

# **ETHICS OF SELF-RELIANCE - A CHALLENGE TO THE AFRICAN CHURCH AND PEOPLE FOR RESPECT, HUMAN DIGNITY AND SELF-WORTH**

*Obiora F. Ike*

## **4.1 Introduction**

We start this reflection by stating that poverty is not God determined<sup>79</sup>. Poverty is man-made. If we wished, we could reduce and eradicate poverty, hunger, malnutrition, disease and provide affordable and peaceful environments for all peoples within this globe - within a decade, simply by the force of values and ensuring that ethical ingredients drive our actions. It is time to do the right things rightly because it is ought that they be so done for the common good.

This contribution serves the common purpose to learn from each other and to focus on one agenda – namely the task for the self-understanding of the Christian churches and the community of believers in Africa for increased self-reliance in their governance structures, judicious management of their natural and human resources and the distribution of their temporal and spiritual goods. This would signal to the larg-

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<sup>79</sup> Rev. Monsignor Prof. Dr Obiora Ike is Executive Director of Globethics.net in Geneva Switzerland and Professor of Ethics and Intercultural Studies at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, Nigeria.

er world that the people and Churches of Africa are at the forefront of leading by example and being the Light of the World and Salt of the Earth (Mathew 7). It is also a sign of its growing maturity and self-worth.

History records show that from the 15<sup>th</sup> century trade on human beings as slaves, Africans have suffered intolerable exploitation of their human and material wealth. This business of slave trade happened for near three hundred years, depopulating the continent, depriving a people of their most important assets, setting the clock back for the progress and development for Africans and killing millions of its sons and daughters in the bowels of the trans-Atlantic slave trade for centuries. The slave trade was immediately followed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with colonialism – a system of forced conquest of people and territory – all in the interest of the usurper and colonizer.

These acted above and out of every natural or human or even divine law - intimidating, killing, maiming and denigrating all known fundamental respects to rights, dignity or self-worth of the colonized with the false notion of civilization. It extremely exploited and robbed the people of their identity and natural wealth in still unimaginable and unfathomable wickedness – difficult for words to express. This unparalleled thievery in human history and the imposed denial of all basic rights upon the African peoples is still cause for the under-development of the continent. The time has therefore come for the search and required introspection necessary for the African church and its peoples, to see in the philosophy of self-reliance, an ethical attempt to reclaim their respect, human dignity and self-worth.

The global environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century offers some space for the African Churches and its peoples to think of ways to reclaim their fundamental rights and dignity by asserting their ability to authentic identity through a certain self-reliance on the economic, social, political and cultural areas of collaboration.

It is time therefore, looking at the biblical insights and the challenges which theology offers for any persecuted people, to understudy the urgency of a Christian community and Church that believes in, and works for Justice and self-reliance for its people. The proclamation of faith in the One God of Heaven who made all people in his own image and likeness, therefore equal in dignity, identity and humanity makes this search and vision possible.

The African churches and its peoples are called to promote self-reliance through care for the environment and creation at a time of climate change and its challenges. There is urgent insistence on the need for the protection of basic freedoms and the religious rights and free conscience of peoples through the prophetic function of education, teaching, witnessing, practice, sharing values and practicing the law of Love within the Churches and amongst the people “made in Gods sacred image” (Genesis 1:26).

The basic Laws of most States including the United Nations are guided by values and norms to protect common interests one of which is that “Human dignity shall be inviolable”. This fundamental principle, rooted in many African traditions as is also found in other religions as well as in Christian tradition offers moral obligations which call people to do the right thing because it is right to do so. This includes the right to move from a beggar and constantly begging and dependent Church to self-reliance and self-sustenance.

Already, the vision, values and Mission of Christ which agenda is open-ended and limitless, without borders and eternal is now joined by the Africa Union Agenda 2063. It corroborates the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030 and the self-understanding of the African peoples themselves.

It seems appropriate to presume that one of the expectations of this reflection is on how we can specifically offer some solution to the legitimate quest for the self-reliance of the local Churches and Societies

within the African continent, moving away from the already mentioned symptoms of stigma of coloniality mentality; alienation, lack of identity and self-worth and age long dependence on external agencies and institutions to the vision and reality of post-conciliar Second Vatican Council (1962 -1965) which challenged the Christian faithful to become more subsistent and self-reliant Christian communities along the examples found in the early Christian Church (Cf. *Acts of the Apostles*, Chapter 2, ff).

