information Collection:* You must do research to comprehend and communicate an issue, problem, or injustice confronting a person, community, or organization. You must explore and collect all pertinent facts from both sides of the debate or subject in

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<sup>182</sup> King Jr., *Stride Towards Freedom*, 105.

<sup>183</sup> King Jr., *Stride Towards Freedom*, 106-7.

<sup>184</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail”, in *The Atlantic Monthly* (August 1963), 1.

order to enhance your comprehension of the issue. You must become an expert in your opponent's position.

*Education:* It is crucial to enlighten people about your topic, especially your opponents. This reduces miscommunications and earns you support and compassion.

*Personal Commitment/ Self Purification:* Check and confirm your belief in the theory and tactics of nonviolence on a daily basis. Eliminate hidden motivations and be willing to endure pain if necessary, in your pursuit of justice.

*Negotiation/Discussion:* Confront the other party with a list of injustices and a strategy for addressing and resolving these injustices using grace, humor, and knowledge. Consider the positive aspects of every move and speech the opponent makes. Instead of seeking to humiliate the opponent, strive to bring forth their best qualities.

*Direct action:* When the opponent refuses to engage in or continue discussion/negotiation, direct action is an alternative. These activities introduce "creative tension" into the dispute, putting your opponent under moral pressure to collaborate with you to resolve the injustice. Indeed, this is the purpose of direct action: "Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has consistently refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored."<sup>185</sup>

*Reconciliation:* Nonviolence seeks understanding and goodwill with the opponent. The goal of nonviolence is not to beat the opponent. Nonviolence targets wicked systems, forces, oppressive policies, and unjust deeds, but not individuals. Both parties agree on a course of action to rectify the injustice after reaching a settlement

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<sup>185</sup> King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," 1.

based on reason. Each act of reconciliation brings the “Beloved Community” one step closer.

*The Pulpit: Preaching as the Bedrock of Activism*

Martin Luther King Jr., as a preacher, used the pulpit to address the severe moral deficits in society. He did this from within a moral and religious framework. Preaching was King’s heritage as he explained:

I am many things to my people; Civil Rights leader, agitator, trouble-maker and orator, but in the quiet recesses of my heart, I am fundamentally a clergyman, a Baptist preacher. This is my being and my heritage, for I am also the son of a Baptist preacher, the grandson of a Baptist preacher and the great-grandson of a Baptist preacher.”<sup>186</sup>

King derived from his heritage as a preacher the metaphysics that informed his social activism and the nonviolent method he employed. He practiced simultaneously as a religious and political leader. Black preachers use the pulpit as an opportunity for activism:

We must remember that prior to the Civil War, there were few opportunities for black leaders—freemen or slaves—to speak out publicly on political matters. The pulpit became one of the few places that black leaders could speak with their people in relative safety. It is thus not surprising that the black Church became the center of African-American social and political organization and that black preachers and ministers served as both religious and political leaders. Following the Civil War and Reconstruction, blacks continued to face all kinds of restrictions—legal and otherwise—against participating in the political system, and accordingly, the black Church continued as the locus of black political action and the primary source from which black leaders emerged.<sup>187</sup>

Preaching sermons for Martin Luther King Jr can be compared to precious pearls.

Cameroonian clergy could learn much from this.

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<sup>186</sup> M. L. King Jr., “The Un-Christian Christian,” *Ebony* 20 (August 1965): 77.

<sup>187</sup> Calloway-Thomas and Lucaites, *Martin Luther King Jr.* m 7.

*Sermons as Pearls*: Maurice Nutt attests that as an erudite preacher himself, Martin understood the power of the preached word. He used his rhetorical agency to move his listeners beyond complacency to places of empowerment.<sup>188</sup> During great turbulence, war, economic and racial injustice threatening the human race, Martin Luther King offers humanity precious pearls in terms of sermons bearing the message of hope to shattered humanity. For example, in the book *Strength to Love*, King's preaching mirrors the personal and collective problems and evils that cloud our society. The book can be understood and used by all looking for counterarguments to violence and retaliation through nonviolence, love, and forgiveness. The book is divided into fifteen chapters. The first fourteen chapters present sermons preached to different congregations around the nation. Among these sermons, "Love in Action," "Loving Your Enemies," and "Shattered Dreams" were written while he was in Georgia jails. The Fifteenth chapter is not a sermon, but King's "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence. Here, he brings to light the reasons that led him to accept nonviolence as a way of life.

The great prophetic insight of Martin Luther King Jr., as portrayed in *Strength to Love* invites us to rethink our attitude towards violence and oppression. I have learned many things from this book. However, I want to insist on forgiveness. I say this because, being a victim of kidnapping, I have learned to agree with King that "Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a permanent attitude."<sup>189</sup> I know those who kidnapped me. I know how to get back to them; however, King reminds me that "He who is devoid of the power to

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<sup>188</sup> Nutt, 143.

<sup>189</sup> King Jr., *Strength to Love*, 33.

forgive is devoid of the power to love.”<sup>190</sup> I am more than encouraged to break the chain reaction of evil through love, peace, and nonviolence.

*Luther’s message to Africa and Cameroon:* Africa has a tragic history of suffering in many ramifications. One can thus conclude without any gainsaying that Africa is in a spiral of violence. Nevertheless a more serious study reveals the fact that Africa is not only in a spiral of violence, but in a descending spiral as Martin Luther King Jr. would have it:

The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. So it goes. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that<sup>191</sup>.

Martin Luther King warns us seriously that:

We talk passionately about peace, and at the same time we assiduously prepare for war. We make our fervent pleas for the high road of justice, and then we tread the low road of injustice unflinchingly. This strange dichotomy, this agonizing gulf between the ought and the is, represents the tragic theme of man’s earthly pilgrimage.<sup>192</sup>

From the above, we decipher that Martin Luther King Jr. was a Baptist minister who used his sermons and speeches to advocate for civil rights and social justice in the United States. In addition, many other religious leaders and preachers worldwide have used their pulpits to advocate for a wide range of social causes, such as poverty

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<sup>190</sup> King Jr., *Strength to Love*, 44.

<sup>191</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*, 62-63.

<sup>192</sup> King Jr, *Strength to Love*, 32.



reduction, environmental protection, and gender equality. King used the pulpit to preach nonviolence and advocate for peace. Therefore, preachers in Cameroon can use this same platform, the pulpit, to build a new peaceful society.

#### Nonviolent Preachers as Promoters of Peace, Reconciliation, and Unity

Just like in the times of Gandhi and Luther King Jr., we live in a contentious era. Our society is riven with conflict and polarization regardless of where we go, what we watch, or how we connect. Regrettably, Christians appear caught up in the same hostility as the culture. Despite being called by our faith to be united as Christians, the unfortunate reality is that our churches face divisions of class, ethnicity, gender, and politics. When these societal divides widen within and beyond the church walls, the preacher's function becomes increasingly significant. Preachers, therefore, should use their influence in their pulpits to promote unity and reconciliation in their churches and communities. Amid their troubled society, Gandhi and King Jr learned from Christ and preached peace and nonviolence. In the same way, the preacher should, first of all, look at Jesus.

#### *Learning from Christ the Preacher*

Peace and nonviolence were central themes of the Gospel that Jesus Christ preached. One of the most comprehensive accounts of Jesus Christ's teachings in the New Testament is known as the Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7. This sermon is considered a classic example of nonviolent preaching. In this pivotal discourse, Jesus Christ outlined the fundamental aspects of the way of life that He instructed His disciples to follow. Christ's expectation that his followers should preach peace rather than violence or conflict is one of the key themes of the Sermon on the Mount, and this greatly influenced Mahatma Gandhi.

In the famous opening to this of this magnificent discourse that is known as the Beatitudes, Jesus preached: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). Christ’s disciples ought to be distinguished by the fact that they live in a manner that contributes to peace, which is the complete antithesis of a life of violence and strife.

As a preacher, Jesus preached on social issues. In effect, Jesus was profoundly imbued with the sentiments of justice, righteousness, and liberation for the poor and oppressed in the Hebrew scriptures he read and studied. Jesus saw himself as the embodiment of the hopes of the Jewish people and the promises of the One he called Father.<sup>193</sup>

Nothing daunted Jesus in exposing the social ills and presenting himself as a messiah who had come to redeem his people. He emphasized this in the inaugural sermon:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:18-21).

No matter how divided the preaching context may be, the role of a preacher is to remind Christians that being a peacemaker is ideal for consistently emphasized throughout the New Testament. As such she must promote peace, reconciliation and unity through preaching.

Matthew D Kim and Paul A Hoffman attest to this when they say:

Preachers are leaders by virtue of their vocation, so we cannot sit idly and watch our congregations remain divided. Leadership requires us to bridge the divides in

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<sup>193</sup> Maurice J. Nutt, *Down Deep in my Soul: An African American Catholic Theology of Preaching* (Maryknol, NY: Orbis Books, 2022), 163.

our churches over theology, politics, tension between social classes, gender-related issues, and other controversial matters.<sup>194</sup>

It is God's desire that we all remain in peace. Paul instructed insists vehemently to the Romans: "Live at peace with all" (Romans 12:18). More elaborately, Paul tells the Ephesians:

For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. (Eph. 2:14–17)

Similarly, many biblical passages encourage Christians to keep peace with everyone: "*Strive for peace with everyone, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord*" (Hebrews 12:14). This is a call for everyone to work together for peace. However, it is good for preachers to remind listeners because, as William H. Willimon would say: "Preaching and leadership are inseparable."<sup>195</sup> As leaders, the preacher must do what Maurice Nutt recommends: "Injustice in the world must always and at all times be condemned by the Christian preacher, Catholic or Protestant."<sup>196</sup> The preacher, thus, as Ronald Allen would have it, "is called to help the congregation interpret social issues and a Christian response from the perspective of the gospel. The

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<sup>194</sup> Matthew D Kim and Paul A Hoffman, *Preaching to a Divided Nation: A Seven-Step Model for Promoting Reconciliation and Unity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022), 101.

<sup>195</sup> William H. Willimon, *Leading with the Sermon: Preaching as Leadership* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2020), 10.

<sup>196</sup> Nutt, *Down Deep in my Soul*. 162.

Church seeks for every social world to conform to the gospel, that is, to manifest relationships that are loving and just.”<sup>197</sup>

Jean Marc Ela, x-raying the Church in Cameroon, insists on the role of church leaders to preach the liberation of the human person at all levels. Ela thus invites the Church to invest in the “liberation project of the African man and woman with an evangelical content.”<sup>198</sup> Standing as an *avant-garde*, he insists that “we must believe in Jesus Christ and put up a mighty resistance to all structures of oppression.”<sup>199</sup>

*The Church in Cameroon as the Harbinger of a New Political Future*

Just like Gandhi and King, preachers in Cameroon have a crucial role in bringing about peace. Everyone in Cameroon knows the major influence of religion in the country. In all major state events, religious leaders are given privileged positions. It is clear that the mission of the Church is not political but spiritual and that immediate involvement in politics does not fall within the immediate competence of the Church, but within the political sphere, whose principal mission is to build a just social order. The Church can be the harbinger of a new political future not by taking the place of politicians but by making its voice heard through what it knows best to do: preaching.

In Cameroon, the Church can now preach real reconciliation and propose a new politics of a new we. Cameroon is a very religious country. While not asking the Church to meddle into dirty politics, it is worth noting that in its preaching the Church has a great platform to educate and form its faithful. Through preaching, the Church can touch the

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<sup>197</sup> Ronald Allen, *Patterns for Preaching* (Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 1998), 199. Quoted by Nutt.

<sup>198</sup> Jean-Marc Ela, *African Cry*, translated by Robert J. Barr, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2005), 101.

<sup>199</sup> Ela, *African Cry*, 138.

lives of millions of Cameroonians daily and weekly. People still have confidence in Church, and people come to Church for their salvation. From the very first chapter of *Africae Munus*, the Pope points out that in addressing the themes of reconciliation, justice, and peace, the synod was interested in the public role of the Church and her place in the African space today.<sup>200</sup>

Preachers' lives should be exemplary; they should be models of the peace, justice, and reconciliation they preach, especially in their daily interactions with the people of God. Churches in Cameroon throughout history have not been the best models of those who preach by example. This situation is common to all churches in Cameroon; however, this work concentrates on the Catholic Church. According to Paul Gifford, "The Catholic Church reflects the same deep and pervasive divisions as the country at large - in many ways it holds up a mirror to the nation."<sup>201</sup> Gifford highlights some reasons for this: "the wish to be independent of foreign control, both political and ecclesiastical; financial dealings which are less than totally transparent; close identification with the political aspirations of one's own ethnic group; and deep episcopal disunity."<sup>202</sup> The disunity in the episcopate has influenced the clergy and the people of God negatively, so tribalism has eaten deep into the Church. Preachers cannot be faithful witnesses when leaders are divided into those for the regime and those against.

Cameroon as a nation needs healing from its deep brokenness, and it is paramount to return to the reconciliation theology. Reconciliation is highly needed at this time:

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<sup>200</sup> Cf. *Africae Munus*, 17.

<sup>201</sup> Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 255.

<sup>202</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, 256.

The country is racked with divisions, and the churches mirror these... Even the Catholic Church, unique in being a national church in the strict sense is split; this is why it has produced nothing like the pastoral letters or statements we have encountered in our other countries. The country's divide between anglophone and francophone regions highlights the split within Christianity.<sup>203</sup>

Preachers should be bold enough to identify the social ills and even name them as spells.

These spells are difficult to discern and haunt one's present existence. Emmanuel

Katongole insists: "Only by naming those spells and setting out to exorcise them in

protracted ways does one hope to live into a new future."<sup>204</sup> The spells can be anything:

tribalism, crises, intertribal war, interethnic and linguistic wars. When the spells have

been named, then it is good to look into what Christianity can offer in order to interrupt

them. It is a pity that these spells are often mistaken for identity. Despite the inherent

spells of tribalism, disunity and divisions in the Church of Cameroon, "it has real leaders

of considerable moral stature and intellectuals whose analyses carry weight."<sup>205</sup> In the

Church's history, the leaders have tried to combat oppression and injustice, even to the

extent of suffering martyrdom of its clergy. Much still has to be done by Cameroon

preachers to propagate a new Christian Identity based on the *new we*. Despite being

limited in their clear and unambiguous political guidance, one can applaud the efforts of

many preachers like Christian Cardinal Tumi who have continued preaching a "new we"

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<sup>203</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, 304.

<sup>204</sup> Emmanuel Katongole, "Identity, Community and the Gospel of Reconciliation: Christian Resources in the Face of Tribalism," The Great Lake Initiatives, Duke Center for Reconciliation, 7, <https://divinity.duke.edu/sites/divinity.duke.edu/files/documents/cfr/identity-and-reconciliation.pdf>.

<sup>205</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, 270.

and as a result, “The church is no longer seen as the ally of the government.”<sup>206</sup>

Therefore, there is a need to identify the real Christian identity.

### Conclusion

Learning from the doctrine of nonviolence, this chapter supports the idea that nonviolent preaching might bring peace to Cameroon. The emphasis has been on how preachers may utilize the pulpit to work nonviolently for peace and justice by discussing the idea of nonviolence and how great personalities have employed it. Nonviolent preaching can be a powerful pathway to peace because it seeks to address conflicts and social issues peacefully and nonviolently. Preaching is a means of communication that can inspire individuals and communities to adopt peaceful attitudes and behaviors.

Nonviolent preaching promotes principles such as respect for human dignity, empathy, compassion, and forgiveness, essential for building peaceful relationships and resolving conflicts. It can help individuals and communities to recognize their common humanity and work towards understanding and cooperation.

Furthermore, nonviolent preaching can challenge existing power structures and promote social justice, a fundamental aspect of building lasting peace. A perfect example was how Martin Luther King Jr. used the pulpit for activism. On this note, after introducing nonviolence, we proceeded to treat the lives and works of Gandhi and King Jr. By calling attention to injustices and advocating for change peacefully, nonviolent preaching can create a more equitable society and reduce the likelihood of conflict. For nonviolent preaching to be effective, preachers need to lead by example and embody the principles they preach.

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<sup>206</sup> Gifford, *African Christianity*, 303.

In conclusion, nonviolent preaching can be a powerful tool for promoting peace by inspiring individuals and communities to adopt peaceful attitudes and behaviors, promoting social justice, and challenging existing power structures. In the next chapter, we shall show how preachers can preach in a divided zone using all the nonviolent tenets. The next chapter teaches preachers how to use the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method to create meaningful and engaging sermons that promote dialogue, learning, and connection within the congregation.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method for Preachers**

#### **Introduction**

The preceding chapter has shown us how charismatic persons have used their power of speech to bring down violence in all its forms. Through lessons and sermons, these leaders have been able to aim toward a culture of nonviolence and build a beloved community, thus changing a violence-oriented society into an oasis of peace. Martin Luther King Jr., for example, used the pulpit not only to give speeches. As a minister and preacher, he moved from the pulpit to the streets. The current society of Cameroon is in dire need of leaders who can preach peace. We, the preachers and church leaders in Cameroon, have the pulpit at our beck and call to redress the nation by preaching peace to a culturally and politically divided Cameroon.

Against this backdrop, I wish to help preachers use nonpartisan, biblically-centered approaches and deliberative dialogue to address Cameroon's current situation of division. Before delving into teaching others, I had the opportunity to learn and practice the deliberative dialogue process myself. On this note, I took the Independent Study entitled "Preaching and Dialogue in a Divided Context" which Lutheran homiletician Dr. Leah D. Schade designed for me. Preaching prophetically in a divided zone is a significant challenge for preachers. Because of this, many shy from controversial topics and end up not being prophetic and relevant in their context. This chapter will explore the sermon-dialogue-sermon method to empower preachers to preach well in a divided zone.

I will show how this method has worked for me and how preachers can use it in different contexts. I will first dialogue with Dr. Leah Schade and navigate with her through the meaning of prophetic preaching and its challenges. Then I will explore her “sermon-dialogue-sermon” process, apply it to my context and prepare myself to recommend it to other preachers. Leah Schade recommends this process for preaching in the purple zone.

#### Leah Schade and the quest for prophetic preaching in the Purple zone

Dr. Schade has formed me through the “sermon-dialogue-sermon” process of addressing social issues in divided zones from the pulpit. Through her, I have been rooted in scriptural and theological frameworks that have permitted me to preach and conduct dialogue in my politically and culturally divided context. I was equipped with the Bible as the primary source and *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, which I fondly call my “textbook,” as well as by great writings that portray the importance of collaboration, community conversation, and leadership around the roundtable pulpit. I will dialogue with Dr. Schade and show how this method can work.

#### *Biographical Note*

The Rev. Dr. Leah D. Schade serves at Lexington Theological Seminary in Lexington, Kentucky, as an Associate Professor of Preaching and Worship. Leah has been a Lutheran minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) for over twenty years. She earned her M.Div. and Ph.D. degrees from the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia (now United Lutheran Seminary). She has been the pastor of three churches in Pennsylvania, in suburban, urban, and rural areas. Dr. Schade also taught religion and philosophy part-time at Lebanon Valley College in Annville,

Pennsylvania, and Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, where she taught classes on ethics, religion, gender, and ecology.

Dr. Schade was elected Second Vice President of the Academy of Homiletics in December 2021, and she became President of the Academy in December 2023. Leah has spoken at the Festival of Homiletics, runs workshops and retreats, and continues giving keynote speeches at events all over the United States. She directed a Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning Theology and Religion grant examining how congregations and theological education institutes can use deliberative dialogue. She is also part of a research exchange with the Kettering Foundation that looks at the role of religious groups in building democratic communities. Dr. Schade is doing a long-term study on ministry, preaching, and social issues. Since 2017, she has surveyed nearly three thousand clergy and one thousand laypeople for this study.

In 2019, Dr. Schade won an award from the Kentucky Council of Churches. She is also a co-founder of the Clergy Emergency League, which is a network of more than 2,600 pastors from all over the United States who provide support, accountability, resources, and networking for clergy to minister prophetically in their congregations and the public square in this time of political upheaval, social unrest, and partisan division.

Dr. Schade is the author of *Creation-Crisis Preaching: Ecology, Theology, and the Pulpit* (Chalice Press, 2015) and *For the Beauty of the Earth*, a Creation-centered Lenten devotional (Chalice Press, 2019). She is co-editor and author with Margaret Bullitt-Jonas of *Rooted and Rising: Voices of Courage in a Time of Climate Crisis* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019) and co-author with Jerry Sumney of *Apocalypse When?: A Guide to Interpreting and Preaching Apocalyptic Texts* (Dimensions, 2010). She is

the EcoPreacher blogger for Patheos. Her important book, *Preaching in the Purple Zone: Ministry in the Red-Blue Divide* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2019) explores how clergy and congregations can address controversial social issues using nonpartisan, biblically-centered approaches and deliberative dialogue.

### *Meaning of Purple Zone*

“Purple zone” describes the political situation in the United States where conservatives are considered “red” and progressives are considered “blue.” In a congregation, mixing these results in color “purple,” and the pastor must find a way to minister within this blended political spectrum. Pastors are often caught up in the purple zone when they have to preach prophetically.

Though listeners can accuse preachers of being “too political,” preachers must assist their congregations in engaging in polite discourse on “hot subjects,” identifying the values that unite them, and responding truthfully to God’s Word. Regardless of how carefully preachers approach modern justice concerns in their sermons, it is inevitable that someone will at some time respond with this dreaded allegation of being too political. Schade identifies some possible reasons why listeners discourage pastors from preaching:

You’re making me uncomfortable.... I don’t agree with your position.... You’re crossing “church-and-state” boundaries that I think should stay in place.... Don’t challenge my comfort zone.... You’re taking sides when you should remain neutral.... You’re challenging me (and the media that informs my position), and I don’t appreciate it.... I come to church to escape or get a break from the world, not to further engage.... This is too complicated to talk about or hear preached. It’s too difficult for me to think about this.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup>Leah D. Schade, *Preaching in the Purple Zone* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2019), 30.

In such a situation, the preacher tries to be careful not to cross the divide. Similarly, if the preacher has chosen a stance that does not coincide with a parishioner's political orientation, the parishioner may feel offended that their pastor cannot share their viewpoint. As a result, at least for this parishioner, the pastoral relationship is now strained. Such a situation might result in emotions of alienation, hurt, and the possibility of rage, which can further damage the connection between the minister and the parishioner. In such cases, the parishioners accuse the preacher of not being prophetic enough.

*Preaching in the Purple Zone* is both a book and a method. Preaching in the purple zone is a tool for encouraging and preparing preachers to address the crucial justice concerns of our day while assisting the church in understanding the difficulties parish pastors face. Leah Schade's book presents a way and a method for the preacher to address controversial issues of public concern by using nonpartisan Bible-centered approaches in one's preaching. Schade introduces the reader to the deliberative dialogue method to assist the preacher in preaching political issues. As a method, it focuses on small group discussions concerning controversial topics that seek common ground and are more reflective and Christ-centered in their content. In effect, Schade offers step-by-step guidance for avoiding the pitfalls of prophetic preaching using tried-and-true methods and preventive measures based on biblical and theological premises. Using the "deliberative dialogue" approach of civil conversation to identify shared ideals among politically divergent parishioners is essential to the success of preaching.

*Preaching in the Purple Zone : A Resource for Prophetic Preaching*

A key insight from *Preaching in the Purple Zone* is the dire need for prophetic preaching. Citing Howard University homiletician Kenyatta R. Gilbert, Schade proposes a socially engaged homiletic arising out of the prophetic voice of preaching. The prophetic voice “focuses on ethics, engages in social critique, calls for justice, and boldly unmasks the systemic sin that holds individuals, the community, and larger society in thrall.”<sup>208</sup> Prophetic preaching “expresses unrelenting hope in God’s activity to transform church and society.”<sup>209</sup> In the words of Gilbert,

The prophetic voice is a mediating voice of God’s activity to transform church and society in a present-future sense based on the principle of justice. The prophetic voice speaks of divine intentionality—what God demands and expects of God’s own human creation. The basic biblical feature of this discourse is that it opposes idolatry, particularly self-serving and self-deceiving ideologies. It refuses the temptation to absolutize the present; it drives toward a new, unsettling, unsettled future. It is a word that speaks to the predicament of human suffering from the perspective of God’s justice. This speech, at all times, assumes a critical posture over and against established power. Last, the prophetic Word is a word of relentless hope.<sup>210</sup>

To throw more light on the above, Schade expounds on the Seven Hallmarks of prophetic preaching. In effect, Yale University homiletician Leonora Tubbs Tisdale offers a short definition of prophetic preaching as “cutting edge and future-oriented (yet not future predicting), and that addresses public and social concerns.”<sup>211</sup>: These seven hallmarks of prophetic preaching are some of the characteristics that make proclamation prophetic:

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<sup>208</sup> Schade, *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, 49.

<sup>209</sup> Kenyatta R. Gilbert, *The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2011), 12.

<sup>210</sup> Gilbert, *The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching*, 12.

<sup>211</sup> Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach*. (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2010), 3.

1. Prophetic preaching is rooted in the biblical witness: both in the testimony of the Hebrew prophets of old and in the words and deeds of the prophet Jesus of Nazareth.
2. Prophetic preaching is countercultural and challenges the status quo.
3. Prophetic preaching is concerned with the evils and shortcomings of the present social order and is often more focused on corporate and public issues than on individual and personal concerns.
4. Prophetic preaching requires the preacher to name both what is not of God in the world (criticizing) and the new reality God will bring to pass in the future (energizing).
5. Prophetic preaching offers hope of a new day to come and the promise of liberation to God's oppressed people.
6. Prophetic preaching incites courage in its hearers and empowers them to work to change the social order.
7. Prophetic proclamation requires of the preacher a heart that breaks with the things that break God's heart; a passion for justice in the world; the imagination, conviction, and courage to speak words from God; humility and honesty in the preaching moment; and a strong reliance on the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>212</sup>

As contemplated by Schade, prophetic preaching eschews authoritarian deductive preaching for an inductive approach that emerges not from a "lone prophet" but from the congregation enlivened by the Holy Spirit. A benefit of bringing this insight to preaching

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<sup>212</sup> Tisdale, *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach*, 10.

is that prophetic preaching does not avoid difficult issues. However, it addresses them head-on, not through confrontation, but pastorally and dialogically.

