

Workshop on the Synod II for Africa

Rome, 30th September to 2nd October 2009

Introduction

We participants coming from International Movements of Catholic inspiration and lay movements acting in Africa met in Rome, Casa Ravasco, Via Pio VIII from 29th September 2009 to 2nd October 2009 under the auspices of Pax Romana ICMICA and other movements¹. Our meeting was convened to express our support and solidarity to the second synod of Africa and make our contributions to this important process. This synod succeeds the first one held in Rome in 1994 and we are grateful to God for the accomplishments achieved so far while acknowledging that much remains to be done. The progress made so far gives us as a church a reason for optimism and confidence to face the future. In our reflection process we have analyzed the enormous challenges faced by the continent and also found several reasons to be hopeful. We hence wish to join the entire African Family of God to discern the direction to which the Spirit leads and moves the Church during this synod. Thus we have developed recommendations on Justice, sustainable peace building and reconciliation.

1. Economic and Political justice

The socio-economical situation of a major part of African population contrasts nowadays with the relative successes of African economic growth. The human development situation in some economically stable countries is sometimes even more worrying than in crisis stricken countries. Natural resources are often plundered by multinational extractive companies with the active complicity of the African elites and become the source of tensions and conflicts. Pan-African structures, especially the African Union and its development program – NEPAD -, have helped so far to put in place a legal frame to support the development of the Continent. Unfortunately there are still unable to take position in case of obvious violation of the aforementioned dispositions by the member states. That is why they are not seen as genuine alternative for African development. It becomes necessary that African citizen abandon the victim role they are playing to take their main role of the control of their political and economical environment.

Recommendations: Since the lack of consciousness and civic education of the population help the development of a very counter-productive political environment, as it is expressed in the Instrumentum Laboris, we would request the Fathers of the African Church meeting in Synod:

1. To reinforce the programmes of civic and ethical education within the Justice and Peace Commission, by vulgarizing some NGO's advocacy initiatives on democratic governance,

¹ MIJARC, ICYCW, IMCS, IYCS, FIMARC, MIAMSI with the support of Action de Careme and Secours Catholique and Caritas France.

incorporating some useful recommendations from the NEPAD evaluation mechanisms, etc., to improve their appropriation by African citizen as to help them in defending their rights.

2. To involve more closely with the lay Catholic Organizations, especially those working with youth, in training and assisting the development of a new catholic/Christian African leadership more respectful of political and economic ethics.
3. To make basic catholic schools available to all by applying non prohibitive fees, in order to insure an ethical base and a basic knowledge to a great number, this is a guarantee for a more responsible citizenship.
4. To reflect on how to implement Catholic Church liaison representations within regional and Pan-African structures, to advocate put forward the point of view of the Church during their discussions and also to appropriate useful decisions in order to vulgarize them within the training frame of Justice and Peace Commission

2. Social Justice and Inequality

For a better participation of young workers to Peace and Development, we are suggesting to the synod of African Bishop to see how to integrate in the reflection of the synod these points which we think, could contribute to well response to the actual needs of the church in service of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation.

The lay organizations as education milieu of young people to be accountable: the church by defining its vision should associate lay actors in a plan of action with a specified objectives to each organization according to its vocation et evaluate at each steps the results. This could increase the sense of responsibility and the culture of efficiency, citizen control of public power actions and the sense of accounting.

Think a system of education of Man and the whole Man, who must give answer to the need of local development to maintain African elite on the floor to conceptualize a social economy including cultural values for development and avoid the brain drain.

Educate to citizenship and concerted action as experience of transformation of Man and its environment.

For the accompaniment, appoint chaplains who are able, aware and available for this ministry for an effective hearing presence for an education to an acting faith to Justice and Peace.

3. Justice and Food Security/Sovereignty

The matter o African Populations and especially the most vulnerable should lead the Church in Africa to get strongly involved for the defense and promotion of a familial agricultural model, targeting to increase productivity more than agricultural exportations, it means targeting more local needs and food sovereignty of local population. Only the growth of productivity of small farms will help millions of rural to escape from extreme poverty and from the unfair conditions. For this use, it is fundamental to guarantee access to land, seeds, water and also access to local markets (through public investment). This agricultural model that has to be promoted can be called a sustainable familial, social and ecological model.

Recommendations :

The church through its episcopate and by its appropriated structures must support this model of agriculture,

Request from public power a good allocation of resources in benefit of rural populations where are also the poor and vulnerable persons on the continent.

Catholic farmers movements, young rural and eventually trade union must be supported and promoted appropriately.