This agenda is summarized in those beautiful words of St. John's Gospel: "*The Word took flesh and dwelt among us*" (John I: 14). It is the taking flesh of faith in Christ (incarnation) in a particular place, culture and amongst people, still remaining authentically Christian and truly human and Africans. This world view and theology empowers and liberates people – offering people the possibility to realize that poverty is not God determined but man-made. If we wished, we could reduce and eradicate poverty. Poverty, hunger, malnutrition and want could be overcome within a decade if the right things were done.

## **4.2 The Gift – Africa's Blessings and Tremendous Assets**

I mention as starting point a truism which I believe you know well but I feel some joy each time to repeat it: Africa is the cradle of humankind – "and there is some atom of Africa in each person" according to a recently widely publicized document of the German Government titled: "*Africa and Europe – A new partnership for development, peace and a better future*".

The continent is rich with vast agricultural and land resources and potentials to feed all its peoples. Looking at the size, this is a landmass three times the size of Europe and 85 times the size of Germany, consisting of 54 independent countries and is home to over 3,000 ethnic groups and communities, distinct cultures, languages, landscapes and

countless religious faiths.. In concrete terms, afro-optimism insists that an Africa without hunger is possible.

Nature has blessed creation with abundance and it has blessed the continent of Africa. Scientists, philosophers, economists and simple people know this. There are plenty of resources, natural, human, spiritual, technical and mental to take care of all. The continent is home to 15 per cent of global oil reserves, 40 percent of gold reserves, 80 per cent of platinum metal reserves and has the largest expanse of agricultural land in the world (African Development Bank documents, 2015). In addition to its richness in resources is the tremendous asset of its young population, with cultural diversity, entrepreneurial spirit, innovative power and great untapped potential in the areas of renewables and agriculture.

The Churches and faith communities share cultural and religious diversity which bring joy, life, meaning and values into the African space. Churches have always played a pivotal role in providing social services, especially in the areas of education and health. They reach people even in places where no public institutions or systems exist. Religious groups are strong in defence of human rights and development and raise their voices exposing corruption and social injustice even at risk of persecution.

A McKinsey study makes concrete forecasts for year 2025 on Africa, showing doubling of manufacturing output, 2.1 trillion USD in household consumption and 3.5 billion dollars in business spending. In the last few decades, there have been some positive developments: *“the gross domestic product has increased fivefold since 1990, child and maternal mortality has been reduced by half, and 80 per cent of all children today attend primary school”* (McKinsey Global Institute (2016), *Lions on the Move II*).

But there is unfortunately, the equivalent amount of greed, wickedness, sin and powerful agents who do not wish for a world for every-

body. This is so when we consider our Youth, caught languishing on the waters of Mediterranean sea as migrants and being pushed by circumstances, feel rejected by all – both at home and abroad.

God gives abundant life and resources to his whole creation, including humanity. Christians as followers of Jesus Christ and churches as the body of Christ participate in this abundance of God's gifts with talents of human resources and manifold mobile or fixed assets in land, forests, real estate, institutions, capital, including the assets of church-related organisations (CROs) such as schools, hospitals, farms, training centres, microfinance institutions, women's associations, universities etc. What we have done with all these gifts?

Are they being effectively used?

Therefore, we need a new partnership in development co-operation where a coalition is built around those who believe that poverty is not God determined. We are challenged to take a stand on the side of on-going struggle for the eradication of the structures of disease, hunger and ignorance.

## **4.2 The Challenge**

Africa "*rise up and walk*"! (John Chapter 5). This is the challenge, words found on the lips of Jesus Christ and addressed to the lame man on the pool side of Siloam in the New Testament to help himself and not live in helplessness. These words are addressed to the African peoples in Church and Society with even greater vigor today so that that they do not continue to wallow in self-pity, lethargy, apathy, unrealistic and unrealistic bogus claims, dishonesty, adulation and a perpetual dependency syndrome.