Adding her expertise into the dialogue on prophetic preaching, Schade drew from the metaphor of tree ecology to propose Five Paths to Prophetic Preaching. The imagery she uses can help craft a homily addressing controversial issues: rooting, pollinating, flowering, fruiting, and leafing. These simple Five Paths made the ideas behind the challenge to preach prophetically in the purple zone understandable and practical. Using these Five Paths helped me to understand that preaching is rooted in biblical principles. Stemming from what proceeds, one cannot underestimate the importance of raising awareness regarding social justice issues. Once a community enters into a conversation regarding social issues, they can begin to discern the “so what” aspects of complicated and persistent questions in the Purple Zone.

#### *The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method*

Leah Schade lays out a model called the sermon-dialogue-sermon method that allows congregational leaders to address issues of justice and social concern that stir up powerful emotions and convictions in the people of God. Generally, it starts with a rooting sermon or adult forum introducing the controversial Justice issue about the need to address issues of public conversation. After this, the preacher makes a “Prophetic Invitation to Dialogue sermon.” This sermon encourages participation in the upcoming dialogue by justifying the need to discuss the specific topic. Here, the preacher does not take a stand on the issue one way or another. The preacher’s work draws awareness and invites listeners to participate in the deliberative dialogue. This is followed by deliberative dialogue sessions which are core to this model, wherein people have a



facilitated discussion about a controversial issue. The preacher then incorporates the fruits of that dialogue into future preaching on this issue to help guide the community to embody the gospel. In doing so, the preacher establishes an authentic connection with the lived experience of the listener. Because of the intentional dialogue, the preacher does not need to imagine how people think and feel about an important issue but can instead point to people's actual words.

In effect, Schade establishes a procedure and a method called sermon-dialogue-sermon that enhances the preacher's degree of interaction with parishioners/listeners on justice concerns beyond the single sermon. The model itself ably expresses a healthy ecclesiology. The entire Body of Christ is at work in the preaching act. The dialogue provides a way for the receivers of a sermon to form the preacher, better equipping future preaching. That, in turn, enables the preacher to develop better and celebrate authentic discipleship within the community when addressing issues of societal import.

A key element is that "the sermon-dialogue-sermon process begins with, is sustained by, and ideally is genuine results in Christ's agape-love."<sup>213</sup> The preacher must be prepared and rely on the power of Christ's love to proclaim the message, especially when Preaching in the Purple Zone. The process laid out in Schade's text also brings out the importance of other voices to be heard, such as women and Pastors of other Faith denominations. Another consideration must be the length of time a preacher has been with a congregation to wisely approach a sermon found in the Purple Zone.

#### Preaching and Dialogue in a Divided Context

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<sup>213</sup> Schade, *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, 41.

As mentioned above, in *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, Leah D. Schade proposes a “sermon-dialogue-sermon” process for preaching on politically difficult or controversial justice issues. I find this process insightful in that it doesn’t assume a concluded sermon when the minister leaves the ambo; rather, this preaching style is an ongoing dialogue that leaves room for a communal proclamation to emerge from the whole worshipping community. Implementing such topics in listening to each other and learning signifies a real chance to initiate change in our congregations. The clearly guided dialogue with its very well-described steps is so helpful to lead conversations about difficult topics, not only in the process Schade provides. The method is really effective in preaching in congregations with the red-blue divide.

In Cameroon, there is no clear-cut red-blue divide, but rather multiple divides according to language, culture, politics, religion, etc. However, before training preachers (cf. next chapter), I began with myself. Leah Schade prepared me to test and to see whether the sermon-dialogue-sermon method and the principles of the “purple zone” would translate to a context outside of the United States. In other words, would the sermon-dialogue-sermon method work in a country and congregation beyond the American purple zone? Thus, the hypothesis to be tested is that with appropriate attention to the cultural context, biblical exegesis using the “dialogical lens,” wisdom from scholars who have explored collaborative preaching and ministry and coaching from those who have used deliberative practices, the “purple zone” methodology could be applied in Saint Charles Lwanga Parish, Nkolbisson, Yaoundé, Cameroon. Below, I will provide the context, the processes, and the analysis of how it all transpired.

## Context

### *Cameroon a Glorious Land with Woes of Division*

Cameroon is strategically situated at Africa's elbow, opening wide her arms to welcome every intercontinental transaction by sea route. Above all, the dynamic inhabitants of a thousand and one origins (over two hundred ethnic groups) enrich its cultural heritage. The originality of their genial productions, such as music (*makossa, njang, bikutsi, asiko*, etc.), arts and crafts, intellectual works, and internationally acclaimed sportsmanship, as well as their long past years of peaceful cohabitation (Muslim and Christian for example, or people of different ethnic groups), reveal a panoramic view of Cameroon a microcosmic representation of its continent. Looking at Cameroon with a critical eye also reveals some awkward situations that can lead to greater woes if not well managed.

At the same time as it stands glorious, some have seen Cameroon as a country bleeding in silence. From independence to the present times, Cameroon remains a nation needing reconciliation. Jean-Marc Ela portrays that a few years after independence, many young Cameroonians "were shut out of the job market, and the numbers keep increasing. The hope of the nation, no less! The future of the young is as bleak as that of the intellectuals."<sup>214</sup> Unfortunately, however, the same country suffers a host of multidimensional 'plagues' that stifle her progress and put her internal coherence to question:

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<sup>214</sup> Jean-Marc Ela, *African Cry*, Translated by Robert J. Barr. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 2005), 81.

- The current socio-political strife across the national territory, the recurrent Boko-Haram attacks causing insecurity in the North region of the country, and the belief that Military violence and oppression will solve problems during strikes
- The worsening situation of the “Anglophone problem,” especially in its North West and South West regions. In effect, “many contemporary accounts of secessionist violence in Anglophone Cameroon begin with the protests and strikes by teachers and lawyers in the fall of 2016 that eventually escalated to demands of federalism and later secession ... the secessionist claims can be traced to policies since the colonial period.”<sup>215</sup>
- The despicable hardship and bloodshed, displacement of families, and the joblessness of the youthful population
- The rather *non-dynamic* leadership. We can observe that ever since independence in 1960, the ‘democratic Cameroon’ has produced just two presidents
- Exacerbated corruption, misappropriation of public health, and the centralization of administrative structures and institutions
- Ethnicity, tribalism, and “regionalism” hamper national unity

How does a preacher preach in this culturally divided Cameroon? I was able to use the sermon-dialogue-sermon method in Nkolbisson parish. In my intervention in the next chapter, I will describe how I trained some priests, deacons, and lay people to preach in different contexts.

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<sup>215</sup> R. Maxwell Bone, “We Had No Choice”—the Emergence of Secessionist Violence in Anglophone Cameroon”, Dissertation submitted for the degree of Master of Philosophy in African Studies at the University of Cambridge, 2021, 12.

### *Thick Description of Congregation*

Many people have migrated from Cameroon's crisis zones and come to Yaoundé, the capital, for many reasons, including jobs, security, and education. In this context, preachers are caught in the middle between two languages and cultures. They must be careful about preaching within such a divided context. Some churches are attempting to become more and more intercultural, with the Anglophones and Francophones having Masses and activities in the same parish. Saint Charles Lwanga Parish, Nkolbisson Yaounde, is one of those intercultural parishes with eucharistic celebrations in English and French.

The parish has many families from the Anglophone and Francophone communities. There are two Masses on Saturday evening (5:30 p.m. in French for the youths and 7:30 p.m. in a group known as the Neocatechumenal Way). On Sunday, there are six Masses, of which one (the 9:30 a.m. Mass) is in English. Although English is the standard language for the Anglophone community, the congregation has many divisions according to tribes. Others speak English or are coming to learn English but do not necessarily belong to the two regions of the country that speak English. In the same community, some people have intermarried with the Francophones. However, the central divide within the Anglophones is within the two Regions: North West Region and South West Region.

Presently, my congregation comprises 229 families that form a diverse group regarding age, class, ethnic group, and social status, all attending the only English Sunday Mass in the parish. The congregation makes efforts to be the body of Christ. In the spirit of communion, the community members address themselves as brothers and

sisters. They have continuously grown in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18). To make a thick analysis of the congregation, I will use Leonora Tubbs Tisdale's *Preaching as Local Theology And Folk Art*.<sup>216</sup> Tisdale offers six steps to help exegete the congregation. However, for our study, we shall highlight three of them.

*View of Humanity:* This congregation regards human beings as fallible yet perfectible through the inner workings of the Holy Spirit. The Anglophones constitute the linguistic minority in the country. Two of ten regions are English-speaking, and the rest are French-speaking. At times they see themselves as victims of circumstances and as being marginalized.

*View of the Church:* The people hope that the church is an institution that can advocate for their fundamental rights. The high rate of church attendance is very encouraging. Our church is still very "clericalistic" and hierarchical, with very little involvement of the laity in only a few specific ministries. At this time, lay communion ministers and permanent married deacons are not yet accepted. There are no special considerations for accommodating the disabled. Children have their places in church separate from the adults, and they form their choir. Women take up church ministries. The president of the community is a woman.

*Views of Christian Mission:* The church is aiming towards inculturation.<sup>217</sup> Inculturation is understood as the "insertion of Christianity into various human culture.

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<sup>216</sup> Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, *Preaching as Local Theology and Folk Art* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997).

<sup>217</sup> The concept of inculturation formed one of the major themes at the Second Vatican Council beginning in 1962 and at the subsequent Synod of Bishops for Africa which took place in May 1994. After

... it is a requirement for evangelization, a path towards full evangelization and one of the greatest challenges for the church on the continent.”<sup>218</sup> Theologically, the foundation of inculturation is the incarnation. For Christians, the Word of God became incarnate (John 1:14) in human culture through the gospel of Jesus Christ in the local culture and context (Acts 10:34). In this way, the Gospel message becomes more concrete in Africa when the cultural values can be transformed through their exposure to the Christian message and the insertion of Christianity into indigenous cultures.<sup>219</sup> Stemming from this, traditional dance instruments, songs in our local languages, dresses, and symbols that people considered “fetishes” can now be used in the liturgy. The church is the safest place for most of the members. If there is any political or social issue, they turn to the church for help. In terms of its self-image, this is a pilgrim church and a haven for many internally displaced in society.

I have known my congregation since 2006, when I came to begin undergraduate theology studies in Nkolbisson, Yaounde. By then, there were fifty families and my Claretian superiors assigned me to help. I gave catechism classes and strengthened different groups in church. I preached in most cases since English-speaking priests were not always available. Being the minority group in the parish, the community felt discriminated against. They prayed in the parish hall while others would use the church. They were not always included as part of the decision-making of the parish. But from

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this synod, Pope John Paul II published *Ecclesia in Africa*, rendered public during his apostolic visit in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on September 14 1995.

<sup>218</sup> John Paul II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (September 14 1995) (Yaounde: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), no. 59.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 60-62.

2006 to 2020, they had grown to more than two hundred families and constitute a significant force in the parish, contributing to its financial strength. With the said growth, the “enemy” was no longer the Francophone community. Instead, there were internal divisions based on tribe, social status, political affiliations, and regions of origin. They were not collaborating enough with the entire parish or even among themselves.

#### Description of the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Process

Before implementing the sermon-dialogue-sermon process, Dr. Schade arranged for me to interview two individuals who have experience with deliberation. One was Ruby Quantson Davis, a colleague of Dr. Schade at the Kettering Foundation. She has worked with communities on deliberative dialogue in war-torn areas. Ruby advised me that I didn’t need to conduct a huge process with the whole parish. Instead, she encouraged me to start with small groups of people where there is already trust. This proved to be a key to the success of this experiment. The other person was the Rev. Foster Frimpong, a student of Dr. Schade who graduated from Lexington Theological Seminary and is pastor of Co-Heirs with Christ Missions, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), an African immigrant congregation made up of both Francophones and Anglophones in Lexington, Kentucky. Rev. Foster helped me understand the importance of Empathic Listening in order to ensure a healthy dialogue in my congregation. For Foster,

Empathy involves discerning the inner dimension of someone to find out about how the person is experiencing by putting oneself in the other through one’s own experiences.... Empathy thus involves the use of the Self and the developing of deep-reflective-listening to hear and meet the needs of someone. It is to give the



person the attention and full recognition of what is going on regardless of a social, educational, cultural, economic, and religious context.<sup>220</sup>

In effect, empathic listening helps the listener to be receptive to what the other person is saying (without necessarily agreeing with the matter). It is an act of ensuring that the person feels understood. Applied in my deliberative dialogue session, empathy will be “a useful tool to equipping the congregation to find a healthy way to talk, listen, share experiences, and find common values to decide what it means to be the church in this place, in this time, and moving forward.”<sup>221</sup>

For my project, I chose to do a variation on Dr. Schade’s outline of the sermon-dialogue-sermon process. In her method, the pastor preaches one sermon called the Prophetic Invitation to Dialogue that invites congregants to engage in the deliberative dialogue. Then the deliberative dialogue is held, followed by a second sermon called the Communal Prophetic Proclamation that integrates the spirit and insights from the dialogue and casts a vision of moving forward with next steps. Because of the layers of complexity and divisiveness in my parish as described above, I decided that more than one sermon was needed to prepare the congregation for the dialogue. I actually preached three sermons as a prophetic invitation to dialogue, then held the deliberative dialogue session, followed by preaching the communal prophetic proclamation sermon. As I will describe, I believe this pre-dialogue work in the weeks leading up to discussion had a

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<sup>220</sup> <sup>220</sup> Foster Frimpong, “Empathy in Deliberative Dialogue: Moving the Church from Political Captivity to Empathy, Leadership, and Deliberative Dialogue—The Role of the Church in a Divided Society.”, in Capstone Project, March 2020, 35.

<sup>221</sup> Frimpong, *Empathy in Deliberative Dialogue*, 14.

significant impact on the responsiveness of the congregation to this new way of interacting with each other and with me as their faith leader.

I used the readings from the Revised Common Lectionary for the Sundays of July 11, 18, and 25, 2021, to preach sermons that would prepare the congregation for the dialogue. My aim was to address the tribalism, regionalism, and division within our Christian community. Reading John S. McClure's *The Roundtable Pulpit*,<sup>222</sup> especially the part on collaboration, I chose the theme of my Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process: *Living Together through Dialogue: Ministry of Collaboration in a Purple Zone*. Speaking theologically, I feel that the Holy Spirit gave me an excellent opportunity to preach in the Purple Zone. The last paragraph in each sermon was an invitation to dialogue on the importance of collaboration in our church.

The first prophetic invitation to dialogue sermon was preached at the 9:30 a.m. Mass on July 11, 2021. Using Dr. Schade's worksheet on using the dialogical lens, I used Amos 7:10-17 as the basis for the sermon. I led my parishioners to meditate on the issue of division, argument, and conflict between Amaziah and Amos. I helped them to see that these same difficulties in the Bible are ones we experience today where we drive away people or mistreat them because they are not from the same region. I insisted on the importance of collaborating in ministry and avoiding divisions based on nationality, region, tribe, or political affiliation. I told them that I would invite them to continue this conversation and engage in dialogue about these issues in the coming weeks. Drawing on what I learned from Rev. Frimpong, I encouraged them to be a church that collaborates

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<sup>222</sup> John S McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit: Where Leadership and Preaching Meet* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995).

and participates in dialogue through empathic listening that can engage in healthy conversations about living together as a true family of God. After the Amos preaching, I approached eight parishioners and asked them to sign up to participate in the deliberative dialogue session I organized on a chosen date to ensure I had enough people.

I made the second prophetic invitation to dialogue on Sunday, July 18, 2021. I continued preaching on collaboration, insisting on the need for good leadership, which will ensure building peace and reconciling people who live with division. Reading from Ephesians 2:13-18 and Mark 6:30-34, I invited parishioners to collaborate in our community by working together and to be true leaders who are servants of peace. I urged them to take the prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi seriously: *Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.* After this, I chose Sunday, July 25, 2021, for the deliberative dialogue after the 9.30 a.m. Mass. In preparation for this event, I sent the following newsletter announcement:

*Dear Sisters and Brothers,*

*What is the role of the church when faced with controversial issues? How can people of faith address the topic of **collaboration in a divided context**? Kindly join us to dialogue after Mass on Sunday, July 25, 2021, at 11 a.m. Join us for a nonpartisan deliberative dialogue on collaboration to help our church discuss how to faithfully engage this issue amid a divided political culture. Our goal is to have a wide range of people from different ages, backgrounds, experiences, and political standpoints in this process, so we hope you'll attend to share in the dialogue. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can discern how God is at work amid this complex issue, identify our shared values, and suggest ways we can move forward together in faith.*

I made the third prophetic invitation to dialogue at the English Mass preceding the event. The readings from 2 Kings 4:42-44 and John 6:1-15, centering around food, gave me the due opportunity to preach about collaborating in God’s abundant generosity. I suspected that the congregation might implicitly ask, “What does food have to do with leadership and collaboration?” I informed my congregation that the Eucharist is the sacred meal of God that brings all of this together—different tribes, races, leaders, you and me!

All these sermons were preached in English with a few phrases in Pidgin English to get the people to have a sense of belonging.<sup>223</sup> The sermons were all sent to the WhatsApp group of eight people, which I created to help the group members read and understand the sermon before participating in the dialogue. As usual, after my last preaching on Sunday, July 25, I made an invitation to dialogue using these words: *“I would like to invite you after this Nass to dialogue on how we can each donate generous ideas on how to improve collaboration within our community. I need those who are ready to sacrifice their time and talent to fill our church with the abundance of God’s grace identified through effective collaboration despite our differences.”* The effect was tremendous; there were far more people who attended the dialogue than I expected.

The Deliberative Dialogue began at 11:30 a.m. in the parish hall. I was expecting less than ten people, including myself. However, some of the parishioners who had heard my invitation for the previous three Sundays participated. There were altogether twenty-four people, including myself (there were also six other people who either came late or

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<sup>223</sup> Cameroonian Pidgin English is an English-based creole language primarily spoken in Cameroon, especially among the Anglophones.

left early, so I am not counting them). Among participants, there were eighteen adults between the ages of 18 and 65 years. The priest who helps with English Masses was present and served as timekeeper. He had celebrated with me at Mass during all the times I preached. A Theology 3 seminarian, member of the Claretian Order, also participated and served as a recorder. To understand his role, the Seminarian had hitherto read Chapters 4-7 of *Preaching in the Purple Zone*. The two catechists of the community also attended. The Vice President in charge of communication and liaison with the Francophone community attended as well. There were eight males and ten females in attendance. There were also two Francophones who participated. They have been attending Mass in the Anglophone community for two years because of their love for the English Language. There were people from various political parties. Among the eighteen adults, six were from the South West Region and twelve from the North West Region. In all, there were five different tribes in attendance. Because this was the first Deliberative Dialogue for all of us, I served as the facilitator. I prepared files with a pen, writing materials, copies of homilies, and a guide used and adapted for this dialogue: “*The Church’s Role in a Divided Society*.” This guide, referred to as *Issue Guide*, was developed by a research exchange sponsored by the Kettering Foundation.

After a word of welcome, I explained in a few words the meaning of Deliberative Dialogue. I had in my mind at that point Katie Day’s words:

Embarking on such a process needs to occur in the context of covenant—one that reflects commitments to God and the community and the individuals within it. Participants need to know that there is a higher purpose to these conversations and that they are in this struggle together.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Schade, *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, 106.

I then proceeded to announce the topic again: *Living Together through Dialogue: Ministry of Collaboration in a Divided Context*. To facilitate the process, I proposed the following rules :

1. Focus on the options.
2. All options should be considered fairly.
3. No one or two individuals dominate.
4. Maintain an open and respectful atmosphere.
5. Everyone is encouraged to participate.
6. Listen to each other.<sup>225</sup>

When everyone felt welcome and understood the rules, we proceeded with the opening prayer, invoking the Holy Spirit to be with us during the dialogue process. We sought to address division in our families, parish, local community, town, and the country as a church community. I gave the opening question: *Have you ever been a victim of or experienced division in your community?* At first, people were hesitant to share these stories. It is not an easy thing to be vulnerable in a group situation like that. I offered my own story first how I was discriminated for being an Anglophone in a Francophone-dominated community. Then one by one, people opened up and talked about their own painful situations. In an open discussion, members shared situations where they had faced rejection, stigmatization, and separation based on tribe, social status, religious and political affiliations, or economic divisions between the rich and poor. This is important because it shows that with modelling and permission-giving, this congregation is willing to be honest and forthright, to share their experiences and feelings in a way that builds

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<sup>225</sup> Schade, *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, 106.

trust. The people were open to sharing their experiences, talking about the rich and poor rivalry which inhibits collaboration. One person also expressed concern about the division among religious denominations (Muslim, Christian, etc.) within school contexts.

Faced with the above issues, we used the *Issue Guide* to discuss three different roles that the church might play in a divided society such as ours. One way is for the church to be a refuge for people by putting everything in place for the spiritual life of the Christians. In this option, the church becomes a source of unity for all God's sons and daughters who form one family. Another option is for the church to serve as a mediator to provide a conducive place to gather people for discussion—much like we were doing in that dialogue. Finally, we discussed the option of the church as a prophetic voice active in the public square that can denounce evil and encourage the peaceful resolution of problems.

During our dialogue, the Holy Spirit led us to understand that this “potluck of ideas”<sup>226</sup> could satisfy spiritual hunger, and hunger for actual food. As a group, we had entered our pilgrimage in the wilderness, just as the Israelites did. In the course of our dialogue, which was already over two hours, some excused themselves because they had to cook food for their families; others told me clearly, “Father, we are hungry, and we hope you will give us something to eat.” More importantly, for me, my heart went for the little child of five that was crying because of being hungry. It is there we saw the importance of food that brings people together and builds the community. We needed to bring in some soft drinks and biscuits to calm the hunger amid our wilderness.

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<sup>226</sup> Schade, *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, 86. A potluck dinner is a term used in North America to describe a meal in which each guest or family contributes a dish of food to be shared by all.

Overall, the participants appreciated the dialogue and said that it was a warm, interactive process that gave us all a learning opportunity. As possible next steps to foster collaboration, some proposals emerged from my partners in the round table pulpit. They told me to keep on encouraging Christians to participate in church activities and that the church should shun and abolish clericalism to give more opportunity for women and the laity to preach. Overall, there was a call to decentralize the church's administration further. To foster unity, they proposed we should organize potlucks after church services and organize intercultural gatherings to promote the inculturation of the Gospel message, taking into account every cultural heritage in the given zone. I was impressed by how the Spirit led us, adults and children, to insist on participating in church activities to have more collaboration among us. We emphasized that we should open our group membership to every social, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural background. We saw the need to take our Gospel sharing seriously in small Christian communities. After the deliberative dialogue session, I evaluated the process with Dr. Schade in terms of the general information and the content. She prepared me to construct the form and scope of the follow-up sermon known as the Communal Prophetic Proclamation.

After the deliberative dialogue, I had the opportunity of making the Communal Prophetic Proclamation on the following Sunday. It was fortunate that the lectionary readings for this week coincided so well with the themes of dialogue and collaboration: Exodus 16:2–4, 12–15 and John 6:24–35. I invited my audience to see Jesus as the food that binds us together despite our differences. The need for physical food by the participants helped me to talk about the importance of actual food for nourishing our bodies. We learned something about the power of God to bring us together, help us listen



deeply to each other, receive shared wisdom, and envision a future of everyone being nurtured both physically and spiritually. In effect, I encouraged my parishioners to continue to value family and community meals that bind us together. After this, I am satisfied because we are equipped now to work harder to bring together peace and unity.

### Analysis

Organizing a Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process has been a fascinating project in my ministry. It will continue to shape my pastoral work and future ministry. My preaching will no longer be the same. The whole process offered me the opportunity of helping my congregation,

understand how the deliberative dialogue dovetails with the mission of the church, the ministry of Jesus, and the vision of reconciliation, wholeness, and hope that God is putting before the congregation. Using the dialogical lens for exegeting scripture, this sermon will biblically and theologically frame the prophetic word regarding this justice issue and offer an interpretation for how this process of communal discernment impacts the ongoing life and ministry of the church.<sup>227</sup>

Though it was a group event, I found myself being the "sole communicator and interpreter of what was a group event"<sup>228</sup> during the last sermon. The choice of the theme of collaboration fit well into the dialogue process because "the tone and the use of language in the Communal Prophetic Proclamation sermon are what communicate this prophetic collaboration experienced in the deliberative dialogue."<sup>229</sup> Looking through the lens of the Amos 7:10-17, I understood the inherent divisions running through the Anglophone community itself due to regional, tribal, social, and political differences.

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<sup>227</sup> Schade, *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, 123.

<sup>228</sup> Schade, *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, 124.

<sup>229</sup> Schade, *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, 124.