4. Justice between Women and Men

Development in any form, should embrace the community; both men and women have an important and a necessary role to play in their attempt to bring development to fruition. The obstacles to promotion of women don't lie so much in laws and African Constitutions (they are generally excellently) but much more in the practise of administration and the mentalities. We notice that there are obstacles contributing to injustices in women – “the inferiority complex” of women is internalised by many women. Women are human beings who have the right to participate in this development. The world situation requires the concerted effort of everyone, a thorough examination of every facet of the problem—social, economic, cultural and spiritual². Proclaim equality is not to deny that differences in function between women and men exist but rather to affirm the complementary roles men and women fulfil in the home, Church and society at large.

Recommandations

- Women be involved in decision-making on the constitution, church
- Change legislation on education - education is their right not a concession to the women by a male dominated society! Education will enable women to be in positions of decision making particularly in areas that affect them, their children with whom they spend more time than men and the vulnerable in society whom they are left to look after on their own when the going gets really tough, e.g. orphaned children who have to stay with their grandmothers, sick and dying grown-up children who have to be looked after.
- Equality of rights between women and men in laws making
- Change mentalities –education, work of conscientization
- Fair salaries for women
- African legislatures enact laws that are blatantly discriminatory to women precisely because women are very much under-represented in the law-making houses called

² Ibid, n. 13.

parliaments except in the case of Rwanda where the constitution clearly states and makes for 50% representation in Parliament! [The current Constitutional Conference in Zambia has proposed only 30% women representation in parliament for 54% of the population!].

Development can only succeed when women and men are accorded equal opportunities to social, economic and political participation. (salaries)

5. New Tendencies in the African Conflicts: What are the Prospects for Lasting Peace?

The regionalization of crisis and conflicts, create some broad zones of fighting and permanent blood spreading in Africa. The weapons' trade at global level without any regulation or control emphasizes these conflicts. Past as well as present wars still have affected the memories of populations; therefore there is the need to develop social therapies in order to heal the memory of victims and the entire collectivities. It seems relevant:

- To spread the action and presence of Commission of justice and Peace in peace and security institutions and political structures of at national, sub regional and continental level.
- To develop synergies among church organization to empower the advocacy of other civil society organization in favor of weapons trade rules at international level.

Peace in Africa (french translation, see below)

The impact of the Catholic Church is not felt particularly in conflict situations in Africa. The suggestion is to identify key people (Bishops, clergy, religious and lay people) who would be trained to intervene in peace monitoring, peace negotiating and sustaining fragile peace structures. At the outbreak of any one conflict or a potential conflict, two or three of these trained people would be called upon to intervene in the country in question and support the local Church.

6. Inter Religious Conflict - Islam in Africa (Based on Experience)

The inter-religious conflicts are a reality on the continent. It seems that the confrontation between Muslims and Christians is increasingly taking a dangerous face.

It is worthwhile to quote positive examples of cohabitation and positive dialogue. Some Catholic movements are engaged in the development of a culture of peace. The dialogue is practised in everyday life : mutual support, solidarity in joy or pain, sharing, talking together. This commitment leads to organizing inter-religious conferences, participating in international conferences on the same theme. This implies among the participants the practice of basic attitudes: mutual respect, friendship, sincerity, reciprocity and mutual knowledge. This requires formation, including at the religious level.

It seems relevant to let know the positive experiences of inter religious dialogue, especially between Catholics and Muslims, in order to fight against negative attitude which could easily lead to the aggravation of conflicts. On this regard, the Media could and should be mobilised.

7. Human Rights, democracy and rule of law

Human rights require an enabling environment for appropriate regulations, institutions and procedures guiding the actions of the state and all actors. Although human rights empower people, they cannot be respected and protected in a sustainable manner without good governance. Governance which is a system for exercising public authority is based on principles of democracy which has important elements such as participation, accountability, transparency and state responsibility. In addition to relevant laws, political, managerial and administrative processes and institution are needed to respond to the rights and needs of populations. There is neither justice or peace without the rule of law and there is no respect for human rights without democracy in the double sense of “procedure” and “democratic culture”. The church in the exercise of its magisterium role has provided leadership and accompaniment to all people and championed for human rights and increase of the democratic space through its pastoral instruments. More however need to be done by the African governments in the following areas:

- Protecting individuals from excessive and arbitrary actions of the states and non state actors
- Contributing to the widening democratic space in Africa
- Promoting the respect and dignity of all individuals within the state irrespective of their social, economic, cultural or ethnicity status
- Pushing for answerability and accountability of all actions that could be considered to be human rights abuses. This would help in ending the culture of impunity to all human rights abusers. Great care should be taken in deciding whether to pursue restorative or restitutive justice.
- Promotion of dialogue amongst various opposing political groupings in order to prevent resorting to violent solution to problem
- Take cognizance of the vulnerable populations e.g. refugees, IDPs, minority groups, women, youth and children.
- Promoting a conducive environment to which all human rights will be provided in order to empower the people.
- Ensuring that human rights based approach permeates the institutional framework in Africa; political, economic, cultural and social.