Look around you and you discover the manifest situation of many people in our lands, frustrated, homeless, facing wars and displacements, dejected, brutalized, abandoned, disillusioned and rendered poor in every sense of the word. They are hungry, exploited and naked, homeless

and many of them die young. Statistics on the African continent state that 40,000 children die daily due to lack of the basic means of livelihood. The contextual statistics would be most challenging, thus, the phenomenon of crime, 'boko Haramism', terrorism, kidnapping and brigandage into negative actions which has become the bane of our society.

At the Berlin conference of 1884/85, European greedy nations gathered together to take what does not belong to them and thus split up the continent drawn with a ruler on a table, dividing peoples, cultures, relations and peoples without taking into account the history and the consequences of these actions – just for the sake of naked power, greed for resources and utter neglect of all the noble principles which guide civilised humans.

By denying the people their right to self-determination for over hundred years of colonialism which just came at the end of over three centuries of slavery – the lowest point in human savagery (selling fellow humans as merchandise), an era of suppression, paternalism, humiliation and exploitation has been entrenched and continues to this day. This past historical reality has caused many conflicts and wars and which continue to the present day, thus the problems of today have their roots in this past European intrusion. *Learning from this history today means assuming responsibility for a common future grounded on justice, equity, freedom and reconciliation.* Europe and the west owe Africa, but what do we say of what Africans do to themselves?

Worldwide, cases of corruption abound. Poverty increases alongside wealth and many die young. There is constant news on abuse of resources and its depletion; of lack of transparency and the growth of nepotism, mediocrity, unethical dealings, or just indifference to the world around us. What is our role in all of this? How do we bring this reality closer in view of rising depletion of resource, climatic changes, disasters such as floods and acid rains, global warming and lack of access to required knowledge and adequate funds to make things better? How do we

build bridges across cultures, religions, sectors to ensure stewardship as a Gospel value? And the bottom line is this: Building a bridge from the reality to the ideal requires a plan.

In many African countries, corrupt elites still have too much influence. Elites who prefer to channel their money abroad instead of investing it locally, who decide to sell their arable land and fisheries instead of using them to feed their own population, who let multinationals exploit the countries natural resources without creating domestic value chains. The many gifts received imply a great challenge and calls for acceptance of principles of Solidarity with those in need; promotion of the thinking around subsidiarity which is self – help; responsible management of available resources to avoid waste and recycle them; rejection of lifestyles that are superfluous and mundane to our vocation and identity.

International corporations are also falling short in many areas. They do not meet local environmental and social standards and compliance regulations where they do business and extract minerals and resources. Large amounts of money are lost through the illicit financial flows, tax avoidance and irregular practices that deprive a continent and its people their wealth and development (*cf. Final Paper of the High Level panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa of the AU/UN, 2015*).

There is still much poverty in churches and CROs, in Africa which urgency implies a need to decrease dependency from donations and to increase income from professionally managed assets. This include the mismanagement and abuse of church resources e.g. by corruption. Improved asset management is urgent for the sustainable continuation and expansion of the mission and tasks of the churches and CROs. It is also a key element for African Dignity, the motto of the All Africa Conference of Churches All African Conference of Churches (AACC).

In addition, women and minorities are often excluded in many cases although the skills and abilities of all people are needed. No society can afford not to use the potentials of half of its population. The women of

Africa hold the key to the continents future in their hands. They must also be able to use that key.

The aforementioned document on a Marshall Plan with Africa mentions large sections of the African populations, especially in sub-Saharan Africa *who suffer from a political culture that does not define “government” as a duty to serve the common good but as the right to help yourself.* This aberration deprives everyone, particularly the youth of Africa of their future.

### **4.3 Our Mandate**

Our mandate has its roots in the Gospel of Jesus Christ to *“Go into the whole World and proclaim the good news”* (Matthew 28:19). *“I came that they may have life in abundance”* (John 10:10). *“The spirit of the Lord has been given to me for the Lord has sent me to Good news to the poor”* (Luke 4:18). The Lord Jesus Christ in his life challenged the people of Israel to self-help. A good example is the miracle at the lake of Galilee with the multiplication of loaves. He made the disciples *‘not to send the people away into the desert in search of food’* but to give them food themselves by helping locate a young lad who had five loaves and two fishes. This symbol was enough for the Lord to perform the miracle of the multiplication and feeding of five thousand people, not counting the numbers of women and Children.