Choosing collaboration was not only for the parishioners; it was also necessary for me to learn consultative and collaborative leadership. On this note, McClure insists:

Consultative and collaborative forms of leadership, however, are more effective when leaders hope to build the strategic prophetic, evangelistic, and pastoral commitments that are needed in our churches today. Situational studies of leadership demonstrate that collaborative forms of leadership are particularly effective in building lay commitment and lay leadership.<sup>230</sup>

With this in mind, I strove to move towards a collaborative homiletic. My prophetic invitation to dialogue sermon and the whole process centered around collaboration for a compelling mission. Collaboration comes from the Latin *Collaborare* (*Co* and *laborare*) – work with. When applied to the process of preaching McClure describes collaboration this way:

The word *collaboration* means “working together.” It implies a form of preaching in which the preacher and hearer work together to establish and interpret the topics for preaching. They also decide together what the practical results of those interpretations might be for the congregation. The preacher, then, goes into the pulpit and represents this collaborative process in the event of sermon delivery.<sup>231</sup>

I understand McClure’s insistence that the preacher “collaborates with members of the congregation, galvanizing in the pulpit the actual talk through which the community, in response to the biblical message, is experiencing and producing in its own congregational life and mission.”<sup>232</sup> It became apparent that the Deliberative Dialogue and the principles of the Purple Zone worked in my context of Cameroon because they allowed me to organize this round table pulpit. Many important points came up from discussing with the congregation that made me see the need of working for peace.

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<sup>230</sup> McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit*, 12.

<sup>231</sup> McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit*, 48.

<sup>232</sup> McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit*, 50.

In the Deliberative Dialogue session, the sharing about discrimination based on Muslim-Christian conflict reminded me of the stories of Yusuf al-Falah, an Arab, and Avi Rozen, a Jew in the *Anatomy of Peace*.<sup>233</sup> I have come to understand that we live in a world with its conflict because of our natural differences. I have learned how to navigate through our personal, professional, and global conflicts that weigh us down amid war. We usually try to fight for our positions and correct other persons in conflict situations, which only perpetuates conflict. The sermon dialogue process has taught me that I will not make any strides if I remain “inside the box” and closed up to myself. I thus invited my parishioners to shun the “heart of war” to accept a “heart of peace.”<sup>234</sup> In effect, it is excellent to know that peacebuilding begins by me becoming an agent of change.

Consequently,

I become an agent of change ... only to the degree that I begin to live to help things go right rather than simply to correct things that are going wrong. Rather than simply correcting, for example, I need to reenergize my teaching, helping, listening, and learning rather than simply correcting. I need to put time and effort into building relationships.<sup>235</sup>

Despite my will to gather and build relationships, I found it hard to talk about controversial issues on the pulpit. However, Katie Day challenged me, on the one hand, and encouraged me, on the other hand, to take the risk of entering into difficult conversations, and I attest to the transformation in the heart of the parishioners. I am more convinced, just like Desmond Tutu will say in post-apartheid South Africa, that I

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<sup>233</sup> The Arbinger Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2020)

<sup>234</sup> The Arbinger Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace*, 2.

<sup>235</sup> The Arbinger Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace*, 18.

had to enter into a complex but also creative “difficult conversation”<sup>236</sup> if I wanted to help change the social sphere where we are. To deal with this issue, after following the congregational model through preaching and identifying the need for collaboration, I was able to identify “potential conflicts within the congregation itself...issues from the community culture at large.”<sup>237</sup> At the advice of Ruby Quantson Davis.<sup>238</sup> I decided to start small with a small group of people who trusted me and trusted each other. This was supported by Day’s model of “conversation in small groups”<sup>239</sup> which we experienced in the Deliberative Dialogue. It was for this reason that I invited eight people, though I ended up having almost thirty. Working with a small group, the parishioners themselves requested that the topic of dialogue should continue as an ongoing practice. To this end, I am open to “ongoing conversations.”<sup>240</sup>

Talking about conflict situations has taught me that we must not see anyone as inferior because of their race, region, tribe, political affiliation, gender or religion. This is important to know because “Seeing an equal person as an inferior object is an act of violence.”<sup>241</sup> To avoid seeing others as inferior, we learned to be a conversational church. Allen defines a conversational church as one that

respects the Bible and tradition, and listens carefully to their voices, adopting those perspectives that are life-giving while having the freedom to critique and

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<sup>236</sup> Katie Day, *Difficult Conversations: Taking Risks, Acting with Integrity* (Alban Institute, 2001), 45.

<sup>237</sup> Day, *Difficult Conversation*, 47.

<sup>238</sup> Zoom discussion and interview with Ruby Quantson Davis, International Peace Research Consultant on Wednesday June 9, 2021.

<sup>239</sup> Day, *Difficult Conversation*, 50.

<sup>240</sup> Day, *Difficult Conversation*, 54.

<sup>241</sup> The Arbinger Institute, *The Anatomy of Peace*, 34.

even turn away from aspects of the Bible and tradition that work against God's purposes. The conversation includes Scripture and tradition while going beyond these two voices.<sup>242</sup>

To help foster our parish to become a conversational church, I have learned to share my vulnerability and experiences without fear. The importance of this became clear at the beginning of the dialogue. Only after I began sharing my own experiences of marginalization did my people understand that I had a connection of solidarity with them as a preacher and fellow sufferer of divisiveness. They understood that I saw them as "partners in matters of faith and practice."<sup>243</sup> These were the marginal voices that could be heard in the same community of faith, a term which I draw from Lucy Atkinson Rose who said that "fundamental to...experiences of and reflections on preaching is the conviction that the preacher and congregation are not separate entities but a community of faith."<sup>244</sup> Based on this assertion, the sermon-dialogue-sermon process made me understand that it is possible for me as a preacher to sit at the table with the marginal voices in my congregation and then to carry their concerns, experiences, and wisdom into my sermons.

### Conclusion

Preaching prophetically in a culturally and politically divided context is a great challenge especially for the preacher. In the bid to help my congregation collaborate despite the inherent division, I was wondering if the sermon-dialogue-sermon method

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<sup>242</sup> Ronald J. Allen, John S. McClure and O. Wesley Allen. *Under the Oak Tree: The Church as Community of Conversation in a Conflicted and Pluralistic World* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2013), 9-10.

<sup>243</sup> Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 89.

<sup>244</sup> Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word*, 89.

would work in a country and congregation beyond the “purple zone” of the United States. I have journeyed with the English community of Saint Charles Lwanga Parish, Nkolbisson Yaoundé, through the sermon-dialogue-sermon process, and I can ascertain that it works outside of a United States context. Preachers need to be attentive to the culture, language, political conflicts, and unique experiences of their particular congregation. For preachers who want to implement this method in congregations with multiple layers of divisiveness, more than one sermon will be needed to prepare the congregation for the dialogue and move on a spiritual journey with them.

Regarding my own spiritual journey with this process, I feel that God is always present to direct honest conversation. I felt the Spirit of Christ invisibly directing all the honest conversations we had. Looking back on the five weeks during which we carried out the sermon-dialogue-sermon process, I feel like one of the disciples of Emmaus: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road? (Lk 24:32).

Lucy Atkinson Rose captured this Emmaus experience in these words:

On the one hand are the divine-human conversations in which the divine partner is God or the Word as found in its complexity and variety most fully in biblical texts. On the other hand, are the human-human conversations within the particular community of faith, among communities of faith, between the dominant voices and those that are marginal and muted, and between the church and the world. Through the Spirit, God becomes a participant in these human-human conversations, much as Jesus after the resurrection joined the two disciples as they “homilied” together on the road to Emmaus<sup>245</sup>.

I have learned many good practices in sermon preparation and delivery in any divided context. I achieved my goal because I used collaborative preaching to engage in

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<sup>245</sup> Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word*, 96.

and influence the ways that my congregation is “talking itself into”<sup>246</sup> becoming a Christian community. Now I am equipped to train other preachers in to use this method in their different congregations. On this note, I am training two priests and one lay person to use the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process in different congregations in Cameroon.

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<sup>246</sup> McClure, *The Roundtable Pulpit*, 50.

## Chapter 5

### Training Preachers to Preach in a Divided Zone

If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.

—Unknown

#### Introduction

In his introduction to the book *Training Preachers*, the editor Scott M. Gibson opines, “There are many methods of teaching homiletics as there are many teachers of homiletics, and there are many methods of preparing sermons as there are many preachers.”<sup>247</sup> The good news is that teachers of preachers can teach and communicate sound preaching methodology to others. Several methods exist to educate preachers to skillfully and effectively present God’s word to their congregations in different contexts. In the preceding chapter, I explained how I used the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method to preach in a divided Cameroon. This intervention came after I took the Independent Study entitled “Preaching and Dialogue in a Divided Context” with Lutheran homiletician Dr. Leah D. Schade. Preaching prophetically in a divided zone is a significant challenge for preachers. This method has worked for me. This chapter will give a detailed account of my thesis project’s ministerial intervention. I recount how I have trained preachers to use the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method in different ministerial contexts.

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<sup>247</sup> Scott M. Gibson, *Training Preachers: A Guide to Teaching Homiletics*. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2018), 1.



I learned the method because Jesus commanded us to teach what we practice. I wish to help preachers use nonpartisan, biblically-centered approaches and deliberative dialogue to address Cameroon’s current situation of division. I had the opportunity to learn and practice the deliberative dialogue process before I began teaching others. I could only achieve this by understanding the importance of having collaborators in preaching. On this note, the need to collaborate with others propelled me into working with collaborators in training. This commitment to collaboration was the stepping stone to my ministerial intervention.

#### Identifying Collaborators in Preaching: The Need to Work Together

The human person is a social being who lives in society. He/she is a being with others and a being in relation. Aristotle tells us that he or she who cannot live in society or has no need for it because to be sufficient for oneself is to be either a beast or a god. Television and other social media platforms show us how animals work together—a clarion call for humans to do the same. We are increasingly convinced that “united we stand” and “divided we fall.” This assertion fits nicely into some traditional African socialism quests. Whether one calls it *the Ujamaa*<sup>248</sup> or the *Ubuntu*<sup>249</sup>, the *Harambee*<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> Swahili word for extended family or family hood as propagated by Nyerere.

<sup>249</sup> The ancient Ubuntu philosophy of South Africa recognizes a person's humanity through interpersonal relationships.

<sup>250</sup> A term that originated among natives, specifically Swahili porters of East Africa. The word *Harambee* traditionally means “let us pull together.”

or the *Igbo Kwenu*,<sup>251</sup> the French *vivre ensemble*, or the Indian *Sarvodaya*,<sup>252</sup> the long and the short, as shown in the above analogies, is that we are called to be together. Therefore, working together is challenging if we desire a more cooperative society. We need to work in teams to accomplish common projects. The African adage, “It takes a whole village to raise a child,” is pertinent. With this backdrop, I knew that my ministerial intervention could be successful if people understood the need to collaborate.

Collaboration comes from the Latin *collaborare* (*co* and *laborare*)—work with. Collaboration happens when two or more people work together to create or achieve the same thing. To collaborate means to work with someone else for a special purpose. The adjective *collaborative* applies to two or more people working together for a particular purpose.<sup>253</sup> For Austin Echema, “Collaboration implies a coming together of two people or groups that are different, but who for a common purpose must put aside their differences in order to achieve a common goal.”<sup>254</sup> All sectors of human life, social, civil, or ecclesiastical, require collaboration. Authors Loughlan Sofield and Carrol Juliano

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<sup>251</sup> During my stay in Igbo land in Nigeria, I can still remember the great *Igbo Kwenu*, which is used as a supreme rallying call to attention and order to speak in a culturally appropriate way. In my philosophical intuitiveness, I understood that “*Igbo kwenu*” most literally means, “We, the Igbo people, stand together in agreement and collective will.” It does not end there. It also is a shortened form of a longer phrase, “*Igbo kwere na ihe ha kwuru*” which roughly means, “The Igbo believe in what they have agreed upon to think, say, and do.”

<sup>252</sup> Hindi word for welfare for all, as propagated by Mahatma Gandhi.

<sup>253</sup> *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary and Thesaurus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>.

<sup>254</sup> Austin Echema, *Priests and Laity Collaboration in the Postmodern Church*. (Owerri: Assumpta Press, 2011), 25.

define collaboration as the “identification, release, and union of the gifts of all baptized persons.”<sup>255</sup>

While dialoguing with my collaborators, my mind went directly to the teacher-student pedagogical relationship. According to educators Mary Hess and Stephen Brookfield,

Three pedagogic emphases are discernable in theological teaching: a commitment to continuously inquire the pedagogic contexts in which we work and to responding publicly to what we learn from this research, a deliberate attempt to treat learners as adults with the attitude of respectful attention to students’ experiences this implies, and models a public, critically reflective engagement in spiritually grounded learning.<sup>256</sup>

For over a year, I contacted several possible collaborators who all accepted but could not make it due to various constraints. Therefore, I consulted with my thesis adviser, and we agreed to work with three available collaborators, two priests and one layperson. This limited number of collaborators allowed me to work and coach each one personally. I now present my preaching collaborators and their preaching contexts briefly.

Father Edwin Mumukom Mbang works in Saint Gregory the Great Parish in Ndobu, Douala. This parish is bilingual (English and French) and run by Claretian Missionaries in the Archdiocese of Douala, in the French-speaking side of Cameroon and the gateway between the English and French regions of Cameroon. Many internally displaced people live there, and the Claretians minister to them. Father Edwin is originally from the English-speaking part of Cameroon and understands the country’s

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<sup>255</sup> Loughlan Sofield and Carrol Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry, Skills and guidelines*. (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1987), 11.

<sup>256</sup> Mary E. Hess and Stephen D. Brookfield, eds. *Teaching Reflectively in Theological Contexts: Promises and Contradictions* (Malabar: Kreiger, 2008), 4.

socio-political situation well. Father Edwin is taking a Master's Degree in Philosophy at Domuni Universitas Online and has completed his university formation in carpentry. Apart from his work as a parochial vicar, he runs the Claret Youth Training Center in Douala. Father Edwin carried out the sermon-dialogue-sermon method with selected parishioners on sibling rivalry.

Father David Onana is a parochial vicar in a remote village mission in the Diocese of Kumbo. I chose him because he is originally from the French-speaking side of Cameroon. He decided to work in the English side of Cameroon, despite all the instability due to the ongoing socio-political crises in the English-speaking side of Cameroon. He has a great love for the mission and has mustered much courage to accept this challenging mission. He is a Claretian Missionary and carried out the sermon-dialogue-sermon method with his parishioners in Saint Thomas Aquinas Pastoral Zone in Mbot, Diocese of Kumbo. He dialogued on our responsibility to mediate to bring peace to Cameroon.

Dr. Nyala Etanefila Valery Ngam has a Ph.D. in History and International Relations. Valery's educational background equips him to analyze the country's socio-political situation. He did his sermon-dialogue-sermon process with his prayer group known as "Our Lady of Perpetual Group" in the capital city of Yaoundé. The group met on Sunday evenings to pray the rosary and share the scriptures. This group comprises primarily students and ex-students of the University of Yaoundé I and other tertiary institutions in the city. The parish is the Saint Francis Xavier Catholic University Chaplaincy, run by the Jesuit. Dr. Nyala preached his sermons on the Know Justice,

Know Peace theme. His sermons were titled A Journey through Romans 3:21-30, Experiencing the Peace of God through Unity and Prayer and Embracing God’s Justice.

The two priests have had basic seminary formation and at least one preaching class. The lay Christian holds a doctorate in history and has not taken any preaching classes. Having declared my intention to teach preachers how to conduct deliberative dialogue in a divided zone, these three people agreed to be my collaborators.

#### An Overview of the Training of My Collaborators

I made phone calls on May 31, 2023, to invite my three collaborators for this training in the Claretian Curia in Nkolbisson Yaoundé on June 8, 2023, at 6 p.m. During our first meeting, I informed them I was a freshly minted preaching professor ready to be their friend and companion. One word that makes my theology of teaching preaching meaningful is “accompaniment.” Accompaniment is essential because, as a faithful witness when teaching, I am not a “guru” or a “big man.” I am a friend accompanying the student in an instrumental conversation and dialogue.

After my introductory session, I knew they were ready to let me train them as “faithful and effective biblical preachers.”<sup>257</sup> I developed a one-day training workshop for these companions to drill them through the Deliberative Dialogue and the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method. I journeyed with my collaborators and accompanied them to become better preachers. I always had in the back of my mind the Emmaus story. Therefore, I wanted to come across as a friend to accompany my collaborators. As a teacher of preaching, I knew I had my part to play, and the collaborators had their part to

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<sup>257</sup> Tony Merida, “What a Freshly Minted Preaching Professor Needs to Know (Part 1), in Scott Gibson, *Training Preachers*. 77.

play.<sup>258</sup> I intended to empower the collaborators, increase rapport, and make them better preachers. I am glad to have achieved this goal. In one of our discussions, Father Edwin Mbang, one of my preaching collaborators, told me, “My parishioners tell me that I preach better now. They feel free to comment about my preaching even when I feel the topic was hard on them.”

A good preaching teacher must have a solid theological foundation and a comprehension of the Bible through theological lenses. A preaching teacher with a solid theological and biblical foundation can help students understand their preaching mission. Because preaching is the last command Jesus gave us before ascending into heaven (Matthew 28:19; Mark 15:16), it has become the Church’s primary mission. Preaching teachers must have a solid theological foundation and a passion for God’s Kingdom to teach and preach effectively. A good preaching teacher must understand the biblical and theological basis of preaching via the perspective of homiletics. I learned this through my Independent Study with Leah Schade and, above all, through Aquinas Institute of Theology courses.

The one-day training workshop began with an opening prayer led by the youngest in the group, followed by introductions, a welcome speech, and a detailed review of the agenda and consent form. I gave a brief overview of my thesis project’s purpose. The meeting took place in my office. For thirty minutes, I drilled my collaborators on *Preaching in the Purple Zone* by Leah Schade and taught them how to use the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method. I told them how I did this formation with Leah Schade and

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<sup>258</sup> Cf. Aaron S. Richmond, “Constructing a Learner-Centered Syllabus: One Professor’s Journey” in *Idea Paper #60* (September 2016), 1.

how they could do it in their contexts. Since they had read *Preaching in the Purple Zone* earlier at my request, it was easy for them to relate to my presentation. *Preaching in the Purple Zone* contains chapters that explain the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process in detail, equip pastors and congregations to carry out the process in their churches, and provide numerous case studies of preachers who have used this method in their ministries. I was careful not to be too theological and to speak with particular attention so that the layperson, who had studied neither theology nor philosophy, could follow along.

In effect, homileticians encourage preachers to think of preaching as a discussion, a wager, collaborative work, and mutual critical correlation, using words like confession, witness, and testimony to characterize how one voice can dare to say a meaningful message to the congregation on Sunday. Collaboration is one of the most effective ways to make a difference when leading a congregation, and collaborative preaching is the most effective way to inspire and guide a congregation. In *Sharing the Word: Preaching and the Roundtable Church*, Lucy Atkinson Rose<sup>259</sup> gives particular attention to the listener. Leah Schade's "sermon-dialogue-sermon" process helped me to preach collaborative and listener-friendly sermons in the purple zone.

The training, therefore, involved a good understanding of Leah Schade's *Preaching in the Purple Zone*, a presentation of how I applied it to the Cameroon context, and some cautions on how the collaborators could use it in their different contexts. (Appendix A has full details of the one-day workshop on the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method). I also drilled them on sermon preparation by using the dialogical lens to

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<sup>259</sup> Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching and the Roundtable Church*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

exegete their texts (the Worksheet for Using the Dialogical Lens is in Appendix I). At the end of the training, I can attest that my collaborators showed signs of satisfaction and readiness to serve in their different peripheries. Participants signed the consent form (Appendix D) and agreed to collaborate with me by preaching in their churches. We all decided to create a WhatsApp group for accessible communication. I encouraged each collaborator to choose a topic and propose a theme for the sermon-dialogue-sermon method.

*An Overview of the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Process by My Collaborators*

My collaborators organized the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process in their different parish communities. Each of the three collaborators minister in a different diocese in Cameroon, spread across three distinct cultural and political regions: Center, Littoral, and North West Regions of Cameroon. Participation in each parish was open to those willing to join after being contacted and invited. The three collaborators issued their invitations through phone calls or WhatsApp messages or in face-to-face conversations immediately after receiving the Yaoundé training.

Father Edwin chose to work on Sibling Rivalry. He discussed the importance of collaborative, peaceful cohabitation in our families and community despite sibling rivalry and other differences. Father preached the first sermon on Genesis 21:8-21 (Appendix M), which opened their eyes to the reality of conflicts in our society originating from the family. He insisted on peaceful cohabitation through dialogue in a Ministry of Collaboration in a divided context. A week later, Fr. Edwin deepened the reflection through the story of Jacob and his brother Esau (Gen. 27:1-40, Appendix M), noting the



need for forgiveness as a tool for reconciliation. Based on these two sermons, he made a prophetic invitation to dialogue.

In the deliberative dialogue, a group of seventeen adults participated. The participants were both francophones and anglophones from different regions of the country. The nine men (including three seminarians and a priest) and eight women gathered in the Marian grotto of the parish to dialogue on how they, as a church community, could address the issue of conflicts in families, parish, local community, town, and country. In an open discussion, members freely shared situations in which they had faced betrayals, rejection, stigmatization, and separation based on tribe, social status, religious and political affiliations, or economic divisions between the rich and poor. At first, people hesitated to share these stories because being vulnerable in a group situation like that is not easy. But one by one, people spoke about these painful situations. This openness is essential because it shows that his congregation was willing to be honest and forthright, to share their experiences and feelings in a way that builds trust. With this, Fr. Edwin was ready to preach the last sermon, the communal invitation to dialogue.

Faced then with the challenging situation concerning our living together, which he deduced from the deliberative dialogue, Father Edwin preached on forgiveness. Edwin knew when living together, hurting one another becomes inevitable. Then, the search for peace and reconciliation is paramount, as Jesus makes plain in the Gospel of Mathew 18:15-20. (Appendix M). Based on this, Father Edwin helped his parishioners understand that forgiveness is a process we best achieve through dialogue. Dialogue is the only means through which our different families can receive healing and experience the love and mercy of God.

Apart from discovering this inevitable need for dialogue and forgiveness, his dialogue group thought of possible next steps and a way forward to encourage collaboration in the community. In this regard, they insisted on participating in church activities and more collaboration among church members. They emphasized the spirit of openness to those of other social, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. They also saw the need to be appreciative of others and be ready to learn from them, the need to be humble, the need to allow the ideas of others over ours, the need for self-development, and the need to go towards others and to take our Gospel Sharing seriously in Small Christian Communities. They implemented these proposals and had an evaluating meeting after the Communal Invitation to Dialogue sermon (Appendix M). The parishioners have resolved to ameliorate division in their families and parish through mutual forgiveness, dialogue at different levels, open-mindedness, flexibility, and tolerance. In their dialogue, they underlined that in conflict resolution, we should learn not to take sides but be neutral to understand that conflict resolution is a gradual process.

In his sermon-dialogue-sermon process, Dr. Nyala worked on the importance of Justice and Peace in a Divided Zone. He preached two sermons before the deliberative dialogue. In his first (rooting) sermon, he delved into the powerful message in Romans 3:21-30 (Appendix N). He brought out the concepts of justice and peace and their importance to faith in Jesus Christ. For him, we can achieve peace only through knowing God's justice. In effect, he insisted that knowing justice through faith in Jesus Christ leads to experiencing the true peace of God. His second sermon, the prophetic invitation to dialogue, took place on August 13, 2023, based on the reading of Philippians 4:1-7 with the title "Experiencing the Peace of God through Unity and Prayer." (Appendix N).

In this sermon, he said God's peace surpasses all human understanding and guards our hearts and minds. This peace is a gift from God through a relationship with Jesus Christ. He insisted that the peace of God is different from the world's temporary peace. While worldly peace is based on external circumstances, God's peace is rooted in the assurance of His love, grace, and sovereignty. He then invited the listeners to the deliberative dialogue in the garden of the Church.

Dr. Nyala organized the deliberative dialogue with ten young adults who are leaders of groups in the St Francis Xavier Catholic University Parish Emia, Yaoundé. The group comprised seven males and three females. The participants' ages ranged from 29 to 40 years. Four participants were teachers, three ran petit businesses, two were still in school, and one had no job. They were all English-speaking but from different tribes and ethnic groups. All of the participants were not interested in partisan politics. The discussion was relatively calm as participants expressed their frustration on how they were treated as Anglophones when they first got to Yaoundé. They respectfully shared their frustration on how they were treated even in religious zones where they came to worship God. The common emerging themes were collaboration, acceptance, unity, and love. The main idea that seemed to generate much energy in the next step was fairness, collaboration, and acceptance. Despite the challenges identified, only fairness, collaboration, and acceptance could heal the scar of division. With this dialogue, Dr. Nyala then prepared his communal invitation to dialogue sermon.

The last sermon (Appendix N), rooted in Leviticus 19:15-20 was an invitation to "Embracing God's Justice," as shown in its title. He made the strong point that our Christian duty is to speak out against injustices that violate human rights. We should not

remain silent when we witness oppression, discrimination, or violence. Jesus is an example of one who stood against injustice and defended the marginalized. Promoting respectful dialogue, therefore, is essential in a nation with diverse cultures and perspectives like Cameroon. When conflicts arise, let us seek peaceful solutions that uphold the rights of all parties involved. The Bible teaches us to be peacemakers, and this principle applies to our interactions on both personal and societal levels. By doing so, he insisted, we contribute to transforming our nation into a place where God's justice and love are evident in all aspects of life.

Father Jules David Onana, cmf, had his intervention in a village parish in the diocese of Kumbo. He based his sermons on the liturgical readings of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Sundays in Ordinary Time, Year A. His first sermon, the Prophetic Invitation to Dialogue Sermon, was titled "Mediators of God's salvation into the world." (Appendix O). He portrayed Moses' mission as a mediator. He insisted that Moses never lost focus on his mission as a mediator and was able to fulfill it. In his footsteps, we should equally focus on our call as mediators of peace and avoid being distracted by all that works against peace. With this sermon, David invited parishioners to deliberative dialogue. The invitation was in the last part of his sermon.