It is our responsibility as Christian leaders of society to encourage the empowerment of people, which leads them into self-reliance and allows them to shape their destiny. Such strength helps people to understand the underlying causes of poverty and to organize themselves for purposeful activity. Positive empowerment is based on solidarity and mutual respect and strives for an equality of relationship, which it may never fully achieve. This is the real challenge facing the world and the Church, for how can we see people die daily of hunger for food, unemployment, curable diseases, illiteracy and ignorance, ill-health, inade-

quate housing and horrendous poverty without realizing their God given destinies and talents? The challenge and mandate in the language of Vatican II is to “*see the signs of the times and translate them in the light of the Gospel*” (GS I, 2).

Taking into consideration, the fact that any discussion about self-reliance revolves around the proper use of power which is the ability to achieve purpose and bring about change, we do underscore our utter rejection of a system which creates and encourages poverty in order to practice charity. The New Testament repeatedly attests to the paradoxical inter-relationship of power and powerlessness. “*He has sent me to bring the Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind to set the downtrodden free and to proclaim to all the Lord's year of favour*” ( Luke 4:18-19).

The long tradition of Christian Ethics and Social Teaching has always advocated the *empowerment* of poor and marginalized people, a theology completely consistent with the Gospel by empowering the less privileged to become equal and responsible citizens. *No genuine authority can be based upon the powerlessness of those who are subject to it.* In fact, political and economic situations challenge poor people to effect changes in their own lives by engaging the oppressive structures and social situations that has kept them dependent. “*God helps those who help themselves*”.

What we experience in the Arab world and in other places of tumult and uprising currently is somehow related to the relocation of power to the people against years of oppression, injustice and tutelage. There comes a time when people can and must say “No!” to subjugation as an attempt to recreate their destinies wasted by elite that denied them their rights and suppressed it. The exodus phenomenon is the historical presence and action of God alongside the marginalized, a paradigmatic approach which captures the present situation and mood of the Nigerian people.

In the words of a Vatican diplomat to the UN: “*if the process globalization which is taking place in our world is to be truly human, it requires the construction of a truly global community where concern for all especially the weakest is uppermost*” (cf. Archbishop Renato Martino, Vatican Diplomat and Nuncio, *Speech to the UN*, 1977).

#### **4.4 Some Solutions towards Self-reliance of the African Church and Society**

It has been said often but bears repetition here: “*There is not ONE solution, ONE plan, ONE best way of responding to the challenges that Africa faces today*”. There are many ways but the first step is in values driven leadership where Africans must first of all help themselves first.

The African Church Assets Programme ACAP of AACC and Globethics.net, supported by Bread for the World, is a very important effort and contribution to these goals. The handbook on Assets management for the Church in Africa is a concrete tool for church leaders, finance and asset officers, pastors, lay persons and experts to develop their action plans, increase their income from assets and attract ecumenical partners, investors and governments to support the efforts of the churches and CRO for sustainability and thus also to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The handbook is also timely as AACC with its 11<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in Kigali/Rwanda early July 2018 decides on the AACC programmes for the coming years. Responsible and sustainable assets management will certainly be part of it.

##### **4.4.1 Ethics is Key**

The subject of Ethics is in very high demand during these times as we face global challenges that need standards for human interaction and orientation, founded on values and sustainable principles that serve the common good of all people.

With the consequences of scandals at all levels in the corporate, religious, educational and overall private sectors, exposing massive abuses, gross cases of corruption, growing poverty and impunity that justifies illegality (*might is right*), there is urgent need to address an ethical orientation in the financial management of resources entrusted to our care.

#### **4.4.2 Ethical Education**

There is need for ethical education at all levels starting from the family but entrenched in the curriculum of studies of centres of learning, particularly in tertiary institutions of education, but also in seminaries and business schools. But ethical education is not enough. It must be followed by transformation from within since this is a domain that needs internal but also external co-ordination. Universal Standards that guide people through constitutions, codes, guidelines and wisdom practices become relevant.

Management of the resources of groups and religious congregations and their assets are not normally the first things religious think of in the context of their piety, mission and the practice of their spiritual lives as religious brothers and sisters. So why focus on “Economy and Mission”? The question can be put in another manner: How are you managing the responsibilities entrusted to you as a religious at every level of responsibility? And since some of these assets are material, a clear answer necessarily links the topic of Economy and Mission. In view of global climate and socio-political and economic challenges, there is a worldwide concern about the care for our resources and for the environment.

People are thinking of the future in ways that was some years earlier presumed as certain. Religious life is moving from the global North to the global South after several years of dominance and presence of the centres of religion and political dominance in these centres. Just like a well that watered other countries and farms in the past, it is clear that the

North must let go so that the younger mission countries find their own sources, resources, and personnel to thrive and grow new fruits. It is a difficult task to let go, therefore several discussions are happening about the Future and the responsibility all of us have for this Future. Pope Francis has called all to become Good Stewards. The simplest way to formulate this question is to ask the following to the brothers and sisters: “How do you start your day? Do you have any plans? Or do you just wake up in the morning and watch the day pass by, waiting for things to happen? And the Religious are specially invited to raise awareness about the importance of good stewardship, become better stewards in areas of competence and serve Christ better.

Let it be said – Many Church leaders, theologians and pastors live in a reality that is often far removed from our ideal. *“When we discuss finances, we talk about our lifestyle and the way of living together and therefore, in particular about the credibility of our religious life. And at the same time we reflect upon the way in which we establish our mission [...] the importance of our vocation to be close to the poor”* (Brother Lawrence Obiko, Superior General of the Brothers CMM, at the International Meeting Accountable Brothers – Good Stewardship in Brothers CMM, October 9<sup>th</sup> to 21, 2016; ISSN, 1877-6256, p.4).

Permit me to begin this reflection with a statement made by the Blessed Michael Eneja, Bishop of Enugu 1978 -1996 who addressed religious and priests in Nigeria with these words: *“We as individuals and groups need to be efficient in financial management. Our system must be clear, orderly and transparent. Our reports must be punctual and regular. One must not be satisfied that one is honest to oneself. This is no longer enough. One must also prove that one is honest before others and the Law. It is not just the casual statement “it is between God and me”. In these days, it is the question of “between others, the Law and me”.* Church stewardship on financial management is a dimension of

integral Development. It is the relevance of the link between body, mind and soul and a call to faithful followership.

#### **4.4.3 Stewardship**

The goods of this world have been given to humankind for use and responsible stewardship/management. This mandate to stewardship is grounded in sound reason and common sense and is justified in all cultures, traditions and religions. For Christians this mandate is at the origin of creation in the Book of Genesis chapter one: “*subdue the earth and fill the earth*”. True stewardship therefore involves and revolves around the following themes with implications for:

- Preservation of the *trust* delegated to humankind;
- The guarantee of *justice* in the distribution of goods;
- The promotion of the *common good*;
- Search for the restoration of *human dignity*;
- The practice of the *principles of subsidiarity, solidarity and accountable lifestyles*;

The good Shepherd has taught us: “*not only in this life, but even in the next shall each person be held accountable for deeds, misdeeds and omissions (Mathew chapter 25)*”. And this portion shows that the accountability shall be based on Truth, Justice and Charity. Self-reliance implies stewardship which is realised through proper planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluating development and projects as stewardship “*Failing to Plan is planning to fail*”. This is an old adage and is useful for each Planning group of person.

The Lord teaches in the Gospel of Luke 14. 28 -33 to plan and budget properly. The adage is “Look before you Leap”. Planning is an intellectual process, the conscious determination of courses of action, the basing of decisions on purpose, facts, actual situations and considered estimates. Planning could be ad-hoc, short term, medium term, or even long term depending on the project and problem in view. The ad-

vantages of planning are many including offsetting uncertainty, minimising costs or wastes, facilitating control, keeping objectives in view. Good planning under normal circumstances leads to successful results.

#### **4.4.4 Co-ordination and Collaboration Skills**

Co-ordination calls for mutual proper assessment of targets and goals aligned to expected results. The leaders ensure communication and knowledge of skills, respect, trust, understanding and team work among the stakeholders of a project. Faithful to our mandate to witness to Jesus Christ in our lives and in His Church, the responsibility of co-ordination of various projects and persons responsible for execution appears as the mandate to stewardship and preservation of the goods given to our care. Co-ordination can be internal or external but always implies that the right people be appointed for the right jobs. We call it “putting square pegs in square holes”. It implies ability to maintain a strong communication link among the activities in a particular project in order to get the desired goals and objectives achieved according to plan. Therefore the regular training of the agents and sharing of experiences of projects is critical for success.