The participants at the dialogue comprised twelve people: four men and eight women, four young adults, seven middle-aged adults, and one retiree. The participants were mainly farmers, with two teachers and one retiree teacher. All participants were from the North-West Region of Cameroon from two different tribes from the Ndonga-Mantung Sub-Division. From his observation, most participants had no affiliation with any political party. Two seem to favor the crisis, and one is a member of the political

party ruling the country. The main issue was: How can we become peace mediators in our socio-political divided context? The participants identified difficulty in forgiving past evil experiences, making the process to peace hard, the loss of beloved ones, raising concerns about revenge, and the high rate of suspicion that brings disunity into families. They identified several ways forward within the community context: the reorganization of small Christian communities (SCC) to facilitate the approach to peace from the roots, active participation in Church activities and groups, and a serious emphasis on forgiveness through Church doctrine home visitations from pastors to appreciate situations better, opening the door of the Church to non-Christians for dialogue and peace to prevail, and the creation of traditional dancing clubs and football teams for more socialization and interaction.

The communal invitation to dialogue sermon was based on the lectionary readings of the 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, titled Servants of the Truth in a Socio-Politically Divided Context (Appendix O). In this sermon, Fr. Jules reflected on our call as servants of the truth in a socio-political divided context. He set the attention toward prophet Jeremiah, who will serve for us as a paradigm of the revealed truth even when the context seems not favorable. He opined that truth must prevail for peace to reign. In other words, there is no withstanding or everlasting peace without truth. For him, this is now the time to witness the truth, and nothing can stop it, for at the end of the day, responsibilities will be assumed according to everyone's choice.

## Data Collection

Tim Sensing's Data Triangulation<sup>260</sup> from distinct perspectives guided my collection of data. Knowing that "any single approach will have limitations,"<sup>261</sup> I, therefore, opted for triangulation, which provides a thicker interpretation and helps to crosscheck data, giving breadth and depth of analysis and increasing the trustworthiness of research.<sup>262</sup> I found Sensing's three angles—outsider, insider, and researcher—beneficial.

My personal experience as one who has gone through kidnapping and is a preacher in a divided zone placed me in the position of researcher. As the researcher, therefore, I determined the problem and hypothesis of this thesis project, conducted the research necessary to test them, reviewed the relevant literature, and established its interdisciplinary, theological, and homiletic underpinnings and interventions. The observations I have made and all the findings are in Chapter 6. The insider angle comprised the three collaborators I trained to use the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method and the participants they each preached to in their different peripheries. I conducted four surveys for the preachers and the participants, as discussed below. Professor Leah Schade functioned as the independent expert. Since her book served as a bedrock for the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method to help preachers preach in a divided context, I see her as the expert in the field. She has been with me from the conception of this thesis project till its

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<sup>260</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 72-77.

<sup>261</sup> Sensing, 72.

<sup>262</sup> Sensing, 72.

realization. She has reviewed the theories and accompanied me all through the intervention. I report her observations and findings in the sixth chapter.

I used qualitative methods and collected data through interviews and ethnographic research. Through qualitative research, we have understood the ordeals of preaching in a divided zone and understood people's experiences, beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors in different contexts. In effect, as qualitative researchers Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln insist:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.<sup>263</sup>

In this thesis project, through qualitative methodology, I focused on training three preachers who, in turn, conducted the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method with their focus groups. I drilled them on preaching, and they gave feedback through surveys and participation observation. I also analyzed their content and case studies. The qualitative research method helped me gain a deep understanding of what people are experiencing in the different ministry contexts, especially in different zones of Cameroon amidst the division.

Quantitative research, etymologically from "quant," involves collecting numerical data to analyze relationships, patterns, and trends within a specific context. Statistical analysis helps rank, measure, or categorize the numerical data gathered. It facilitates the

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<sup>263</sup> Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Ed), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.), (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2005), 3.

identification of patterns or relationships, as well as generalization. This form of research helps determine the number, quantity, frequency, or extent of something. As Sensing recapitulates, “Qualitative studies are designed to investigate an issue in great depth; quantitative studies are designed to investigate an issue with great breadth. The tension between depth and breadth is resolved by determining the purpose of the study.”<sup>264</sup> I did not make use of quantitative research.

My intervention occurred in three main stages: First, I brought together three preachers and trained them. They all had to read *Preaching in the Purple Zone* by Leah Schade. Secondly, I gave them guided, one-to-one accompaniment. Before preaching each sermon, the preacher sent it to me for correction and comments. Thirdly, I prepared questionnaires and surveys. After the deliberative dialogue, each collaborator had a questionnaire (Appendix) to help him analyze the flow of the deliberative dialogue in view. The next was a Post Deliberative Dialogue Survey (Appendix C) in which the preachers gave their impressions, satisfaction, or dissatisfaction about the whole process. There was also a Preaching Response Questionnaire (Appendix G) for the participants who evaluated the preacher: The aim was to provide helpful information for the speaker’s preparation of sermons. Then, there was the Congregational Sermon Evaluation Form (Appendix H), involving an open-ended questionnaire used as a peer-evaluation tool. The last was the interview with Preachers after Conducting the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Process (Appendix L).

As explained above, we tried doing surveys and got very little response. We have learned to get these surveys immediately after the experience to increase responses. My

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<sup>264</sup> Sensing, 82.



data collection from surveys was not as robust, and I realized the importance of conducting such surveys immediately after the intervention. We did not do that immediately, so many people are not responding. My data comes from the leaders and not from the participants in the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process. Chapter 6 will expound more on the lessons learned.

### Data Analysis

The questionnaire that returned almost immediately was the “Questions for Reflecting on the Deliberative Dialogue” (Appendix J). In my intervention, two priests and one layperson who were my preaching collaborators were all men between the ages of 35 and 40. They were all leaders in their community. In terms of education, they were well-grounded with postgraduate studies. The intervention took place in different locations in the country: Kumbo, where the current armed conflict is at its apex; Yaoundé, which is the political capital of Cameroon; and Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon. Two collaborators were from the English side of Cameroon and did their training in the French side of Cameroon. One was a French-speaking Cameroonian, and he did his intervention in the English-speaking side of Cameroon. I did this to ensure a balanced appraisal.

From Kumbo, twelve adults participated. There were four men and eight women. They were not all interested in politics. Two of them favored the division of the country. From Yaoundé, ten young adults who are leaders of groups in the university parish participated. They were all seven males and three females. All were not interested in politics. From Douala, seventeen people participated, and there were nine men (including

three seminarians and a priest) and eight women. They were not at all interested in politics.

The total number of participants was 39, comprising 20 men and 19 women, primarily young and middle-aged. We can deduce that there was a gender balance in the participation. Analyzing the data, I can infer tips and lessons from the dialogue and questions I gathered with my collaborators. Training preachers to preach in a divided zone can be challenging and essential as it involves addressing sensitive issues and promoting understanding, empathy, and unity among diverse communities.

### Ethical Procedures

Ethical behavior “helps protect individuals, communities, and environments, and offers the potential to increase the sum of good in the world.”<sup>265</sup> Ethical procedures within a Doctor of Ministry project are essential. I ensured during this process of research that everything went on with integrity, respect for participants, and adherence to established ethical standards. My collaborators in preaching had the same ethical procedures.

First and foremost, I got the “Informed Consent Form” (Appendix D) from the two priests and one layperson I trained. For research ethicists Mark Israel and Hay Iain, “Informed consent implies two related activities: participants need first to comprehend and second to agree voluntarily to the nature of their research and their role within it.”<sup>266</sup> Stemming from this assertion, during the training, I gave my preaching collaborators

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<sup>265</sup> Mark Israel and Hay Iain. *Research Ethics for Social Scientists* (London: SAGE Publications, Ltd, 2006), 2.

<sup>266</sup> Israel and Iain, 61.

understandable information about the research purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, and their right to withdraw without penalty. I informed them how I would use, store, and anonymize their data. They understood that the research process was confidential.

In the process, my collaborators and I respected participants' privacy, mainly when conducting interviews, surveys, or observations. I also made them understand that their intervention would benefit not only them as they participate but also positively affect the field of study or the community under investigation. As they were working with parishioners, I told them they were to assure them of the confidentiality of their interventions and get their consent to share anything with me. I also let them know that their participation was non-coercive and voluntary and that they could freely participate in my research. They were free to withdraw at any time without prejudice.

Two collaborators were Claretian priests, whom I asked to complete an Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal for Claretian Priests and Deacons (Appendix E). I clarified that their decision to participate or withdraw would not affect their relationship with me or the Claretians. These are the three points I highlighted to them:

- I understand that I am your Major Superior, and I have immediate authority over you as per your vows. However, I want to assure you that your participation in this research work will cause no prejudice to your vocation and will not endanger you in any way.
- Your decision to take part in this research study is entirely voluntary.
- You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled.

My collaborators reviewed and signed the consent forms. In my opening remarks on the day I trained them, I thoroughly checked the consent forms and allowed participants to ask questions, decline, or withdraw. Every participant signed the consent form. My collaborators raised no queries, declinations, or withdrawals. My initial plan was to train Claretian priests and deacons. Many accepted when I talked with them and distributed the *Preaching in the Purple Zone* book to them. However, for one full year, I did not see the motivation in many of them. Only two of the ten who received the books came back to me. Since I am the leader of Claretians, many were nervous that the research might affect them, explaining why only the two I worked with were happy to sign the consent form.

### Conclusion

The whole process of the ministerial intervention went well. However, there were some hurdles. Pinning down a period to do the intervention took much work. Many who had accepted to be my preaching collaborators still needed to meet up with the promise. The whole process flowed well when I finally got to work with the three collaborators mentioned above. Since it was a free participation, I am glad those who came were ready to work. Ultimately, training preachers to preach in a divided zone requires a commitment to promoting understanding, compassion, and empathy. The goal is not to convert people to a particular belief system but to foster a spirit of unity and coexistence among diverse communities.

After training my collaborators to preach in the purple zone, I can say that the sermon-dialogue-sermon method works outside the United States. However, preachers must be attentive to their congregation's culture, language, political conflicts, and unique

experiences. For preachers who want to implement this method in congregations that have multiple layers of division, more than one sermon will be necessary to prepare the congregation for the dialogue and move on a spiritual journey with them. These are the issues that my collaborators addressed in their different congregations.

My collaborators and I have learned many good sermon preparation and delivery practices in any divided context. The data collected demonstrates the high level of involvement exhibited by my preaching collaborators and the participants in the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method and how God influenced their lives during the process. By training preachers, I have helped them learn good practices so that they can continue to dialogue in different parts of “the purple zone” of Cameroon.

Chapter 6 of this thesis project discusses the findings, observations, and conclusions derived from the collected data. I attest that the primary question that guided this research is addressed and answered affirmatively.

## Chapter 6

### **Observations, Findings, Recommendations, and Future Opportunities**

For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as ransom for all. This was the testimony at the proper time

—Timothy 2:5-6

#### Introduction

This thesis project aimed at developing and testing the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method to train preachers to preach in Cameroon. The theological framework proposed the theology of reconciliation as a pathway. By hinging the project's interdisciplinary framework on the doctrine of nonviolence, this project showed that great activists like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr used the pulpit to propagate their doctrine and bring about change. The training of the preaching collaborators in the preceding chapter showed that the three preachers, in particular, and the Church, in general, could use the pulpit to mediate peace and invite participants into a deliberative dialogue process. Their active participation and willingness to share their vulnerability and proffer solutions demonstrated that preaching peace is possible.

This chapter looks at the project in terms of findings, observations, and opportunities. First, there will be general observations and specific results from collected data from the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method and its impact on people's lives. Following suit, some specific findings will arise from analyzing the reports from the

collaborators. The last part of the chapter discusses recommendations for further study and how these results can open promising opportunities to keep going with this work.

### General Observations

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I consulted priests and deacons of the Claretian Congregation to be my collaborators. Many did not respond for reasons best known to them. However, two Claretian priests accepted: a priest originally from the English-speaking side of Cameroon working in a bilingual parish in Douala in the French-speaking Side of Cameroon and another priest from the French-speaking side of Cameroon working in the conflict-stricken zone of Upper Mbot, Kumbo, in the English speaking side of Cameroon. I respect the prudence of many Claretians in discerning whether to participate in an intervention that involves being vulnerable with their religious superior. I invited two laypersons, one of whom was available. I saw in this the willingness of lay people to be involved in the preaching of the Church. I affirm the willingness of my collaborators to be formed and to form others. They participated fully in the training I gave them and asked very pertinent questions. From their interventions, I observed the resolve to mediate peace in a divided zone. From the reports they sent, I made other general observations.

After going through the post-deliberative dialogue survey and reading through the reports of the preaching collaborators, Prof. Leah Schade pointed out that there were moments of tension. The participants were wrestling with feelings of harm and mistrust. There was legitimate airing of grievances, expressing their feelings and not letting the pot boil over to become so strained. Prof Schade said: “A container was created to hold these problematic thoughts, feelings, and emotions, and it relieved some anger, despair, and

frustration because at least they were being heard.” This appraisal of Prof. Schade opened my mind to emphasize three things from the context of the deliberative dialogue.

First, I agree with Prof. Schade, who observed, “The dialogue occurred in a country where people have been colonized. In this case, white colonizers imposed on them without getting their feedback.” True enough, Cameroon passed through three white colonial masters: the Germans, the French, and the English. While not neglecting all the positive impacts of colonialism, one understands the comment of historian Thomas Pakenham in his book *The Scramble for Africa*: “The European powers had no regard for African rights or interests. They simply partitioned the continent among themselves, drawing arbitrary lines on maps and ignoring the existing political and ethnic boundaries.”<sup>267</sup> The imposition of colonial control had a significant impact on the development of Africa. It resulted in the deterioration of traditional African cultures and institutions and the exploitation of African resources to benefit European powers. Africa still feels the effects of colonialism. Many African countries are still grappling with the economic and social difficulties generated by colonial control. Sometimes, they have made significant decisions with the “chiefs” without consulting the people. Taking about chiefs, we can make the second contextual observation.

The second thing to note about the context is that the interventions took place within the context of traditional monarchy and hierarchy in which the chief (*fon*) is next to a god. In effect:

The *fon* is exceedingly prestigious and regarded as being quite apart from other human beings. He obtains the protection of the late *fons* and their benedictions for abundant crops. He is sacred; he performs rituals.... Many things in the life of the *fon* indicate his separate status.... He does not eat in public, and in fact, many

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<sup>267</sup> Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (London: Abacus, 1991), 590.



people believe he does not eat at all. People do not talk openly about him or about his body, but only indirectly or by metaphors.<sup>268</sup>

No one would say ‘the *fon* is ill’ but ‘there is sickness in the palace;’ or ‘the palace is hot.’ His children and wives are not referred to as the *fon*’s children and wives but as ‘children and women of the palace.’ His eyes are ‘stars,’ and his feet are ‘things.’ No one could talk to him unless they bow, cuff their hands over their mouth, and speak through their hands in a low voice.<sup>269</sup> The church authorities sometimes behave like other forms of religious *fons*, leading to high clericalism.

The third context has to do with the troubling clericalism within the Church. A harbinger for justice cannot sit quietly amidst gross social inequality and the suffering of the poor masses facing famine, drought, and disease. After experiencing this weight of suffering, injustice, and deep frustration, Jean-Marc Ela offers “small steps of liberation” and the faith’s impact on marginalized peasants’ lives. In *My Faith as an African*, Ela observes that many African people still have empty granaries, lack of health care, and increasing injustice. Stemming from this assertion, Ela insists that the Church must root the Gospel in the people’s lives. He, therefore, presents the Church community as “the conscience of a conscienceless society.”<sup>270</sup> In contrast to a Church marked by clericalism, the Church should be a Church of the poor.

My collaborators called people into dialogue within such political, cultural, and ecclesial contexts. In such a situation, it is not unusual to observe from the beginning that

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<sup>268</sup> Exodus Tikere Moffor “The Making of Fons Kings: An Insight into the Regalia of a Newly Crowned Cameroon Grassfields Fon” in *IJRMPS*, (Volume 10, Issue 5, September-October 2022), 3.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Paul Nchoji Nkwi and Jean-Pierre Warnier, *Elements for a history of the Western Grassfields*, (Yaoundé: Department of Sociology, University of Yaoundé, 1982), 61.

<sup>270</sup> Jean-Marc Ela, *My Faith as an African* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 51.

there will be a lack of trust. In effect, each preaching collaborator confirmed that it was a timid beginning because participants were very reticent to share their stories. By contrast, the dialogue process, in the words of Leah Schade, says, “Your voice is important, and we are going to figure out how to live together in community and not just impose upon you from the outside and the upside.” There was no imposition in the deliberative dialogue. It was dialogue, indeed. In effect, the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of this dialogical approach for addressing division and fostering unity within a congregation, community, and country.

The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process also encouraged greater congregational engagement and participation. Congregants shared their views and perspectives during the dialogue. Observations indicate that participants from diverse backgrounds, age groups, and points of view felt secure expressing their opinions during the dialogue phase. The intervention demonstrated that the dialogue process positively affected the relationship between the preacher and the congregation. The dialogue promoted a sense of candor and connection between the preacher and the congregation. True enough, in those different contexts of my preaching collaborators, I observed that dialogue allowed the division to be addressed, and steps toward reconciliation were taken. The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process promotes healing and reconciliation, leading to increased empathy and understanding. In effect, participants shared that the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process positively impacted the division within the congregation. Many felt it helped bridge divides and create a more inclusive and caring community.

## Specific Findings

The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method used for our ministerial context was initially developed for the United States political context of the red-blue divide. During my independent study with Leah Schade, I first tested this method in a different cultural, political, and religious context. I then absorbed this material, made it my own, and went further to train others. In a video discussion with Leah Schade, she expressed her gratitude for this move and likened it to “taking a musician’s piece of music to another symphony and having them learn and perform in a concert.”<sup>271</sup>

### *Shift in the Context*

The most significant adjustment I had to make was to take this method from a red-blue divide to a multifaceted context. Cameroon has divisions at many different levels—of tribe, language, and religion. I took the method from a clear-cut red-blue divide to a multi-division perspective. That is the main shift in what I did. The first and most important finding is that the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method, which worked in a red-blue divide, can also work in a multifaceted divide. It is a method that can work in different contexts.

The three preachers successfully conducted the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method in their different work areas. I agree with Professor Schade, who observed, “The whole thing was about trying to find a way for people to literally not kill each other and to be respectful and to be empowered, to have their voices empowered.” I can attest that the method worked. The preachers were able to identify specific problems and call people to round-table discussions. Before, it was the big man or woman standing and talking. In

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<sup>271</sup> Zoom discussion on September 13, 2023.

this process, however, we have been collaborators in preaching—naming a problem, looking at it together, and trying to make everyone’s voice heard. The most outstanding achievement was the capability of creating round-table pulpits, circles where people heard their problems brought into preaching and could react to it by making their voices heard. After the preaching, they could sit in a group and talk about what they were experiencing and propose possible solutions to how this could be done.

From this, I can attest that the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method is a way to preach and teach that can be changed to fit different cultures. This way of presenting a message takes into account how important it is to keep the audience’s attention and get them talking and involved. The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method works well in Western societies, where independence and critical thinking are valued. During the dialogue part, it encourages people of all ages to get involved and talk by asking questions and giving their points of view. In many African and indigenous cultures, communication is based on oral history, stories, and group conversation. This method fits in with these ways of communicating. The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process fits well with these cultural ideals and can help bridge the gap between traditional spirituality and Christian teachings.

The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process can be a way to bring people from different backgrounds together while still respecting their points of view. This way can encourage interfaith and ecumenical dialogues, which can help people of different faiths and religious backgrounds understand each other and work together. What I can advise here after using this method is that to use the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method in different cultural settings, you must be sensitive and flexible and know the audience’s

cultural norms and beliefs. It means understanding how vital conversation and involvement are in identifying different issues concerning the cultural and spiritual needs of the community.

### *Identifying the Different Forms of Division in Communities*

During the deliberative dialogue sessions in different contexts, we identified the various forms of division in the community. Working with his group, Dr. Valery Nyala came up with some points as points of experience of violence in the community. From their points, one can truly affirm that living in a divided context as a marginalized anglophone in a francophone-dominated church community has been a challenging experience for many. The language barrier often accentuates the sense of being on the outskirts, as it limits the ability of Christians to engage in religious activities and connect with fellow worshippers fully. It is disheartening and frustrating to feel excluded from certain aspects of the community due to linguistic differences.

However, this situation has also sparked a resilience in these Christians to preserve their faith and seek ways to overcome these obstacles. It is a reminder of the importance of inclusivity and understanding in any faith community and the need to address issues of marginalization and exclusion. This experience has made many Christians more aware of the struggles faced by marginalized groups in various contexts and strengthened their determination to promote unity and acceptance within the church, as every worshipper, regardless of language, should feel a part of the spiritual journey. The situation in the ministerial context of Fr. Jules David Onana is almost the same.

In a divided context, as seen in the findings of Fr. Jules David, living and preaching forgiveness takes on a profound significance. The loss of loved ones, often at

the hands of those within the same community, has sown the seeds of vengeance and revenge. Suspicion has eroded the bonds of trust among families, transforming neighbors into potential enemies. The political rivalry has further fractured community relationships, intensifying the discord. Within the Christian community, betrayal has become an issue, causing a crisis of faith. Amidst this complex web of bitterness and hatred, the message of forgiveness is a beacon of hope for Christians. It serves as a reminder that healing and unity are possible, even in the face of such adversity. To live as a Christian in this context is to uphold the teachings of love, compassion, and reconciliation, striving to break down the walls of distrust and animosity and working towards a future where forgiveness can lead the way to lasting peace and restoration in the community.

#### *Need for Lay Preaching Collaborators in the Church*

The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method is not only limited to the clergy. As mentioned in Chapter 5, my collaborators comprised two priests and a layperson. The initial challenge was how the layperson would preach in Church. Preaching at Mass or other liturgical services is traditionally reserved in the Catholic Church for ordained clergy, such as priests and deacons, who have received the required instruction and authorization. Preaching the Word of God is among the principal duties of those who have received the sacrament of orders (cc. 762-766). Canon 767 further insists that: “Among the forms of preaching, the homily, which is part of the liturgy itself and is reserved to a priest or deacon, is preeminent.” This canon clearly states that the homily during the liturgy (Mass) is reserved for a priest or deacon. However, Can. 766 states: “Lay persons can be permitted to preach in a church or oratory, if necessity requires it in

certain circumstances or it seems advantageous in particular cases, according to the prescripts of the conference of bishops and without prejudice to can. 767, §1.” For purposes of this project, inviting Dr. Nyala, as a lay person, to preach fits into the need to preach and mediate peace in Cameroon.

Having carried out the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method, I have found a good lay preacher in one of my collaborators. While the priests did so in a pure liturgical setting, he did so with his hebdomadal prayer group known as Our Lady of Perpetual Help Prayer Group. Although the homily is just for clergy, there may be additional occasions for laypeople to preach and teach outside the official liturgical environment. This includes speaking, presenting, and reflecting on many pastoral and educational events within the Church. Evangelization activities such as catechism, religious education, parish mission retreats, and youth ministry are avenues and other service forms that entail spreading the faith through preaching, which involves laypeople.

The Church has always encouraged lay people to collaborate in spreading the message of salvation and to use their gifts, in co-operation with the bishops, to proclaim the gospel and communicate Christian teachings.”<sup>272</sup> On this note, lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, that is, “the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life ... this evangelization ... acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world.”<sup>273</sup> The quest for the laity to be more included in preaching opens up another need for more collaboration with the clergy.

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<sup>272</sup> Cf. Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, (November 21, 1964), 33; Vatican Council II, “*Ad Gentes* (December 7 1965), 21.

<sup>273</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 905.

### *The Quest for More Dialogue Between Clergy and the Laity in the Church*

Going through my collaborators' different preaching topics and sermons revealed that our Church in Cameroon needs more collaboration between the laity and the clergy. It was as if the people were waiting for this opportunity to share their points of view. The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method encourages collaboration and participation, resulting in a more active and involved congregation. The procedure is effective and promotes healing and reconciliation in a divided context. After training my three preaching collaborators on preaching in the divided context using the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method, each chose the topic for the process in his context.

Father Edwin Mbang decided to preach on sibling rivalry and gave this testimony:

In the process of realizing the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon, after preaching the first sermon (the sibling rivalry between Isaac and Jacob), we felt the need to do a second one as during the evaluation we first found timidity but then we had to push participants to go deep within them as a means of them taking responsibility of their contribution in conflict. Thus, a second sermon (sibling rivalry between Jacob and Esau) and an evaluation, as usual, helped us to prepare our deliberative dialogue. The elements of this dialogue influenced our preparation of the communal sermon dialogue. At the end of this exercise, we want to continue with these forms of dialogue in our different groups.

When asked the possible next steps, the dialogue partners of Father Edwin requested more dialogue in the parish. These parishioners saw “the need for creating and strengthening structures of dialogue in the parish such as the parish pastoral council, organizing a parish week of dialogue, encourages dialogue in our homes.” They insisted: “We see this situation as the working of the Holy Spirit in that realities on the timidity experienced in the parish came out and solutions too were proposed, and we saw satisfaction in the faces of participants.” This quest for more dialogue led the group to request another dialogue after the communal invitation to dialogue. This is unusual to



organize another deliberative dialogue when the communal invitation to dialogue sermon has been preached. This time, people expressed the need for dialogue. On this note, I am also quoting one testimony from the minutes of the discussions (Appendix):

During our discussion, we noticed it was not just about the story, as we all have had conflicts in our homes and church as a home. In this light, Mr Langa (not his real name) opened up to share a conflict with his parish priest in which the parish priest had misinformation about him and then blamed and condemned him without hearing from him. So he (Langa) took the matter to a third party who advised the parish priest to dialogue with him, which he did, and the truth came out, which led to the resolution of the matter, and the parish priest was humble to apologize for acting without verification of the information he had received.

### Recommendations

Several recommendations follow from the findings in the thesis project.

#### *Foster Collaboration between Priests and Laypeople in the Church*

First, there is a need to encourage collaboration between priests and laypeople in the Church. The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method has revealed a need for dialogue between priests and lay persons in the Catholic Church in Cameroon. All the collaborators underlined this. Many Church documents emphasize the role of the laity in the Church and their call to active participation. Pope Paul VI insisted that:

They exercise the apostolate in fact by their activity directed to the evangelization and sanctification of men and to the penetrating and perfecting of the temporal order through the spirit of the Gospel. In this way, their temporal activity openly bears witness to Christ and promotes the salvation of men. Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardor of the spirit of Christ<sup>274</sup>

Dialogue between priests and laypeople can facilitate collaboration in pastoral work. Laypeople often have unique insights into the needs and challenges of their

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<sup>274</sup> Pope Paul VI, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, (November 18, 1965), 2.

communities. Encouraging dialogue empowers laypeople to take on leadership roles within the Church. Lay leaders can contribute their talents, skills, and perspectives to various ministries, enhancing the Church's ability to serve its communities effectively. On this note, Pope Francis in "*Evangelii Gaudium*" emphasizes the need for a "pastoral and missionary conversion" in the Church. He makes a clarion call for dialogue and collaboration between priests and laypeople to revitalize the Church's mission:

Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God. The minority – ordained ministers – are at their service. There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church. We can count on many lay persons, although still not nearly enough, who have a deeply-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of the faith. At the same time, a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places. In some cases, it is because lay persons have not been given the formation needed to take on important responsibilities. In others, it is because in their particular Churches room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making. Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge.<sup>275</sup>

Encouraging dialogue and collaboration with laypeople, including catechists and educators, can lead to more effective and culturally sensitive teaching methods and nurturing faith. It reinforces the sense that the Church is a faith community where all members are valued and have a role to play. With this, the Church is ready to address contemporary issues such as migration, poverty, healthcare, and environmental concerns. Dialogue allows for a collective response to these challenges. After deliberative dialogue with the people of Mbot, Father David and his group proposed that there should be

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<sup>275</sup> Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, (November 24, 2013), 102.

“formation of the laity on deliberative dialogue and more responsibilities entrusted to them, this entails organizing formation sessions on Church doctrine, and a need for intercultural dialogue on hot topics.” Dr. Nyala and his group proposed more value and respect to the laity and insisted on “training some of our lay leaders to facilitate deliberative dialogue.” In the churches under my jurisdiction as Superior, I will highly recommend to the pastors that the lay people be more involved in our local church.

*Revisit Ecclesia in Africa and Africae Munus*

Another recommendation is to encourage the Church of Cameroon to revisit *Ecclesia in Africa* and *Africae Munus*. I will, therefore, make myself available to give conferences and workshops on these two documents. The African Synod of Bishops has produced two important documents highlighting the specific challenges and opportunities for the Church in Africa. The Catholic Church in Cameroon has special privileges because these documents historically have something to do with the visit of the pontiffs to Cameroon. Pope John Paul II promulgated *Ecclesia in Africa* in 1995 in the Our Lady of Victory Cathedral in Yaoundé. The *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Second Synod of African Bishops was given in Yaoundé on March 19, 2011. This synod led to the promulgation of *Africae Munus*. This document has been presented in Chapter Two as a bedrock for the Church to mediate justice, peace, and reconciliation. I recommend revisiting these documents, as they will provide both laity and clergy with information on addressing the unique pastoral needs for reconciliation in the continent. The Church in Cameroon will be able to create spaces for open and respectful discussions, organize pastoral councils that include lay representatives, and provide training on pastoral communication and collaboration. By recognizing the unique contributions of priests and

laypeople and promoting collaboration, the Catholic Church in Cameroon can better fulfill its mission of serving its communities' spiritual and social needs.

*Track the Three Communities Where My Collaborators Preached*

In a divided context in Cameroon, where tensions and conflicts have taken root, the Church can play a pivotal role in fostering peace, reconciliation, and social cohesion. Tracking the three communities where my collaborators preached, I noted they recommended a multifaceted approach.

Firstly, my collaborators recommended the return to Small Christian Communities to facilitate peace from the roots and encourage Christians to participate in church group activities. This initiative will help to address divisions and nurture peace at its foundation. The Church needs to revive and strengthen Small Christian Communities. Small Christian Communities can serve as the building blocks of unity and understanding within local congregations. They recommend that pastors actively engage with Small Christian Communities, encouraging open dialogue, fostering trust, and nurturing a shared identity among members. This approach allows peace to take root at the community level, ensuring lasting transformation.

Secondly, they recommended serious emphasis on forgiveness through Church doctrine. A central preaching theme in a divided context should be forgiveness, deeply rooted in church doctrine. Pastors and spiritual leaders should emphasize forgiveness as a fundamental principle, weaving it into sermons, teachings, and community discussions. This emphasis on forgiveness can be a powerful tool in helping individuals let go of past grievances, promoting healing, and paving the way for reconciliation.

Thirdly, they vied to create traditional dance clubs and football teams for socialization in local communities. In the pursuit of unity and reconciliation, the Church can create opportunities for socialization through traditional dancing clubs and football teams. These cultural and recreational activities can bridge divides and foster relationships between congregants of different backgrounds. My collaborators recommend that individuals form connections beyond their differences by participating in shared interests, promoting mutual understanding and harmony within the community. After visiting the parish where Father Jules David works, I attest that this is an excellent proposal. The parish, divided into many outstations across different villages, has found traditional dancing and football encounters as focal points for socialization.

Fourthly, they saw the need to work closely with the Diocesan Commission for Justice and Peace to promote social justice initiatives and provide training in conflict resolution skills for both leaders and members. Collaboration with the Diocesan Commission for Justice and Peace is vital for addressing more significant conflicts and social issues. My collaborators recommend that the Church actively engage with this organization to access resources, expertise, and guidance on conflict resolution and reconciliation. Joint efforts can amplify the impact of peace initiatives, enabling the Church to address conflicts more effectively.

Fifthly, they recommend raising awareness and engaging the community in conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts. The Church should organize conferences, seminars, and workshops on Conflicts and Reconciliation with experts. My collaborators insist that these events provide a platform for discussing conflicts, sharing experiences, and learning from experts. The Church can foster a culture of reconciliation and active

participation in peacebuilding by involving the congregation and the broader community in these discussions.

My collaborators developed these recommendations from the three communities they worked with. I attest that when integrated into the preaching and community engagement strategies of the Church, it can significantly contribute to healing divisions and promoting peace and reconciliation within the context of Cameroon. By returning to the roots of SCCs, emphasizing forgiveness, facilitating socialization, collaborating with relevant organizations, and organizing events for conflict resolution and reconciliation, the Church can be a powerful force for positive change in the lives of its congregants and the broader society.

I propose that the collaborators follow up with those who did the dialogue so that they, in turn, conduct it with focus groups in their parishes and empower more people to use the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method. After one year, I recommend conducting another Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Process in these communities to see if these points were implemented. I will also organize a follow-up training program with them to see if these recommendations worked in their contexts.

#### *Deliberative Dialogue as a Means for Mediating Peace in Cameroon*

The Church in Cameroon, whether Catholic or Protestant, has the power of convening. The Church in Cameroon (especially the Catholic Church) can help resolve conflicts and unite people by using different ways to mediate peace. People recognize the power of the Church. That is why when Cameroon's crisis reached its peak, the

International Crises Group threw back the task to the Catholic Church to mediate peace.

They identified that:

Fighting is spreading between security forces and militants from Cameroon’s English-speaking minority. The government largely rejects Anglophone grievances, while armed militants appear inclined to continue fighting. The Catholic Church, representing nearly a third of Cameroonians, could be an arbitrator, but its clergy have taken divergent positions on the crisis.<sup>276</sup>

Why does it matter for the Catholic Church? The International Crises Group warned in 2018 that few prospective peacemakers besides the Catholic clergy exist. Therefore, “If no one fills that role, the separatist sentiment already voiced by many Anglophones will continue to grow, fuelling further violence and exacerbating the ongoing insurgency in the Anglophone regions, with elections in late 2018 a flashpoint.”<sup>277</sup> To this, they asked a significant question: What should be done? At this stage, they proposed that the Catholic Church “should bridge its divides and state its impartiality on the thorniest question facing Anglophone regions—federalism versus decentralization. A clergy able to project a position of neutrality could work with other trusted actors to mediate between Anglophone leaders and the state, and stem a dangerous and growing crisis.”<sup>278</sup> The International Crises Group vies for a situation where the Catholic Church “could continue working together with other religious institutions, such as the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, which in January 2017 stated

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<sup>276</sup> International Crisis Group, “Cameroon’s Anglophone, Crisis: How the Catholic Church, Can Promote Dialogue, Crisis Group Africa”, in *Briefing N°138*, (Nairobi/Brussels, 26 April 2018), 1.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibidem*.

its readiness to mediate, and the Cameroon Baptist Convention, as well as credible civil society associations and traditional rulers.”<sup>279</sup>

How can the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method help the Church to mediate peace in Cameroon? The Church can act as a neutral mediator to help parties in disagreement talk to each other and agree. Our thesis intervention has demonstrated that the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method is a specific approach to peacebuilding and conflict resolution that has worked in different contexts and has been used by some religious leaders, including the Church. The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method offers an essential tool for the Church in Cameroon to mediate peace by engaging stakeholders in meaningful dialogue, which promotes understanding and reconciliation.

The Catholic Church in Cameroon can champion this process by delivering a sermon on a peace-related topic, followed by a dialogue session in which congregants or participants discuss the sermon’s themes and implications, concluding with a second sermon reflecting on the dialogue and providing further guidance.

We can train facilitators of the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method through the Justice and Peace Commission of the Episcopal Conference of Cameroon (CENC) and the Peace office of the Presbyterian Church. The sermon as a powerful weapon to educate Cameroonians about the importance of peace, the consequences of violence, and the ethical and moral imperatives of pursuing peace. Sermons can emphasize the importance of empathy, forgiveness, and understanding as essential components of reconciliation. Dialogue sessions can provide opportunities for individuals and communities to discuss past grievances and explore paths to reconciliation.

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<sup>279</sup> *Ibidem.*



Having organized this method with three preachers, I propose offering workshops with the Episcopal Conference of Cameroon, where we shall train facilitators on the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method. When effectively implemented by the Church in Cameroon, I suggest that the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method can be a powerful tool for peace mediation by engaging congregants and communities in meaningful discussions, fostering empathy, promoting nonviolent communication, and mobilizing collective action toward peace and reconciliation.

#### Learning and Future opportunities

I would have loved to delve into quantitative data with the participants at the deliberative dialogue session organized by my preaching collaborators. However, the surveys were not given immediately after the dialogues. I tried sending the surveys later and have yet to receive responses. I have learned to get these surveys immediately after the experience on the day the dialogue happens before people leave the room to increase responses. My data collection could have been more robust. My data comes from the leaders and not from the participants in the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process. Even when we tried to do the survey online, out of the thirty-nine participants, only six responded. Seeing that there was not enough participation, we had to forego a quantitative analysis of the process.

I gained more knowledge about the Protestant world. I was formed in a seminary from the age of ten and was closed up in the Roman Catholic world. This thesis project has widened my knowledge of the Christian world. I have learned from a Lutheran minister. I interviewed the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon and understood that mediating peace is not limited to the Catholic Church. The Presbyterian

Church, through its peace office and the moderator's leadership, has kept mediating peace in Cameroon, working at the forefront in the local communities, training resource persons, and advocating for peace. In an interview, the moderator expressed how, in his bid for peace mediation, he found himself between the hammer and the nail, both from the government and separatist fighters. Chapter Four of this thesis project mentioned that I also interviewed Rev. Foster Frimpong, a pastor from the U.S. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination.

After evaluating the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process, one can confirm that this thesis project has touched many lives and has borne much fruit. At this juncture, this thesis project serves as *logoi spermatikos* that can open the way for further research and consideration. Cameroon remains under conflict at various levels. Boko Haram remains active in the Far North, instability prevails along the eastern border with the Central African Republic, and popular discontent continues to roil large cities; the insurgency in Anglophone areas and the clumsy government response is now the main threat to the country's stability. A negotiated solution is vital. The Catholic Church, if it can resolve or keep under wraps its internal divisions and project neutrality, could be well placed to help bring it about. International actors should support Church initiatives and encourage greater unity among the clergy. But the onus is also on the Church itself to display greater coherence. The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method is a promising new teaching method that can help Cameroonians respectfully discuss complex social problems. However, a few steps must be taken for the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method to be widely used in Cameroon.

I would love to train more preachers on the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method since it requires a high level of skill and training on the preacher's part. It is essential to provide more training opportunities for preachers.<sup>280</sup> I will also develop resources and conduct the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process in French and pidgin English. At the moment, you can only get it in English. For more people in Cameroon to be able to use this method, it is essential to make tools in the local languages.

My research taught me how to partner with local churches and organizations. I will partner with the Presbyterian Church of Cameroon, primarily through their Peace Office, and offer training to them. The Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method works best when it is implemented with the help of local churches and groups. Preachers and congregations that want to use this method can get help and tools from these groups. On this note, I will introduce them to *Preaching in the Purple Zone* by Leah Schade. In addition, I am resolved to promote the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method to Church leaders in different denominations that give me access. I would love to inform Church leaders and denominations of the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method and its potential benefits, especially in mediating peace in Cameroon. To make the method accessible to a broader audience in Cameroon. I would love to develop resources for more contextual training in local languages in Cameroon. I will also develop online training resources. As I progress in these steps, I will develop a network of the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon practitioners in Cameroon. This network will provide support and resources for preachers and congregations.

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<sup>280</sup> Cf. Leah D. Schade, "Preaching Across the Political Red-Blue Divide: Using the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method in the Purple Zone." In *Journal of Lutheran Ethics* 19, no. 5 (2019): 1-12.

Finally, I would love to publish this thesis project's findings as a book, a series of articles, or a digital online course. If developed into a book, I would love to contextualize it to the African situation and use culturally suitable examples for the African audience. In this book, I will strongly propose the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process to mediate peace and reconciliation in our divided context. I would broaden the meaning of reconciliation and explore existing traditional ways of reconciliation that fit our context. I will explore the oral tradition and the storytelling heritage to make people dialogue. Prof. Schade suggested we co-author some articles and a possible book about the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon method. I welcome this proposal and I will be glad to be part of it.

### Conclusion

Writing this thesis project has been a challenging task. However, I am so fulfilled and satisfied. I wrote it from the bottom of my heart. After being a victim of a kidnapping in my context, I understand that preachers often find themselves between the hammer and the nail and would shy away from prophetic preaching. It is on this note that after identifying the cultural and political divisions inherent in the history of Cameroon, I then proceeded to delve into the theology of reconciliation in Chapter Two. I identified Cameroon, which is my context, as a land needing reconciliation, justice, and peace. Exploring the doctrine of nonviolence in Chapter Three, I showed how great nonviolence activists like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr mediated peace from the public. Based on what I learned, I equipped preachers to preach in a divided context in my ministerial intervention. I drilled them on the basic tenets of the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process and guided them as they made the intervention in their various contexts.

Finally, preaching peace in a culturally and politically divided Cameroon might be difficult, but it is necessary. Chapter Two of this thesis encouraged the church to preach the biblical and theological basis of reconciliation to foster peace and reconciliation. As recommended in Chapter Three, teachers are encouraged to address the core causes of conflict and use the pulpit to promote discussion and understanding. Preachers can play an important role in promoting peace and reconciliation in their communities using the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon technique.

The role of the Church in negotiating peace is especially essential in Cameroon, a culturally and politically divided country. The Church can assist in bridging gaps between different groups and creating a more peaceful and just society for all Cameroonians. Furthermore, our collective responsibility is to work to heal the wounds of separation and strife. The Church can offer victims of violence and persecution counseling and assistance and strive to unite various groups through the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon process. I remain fulfilled and thankful to God for this thesis project.

## Appendix A

### One-Day Workshop on Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method<sup>281</sup>

#### I. Opening Prayers by Father Edwin (2 minutes)

#### II. Self-introduction

#### III. Welcome speech

Welcome dear confreres to this one-day workshop on the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method. Thank you once again for accepting to be part of this work. I am glad you have had the time to read *Preaching in the Purple Zone*. I have no doubt that you found it a resourceful material not only for today, but for your entire ministry. Today, I will give you an interesting and important drill on the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method. Your contributions and participation are particularly important to helping us learn from each other. So, feel free to express yourself, be open and transparent if you will want to share. I will, however, ask that, for the sake of our time, we would be brief in our discussions. I still want to reassure you that, though I am your superior, this process will cause no harm or prejudice in your ministry as you can find in the confidential statement below.

#### IV. 30 Minutes Lecture on Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Method

#### V. Discussions and Questions for 30 Minutes

#### VI. Drill on Deliberative Dialogue after preaching

##### A. Sample Letter of invitation for Deliberative Dialogue

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

What is the role of the Church when faced with controversial issues? How can people of faith address the topic of **Collaboration in a divided context**? Kindly join us so that we have a dialogue after Mass on Sunday, \_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_. Join us for a nonpartisan deliberative dialogue on collaboration to help our Church discuss how we can faithfully engage this issue in the midst of a divided political culture. Our goal is to have a wide range of people from different ages, backgrounds, experiences, and political standpoints in this process, so we hope you will attend to share in the dialogue. With the

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<sup>281</sup> Based on Schade, *Preaching in the Purple Zone* Chapters 4-8.

guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can discern how God is at work amid this complex issue, identify our common values, and suggest ways we can move forward together in faith.

## **B. Date and Place of Deliberative Dialogue**

**C. Roles within Deliberative Dialogue:** Recorder, Timekeeper, Facilitator

## **D. Ground rules for deliberation tomorrow**

As *Difficult Conversations* author Katie Day explains, “Embarking on such a process needs to take place in the context of covenant—one that reflects commitments to God and the community as well as the individuals within it. Participants need to know that there is a higher purpose to these conversations and that they are in this struggle together.”

These typically include the following:

1. Focus on the options.
2. All options should be considered fairly.
3. No one or two individuals dominate.
4. Maintain an open and respectful atmosphere.
5. Everyone is encouraged to participate.
6. Listen to each other.<sup>282</sup>

## **E. Prayer before Deliberative Dialogue**

God of Wisdom, you have engaged your people in holy conversations in Scripture, throughout the Church’s history, and in our congregation. Send your Holy Spirit among us that we may listen and speak with respect as we honor the deeply held values and convictions that come from our faith and experiences. Engage our minds with clarity and curiosity, drawing from among us the insights that help us see your will for our dialogue, our Church, our community, and our world. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

## **F. STAGES IN DELIBERATIVE DIALOGUE**

### **1. Introducing the Topic and What’s at Stake**

How can we, as a church community address the issue of division in our community, parish, in our town, and our country

“What’s at stake for you regarding this issue?”

In what ways has this issue affected you personally or someone close to you?”

In other words, what’s your “skin in the game”?

### **2. Analyzing the Issue, Weighing the Options**

Once everyone has had a chance to share why the issue matters, the next stage is deliberating about the three approaches to the topic. Allot equal time for each of the options. At the top of each large sheet of paper, write the title of the approach and put “Pros” and “Cons” in two columns underneath. Give equal time to consider the consequences for each option’s good and ill.

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<sup>282</sup> Schade, *Preaching in the Purple Zone*. 107.

## **The Church's Role in a Divided Society**<sup>283</sup>

What should the Church do to help congregants navigate Cameroon's current state of political discourse?

What would it take to invite into dialogue our fellow church members who hold not just a variety of political perspectives but different ideas on how to engage with these perspectives?

How do we bring our faith and morality to bear without widening the gap between people who hold different political views?

### **option 1: the Church as a refuge**

"Churches should focus more on spirituality and faith instead of social issues."

"Bringing politics into the church could hinder fellowship and cause divisions."

"We should protect the church from being misguided or hijacked by outside interests."

### **option 2: the Church as a mediator**

"The church should engage differences with hospitality."

"The church should model listening and facilitate conversation across differences."

"The church should be a ministry of reconciliation."

"The Church has a responsibility to listen & care, to build bridges of new understanding, trust, and relationship with individuals and communities. "

### **option 3: the Church as a prophetic voice**

"We should express our faith through ACTION."

"The church should be an agent of change for the betterment of society."

"The church should speak out on issues about which scripture conveys timeless truths."

## **3. Reflecting on Recurring Themes, Shared Values, and Common Ground**

After analyzing all three options, the next stage is reflecting on the conversation as a whole in which the group looks at the three sheets of paper with the pros and cons listed under each option. The facilitator asks: "What are some common themes that kept coming up throughout our discussion? And what commonly held values do you see emerging from the three options?" As people identify those themes and values, the recorder writes them on another sheet of paper. While the group may not agree on achieving or enacting those values, the goal is to name the points of common ground.

## **4. Suggesting and Discussing Next Steps**

The final stage of the deliberative dialogue is to consider possible action steps. The facilitator asks, "Based on our shared values and knowing that we have a wide spectrum of experiences, political affiliations, and personal convictions, what are two or three things that might be next steps for us in continuing to address this issue?" This is a time for brainstorming, so as people make suggestions, do not critique, judge, or dismiss any ideas. The recorder simply writes the suggestions on the final sheet labeled "Next Steps."

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<sup>283</sup> <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/sites.baylor.edu/dist/0/208/files/2019/10/New-Churchs-Role-Moderators-Guide.pdf>.



**TIP:** I suggest that after a list of next steps has been compiled, the facilitator should ask the group to identify the three that seem to have the most energy or appear to be the most doable in the short term. While it's not necessary, the pastor may also ask if any individuals would like to follow through with any suggestions and make plans to put the steps into action.

## **5. Concluding the Deliberative Dialogue**

As the session draws close, it's a good idea to do a final check-in to ask how people feel about the process. What's their takeaway? What did they learn? What surprised them? What's one word they would use to describe how they feel now that the session is ending? This helps to provide closure and gives the facilitator immediate feedback on the process. The facilitator then hands out the evaluation forms (Appendix C) for people to fill out before leaving. The forum concludes with prayer, and the facilitator thanks everyone for attending.

At the end of the deliberative dialogue, then, there should be at least six sheets of paper up on the walls. Before taking down the sheets of paper and recycling them, be sure to take photos of them to share with group members and others who could not attend the dialogue but may be interested in the results. These sheets contain the group's wisdom, a record of the process and will serve to jog your memory when it comes time to prepare the follow-up sermon, the Communal Prophetic Proclamation.

### **Closing Hymn: *Spirit of God in the clear running water, led by Valery***

Spirit of God in the clear running water  
Blowing to greatness the trees on the hill.  
Spirit of God in the finger of morning:  
Fill the earth, bring it to birth,  
And blow where you will.

*Blow, blow, blow till I be  
But the breath of the Spirit blowing in me.*

### **Closing Prayer: By Fr David**

**Benediction:** May God Almighty Bless You, The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen

## **Appendix B**

### **Questions for Facilitating Deliberative Dialogue**

Could you share a story about why you came to stay in this city?

What do you think of attending the same Church with people from different cultures?

Do the members of the Church council accept your proposals?

How may your ideas affect other people?

Whom should we include in this dialogue that is not already represented?

Are you ready to work together with someone who disagrees with your opinion?

What is your stand about the current sociopolitical situation in the country? Who to blame?

## Appendix C

### Post Deliberative Dialogue Survey

Name :

Gender :

Responsibility in the Church:

Please rate the following questions about Deliberative dialogue on a scale from 1 through 5, with 5 being “completely satisfied” and 1 being “completely dissatisfied.”

The stories others shared affected you personally and positively.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

The discussion was relatively calm and without tension.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

There were common themes and shared values in the stories and scripture images.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

The discussion portrayed the workings of the Holy Spirit in the group.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

The chosen texts from the scriptures depicted our current political situation.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

The sermons and the follow-up sermons portrayed God at work in our lives.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I am resolved to be the unifying factor in my divided country.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I will practice Deliberative Dialogue more often.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Your overall satisfaction after the three consecutive Sundays

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Your overall assessment of the preacher

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

## Appendix D

### Informed Consent Statement for the Research Assistant

**To maintain confidentiality, I agree to:**

1. Keep all research information that is shared with me (e.g., flash drives, notes, transcripts, data, etc.) confidential by not discussing or sharing this information verbally or in any format with anyone other than the principal investigator of this study;
2. Ensure the security of research information while it is in my possession. This may include:
  - Keeping all documents or data related to the research study on a password protected computer with password-protected files;
  - Closing any programs, documents, or data files related to the research study when away from the computer;
  - Keeping any printed documents or data related to the research study in a secure location such as a locked filing cabinet;
  - Permanently deleting any digital communication containing documents or data related to the research study after completion of the study.
3. Not make copies of documents or data related to the research study unless specifically instructed to do so by the principal investigator;
4. Give all research information/data and research participant information/data back to the principal investigator upon completion of my duties as a research assistant;
5. After discussing it with the principal investigator, erase or destroy all research information that cannot be returned to the principal investigator upon completion of my duties as a research assistant.