#### **4.4.5 Self-reliance - Christian Social Teaching en route**

The universal quest by man created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 27) for a better world founded on the biblical injunction to “subdue the earth and fill it” (Gen 1: 28) living in full equality, dignity and integrity, prompted this reflection on the linkage of Church and self-reliance.

Due to the lack of knowledge by people, including Christians of the profound teachings contained in the Social Teaching of the Church since Pope Leo XIII’s Encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum* on the conditions of the working classes and the call for their liberation, just treatment and just wage, the magisterial office of the Church has continued to inundate the world and the Faithful with statements, guiding principles and teach-

ing that guarantee a proper understanding of socio-economic and political-cultural realities. These realities are founded on sound reason, common sense and the injunctions of faith. We as African theologians, Christian Faithful and ministers of the Word are also called to reflect on these teachings in the light of our own peculiar faith experiences and circumstances of life with the purpose of drawing from their insights, deepening them in our thoughts and further elaborating upon them with our background and context in view.

#### ***4.4.6 Christian Principles Call for Personality and Subsidiarity***

This sharing today draws upon some of these age old wisdom and guiding principles, thus, their presentation in a brief summary here. Pope John XXIII described the Church as “*Mater et Magistra*” (mother and teacher) in his Encyclical letter which bears this title, stating very strongly that this “Catholic social Doctrine is an integral part of the Christian conception of life” (MM 222). He suggests that these principles are of universal application, for they take human nature and the varying conditions in which man's life is lived into account.

The principles also take into account the principal characteristics of contemporary society, and are, thus, acceptable to all (Cf. MM no 220). Pope John XXIII, therefore, recommends that there is urgency for the study of the Social Doctrine of the Church. “*Such teaching must be extended by regular, systematic courses in Catholic schools of every kind, especially in seminaries. It is to be inserted in to the religious instruction of parishes and of association of the lay apostolate. It must be spread by every modern means at our disposal: daily newspapers, periodicals, popular and scientific publications, radio and television*” (MM 224).

This call, which since then has been interpreted to mean prophetic challenge in view of the events of human history since 50 years of its publication, faces us more in the particular churches of Africa and our developing nation. With the document *Populorum Progressio* Pope Paul

VI in 1968 gave the world a clear teaching on the link of development and progress, Church and self-reliance, culture and society. In fact, he called development the ‘new name for peace’ and urged that every effort be made to bring humanity to the awareness and authenticity of their true self, identity, skills, ability and resources which in essence is authentic and sustainable development. *True development is not infrastructural; it is the building of the human person and his integrity and personality according to the mind of God.*

The linkage of Church and self-reliance is a theological concept, expressed since apostolic times and engraved even in the nature of the family and the system of economic enterprise, particularly agricultural production in antiquity before the emergence of industrial capitalism. In the word of Pope John XXIII, “*it is not enough merely to formulate a social doctrine. It must be translated into reality. And this is particularly true of the Church's Social Doctrine, the light of which is truth, justice its objective and love its driving force*” (MM226).

Grieved at the wanton misery and suffering into which increasing majorities of our people are condemned to live especially their economic dependence, there is need for the leaders of the people to realize that “*failing to plan is planning to fail*”. Therefore, in an effort to free ourselves from the present situation of dependency we acknowledge the need to recognize our potentials and limitations in order to achieve the desired self-reliance. Over ambition and undue expectations are part of the problems which make people “*build castles in the air*”. Several resources have been wasted in unattainable projects. The Church is called to lead by modest example to sustain this drive and its ministers must commit themselves to carry out this mission in educational campaigns for justice and peace for all our people.

#### ***4.4.7 Self-reliance also Implies Solidarity***

The quest for self-reliance is not an attempt at rebellion, or an exercise in isolation. The Church can attain self-reliance in those areas

where she can do things for herself, seek reasonable assistance from external bodies on those things she cannot support herself and pursue the wisdom which states that subsidiarity does not exclude solidarity in the search for the Common Good. Our belief is based on the fact that we have several values in our religious, theological, cultural and social ambient which teach us the proper use and management of resources. These correspond to the wisdom of our ancestors who became rich by saving and harnessing the little they had. In our context and with the added advantage of knowledge and experiences of what works elsewhere, the management of local resources and the belief in our ability to sustain and survive assumes the dimensions of a Gospel initiative. It is imperative to accept this challenge and serve the people to redirect their values so that we learn to “*cut our coat according to our size and cloth*”.