**By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have reviewed, understand, and agree to adhere to the expectations for a research assistant described above. I agree to maintain confidentiality while performing my duties as a research assistant and recognize that failure to comply with these expectations may result in disciplinary action.**

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Signature of Research Assistant

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Date

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Print Name

## Appendix E

### Informed Consent and Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal for Claretian Priests and Deacons

Dear Rev \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a student at Aquinas Institute of Theology, and I am requesting your participation in my intervention. I am writing my thesis on the topic: “Preaching Peace in A Culturally and Politically Divided Context: Church Mediating Peace in Cameroon.”

1. I will like to train you in the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Process in order to facilitate your preaching in the Divided Zone of Cameroon.
2. You will be required to preach sermons in the church where you work and facilitate a deliberative dialogue session with some of your parishioners who are willing to participate.
3. I will also request that you hand me copies of the sermons you are to preach and if possible, the videos of the sermons and the audio recording of the deliberative dialogue sessions. These will serve as materials to help me evaluate the process and analyze the data for my research work.
4. I will provide you with the necessary materials and coaching during this period.
5. As you are working with parishioners, you are to assure them of the confidentiality of your intervention and get their consent to share anything with me.
6. I understand that I am your Major Superior and I have immediate authority over you as per the vows you have made. However, I want to assure you that your participation in this my research work will cause no prejudice to your vocation and will not endanger you in any way.
7. Your decision to take part in this research study is entirely voluntary.
8. You may refuse to take part in or you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are normally entitled.

**By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have reviewed, understand, and agree to adhere to the expectations described above. I agree to maintain confidentiality while performing my duties and recognize that failure to comply with these expectations may result in disciplinary action.**

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Signature of Priest/Deacon

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Date

## Appendix F

### Sample Consent Form for Interviews<sup>284</sup>

**Introduction:** My name is Jude Thaddeus Langeh, and I am a Doctorate student at Aquinas Institute of Theology writing my Thesis on *Preaching Peace in a Divided Context*. My telephone number is: +237675390021. My research supervisor is Fr. Greg Heille of Aquinas Institute of Theology. You may contact either of us at any time if you have questions about this study.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to study the practice of \_\_\_\_\_ at (name of congregation or agency). I am trying to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_.

**Procedure:** If you consent, you will be asked several questions in an oral interview that will take place (where). I will make an audiotape recording of the interview.

**Time required:** The interview will take approximately 1–2 hours of your time.

**Voluntary participation:** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may still refuse to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. You may also withdraw from the study at any time.

**Risks:** There are no known risks associated with this interview. However, it is possible that you might feel distress in the course of the conversation. If this happens, please inform me promptly.

**Benefits:** While there is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible that you will enjoy sharing your answers to these questions or that you will find the conversation meaningful. This study is intended to benefit the congregation (or hospital, school, etc.) by enlivening our discourse on the theology and practice of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Confidentiality/Anonymity:** Your name will be kept confidential in all of the reporting and/or writing related to this study. I will be the only person present for the interview and the only person who listens to the tapes. When I write the ethnography, I will use pseudonyms—made up names—for all participants, unless you specify in writing that you wish to be identified by name. If you wish to choose your own pseudonym for the study, please indicate the first name you would like me to use for you here: \_\_\_\_\_.

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<sup>284</sup> Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), 235-237.

**Sharing the results:** I plan to construct an ethnography—a written account of what I learn—based on these interviews together with my reading and historical research. This ethnography will be submitted to my professor (or research supervisor) at the end of the term. I also plan to share what I learn from this study with the congregation (hospital or ecclesiastical board). Portions of the ethnography may be printed and made available to the members.

**Publication:** There is the possibility that I will publish this study or refer to it in published writing in the future. In this event, I will continue to use pseudonyms (as described above) and I may alter some identifying details in order to further protect your anonymity.

**Before you sign:** By signing below, you are agreeing to an audiotaped interview for this research study. Be sure that any questions you may have are answered to your satisfaction. If you agree to participate in this study, a copy of this document will be given to you.

Participant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix G

### Preaching Response Questionnaire<sup>285</sup>

**Instructions:** Please read each statement carefully and respond by circling the response which describes your personal reaction to this statement. Please be completely open and honest in your responses to make the information useful for the speaker's preparation of sermons.

**Name of Preacher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Listener:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sermon Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sermon Text:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. Did the sermon have an organized structure that you could notice? (Please circle your choice.)

- a. No evident organization of structure (loose, informal collection of thoughts and points)
- b. Occasional evidences of organized structure (on occasion, a progression of points could be followed)
- c. Clearly evident organization of structure (structure obvious in evident progression of points)

2. How would you describe your involvement (participation) in arriving at the conclusion of this sermon?

- a. The conclusion was already made for me.
- b. I joined in forming the conclusion.
- c. No conclusion was offered, so I made my own.

3. This sermon has a clear central idea (main point) which I could sense. (Please circle your choice.)

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

4. I could easily follow the organization of this sermon.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 239-241.

5. The speaker caught my attention by appealing to varied types of mental imagery and thought provoking illustrations.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

6. The speaker effectively held my attention.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

7. This sermon was interesting and easy to listen to.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

8. I felt the speaker properly explained and applied the biblical message.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

9. I felt I knew exactly what was expected of me through this sermon.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

10. In my judgment the speaker did not prove his point in this sermon.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

11. What is your impression of the speaker's opening remarks?

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	-----------	----------	-------------------

12. To what degree did you find the speaker's line of thought clear?

Vivid	Clear-Cut	Intelligible	Confusing	Unintelligible
-------	-----------	--------------	-----------	----------------

13. The logic of this sermon was:

Indisputable	Convincing	Acceptable	Doubtful	Fallacious
--------------	------------	------------	----------	------------

14. In my judgment, the speaker's concluding remarks in this sermon were:

Impressive	Effective	Relevant	Weak	Distracting
------------	-----------	----------	------	-------------

15. How would you rank this sermon in value to you?

Important	Worthwhile	Medium	Unimportant	Worthless
-----------	------------	--------	-------------	-----------

Circle the number that most nearly indicates the relative effectiveness of yourself as a listener to this sermon.

Attentive	1	2	3	4	5	Inattentive
Active	1	2	3	4	5	Passive
Sharp	1	2	3	4	5	Dull
Effective	1	2	3	4	5	Ineffective
Valuable	1	2	3	4	5	Worthless
Fast	1	2	3	4	5	Slow
Clear	1	2	3	4	5	Hazy

Stale	1	2	3	4	5	Fresh
Good	1	2	3	4	5	Bad
Abstract	1	2	3	4	5	Concrete
Dead	1	2	3	4	5	Alive

## Appendix H

### Congregational Sermon Evaluation Form<sup>286</sup>

The following evaluation is an open-ended questionnaire used as a peer-evaluation tool.

**Name of Preacher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Listener:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sermon Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sermon Text:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What was the objective of this sermon? Was the objective met?
2. How was the biblical text employed in this sermon? (Was it confronted, avoided, distorted, transcended?)
3. Did the sermon address contemporary needs?
4. Did the sermon move smoothly from biblical text to the needs of people in today's world?
5. How was the liturgical occasion addressed? (Was it acknowledged, amplified, distorted, ignored, transcended?)
6. How did the text and liturgical occasion relate?
7. What did the preacher expect from you?
8. Outline the sermon's structure (plot the sermon's moves):
9. The strongest aspect of this sermon was?

Rate the following

1 = excellent; 2 = good; 3 = fair; 4 = needs attention; 5 = poor

Posture	Style	Voice
Language	Eye Contact	Force
Gestures	Introduction	Rate

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<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 239-244.

Illustrations  
Transitions  
Structure

Emotion  
Logic  
Conclusion

Pitch  
Articulation

Suggestions and other Comments:

## Appendix I

### WORKSHEET FOR USING THE DIALOGICAL LENS<sup>287</sup>

**Text:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### SIX STEPS FOR USING THE DIALOGICAL LENS

<b>1. Point out the dialogical aspects of the passage.</b>	
<p>In broad terms, describe how this passage of the Bible is an instance of conversation, dialogue, or some other kind of interchange.</p> <p>A. Presumed author, and intended audience?</p> <p>B. Social, cultural, and political forces either in the background or directly present in the passage?</p> <p>C. Other books or authors in the Bible implicitly in conversation with this text or author?</p> <p>D. Characters? Who speaks? Who is in the background? Who is in the scene but silent?</p>	
<b>2. Determine what's at stake.</b>	
<p>A. Presenting issue? What does each of them want?</p> <p>B. Fears or concerns of the author, the audience, or the characters? What are they afraid of losing? What or who is threatening to them?</p> <p>C. Overt or underlying tensions or conflicts?</p>	
<b>3. Identify the values.</b>	
<p>A. What is important to author/audience/characters? What do they cherish and hold dear?</p> <p>B. What is their "best self" that could emerge?</p> <p>C. Where do values overlap, points of commonality? What desires, fears, and values do the characters</p>	

<sup>287</sup> Leah D Schade, *Preaching in the Purple Zone: Ministry in the Red-Blue Divide*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 66-67.

<p>or figures share?</p> <p>D. Where are there gaps? What are the things the dialogue partners are unlikely to agree upon?</p>	
<p><b>4. Explain how God, Jesus, and/or the Holy Spirit is active.</b></p>	
<p>A. What is God doing in the midst of this interchange?</p> <p>B. Is God's action explicit, implicit, or apparently absent?</p> <p>C. How is the larger community wrestling with or expressing their faith in God?</p>	
<p><b>5. Recognize what the dialogue is teaching us.</b></p>	
<p>A. What is this exchange, dialogue, or conversation teaching us about what it means to be church in the midst of contentious public issues?</p> <p>B. What can we learn about being faithful people who engage the conflicts and sin of the world, while maintaining the commitment to grace, hope, and love?</p> <p>C. What can we determine about who God is, what God does, and what God intends for us based on this interchange and dialogue in the passage?</p>	
<p><b>6. Suggest possible next steps.</b></p>	
<p>A. Next steps we might take based on what this biblical passage models for us?</p> <p>B. Public concerns God is inviting us to engage? Are we being invited into dialogue with each other, with this passage, and with God about specific justice issues?</p> <p>C. Are we learning what <i>not</i> to do based on what we see in this text?</p> <p>D. Common values we share that can be the basis for our response to a societal matter?</p> <p>E. What kind of church shall we be, knowing what the Bible models for us, and knowing what challenges our community is facing?</p>	

## Appendix J

### Questions for Reflecting on the Deliberative Dialogue<sup>288</sup>

#### *General Information about the Session*

1. How many people attended?
2. How many men/women/people of other genders were present?
3. What was the age range of the participants? How many youth, young adults, middle-aged adults, and retirees were present?
4. What was the socioeconomic range of the participants?
5. What was the racial/ethnic spectrum of the group?
6. What do you guess to be the political affiliations of the participants? What percentage were conservative, moderate, progressive, or a mixture?

#### *Content of Deliberative Dialogue Forum*

7. In the opening section, when people shared how this issue affected them personally, what stories stood out to you?
8. How would you characterize the discussion? Was it relatively calm or intense? Were there moments of tension? If so, what were the points of contention?
9. After the group deliberated about the three options, what common themes and shared values did they identify? What passages, stories, or images from scripture align with these themes and values?
10. What ideas were suggested in the “next steps” section? Which ones seemed to generate the most energy? In what way might these ideas be the workings of the Holy Spirit within the group and/or the congregation?
11. Were there any “a-ha” moments of sharing within the group that shifted perspectives?
12. How did you feel when the forum was finished? What feedback did you receive from participants after it was over?
13. What did you learn about this group and/or the congregation from this deliberative dialogue?
14. What did you learn about yourself in this process?

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<sup>288</sup> Schade, 122.



## Appendix K

### “Cheat Sheet” Questions for Facilitating Deliberative Dialogue<sup>289</sup>

Generally, avoid questions that lead to yes-or-no answers. Frame open-ended questions.

- Could you share a story to illustrate that point?
- I understand you do not like that position, but what do you think people who favor it deeply care about?
- How would someone make a case against what you said?
- What is there about this approach that you just cannot accept?
- How may your ideas affect other people?
- Can someone suggest areas that we seem to have in common?
- Would someone identify the values that seem to be clashing?
- What is really happening here?
- Who should we include in this dialogue that is not already represented?
- If we followed this course of action, what would be the effects on your life?
- What values might people hold who support this position?
- Can anyone envision how their life would change if this approach became national policy?
- What negative consequences might take place if this action were pursued, or what might be foreseeable downsides to this course of action?
- Would you give up [A] in order to achieve [B]?
- What are the consequences of what you said?
- Do they make a difference?
- How might your concerns differ if you were (poor/wealthy)?
- How do you separate what is a private?

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 207.

## Appendix L

### Interview to Preachers after Conducting the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon Process

Dear preachers, after facilitating this process, I wish to know what you think. Kindly respond to the different questions:

1. What will you always remember about the program on “Preaching in a Divided Context”?
2. Is the program helpful to you at all? (YES) (NO)
3. Why?
4. How would you use what you learned from the program to deal with people, especially in the church?
5. What ideas do you think will help nurture collaboration in the church?

**Name of Preacher:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix M

### Sermon Dialogue Sermon Process of Collaborators

#### 1. Dr. Nyala Valery Gam

##### First Homily

Title: Know Justice, Know Peace - A Journey through Romans 3:21-30

Liturgical Setting: --Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B at Saint Francis Xavier Catholic University Parish Emia, Yaounde

Date of Homily: Sunday August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

##### **Romans 3:21-30 (NABRE)**

Brothers and sisters:

Now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, though testified to by the law and the prophets, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

For there is no distinction;

all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God.

They are justified freely by his grace

through the redemption in Christ Jesus,

whom God set forth as an expiation,

through faith, by his Blood, to prove his righteousness

because of the forgiveness of sins previously committed,

through the forbearance of God—

to prove his righteousness in the present time,

that he might be righteous

and justify the one who has faith in Jesus.

What occasion is there then for boasting? It is ruled out.

On what principle, that of works?

No, rather on the principle of faith.

For we consider that a person is justified by faith

apart from works of the law.

Does God belong to Jews alone?

Does he not belong to Gentiles, too?

Yes, also to Gentiles, for God is one

and will justify the circumcised on the basis of faith

and the uncircumcised through faith.

## Homily Text

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For the last few years in our country, Cameroon, the theme of justice and peace has filled streets, social media, and church pulpits. Despite all the attention given to justice and peace, there remains an insufficient understanding of these precious virtues. In Scripture, the God of justice, the righteous God of Israel, displays his justice in ways beyond the sending of prophets to decry Israel's sin. Yes, the Old Testament has numerous prophets condemning Israel for their sins of injustice and idolatry. (Read Isaiah 5 or Amos 5) Yet, the prophets' main message centers on the coming messiah and the justice, make that the justification, that he will bring (1 Pet. 1:10–12). Indeed, justice apart from justification is a pronouncement of law without gospel. Not surprisingly, a world that does not know the grace of the gospel will call for justice based upon their fallen understandings of law. For Christians, however, when we speak of justice, we must begin with God and follow his Word until it brings us to Christ's cross. For on the cross, we see justice and justification. And from Paul's careful attention to God's righteousness in Romans 3:21–30 we see what justice truly looks like.

In today's sermon, we delve into the powerful message found in Romans 3:21-30. This passage connects the concepts of justice and peace, revealing how they are intertwined through faith in Jesus Christ. It emphasizes that righteousness and justification come through faith in Jesus Christ, available to all people, regardless of their background. Furthermore, it stresses the universality of sin and the need for salvation through Christ's sacrificial atonement. It also highlights that salvation is a gift of God's grace and cannot be earned through works or adherence to the law. As we explore these

verses, we will uncover the vital relationship between knowing justice and experiencing true peace in our lives.

Saint Paul in Romans 3:23 remind us that every individual, regardless of their background or heritage, has fallen short of God's glory. Sin separates us from a perfect and holy God. The justice of God requires a penalty for sin, as stated in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death." Without justice, there can be no true peace. God's plan for redemption is found in Romans 3:21, we learn that apart from the law, the righteousness of God is revealed through faith in Jesus Christ. God's justice is satisfied through Christ's sacrificial atonement. We are justified freely by God's grace. This righteousness is not earned through our works, but it is a gift received by faith. It's important to note that there is unity through Faith. No distinction. St Paul proclaims that there is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles when it comes to righteousness. Faith in Jesus unites all believers, erasing divisions and prejudices. We live today in a divided world where we want to identify ourselves by our ethnic identity or political philosophy. Faith in Jesus should unite us. That is why we have One God and one way. Romans 3:29-30 reinforces that God is the God of all, and all are justified through faith. There is one path to righteousness for all humanity, promoting unity and equality.

Paul further clarifies that God is not just the God of the Jews. He was God long before He ever called Abraham out of the land of Ur to make a great nation through Him. He was God long before He promised a blessing upon Isaac and Jacob. He was God long before He delivered His people out of Egypt. He was God long before He anointed David as King. He is the God of the entire universe, He is Lord of all, and He is the loving Savior of all those who come to Him through faith in Jesus the Messiah.

Peace can only be achieved through knowing God's Justice. We have to rejoice in God's justice. Understanding God's justice through Christ's sacrifice allows us to rejoice in knowing that He is both just and the justifier of those who believe (Romans 3:26). Only then can we achieve peace. Peace is beyond understanding. As we embrace God's justice and accept His gift of righteousness, Romans 5:1 assures us that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This peace transcends human understanding, bringing a profound sense of security and calmness.

But how can we live out this Message? No boasting, Romans 3:27 reminds us that our justification is not achieved through our works, eliminating any grounds for boasting. Instead, we humbly accept God's grace and righteousness. As recipients of God's peace, we are called to exemplify it in our lives. We become peacemakers, reconciling relationships and showing Christ's love to a broken world. Paul makes it very clear that there is no room for boasting (or bragging) because the solution is totally from God, based on the work of Jesus! We'd be foolish to take any credit for being made right with God; it is totally God's work! So, here's the first *now what*: don't take any credit for being saved from your sins; it's all God!

Knowing justice through faith in Jesus Christ leads to experiencing the true peace of God. As we comprehend the universality of sin and God's righteous plan of redemption, we find hope and assurance in the unifying power of the Gospel. The peace that surpasses understanding becomes our anchor in times of trials, and we can confidently navigate life's challenges. Let us embrace God's justice and grace, living as instruments of peace and sharing this life-transforming message with others. May we all

know justice, know peace, and be conduits of God's love to a world in need of His perfect justice and lasting peace.

Let us challenge ourselves this week in the following ways:

*Seek the righteousness of God* : Seek Jesus and His ways. We need Him desperately. Come to Jesus, remain in Jesus, never stop chasing after Jesus. Spend some time this week and seek the righteousness of God through Jesus.

*Share the righteousness of God*: There is only one hope for all of humanity. There is only one solution: Jesus! Do you know that if you know Jesus, you have the only solution for a lost and dying world? They are currently under the wrath of God but they could experience the righteousness of God. Jesus is the solution. Have you experienced Jesus?

In the coming week, I will be inviting you to continue this conversation and even engage in dialogue about these issues. I believe we can do this together because we are rooted in our common values of faith dialogue, courage, empathic listening, justice and peace as God's people.

## **Second Homily**

Title : Experiencing the Peace of God through Unity and Prayer

Liturgical Setting: 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B, St Francis Xavier Catholic University Parish Emia, Yaounde

Date of Homily: Sunday August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

### **Text of Reading: Philippians 4:1-7 (NIV)**

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The

Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

### **Homily Text**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Last week, we talked about knowing justice through faith in Jesus Christ leads to experiencing the true peace of God. As we comprehend the universality of sin and God's righteous plan of redemption, we find hope and assurance in the unifying power of the Gospel. The peace that surpasses understanding becomes our anchor in times of trials, and we can confidently navigate life's challenges. Let us embrace God's justice and grace, living as instruments of peace and sharing this life-transforming message with others. We were all called to know justice, know peace, and be conduits of God's love to a world in need of His perfect justice and lasting peace.

In a world filled with chaos, uncertainties, and challenges, the peace of God offers us hope, comfort, and strength. Today's sermon is centered on the powerful and uplifting words of St Paul in his letter to the Philippians. In the passage, Paul encourages the Philippians to stand firm in their faith, rejoice in the Lord always and find peace through unity and prayer. Before exploring this message and relating it to real life examples that can help these teachings in our daily lives, let us first understand the peace of God. The Biblical foundation of the passages such as Philippians 4:7, John 14:27, and Isaiah 26:3, teach us that God's peace surpasses all human understanding and guards our hearts and minds. This peace is a gift from God through a relationship with Jesus Christ. The peace of God is different from the temporary peace the world offers. While worldly peace is based on external circumstances, God's peace is rooted in the assurance of His love,



grace, and sovereignty. Let us now explore this message and relate it to real-life examples that can help us better understand and apply these teachings in our daily lives.

Unity in Christ (Philippians 4:1), Paul starts by exhorting the Philippian congregation to "stand firm in the Lord." This call to unity in Christ is essential for all Christians. Just as a family stands strong when its members work together, so too does the body of Christ. A real-life example of unity can be seen in a community coming together to support a family going through a challenging time, demonstrating Christ's love in action.

Secondly, St Paul stresses on reconciliation and forgiveness (Philippians 4:2-3). He addresses the issue of disagreement between two prominent women in the church, Euodia and Syntyche. As Christians, we are reminded to seek reconciliation and forgiveness in the face of conflict. In a real-life scenario, this could mean resolving conflicts within our families, workplaces, or communities through open communication, understanding, and extending grace to one another.

Thirdly, St Paul encourages us to rejoice always (Philippians 4:4). Paul's words resonate deeply as he urges us to rejoice always in the Lord. Despite life's challenges, we can find joy in our relationship with Christ. A real-life example of this can be seen in the unwavering faith of Christians who maintain their joy even in times of adversity, knowing that God's love and grace sustain them. Also, he encourages us to let our gentleness be evident to all. In our daily lives, we can display gentleness by showing kindness and compassion to others, especially to those who are hurting or struggling.

Fourthly, St Paul desires us to overcoming anxiety through prayer (Philippians 4:6-7). Perhaps one of the most comforting verses in the Bible, Paul urges us not to be anxious about anything but to present our requests to God through prayer and

thanksgiving. Real-life examples could include individuals finding peace and strength in their faith during times of uncertainty, knowing that God is in control. Again, he encourages us not to be anxious but to bring our concerns to God through prayer, accompanied by thanksgiving. Handing over our worries to Him demonstrates our trust in His care. Spending time in prayer, meditation, and studying His Word opens our hearts to experience the presence of God. As we draw near to Him, He draws near to us, providing His peace to calm our hearts and minds.

We are called upon to trust in God's plan because it is essential in cultivating a lifestyle of peace in our communities today. Recognizing that God is in control, even when life seems uncertain, allows us to find peace in His sovereignty. Trusting in His wisdom and goodness helps us let go of fear and worry. Cultivating an attitude of gratitude enables us to focus on the blessings and goodness of God. Expressing thanks for what we have shifts our perspective away from worries and fosters a peaceful mindset. That is why in extending the peace of God is being peacemakers. As recipients of God's peace, we are called to be peacemakers in our relationships and communities. Extending forgiveness, grace, and love helps create an environment of peace around us. The ultimate message of peace is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sharing the good news with others allows them to experience the same life-transforming peace that we have received.

In conclusion, the peace of God is not just a distant concept; it is a tangible and life-changing reality available to every Christian. Through prayer, seeking God's presence, and trusting in His plan, we can experience the peace that surpasses understanding. As we cultivate a lifestyle of peace and share the Gospel with others, we

become instruments of God's peace, shining lights in a world longing for true and lasting tranquility. Let us take to heart the teachings of Philippians 4:1-7. By standing firm in our unity in Christ, seeking reconciliation and forgiveness, rejoicing always, practicing gentleness, and entrusting our anxieties to God in prayer, we can experience the peace that surpasses all understanding. May we live out these principles in our daily lives and be shining examples of Christ's love to the world around us.

I invite all of us to collaborate in working together to be true leaders who are servants of peace. As we prepare ourselves towards another dialogue on improving collaboration in our community, I beg us all to always remember to pray the Prayer for Peace by St Francis of Assisi daily for Peace in our country Cameroon and the World.

Praise the Lord, Alleluia

### **Third Homily**

Title: Embracing God's

Liturgical Setting: --Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B. St Francis Xavier Catholic University Parish Emia, Yaounde

Date of Homily: Sunday, August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

#### **Text of Reading: Leviticus 19:15-20 (NIV)**

"Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the Lord. Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord. "Keep my decrees. Do not mate different kinds of animals. Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material. "If a man sleeps with a female slave who is promised to another man but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed."

## Homily Text

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Last week, we talked about the peace of God is not just a distant concept; it is a tangible and life-changing reality available to every Christian. Through prayer, seeking God's presence, and trusting in His plan, we can experience the peace that surpasses understanding. As we cultivate a lifestyle of peace and share the Gospel with others, we become instruments of God's peace, shining lights in a world longing for a true trustworthy and lasting tranquillity. We were invited to collaborate to be true leaders who are servants of peace and always to remember to pray the Prayer for Peace by St Francis of Assisi daily for Peace in our country, Cameroon and the World.

As of our last deliberative dialogue on the three options, the common themes that emerged were collaboration, acceptance, unity, and love. The following shared values were identified: fairness, social justice and respect. Today, we delve into a passage from the book of Leviticus, a portion of Scripture that reminds us of the timeless principles of justice, fairness, and respect for human rights. As we explore Leviticus 19:15-20, let's examine how these verses hold profound significance for us in the context of Cameroon, guiding us to treat our fellow citizens with love, fairness, and equity.

The opening verse emphasizes the importance of justice without partiality. As citizens of Cameroon, we must uphold this principle in our legal system, governance, and everyday interactions. By treating everyone impartially, regardless of their social status, we contribute to a just and harmonious society. Verse 17 instructs us not to harbor hatred in our hearts but instead to rebuke our neighbors in love.

In Cameroon, a country rich in diversity, we must embrace unity and love for our fellow citizens. This means addressing concerns openly, seeking to understand one another, and fostering an environment of mutual respect. Verse 18 teaches us the significance of forgiveness and reconciliation. Holding grudges and seeking revenge only perpetuate cycles of conflict. Instead, let us forgive and extend reconciliation, contributing to a culture of understanding and restoration within our communities. Verses 19 and 20 may seem unrelated, but they remind us of our responsibility to honor commitments and treat each other ethically. In our businesses, relationships, and contracts, we should prioritize honesty and integrity, demonstrating respect for the rights of others.

In Cameroon, a nation with numerous ethnic groups and languages, we must embrace diversity and celebrate our differences while treating everyone equally and respectfully. Poverty and inequality are challenges in our society. As Christians, let's engage in initiatives that uplift the marginalized, ensuring that every citizen's rights are acknowledged and upheld. As citizens, we can advocate for transparent governance and hold leaders accountable for their decisions, ensuring that justice and human rights are priorities.

Our Christian duty is to speak out against injustices that violate human rights. We should not remain silent when we witness oppression, discrimination, or violence. Remember that Jesus Himself stood against injustice and defended the marginalized. Promoting respectful dialogue is essential in a nation with diverse cultures and perspectives like Cameroon. When conflicts arise, let us seek peaceful solutions that

uphold the rights of all parties involved. The Bible teaches us to be peacemakers, and this principle applies to our interactions on both personal and societal levels.

Dear friends, Leviticus 19:15-20 serves as a timeless guide for treating each other justly and respectfully. As believers in Cameroon, we are called to act on these principles, advocating for human rights, fairness, and love in all our interactions. By doing so, we contribute to transforming our nation into a place where God's justice and love are evident in all aspects of life. Let's go forth from here, committed to upholding the dignity and rights of all our fellow Cameroonians, inspired by the teachings of Scripture and guided by the Spirit of God. May His grace and wisdom guide us in this noble pursuit. Amen.

### **Post Deliberative Dialogue Report**

Theme: Know Justice, Know Peace through Dialogue: Ministry of Collaboration in the Purple Zone

Place: St Francis Xavier Catholic University Parish Emia, Yaounde

Questions for Reflecting on The Deliberative Dialogue

General Information about the Session

1. *How many people attended?* 10 young adults who are leaders of groups in the CUC
2. *How many men/women/people of other genders were present?* 7 males and 3 females
3. *What was the age range of the participants? How many youth, young adults, middle-aged adults, and retirees were present?* The participants' age ranged from 29 to 40 years
4. *What was the socioeconomic range of the participants?* Four of the participants were teachers, three ran petit businesses, two were still in school, and one had no job at the moment.
5. *What was the racial/ethnic spectrum of the group?* 1. all the participants were from the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. 3 from Mezam, 2 from Bui, 1 from Beyo, 1 from Ndian, 1 from Nkambe, 2 from Manyu

6. *What do you guess to be the political affiliations of the participants? What percentage were conservative, moderate, progressive, or a mixture?* Content of Deliberative Dialogue Forum. All of the participants were not interested in politics.

7. *In the opening section, when people shared how this issue affected them personally, what stories stood out to you?* Participants were very timid to share their stories once I gave an example. Participants shared touching stories about how division has affected them. Division in the parish has made them not to trust. This is evident in groups in the parish as groups with the same charism function separately. This is further seen in the division among religious groups.

8. *How would you characterize the discussion? Was it relatively calm or intense? Were there moments of tension? If so, what were the points of contention?* The discussion was relatively calm as participants express their frustration on how they were treated as Anglophones when they first got to Yaounde. They share their frustration in a respected manner on how they were treated even in religious zone where they came to worship God.

9. *After the group deliberated about the three options, what common themes and shared values did they identify? What passages, stories, or images from scripture align with these themes and values?* After the group deliberated on the three options the common themes that emerged were: collaboration, acceptance, unity, love. The following shared values were identified fairness, social justice and respect.

10. *What ideas were suggested in the “next steps” section? Which ones seemed to generate the most energy? In what way might these ideas be the workings of the Holy Spirit within the group and/or the congregation?* The main idea that seemed to generate much energy in the next step was fairness, collaboration and acceptance. Despite the challenges identified, only fairness, collaboration and acceptance could heal the scar of division.

11. *Were there any “a-ha” moments of sharing within the group that shifted perspectives?*

Participants were carried by their frustration on how they were treated by their French-speaking brothers and wanted to spend on them to talk about it.

12. *How did you feel when the forum was finished? What feedback did you receive from participants after it was over?* It was an opportunity for most participants to talk about their experiences on how they were treated unfairly in religious circles. Participant hope their one the will be treated fairly and equally.

13. *What did you learn about this group and/or the congregation from this deliberative dialogue?* It was a warm, interactive group that expressed interest in learning more about the deliberative dialogue.

14. *What did you learn about yourself in this process?* It was a golden opportunity for me to learn, and I learned to be a listener.

## **2. Father Jules David Onana, cmf**

### **First Homily**

Theme: Mediators of God's salvation into the world

Liturgical Setting : 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A, Preached to the Christians of Saint Thomas Aquinas' Mbot Pastoral Zone (Diocese of Kumbo – Cameroon), June 18, 2023.

1<sup>st</sup> reading: Ex 19:2-6

Psalm 99 (100):2-3, 5

2<sup>nd</sup> reading: Rom 5:6-11

Gospel: Matt 9:36–10:8

Moses then went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, “Say this to the House of Jacob, declare this to the sons of Israel, ‘You yourselves have seen what I did with the Egyptians, how I carried you on eagle’s wings and brought you to myself. From this you know that now, if you obey my voice and hold fast to my covenant, you of all the nations shall be my very own, for all the earth is mine. I will count you a kingdom of priests, a consecrated nation’” (*Ex 19:3-6*). Cf. *The Sunday Missal* (A New Edition), 2006.

### **Homily Text**

Dear brothers and sisters,

Today we celebrate the 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday in ordinary time. We are back to the ordinary season characterized by the green color in liturgy. Green symbolizes as we can observe from our environment a season of interior refreshment, renewal and simplicity. Today's liturgy gives us more than a reason to be renewed spiritually. In this sense, the 1<sup>st</sup> reading from the Book of Exodus presents to us a crucial event revealing a young Israel learning to walk into God's paths through the Covenant. At Sinai, Israel enters into a covenant where God's law is found at the very center of the relationship. In this way, God prepares



Israel for his arrival and his stay in their midst. Therefore, Sinai, the *locus* of this meeting between the human and the divine, where Man and God meet and from this encounter the former is transformed by the latter. On the mount, Man is renewed by God who extends his message of salvation to him. Moses, the servant of God acts as a mediator between God and his people. From the divine message, the experience in Egypt materialized by the goodness of God in setting free his people is of great importance. God, the savior of Israel rescues the nation chosen as his own. To be shown such a great love implies from now obedience to the only God and fidelity to the covenant on the side of the redeemed people.

In order to understand Moses' mission as mediator, let us recall his vocation by God. In fact, in a theophany (divine manifestation of God) God reveals himself to Moses as the God of his ancestors and ineluctably his mission as a mediator in setting free the people of Israel (Ex 3:2-6). As it often happens in such a context, the one sent (Moses) expresses his unworthiness but the Sender (God) assures him and confirms the trust placed in him. Surely and patiently, God makes himself known as a covenantal God whose promises are to be fulfilled. Thus, our first reading this Sunday presents to us Moses acting as entailed by his call as an intercessor between God and his people. The message to be carried by the servant of God evokes the episode in Egypt, a fundamental experience in which God saves Israel from his pursuers and oppressors. The image of the eagle in the message displays God's capacity of intervention even in the most improbable situations and how the chosen people was redeemed without effort of their own. From there, Israel's salvation is to be found in God alone for out of his Savior there is no redemption.

In fact, the great love of God for his people as demonstrated in the first reading reaches its full realization in the sacrifice of Christ for the sinful humanity as proved in the Letter of Paul to the Romans (second reading). This sacrifice of Christ through his death comes as the best proof of love for us and is symbolic of our reconciliation to God. If to give one's life for the worthy is already too difficult, what about dying for the unworthy? But Christ did this for us in order to fulfill the words of John, "We know the love of God in this way: because he laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16). Sin has been the bond of separation between God and us. For out of our own disobedience, we have been separated from God. The same sin symbolized by the infidelity of Israel often breaking its privileged relationship with God. With the death of Christ, after the saving action of God for the liberation of his people from the Egyptian's hands, our reconciliation to him has been sealed once and for all. This was to bear out that we are his people, the people of his flock as heard in today's psalm.

Moreover, in our context still affected by the socio-political crisis, many among us have become the accusers of their brothers for disrupting peace and instilling violence. What is our personal responsibility in bringing back peace and reconciliation in our midst? Like Moses, we have become mediators of our times for our brothers and sisters who suffer and face discriminations. What is our attitude towards those who feel rejected and hated? Are we not at times instigators of divisions in our own families, small Christian communities (scc), and Church groups? Can we take to hearts these words addressed to Jeremiah, "before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. And before you went forth from the womb, I sanctified you (Jer 1:5)"? We live in a divided land coupled with divided hearts. How do we expect the Lord of peace to remain with/in us when grudges,

quarrels, insults, revenge, violence, have become part of our daily life? Can we claim to be disciples of a God who throughout history has preached love and forgiveness? My dear brethren, it will be too deceitful not to acknowledge our shortcomings when one realizes to what extent even within the church some cannot wish to each other the peace of Christ. Is Christ divided (1 Cor 1:13)? If yes we could have million reasons to be divided but since God is one anything that calls for divisions is not from him. As Scripture says, “whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause of offense in him. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness, and in darkness he walks, and he does not know where he is going” (1 Jn 2:10-11). Definitely, how can we become other ‘Moses’ for our brothers and sisters, messengers of good news and not intruders in inseminating divisions?

By choosing and sending the twelve as it happened with Moses from his vocation story, Jesus in today’s Gospel finds the way of mediation through his apostles. God’s compassion from old for Israel is now shown in perfection in his beloved Son feeling sorry for the crowds because they were harassed and dejected. A situation well known to the chosen nation to whom God became a savior through Moses’ intercession. The unique mediation of Christ imparts to his disciples as outlined in the Gospel consists in giving them authority over unclean spirits with power to cast them out and to cure all kinds of diseases and sicknesses. In the same way, our mediation in our context is resumed in bringing peace whenever divisions have become the way of life. To be able to succeed in the task ahead of us, a missionary task, let me share with you this story:

*One day a professor entered the classroom and asked his students to prepare for a surprise test. They waited anxiously at their desks for the test to begin. The professor handed out the question paper, with the text facing down as usual. Once he handed them all out, he asked the students to turn the page and begin. To*

*everyone's surprise, there were no questions...just a black dot in the center of the page. The professor seeing the expression on everyone's face told them the following: "I want you to write what you see there". The students confused got started on the inexplicable task. At the end of the class, the professor took all the answer papers and started reading each one of them aloud in front of all the students. All of them with no exceptions described the black dot, trying to explain its position in the middle of the sheet, after all had been read, the classroom silent, the professor began to explain: "I am not going to grade you on this, I just wanted to give you something to think about. No one wrote about the white part of the paper. Everyone focused on the black dot.*

Is it not the same reality occurring in our lives? We have life as a whole to celebrate and rejoice, but we always focus on the dark spots, on negative points. Our life is a gift given to us by God, with love and care, and we always have reasons to cherish it along with all those around us. However, we insist on focusing only on the dark spots – the health issues that bother us, the “Judas” who betrays us forgetting the good actions of the other “11”. Moses never lost focus on his mission as mediator and was able to fulfill it. In his footsteps we should equally focus on our call as mediators of peace and avoid being distracted to all that works against peace. Let us remember that the dark spots are very small compared to everything we have in our lives, but they are the ones that pollute our minds and our hearts. Let us learn to see the good things in others, to go beyond ourselves, to take a new breath, and from there our vision of the reality can be renewed. Everyone has a white part to focus on and not only a dark spot to comment on. You want to be live peacefully, start focusing on the good things and be positive for peace begins with a pure heart. There is no meaning for being called and sent by Jesus and do his work in sadness, anger, revenge. We should be more loving remembering that he has loved us first. Especially, we should be able to remove the splinter from our eyes before trying to remove the one in our brother's or sister's eye (Matt 7:4).

Definitely, being aware of the great need for peace in our hearts, our lives and our land, I will be inviting you in the coming weeks in conversing and dialoguing about the outlined issues. More than a conviction it has become to me a necessity to do this as a family in order to restore the foundations of our Christian heritage: Faith, Peace, Reconciliation, Forgiveness, for a better testimony of our call as intercessors. This will be a crucial step for us as we look forward to becoming mediators of God's salvation in our context and this will be our effort in building peace and unity. Having said this, let us take together the prayer for peace of Saint Francis of Assisi:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.*

## **Second Homily**

Theme: Servants of the Truth in a socio-political divided context.

Liturgical Context: 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A, Preached to the Christians of Saint Thomas Aquinas' Mbot Pastoral Zone (Diocese of Kumbo – Cameroon), June 24, 2023.

1<sup>st</sup> reading: Jer 20:10-13

Psalm 68 (69):8-10, 14, 17, 33-35

2<sup>nd</sup> reading: Rom 5:12-15

Gospel: Matt 10:26-33

*Jeremiah said: I heard so many disparaging me, 'Terror from every side! Denounce him! Let us denounce him!' All those who used to be my friends watched for my downfall, 'Perhaps he will be seduced into error. Then we will master him and take our revenge!' But the Lord is at my side, a mighty hero; my opponents will stumble, mastered, confounded by their failure; everlasting, unforgettable disgrace will be theirs (Jer 20:10-11). Cf. The Sunday Missal (A New Edition), 2006.*

Dear brothers and sisters,

Last week, we had a lengthy reflection on becoming mediators of God's salvation into the world in the footsteps of Moses, the mediator between God and his people (Ex 19:2-6). Based on this, we equally learn the necessity to work for peace to dwell in our hearts and our land. The latter reference explained my invitation to you all to pray to God for the grace of becoming instruments of peace. Today, we shall reflect on our call as servants of the truth in a socio-political divided context. Setting our attention toward prophet Jeremiah, who will serve for us as a paradigm of the revealed truth even when the context seems not favorable. Truth must prevail for peace to reign, as we prayed for last week. In other words, there is no withstanding or everlasting peace without truth.

The prophet is by definition the one sent by God to the people and who speaks on his behalf, one understands from Jeremiah's vocation the self-acknowledgment of his ignorance of speech and for being too young. As a response, the Lord comforts and assures him of his presence, including God's words in his mouth, setting over the nations and kingdoms, to uproot and knock down, destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant (Jer 1:6-10). Such a call cannot go without risk, rejection, betrayal, and hatred. The prophet of the Lord experiences all these things for denouncing lies and exposing those who perpetrate evil plans. Thus, Jeremiah's mission will consist in proclaiming the bitter truth to a nation sets to receive pleasant words and not the offending truth.

As a matter of proof, our first reading today displays the prophet's enemies ready to do away with him because of his message. The precedent chapter indicates the context of Jeremiah's complaint. By performing a symbolic action (the broken jar) that bears the significance of the upcoming destruction of the city coupled with the exile mainly due to

the sin of idolatry and a series of infidelities, the prophet now goes to the court of the temple to re-emphasize and re-echo his message (19:1-15). A terrible “mistake” on the side of his opponents, among whom is found the priest Pashhur whose mistreatments and malice towards Jeremiah will not stop the prophet of God from prophesying against him (20:1-6). Therefore, our passage on this day recounts the deep pains and frustrations of the man of God whose life is exposed because of the divine message that he has become the sounding trumpet. Jeremiah is now a “wanted,” one against all, the one to eliminate by all means; the price of his life is to be met no matter the outcome.

Brethren, the socio-political crisis we are facing in our context poses, the fundamental problem of our Christian identity. Among the three offices that come with baptism, understood as our incorporation into God’s people, is the function of the prophet. When faced with divisions, camps, and groups caused by the socio-political crisis, where do we stand, and what becomes our stand? Do we still remember the vow we took before the Lord’s people of rejecting Satan and his ways on our baptismal day? How do we cope with the prophet’s message in our context? Can we learn and be inspired by Jeremiah’s courage to face his opponents for the sake of the truth while unshakably trusting in God? Have we not at times sacrificed the truth at the altar of the new idols of our own times and situations, namely, political rivalry, betrayals, tribalism, hatred, regionalism, unhealthy defiance, social injustices, etc.? As a spiritual remedy, more attention will be directed to home visitations, reorganization of our small Christian communities, and an effort to bring back those who have separated from our homeland to engage everyone on the path of forgiveness.

From what precedes, St. Paul addressing the Romans reminds them about sin, which entered the world through Adam, and death was spread to the whole human race. In simple words, the price or consequence of sin is death. Being aware of this, one should recall the words of St. John, “If you obey my teaching, you are my disciples; you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). Since the truth sets free, a lie, a sin imprisoning us, leads by evidence to death. And the father of lies, as we commonly say, is Satan. At the service of the truth, as Jeremiah did, we are free before God, and our conscience is cleaned. Serving lies makes us disciples of the evil one as the priest Parashhur did. Are we left with any choice, my dear Christians? Yes, the choice of being with the Lord of truth through whom divine grace came to so many as an abundant grace (Rom 5:15).

For the reasons above, one easily grasps Jesus’ assertion in today’s Gospel, “Do not be afraid. For everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear” (Matt 10:26). Has anyone ever asked himself/herself what is he/she afraid of and why? Certainly, things unknown and covered by us but known to God, who at the appointed time will uncover them. Jeremiah shows an act of great courage in his trials because he has nothing to reprimand himself, and being convinced of the Lord’s presence on his side, he does not tremble. This is now the time to witness the truth, and there is nothing that can stop it for at the end of the day, responsibilities will be assumed according to everyone’s choice. That is why Jesus announces his defense to those who will be able to declare themselves for him in the presence of men, he will equally acknowledge them before his Father. As a result, the Lord warns us about the nature of our fears, mostly from what kills the body, while our fears should be redirected



towards what kills the soul. One might die physically, and his death be seen as a loss, but once it happens in the Lord the One who conquered death will surely reward him on the last day. O death, where is your victory?

What about those being harassed for denouncing violence, violating human dignity, the kidnapping of people, the murder of innocent, etc.? The voice of Jeremiah should keep on resounding through our own voices. In his footsteps, we should be the voice of the voiceless, the defenders of the revealed truth, no matter the cost. The people you fear to denounce, the big lie you refuse to voice out, the manipulation you are afraid of condemning will make you guilty if not in today, tomorrow. As we say in French, “*le mensonge a les courtes jambes*”, lie has short legs. “99 days for the thief, only one day for the owner”. To comfort you in the pertinence of always living in the truth and viewing it as a whole, allow me to share with you this story,

*There was a man who had four sons. He wanted his sons to learn not to judge things too quickly. So he sent them each on a quest, in turn, to go and look at a pear tree that was a great distance away. The 1<sup>st</sup> son went in the winter (the coldest season of the year), the 2<sup>nd</sup> in the spring (the season after winter and before summer in which vegetation begins to appear), the 3<sup>rd</sup> in summer (the warmest season of the year) and the 4<sup>th</sup> in the fall or autumn (the season of change with a sense of comfort and ease). When they had all gone and come back, he called them together to describe what they had seen. The 1<sup>st</sup> son said that the tree was ugly, bent, and twisted. The 2<sup>nd</sup> son said no – it was covered with green buds and full of promise. The 3<sup>rd</sup> son disagreed, he said it was laden with blossoms that smelled so sweet and looked so beautiful, it was the most graceful thing he had ever seen. The last son disagreed with all of them, he said it was ripe and drooping with fruit, full of life and fulfillment. The man then explained to his sons that they were all right, because they had each seen but one season in the tree’s life. He told them that you cannot judge a tree, or a person, by only one season, and that the essence of who they are – and the pleasure, joy, and love that come from that life – can only be measured at the end, when all the seasons are up. If you give up when it’s winter, you will miss the promise of your spring, the beauty of your summer, the fulfillment of your fall.*

Where do you locate yourselves from the above story? All seasons are important, and we must gain and learn from each season. The crisis we are in constitutes one of the seasons, and life will not end with it. As such, it is all the more important to build from today's failures and limitations to prepare a better future for the next generations. This is to be done based on wearing the mantle of the truth and the spear of peace. We might still have a long journey, but the surest of all.

May the peace of the Lord be with you always!

### **Post Deliberative Dialogue Report**

Theme: Mediators of God's Salvation into the World

#### ***General Information about the session***

**Q1: How many people attended?**

A1: 12 adults

**Q2: How many men/women/people of other genders were present?**

A2: 4 men and 8 women

**Q3: What was the age range of the participants? How many youth, young adults, middle-aged adults, and retirees present?**

A3: 4 young adults, 7 middle-aged adults and 1 retiree

**Q4: What was the socioeconomic range of the participants?**

A4: The participants are mainly farmers with 2 teachers and one retiree teacher

**Q5: What was the racial/ethnic spectrum of the group?**

A5: all participants are from the North-West Region of Cameroon from 2 different tribes, precisely from the Ndonga-Mantung Sub-Division.

**Q6: What do you guess to be the political affiliations of the participants? What percentage were conservative, moderate, progressive, or a mixture?**

A6: From my personal observation, most of the participants are not affiliated with any political party. 2 seem to favor the crisis, and one is a member of the political party ruling the country.

**I. The issue at stake: How can we become mediators of peace in our own socio-political divided context?**

- ❖ The difficulty of forgiving past evil experiences makes the process of peace hard.
- ❖ The loss of loved ones has raised concerns about the issue of impending revenge.
- ❖ The high rate of suspicion has brought disunity into families.

- ❖ There is no peace without trust; everyone sees the other as a potential enemy.
- ❖ Political rivalry has worsened community relationships
- ❖ Unhealthy competition for personal profit and between rich and poor families has escalated the peace debate.
- ❖ The gap in terms of ideological differences is too deep.
- ❖ Betrayals have become a major issue within the community.
- ❖ Acknowledgment of the need of conversion of hearts.
- ❖ Expression of the need to mediate peace through reconciliation and healthy talks.

These are the key aspects on the discussion that really needed my attention.

## II. The Church's role in a socio-political divided context

<b>II.1. The Church as a Refuge</b>	
<p><b>Pros</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a refuge the Church will serve to reintegrate the value of peace in the crisis zone and especially in the hearts of people.</li> <li>• The Christian values of reconciliation and forgiveness will be addressed in the Church as a refuge.</li> <li>• The Church as a refuge would embrace all into the same family of God for a better practice of Christian charity.</li> <li>• Being a refuge sets the Church as a trusty Body defending the rights of the oppressed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the Church not dwell considerably on her mission as a refuge to the point of forgetting other missionary dimensions?</li> <li>• The fear of not fulfilling as it is supposed to be the entire sacramental aspect of the Church for the sake of a range of selected values.</li> <li>• Will all decisions be fair to all parties (families, community, society)</li> <li>• In an ongoing crisis zone would the projects for development not be better?</li> </ul>

<b>THE CHURCH AS A MEDIATOR</b>	
<p><b>Pros</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Church being a Mother and an authoritative moral institution, by promoting peace she rightly plays her role</li> <li>• The context for peace will be extended to other denominations and non catholic faithful.</li> <li>• The biblical figure of Moses as a mediator and other biblical figures can widen the scope in mediation skills for peace</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the context of conflicts, there might be an inclusion of quarrels and unnecessary grudges</li> <li>• In mediating what shall be the fundamental step in case of partiality due to tribalism or friendship or any other reason?</li> <li>• The message of peace might as well be rejected and the mediators blackmailed.</li> </ul>

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<b>THE CHURCH AS A PROPHETIC VOICE</b>	
<p><b>Pros</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a prophetic voice, the Church should proclaim her message with courage, no fear.</li> <li>• The Church should as well be a living testimony of her message, no contradiction should be found in her.</li> <li>• Above all, the aim of peace should be taken in consideration and ways to reach it to be found by the Church.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In case the prophetic voice becomes a “source of divisions” in the community (those for versus those against), how will the Church do?</li> <li>• What about the persecutions and plots against the Church ministers in a conflictual context?</li> <li>• There is a risk with the prophetic voice of the Church to lose membership</li> </ul>

**III. The way forward within the community context**

- A return to reorganize small Christian communities (scc) to facilitate the approach to peace from the roots.
- Activeness and participation in Church activities and groups.
- A serious emphasis on forgiveness through Church doctrine.
- Encouraging home visitations from pastors for a better appreciation of situations.
- Opening wide the door of the Church to non-Christians for dialogue and peace to prevail.
- The creation of traditional dancing clubs and football teams for more socialization and interaction.
- Working hand in hand with the Diocesan Commission for Justice and Peace.
- Formation of all leaders
- Organization of conferences in collaboration with experts on matters of conflicts and reconciliation.
- Encouraging the brethren separated from the community to return to the homeland and join again with their families.
- To look for ways to help those still undergoing trauma

**IV. Final appreciation on the dialogue**

- To have more sessions
- To be less strict on time issue
- To have as many as possible participants in the next sessions
- To open at the parish level a file for archives

Identified values: Formation of the laity on deliberative dialogue and more responsibilities entrusted to them, formation session on Church doctrine, a need for intercultural dialogue on hot topics.