Given the socio-political conditions in our various churches and countries today, the Church's growth and development of the faithful has been adversely affected without much needed resources. The seminaries and religious houses still lack adequate accommodation. Many parishes especially in the rural areas do not have the access and adequate resources required for mission work. Infrastructure much needed for development are lacking as our road network, housing, energy and power supplies for industrial development is below average and constant outage of electricity a common occurrence. As a result, we still have to depend upon external assistance on a wide range of areas.

We realize that funds emanating from external sources may have some ‘strings’ attached and may not continue for long, in fact are rather diminishing. *Donor agencies have developed a gradual ‘aid fatigue’ and there is a direct call to recipients to be on their own.* We urge ourselves and other Non-governmental organizations including our local Church to prepare for this probable development. At a meeting in Kumasi, Ghana of the Bishops of West Africa, concern and focus was given to matters of sustainability and self-reliance, showing that the bishops

are resolved to move from a receiving (begging) Church to become a self-sustaining and rather giving Church.

Our people are brilliant with realistic ideas, planning and methodology skills which are foundations for the proper participation of all persons as productive ingredients in the attempts towards self-reliance. The contributions of the Laity in resources management needs to be constantly encouraged and not be neglected. The laity have a wealth of resources, decision making systems and management competency skills that serves the need of the Church and their locality. Their participation is critical and Laity remain the major untapped resource in our Churches.

#### ***4.4.8 Development Cooperation-Lessons for the Global North and the South***

In a growing global environment with migrations, influences and interconnectedness on economic, cultural, social, political, technological and market/religious levels, human thinking and development models are changing and rapidly too. Whereas populations and youthful religious vocations move to the global south, aging populations and wealth stay in the global North calling for all round paradigm shifts. In a paper I delivered in 1997 at Enugu for Justice and Peace co-ordinators of the Catholic Church of Nigeria and co-organised with Misereor on the topic: "Development strategies and Financial Management of Projects", CIDJAP publications, 1997, pp. 15 to 20, co-edited with Willy Kawohl and Emmanuel Ome, I made the following points which bear repetition here:

- Development must take place in the global North and the global South simultaneously and on a reciprocal basis. This is based on the Social teaching of the Church which states that Development is integral and is needed by all. "The Goods of this world belong to all" (*Ref to Gaudium et Spes; John XXIII, Mater et Magistra; John Paul II Laborem Exercens; Paul VI, Popu-*

*lorum Progeressio; Pope Francis, Spes Salvi*). This means that development can no longer be understood as something that is almost exclusively necessary for the so called “*developing countries*”. Co-operative development work has to be re- defined as applicable both to the North and the South with simultaneous inter-dependent challenges.

- Co-operative Development work has to be more engaged in a just distribution. The imbalance of the distribution of the goods of the universe with statistics that show clear disparity is the bane for Economy and Mission. Whereas some have little or nothing, others have more than they need and even waste it. The world-wide prevalence of the market economy system also integrates the so-called developing countries into the world market. It is a task for Church leaders to counteract the continuing concentration of economic power in the North. The mutual aims must remain the limitations of unchecked market forces, the redistribution of power and wealth at all levels and the strengthening of local and regional structures.
- Co-operative Development Work is not only the Business of Aid/Development Agencies. Churches, Trade Unions, Missionary organisations and governments are all part of development in its broadest forms. The aim of this broad based co-operation is an improved coherence in the relationship between the Global North and the rest of the global south.
- The interdependence of the problems of the North and the South demand specific strategies for their resolution. Changes can be realised by targeted measures that have positive effect on global problems affecting all. Examples include justice questions such as access to Trade and Markets; preventing capital flight from poor countries to the global banks in the north; reduction of

carbon dioxide emissions and balancing the overuse of the planet's resources through greening of the environment of the south, etc.

- The Problems of the North and the South are interlinked. Some of the problems currently existing in the global south have their origins in the structures and rules prevalent in the *global north*. These include: environmental issues; health problems, cultural alienation and migrations. Many of the goals for development work in the North have relevance also for the South, such as strengthening of democratic structures, environmentally supportive food production, dealing with terrorism, etc.

## **4.5 Conclusion and Practical Resolutions**

Aware of the enormous responsibilities facing humanity, the African continent, the Church and society, we recommend and resolve as follows:

1. To face up to the real problems and challenges of the local Church, working in unity, determination and focus and through the Holy Spirit to promote more conscientiously the mission of Jesus Christ which is summed up in the new evangelization understood as: *proclamation, dialogue, enculturation, justice and peace and the challenges of the means of social communication (Ecclesia in Africa)*.
2. *Reaffirm our desire to identify and harness the material, spiritual and human resources of our local Church for the attainment of a state of sustainable self-reliance through measurable action that integrate respect for creation and inclusion of all, especially the poor.*

3. *Acknowledge the relevance of trained personnel* in our work to sustain the training and empowerment of our personnel and calling for ongoing formation in skills and knowledge within the shores of the locality and abroad.

4. *Promote the sustenance of the use and management of funds* at our disposal as a vital issue in the attempts to attain self-reliance. It is, therefore, imperative to hold tenaciously the principle of proper accountability, honesty and transparency in the use of funds.

5. *Promote the preferential option for the poor* which calls each individual to give a weighted concern to the needs of the poor, in all economic, political and social decisions; because, it is the most impoverished people whose rights and dignity are most often violated. We affirm that we are on the side of the poor.

6. *Challenge the rascality by which Local, State, and Federal officials of government have borrowed money* to buy supplies, equipment or a house. They borrow money from private markets and international financial institutions. Individual loans are often repaid directly, but if a country borrows money, the citizens are not necessarily notified or informed of the purpose of the loan or its terms and conditions. In fact instances exist, where such loans have been used to enrich a small group of people and have been transferred to private bank accounts of government officials outside the country. We question the logic and the justice which demands repayment of debt taken thirty years ago, before many African children were born and paid to creditor nations to be enjoyed by their children who were not born when the loans were taken. Huge debt repayments places repayment before life, and a total debt cancellation is a bold gesture of the Millennium Devel-

opment Goals to usher in demand for ethical considerations that promote and enhances life for all.

7. In line with Christian Ethics, *emphasize our belief in the sacredness of each individual and in the dignity of each person.* We consider this position a criterion against which all economic, political and social systems are to be judged and all aspects of the debt situation must be measured. The erosion of common good, caused by the current debt situation demands active solutions from governments, institutions, and the Churches which assure human dignity and protect human rights.

8. *Foster education growth at all levels and in all forms and dimensions,* especially in the promotion of career and skills programmes, youth and women development and in the promotion of a theology of empowerment, which is truly Catholic and authentically African.

9. *Encourage democratic elections and challenge our people to register, vote and be voted for and develop positive interest in politics for the general welfare,* whilst supporting lay and active participation in politics. We are aware that only in the restructuring of the social order based on the principles of justice, truth and fairness can there emerge the new society of our dreams. This optimism has its source in the belief that a “*common dream is the nearest reality*” and affirm with the Bishops of Africa in the Synod our hope and belief in HIM through whom all things are possible (Luke 1:37).

10. *Work towards financial self-reliance through income-generating projects and the establishment of Microfinance banks that are properly functioning and are guided by discipline and corporate governance;* the creation of Small Projects Fund and credit revolving projects for communities and groups such as

youth, women and men to promote their efforts on a revolving basis. Such projects build up group solidarity action and workers' rights; the provision of soft loans through Christian based and NGO Pro-credit Micro finance institutions to support private initiative, social market and individual or group entrepreneurship.

11. *Engage the people in agricultural projects; skills training and vocational centers for the youth and adult education with literacy programmes for those in need.*

12. *Acknowledge the spiritual, social and human dimensions of the contexts in which we act as agents of the Good News.* There is a lot of potentiality in human, natural and material resources in our nations and Christian communities. Almighty God has blessed us abundantly. The Local Church to a large extent is already self-reliant in manpower and personnel. The Church leadership has vision and there is need for courage. While much has been achieved already with the support of the world, Church and people of goodwill, much is yet to be done.

Finally, there goes out a *call on all our people, to work assiduously for the achievement of the goal of a self-reliant Church* in our countries and societies which are mature enough to help herself do what it can and even assist others. Success in attaining self-reliance will need discipline, truth, justice, hope, patience, love and perseverance.