### 3. Fr Edwin DeMarie Mbang Mumukom, cmf

#### First Homily

Theme: Sibling Rivalry based on Genesis 21:8-21

Liturgical setting: Selected Christians from the Anglophone community of Saint Gregory the Great Parish Ndobonaberi-Douala, Saturday, July 8, 2023

#### Genesis 21:8-21 (RSV)

*And the child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac: So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac." And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the lad and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your descendants be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring." So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went, and sat down over against him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Let me not look upon the death of the child." And as she sat over against him, the child lifted up his voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not; for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him fast with your hand; for I will make him a great nation." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. And God was with the lad, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.*

#### Homily Text

*The Lord is good, all the time, and all the time the Lord is good and that is his nature!*

My dear brothers and sisters, societal conflicts are no news in our world today because it suffices to turn on the radio or move from one television channel to another to encounter the reality of conflict. Sometimes we feel it outside, but the fact of conflict is in our homes. Today, we will examine how conflict originates from our homes as we meditate on the sibling rivalry between Ishmael and Isaac (who is the child of promise? Who is the legitimate heir?). When Sarah observed Ishmael playing with Isaac, her son, she grasped

the feeble nature of Isaac's right to the promise. Even though having a son for Abraham via the Egyptian slave, Hagar, was entirely Sarah's idea (Genesis 16), regretting her earlier suggestion, she asks Abraham to send away Hagar and her child. God comes in and eases Abraham's grief at rejecting his son. In the corresponding second part of the story, God relieves Hagar's pain at abandoning Ishmael her son and promises that he will become a great nation. However, it is worth noting that this conflict is not directly between the two brothers but more of a mother's fight to secure her child's future.

*Genesis 21:9-14 God comforts Abraham:* The fundamental question being asked here is, what was Ishmael "*doing*" that warranted the anger of Sarah? Several possibilities have been suggested:

1. Maybe Ishmael's "play" was rough and brutal, and Sarah feared for her son's safety. This makes Sarah's "solution" of sending mother and son into the wilderness, perhaps to die, even more awful.
2. Paul thinks Ishmael is "persecuting" Isaac (Galatians 4:29).
3. We are versed with the verb translated "playing" in verse 9 to mean "mocking" or "laughing." This has been a vital word in the Isaac stories because "Isaac" itself has for its origin. So, we might translate "playing," maybe as "Isaacing," that is, Sarah perceived Ishmael "playing the part of Isaac," fantasizing Isaac's place as heir of the promises.

Cert, it's unbearable, but the opinion that Ishmael was fantasizing about being Isaac and assuming his future role clarifies Sarah's actions. Sarah's plea that Hagar and "her son" are cast out upsets our sense of justice (v. 10). In her culture and context, however, she was within her rights as the principal wife now that her son had endured the early years

of life. She efficiently defends her terrible demand by voicing her request in the words of God's earlier promise to Abraham (15:4).

Verses 11-14 portray the depth of Abraham's pain in a literal way: "the thing was very malevolent, evil, sinful and wicket in the eyes of Abraham" (v. 11). Perhaps, the word "sinful" point to the fact that Abraham supposed Sarah's appeal was somehow unethical or illegal. But Abraham's previous love and affection for his firstborn son seems more likely. More astounding to our ears is his deceptive lack of feeling for the dilemma of Hagar. The text only highlights his sentiments for "his son" as a reason for his anguish. The lack of sympathy for the predicament of Hagar, both by Abraham and Sarah, is curiously treated in God's response (vv. 12-13). Like Sarah, God refers to Ishmael as "the boy/the son of the slave woman", avoiding his name. But unlike Abraham, God relates Abraham's suffering to his sentiments of affection for Ishmael and his mother.

An expedient part of this text is God's promise to Abraham that although Isaac is the principal heir, He [God] will not leave Ishmael and his mother in the lurch (v. 13). They, too, will obtain the blessing of becoming a great nation because of God's faithfulness to the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3.

*Genesis 21:15-21 God comforts Hagar (Consequence of the expulsion of Hagar and her baby):* Just as Abraham had unwillingly cast out Hagar and her son, now in the mirror image of this story, Hagar is obliged to cast her son under a bush (v. 15). This Hebrew word is also used to describe the "casting" of Joseph into a pit by his jealous brothers (Gen 37:20, 22, 24). The fact that texts like Joshua 8:29 use this word about burial practices proposes that Hagar truly thought her son was about to die a horrific death by dehydration.

Just like Abraham before her, Hagar is anxious over the dilemma of her son and cannot stand to hear his cries (v. 16). But just as with Abraham, God hears their cries and comforts Hagar with the same assurance of future nationhood for her son that eased Abraham's agony. And just as Abraham had provided her with a skin of water, God provided a well of water (vv. 17-19). However, Ishmael's name does not appear in this story, but the story is all about Ishmael's name. Genesis 16:11 reminds us that Ishmael means "God will hear" in Hebrew. That is undoubtedly the case here.

Just as the story in verses 9-14 had finished with Hagar and her son nomadic in the wilderness of Beer-Sheba, so this paired story settles with mother and child in the wilderness of Paran, the region between Egypt and Canaan, where Ishmael becomes a nomadic hunter. This story submits that God is not only concerned about the chosen people of Abraham's descendants. In God's primary statement of the promise, the tenacity behind the choice of Abraham was made open, namely, that in Abraham, "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 12:3b). The promise comes via Isaac, but there is blessing enough for all!

Lessons:

1. God, after all, doesn't disremember people who feel forgotten or whom we'd even rather forget. God cares about people whom many prefer to ignore or abandon.
2. God pays attention to those we push to the margins or even out of our big stories.
3. No one is too little or unimportant to be devoid of God's gracious and loving care (so God comes to and stays with Ishmael, even as he grows up).
4. While God is also devoted to making a huge family out of Abraham, it proves tough. We should know that things are rarely easy, even in the best of families. At



least some hurt is closely bound up with families. Yet God graciously continues to work with families. God keeps His promise to stick with the family of the promise and the family of desperation. God moves behind the scenes of family lives to keep His promises and advance good purposes. Families don't have to be perfect for God to work through them. They need to be open to being used by God for His good purposes. After all, as one preacher notes, we managed to kill God's only natural Son. But even that didn't stop God. God won the victory over our limitations. God continues to love, preserve and even expand God's flawed family even to this day.

How can we learn from this story to give everyone a chance to live their destiny according to the will of God? How can we stand on the part of truth and justice for all without being sentimental? How can we be responsible for our acts?

In the coming weeks, I will be inviting us to dialogue more on sibling rivalry. I believe we can do this together because we are rooted in our Common values of Faith, Dialogue, Courage, empathic listening, and living together as God's people.

We can be a church that collaborates and engages in dialogue through empathic hearing that can engage in healthy conversations about living together as a true family of God.

**Minutes of the last sermon-dialogue-sermon  
Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2023 (morning Mass)**

Before this sitting, the Christians who participated in this conversation were selected from the Anglophone community of the Saint Gregory the Great Parish Ndobonaberi two weeks earlier and they were duly prepared for this exercise. This took place after mass.

Number present: 9 persons (3 men, 4 women, 1 youth and 1 child). The moderator was Mr Ngwa Julius, Secretary Mme Atem Nellie and the audio and video recorder Mr Kang Cyril.

Generally, we all agreed upon the reality of conflicts in our society whose foundation is from our homes.

1. Why do we have these conflicts: because we minimize others, misunderstandings, egoism
2. Are conflicts positive?: yes, because it helps to better understand the other
3. What's the main cause of conflicts: when there is a clash of interest

Conflicts extend to our society and as such should be handled with care. Some important questions from our today's sermon:

- Who is to be blame for the conflict?
- How do we handle this situation without hurting either party?

We generally agreed that all contributed to the conflict but we however proposed the following solutions:

- ✓ Mutual forgiveness
- ✓ Dialogue
- ✓ Open mindedness and flexibility
- ✓ Tolerant

During our discussion, we noticed it was not just about the story, as we all have had conflicts in our homes and church as a home. In this light, Mr Langa (not his real name) opened up to share a conflict with his parish priest in which the parish priest had

misinformation about him and then blamed and condemned him without hearing from him. So he (Langa) took the matter to a third party who advised the parish priest to dialogue with him, which he did, and the truth came out which led to the resolution of the matter, and the parish priest was humble to apologize for acting without verification of the information he had received.

This made us underline the fact that in conflict resolution, we should learn not to take sides but be neutral to understand that conflict resolution is a gradual process.

The moderator of the day thanked all for actively participating in the dialogue father, before final blessings, invited in the coming weeks for more dialogue on the different forms of conflicts in our homes.

## **Second Homily**

Theme: Sibling Rivalry based on Genesis 27:18-29.

Liturgical setting: Selected Christians from the Anglophone community of Saint Gregory the Great Parish Ndobonaberi-Douala

Sermon: Saturday, July 29, 2023

### **Biblical Text: Genesis 27:18-29 (RSV)**

*So he went in to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me." But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" He answered, "Because the LORD your God granted me success." Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands. So he blessed him. He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I am." Then he said, "Bring it near to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you." So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near and kiss me, my son." So he came near and kissed him. And Isaac smelled the smell of his garments and blessed him and said, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed! May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord*

*over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"*

### **Homily Text**

*The Lord is good, all the time, and all the time the Lord is good and that is his nature!*

Beloved in Christ as we started reflecting in our last meeting on Sibling rivalry, we keep underlining that it is as old as human creation itself and that in our world today, it continues to greatly distress families. My uncle's two sons are in their early twenties and in my humble, but correct, opinion, they are the best, nicest, cleverest, and most auspicious sons the world has ever known. But they are also truly "biblical" brothers in the sense that at times they parade a different attitude—a defective attitude—toward each other. They engross in sibling rivalry, the kind that can be found many times amongst siblings in the Bible.

Abraham's twin grandsons, Jacob and Esau, can be considered the print children of sibling rivalry. It started before their nativity. Their mother underlined that she felt them frequently tussling within her. On the day their birth, Esau first saw the light of this world but when Jacob came moments later, he was holding Esau's heel in what has being interpreted as an attempt to get ahead of his brother.

Jacob's exertions to contest and contend with his brother for their parents' affection and blessing persisted as the boys gradually became young men. Jacob fooled Esau into passing over the family patrimony to him for a bowl of stew. Their worst period of rivalry reached its peak when Jacob misled their aged, blind father [Isaac] into giving him the all-important patriarchal blessing. Jacob had himself dressed in his brother's clothes and with the aid of goatskins tied on his arms to copycat Esau's hairiness, and nourished his father a wished wild game meal—this was achieved with the

help and encouragement of their mother Rebekah, whom without hiding preferred Jacob over Esau. When Esau later found out what his brother had done, he swore to kill Jacob. We see here that sibling rivalry had escalated into a fratricidal plot! However it is not the first as we have earlier witnessed Cain killed Abel his brother (Gen. 4:1-18).

From incident of the pilfered blessing in Genesis 27, some important lessons about sibling rivalry can be drawn.

*Parental favoritism only worsens sibling rivalry.* Often times, sibling rivalry grows when children feel—rightly or wrongly—that they aren't having a fairly treatment. Naturally, some children get more love, care and attention from their parents a bit than their siblings. Or parents sometimes unfairly apply discipline among their children. Scriptures do not hide the fact the boys were separated between father and the mother that is "Isaac loved Esau while Rebekah loved Jacob" (Gen. 25:28). Isaac and Rebekah could have better helped lessen their sons' rivalry and educated them on how to resolve their differences first by looking up to the Lord for guidance. Instead, they preferred favoritism; and as such making their family to suffer from turmoil and bitter separation.

*Unchecked sibling rivalry can pave the way to lies and deception.* Rivalry and competition can be useful if well controlled. Competition, for instance, can push young people to struggle to be their best and offer their best especially under pressure. This is very true whether in the terrain of athletics, academics, service, or leadership. Parents are wise, however, to checkmate on their children's attitudes concerning rivalry and competition. Devoid of the safeguards of faith, humility, and love, rivalry can become selfish, arrogant, and mean. Corners get cut, and cheating happens. People sense they

must not only win but as well crush their competitors—even if these competitors are their own blood or siblings.

*Only the intervention and graciousness of God can bring good out of sibling rivalry.* The story of the twin's sibling rivalry recaps that God has a greater and better plan for our lives than we know. We sometimes stymie God's good plans for us by vaccinating selfish rivalry into the mix. We discover ourselves in trouble and as well on the run from His perfect plan. Graciously, God is patient, kind, and forgiving. He works on us and in us and aids us to come to our senses and confess where we have gone wrong. He can even arrange reconciliation between alienated siblings if we trust Him and follow His guidance.

If your family is plagued by sibling rivalry, may God's guidance in His Word drive you into taking actions today leading to reconciliation and a fulfilling future of His plans for you and your family.

How can we learn from this story to give everyone a chance to live their destiny according to the will of God? How can we stand on the part of truth and justice for all without being sentimental? How can we be responsible for our acts?

In the coming weeks, I will be inviting us to dialogue more on sibling rivalry. I believe we can do this together because we are rooted in our Common values of Faith, Dialogue, Courage, empathic listening, and living together as God's people.

We can be a church that collaborates and engages in dialogue through empathic hearing that can engage in healthy conversations about living together as a true family of God.

## **Summary of the Conversations of 29<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

**Theme:** *How to proclaim the good news of salvation in a world filled with conflicts, in a diverse environment without making the other uncomfortable*

Most of the conflicts that exist in our families, in our associations, in our different religions are due to dangerous scourges that undermine our society. Among other things, we can cite jealousy, pride, selfishness. These plagues are at the root of many divisions, many conflicts, and many murders; this is the case of Cain and his brother Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Joseph and his brothers..... Based on this observation, we will focus on the origin of conflicts in our families as well as solutions to resolve them by looking today at the situation of Jacob and his brother Esau.

Present for today's conversation: Women 7, Men 1, Youths 4, Priest 1; Total 13

Moderator: Ms. Atem Nellie

Secretary: Fr Arold Franck, Cmf

### *1. Origin of Conflicts in our Families*

*1<sup>st</sup> testimony:* It is the story of a family of three children, including two girls and a boy. The parents showed more love to the boy alone because he was the last born. Each time, he received presents from his parents. He was so pampered, which did not please his sisters because they saw injustice in it. They began to be jealous of their younger brother and this led to a great conflict between the children.

*2<sup>nd</sup> testimony:* A married man had two wives and several children. He looked after his wives and children very well. This gentleman had some possessions and during his lifetime he had never gathered his children to discuss how the children will live after his death because some of them were already discussing the succession of the father although

he was still alive. This made the father of the house happy, for before his death he told his brother that the children must fight among themselves so that the strongest might inherit his property. After the father's death, the children entered an incessant struggle. Every woman wanted her child to inherit the father's property.

*3<sup>rd</sup> testimony:* This is the story of a family of two children. The parents have enrolled each child in their school; the boy has his institution and so does the girl. After a few years, the boy began to complain. According to him, his parents love his sister more than him, that is why she attends a big school and she has a lot of opportunity. This eventually divided the children and even the parents who divorced some time later.

*4<sup>th</sup> testimony:* A widow had four boys. She made her small business to provide for her children, and thanks to God she got away with it because no one lacked something. Despite the limited means she had, she even helped her first two boys to equip their wives. Over time, this woman grew older and the activities and sources of income she had decreased. A few years later, her last son wanted to marry and because of the lack of an average, her mother did not support him as she had for her two big brothers. He became angry that his mother did not love him, but loved his brothers more than him and so he began to hate his brothers.

## *2. Some of the Fleeces that Form Part of these Arrangements*

From the testimonies we have just listed, the first observation we can make is that some parents are at the root of the various problems that are destroying our families. We can quote among others;

*Favoritism:* This is one of the major problems that plague our families. In principle, it should not even exist. Parents tend to prefer one child over the other,



forgetting that this can have very serious consequences for the life and stability of a family. Therefore, we must put this scourge aside in our families and treat everyone the same because we are all equal in law and in duty.

*Rivalry*: it is not totally a bad thing because it allows children who seek the ideal, to work hard, each in their own field so that things move forward. It becomes bad when one considers the other as an enemy, as a competitor of war or combat. It is bad when you use it to humiliate and trample the other.

*Jealousy*: It is one of the worst things that exist in our world. Jealousy is very dangerous because it leads to hatred, anger and if it is misdirected, it can lead to the death of the other.

*Selfishness and Pride*: These are phenomena that we must avoid in our families and detect them in time in our children in order to eradicate them. A child who is motivated by the desire to possess everything is a danger to his entourage. It is these scourges that are at the origin of the struggles, the tears in families about inheritance.

### *3. Some Solutions for Resolving this Conflict Problem*

- Seeking peace and brotherhood among families
- Instilling human and religious values in all our children
- Awakening children's awareness of social cohesion and depravity
- Know how to simplify things and always forgive

### **Third Homily**

Theme: Sibling Rivalry Based on Matthew 18:21-19:1

Liturgical Setting: Selected Christians from Saint Gregory the Great Parish Ndobonaberi-Douala

Thursday, August 17, 2023

#### **Biblical Text: Matthew 18:21-19:1 (RSV)**

*Peter came and said to Jesus, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven*

*times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, is lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as had mercy on you?’ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.” When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.*

### **Homily Text**

Dearly beloved in Christ,

We have in the past weeks, discussed on the importance of collaborative, peaceful co-habitation in our families and our community despite the ever-imposing presence of sibling rivalry and other forms of differences. Reading and meditating from Genesis 21:8-21, opened our eyes to the reality of conflicts in our society originating from the family. We insisted on peaceful co-habitation through dialogue: Ministry of Collaboration in a divided context. A week later, we deepened our reflection through the story of Jacob and his brother Esau (Gen. 27:1-40), however noting the need for forgiveness as a tool for reconciliation.

Today’s gospel presents a challenging and difficult situation concerning our living together which is forgiveness. Considering the fact that we are bound to live together, hurting one another becomes inevitable. But, then, the search for peace and reconciliation is paramount as Jesus tells us in yesterday’s gospel (Mt. 18:15-20) where dialogue is the

main key “if your brother offends you go to him one on one; or invite two witnesses; or call the community”. We see here a strong call to dialogue. Forgiveness is a process which is best achieved through dialogue and it is the only means through which our different families can receive healing and experience the love and mercy of God.

In this light after our last sermon, a group of 7 adults and 6 children and youths gathered in the Marian grotto to dialogue on how we, as a church community, can address the issue of conflicts in our families, parish, local community, town and country. In an open discussion, members freely shared situations in which they had faced betrayals, rejection, stigmatization and separation based on tribe, social status, religious and political affiliations or economic divisions between the rich and poor. I must admit, at first, people were hesitant to share these stories. It is not an easy thing to be vulnerable in a group situation like that. But one by one, people opened up and talked about these painful situations. This is important because it shows that this congregation is willing to be honest and forthright, to share their experiences and feelings in a way that builds trust.

Faced with the above issues, we discussed three different roles that the church might play in a divided society such as ours. One way is for the church to be a refuge for people by putting everything in place for the spiritual life of the Christians. On this note, The Church becomes a source of unity for all the sons and daughters of God who forms one family. Another option is for the church to serve as a mediator to provide a conducive place to gather people for discussion – much like we were doing in that dialogue. Finally, we discussed the option of the Church as a prophetic voice active in the public square that can denounce evil and encourage the peaceful resolution of problems.

In this process, we found the need for forgiveness (forgiving one another) through the light of the Holy Spirit.

Apart from discovering this inevitable need for dialogue and forgiveness, our dialogue group thought of possible next steps and a way forward to encourage collaboration in our community. In this regard, we insisted on participating in church activities and more collaboration among us. We emphasize on the spirit of openness to those of other social, linguistic, ethnic, and cultural background. We saw the need to be appreciative of others and being ready to learn from them, to need to be humble, the need to allow the ideas of others over ours, the need for self-development, the need of going towards others and to take our Gospel Sharing seriously in Small Christian Communities. These and many others were proposals that could bind us together to work in collaboration.

Generally, the question of forgiveness for a fresh beginning was at the center of the day. Thus, learning to forgive those who cause us grief and pain is one of the great challenges life offers us. The question of Peter today is as a result of the difficulties revolving forgiving of others. “How often must I forgive my brother?” This simply implies forgiveness has to be limited. Erring generously, Peter proposes seven times as often enough. Biblically, seven is a generous and complete number. Therefore forgiving seven times is forgiving greatly; surely, at the seventh time, nothing more could be demanded of one. However, Jesus instead asks more, not even seven times, but seventy-seven times. Let there be no limit to our forgiveness. Our forgiveness should be inelastic.

Jesus buttresses this challenging call with the parable about the servant who owes his master ten thousand talents (the ungrateful servant). This was a gigantic amount,

corresponding to billions of FCFA today. Like the debts of some nations to the banks, basically, it could never be paid back. In the parable, the master feeling sorry for this servant simply annulled the debt. This is a victory of grace over stern justice. It is an image portraying the generous ways of our God. Jesus discloses a God whose mercy overrides justice. We find the most memorable image of such a merciful God in the father of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:11-32). This parable requires that the mercy which God has freely given us should flow and penetrate through us to touch others. In other words, “Be merciful as your Father is merciful” (Lk. 6:36).

My dear sisters and brothers let us continue to value forgiveness that capable of healing and binding us together. Let us see how to organize a solid multicultural community that has Jesus as the center. Let us look up to Jesus on the cross as a sign of our own forgiveness. As we pray and meditate today, let us always strive to go for the sacrament of reconciliation from where the love and mercy of God teaches us to be forgiving and merciful to others. Let us build our community, having Jesus at the center. Jesus is the only one who reconciles us to one another, to church and to God our loving Father. May that blood that flood from the cross of Calvary wipe away our sins and help us to forgive others for a more unified community.

May the Good and all Loving God bless us the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen!

**Resume of my experience of the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon with Rev. Fr. Jude Langeh, cmf**

Our journey to the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon experience with Rev. Fr. Jude Thaddeus Langeh, cmf, began in the month of July 2022 when he consulted me to

participate in his thesis, which I freely accepted. To begin, I was given the book titled *Preaching in the Purple Zone* by Leah D. Schade, which helped to prepare me before the training session I later had with two others under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Jude Langeh. I must confess it has been an enriching experience not only for me but as well for my parishioners who still crave for this prophetic conversation and dialogue to continue.

In the process of realizing the Sermon-Dialogue-Sermon, after preaching the first sermon (the sibling rivalry between Isaac and Jacob), we felt the need to do a second one as during the evaluation we first found timidity but then we had to push participants to go deep within them as a means of them taking responsibility of their contribution in conflict. Thus, a second sermon (sibling rivalry between Jacob and Esau) and an evaluation, as usual, helped us to prepare our deliberative dialogue. The elements of this dialogue influenced our preparation of the communal sermon dialogue. At the end of this exercise, we want to continue with these forms of dialogue in our different groups. Personally, as a priest, this sermon method has given me a new and maybe better horizon in the preparation of my homilies for a multicultural community like mine.

### **Questions for Reflecting on the Deliberative Dialogue**

#### General Information about the Session

1. *How many people attended?* 17 people attended our sessions
2. *How many men/women/people of other genders were present?* 5 men; 8 women; 3 seminarians and a priest
3. *What was the age range of the participants? How many youth, young adults, middle-aged adults, and retirees were present?* The youngest was about 22 years while the oldest is 72 years. So we had 4 youths, 3 young adults and 10 adults or elderly persons.
4. *What was the socioeconomic range of the participants?* Participants from all socioeconomic classes (the less privilege, the middle class and the well to do)

5. *What was the racial/ethnic spectrum of the group?* The setting was a high representation of the bilingual nature of the country as well as ethnic groups (north, center, west, north west, south west regions were present)

6. *What do you guess to be the political affiliations of the participants?* What percentage were conservative, moderate, progressive, or a mixture? Content of Deliberative Dialogue Forum

I think they are really not politically inclined but people simply searching to make life better and the world a better place.

7. *In the opening section, when people shared how this issue affected them personally, what stories stood out to you?* It was timid at the beginning but then people began accepting the reality of conflicts in their homes. The story that stood out, though many were linked to it, was about inheritance that destroyed a big family (polygamous family), another one in which a man before dying sold all his properties and telling the children to work for theirs while another told the child to fight in order to choose his successor and this has created a series of death in that family.

8. *How would you characterize the discussion? Was it relatively calm or intense? Were there moments of tension? If so, what were the points of contention?* It was in really intense because we found out that people had a lot in them they needed to voice out. The bone of contention was on the way forward. The question was should forgiveness be the solution?

9. *After the group deliberated about the three options, what common themes and shared values did they identify? What passages, stories, or images from scripture align with these themes and values?* The question of forgiveness and dialogue as seen in the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:31-32), the call of Jesus for dialogue in case of conflicts (Mt.18:15-20), Jesus' insistence of not counting the cost or times of forgiveness (Mt.18:21-19:1).

10. *What ideas were suggested in the "next steps" section? Which ones seemed to generate the most energy? In what way might these ideas be the workings of the Holy Spirit within the group and/or the congregation?* The need for creating and strengthening structures of dialogue in the parish such as the parish pastoral council, organizing a parish week of dialogue, encourages dialogue in our homes. We see this situation as the working of the Holy Spirit in that realities on the timidity experienced in the parish came out and solutions too were proposed and we saw satisfaction in the faces of participants.

11. *Were there any "a-ha" moments of sharing within the group that shifted perspectives?* Yes they were so many (we saw Christians directly pointing fingers at some members of the parish pastoral council present).

12. *How did you feel when the forum was finished? What feedback did you receive from participants after it was over?* I felt satisfied and the participants are happy for it is

bringing personal healings on them and thus, they expressed the desire for the dialogue to continue at all levels in the parish.

13. *What did you learn about this group and/or the congregation from this deliberative dialogue?* It was indeed a dynamic group ready to learn, assist others to growth. I saw their willingness to always be humble and let the ideas of others to prevail.

14. *What did you learn about yourself in this process?* That I could lead people in a peace talk.



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