8. Migration, Sources of Conflict or Peace

As there is a negative image on migration, as a Church, we have a responsibility to be instruments of brining an awareness on causes and benefits of Migration which has always been there and will never be stopped. We need to be the 5th Gospel by being spokespersons about the issues of migrants especially in Africa. We can do this through raising awareness to our Church, our communities and political leaders with a view of reducing ignorance on the reasons of migration. This can only be achieved if we commit ourselves to the human values and being kind to thy neighbour as preached by Christ. Migration does bring diversity and has many positives that are rarely talked about. There is a

need to re-build a new model of African Universities to create a new type of connection with the society in order to fulfill their social function

9. Africa at Peace with its past

African communities, where ever they are or in whatever form they now take have the capacity, with assistance, to work out their challenges of bringing reconciliation to the community through restorative Justice means. Redistributive justice gives way to restorative justice, but restorative justice aims to heal broken relationships, to repair the damage done by the crime, and to bring harmony.

How can African reconcile with its Past?

To answer the above question, one would have to define the word “reconciliation” in an African context. This reconciliation means different things to different people in different socio-economic contexts. Reconciliation is aimed at:

- Acknowledging the past in a way that it helps to pave the way for the future
- Change structures that divide any community
- Reconciliation is reclaiming the rule of law

And reconciliation also seeks that reparation has to be paid for abuses of the past.

Two important points towards reconciliation is that the world needs to take Africa seriously and to listen to Africa in her quest for peace. One forgotten part of the society in reconciliation are young people.

We recommend that:

- Young people be engaged in the outreach for reconciliation and justice because they are capable of.
- Formation of young people in their understanding of Catholic Social Thought and Practices.
- International world to leave Africa to achieve reconciliation without blocking.

10. Africa Reconciled with globalization

The world is becoming globalised i.e. there is more integration in trade. Globalization is at the moment is a process driven by the powerful countries of the world. The poor countries have a weak position and no voice in the globalization process. In essence while some aspects of globalization have been very positive for the development of poor societies there are many

aspects that do contribute in making the poor nations of the world much weaker and dampen their potentiality. We note some concerns in the following areas:

- Trading amongst African countries is very minimal. Africa struggles to look for markets abroad at the expense of its own dignity and integrity while it could also build stable markets back home. Integration into the world markets should go hand in hand with strengthening the local markets in Africa.
- Value addition is another obstacle to making enough income to uplift the incomes of our primary producers. Advanced countries with goodwill could help African countries through a process of technology transfers and assist it to become competitive.
- While privatization is considered to be the norm in the globalised world today, there are some key sectors of the economy that still need to be in the hands of the state e.g. services such as health, education, provision of water, infrastructure and other key service areas. Privatizing services will unfairly lock many poor people out from these benefits and worsen their welfare
- The flow of people and goods is also important during this globalization process. The advanced countries have two aspects of globalization as far as globalization is concerned one is the free movements of people and services within the rich countries and the other is restricting of movements of people from the poor countries. The condition of migrant populations is also not very good. Globalization should have human face too and not only the economic one.
- African civil actors should develop effective networks to promote transparency amongst the multinational or transnational companies. The TNEs are becoming too powerful more than the states as some of them have incomes that are much more than the GDP's of the nations they operate in. Hence they are above controls and limits of those states. International solidarity will help in ensuring that the MNEs are more transparent and answerable.
- Globalization promotes the aspect of egoism and selfishness. It is perceived as a process in which the rich should get richer at the expense of the poor. On the other hand, globalization could become an important tool for people to promote each other through international solidarity to improve the welfare of all human beings.
- Lastly, does globalization offer any hopes for Africa? Yes in many ways but Africa should choose carefully. The focus should be to identify the strengths and vulnerabilities of Africa and act accordingly. Africa cannot afford to join the globalization process blindly if it aims to become competitive.

Conclusion

We are happy for having been able to contribute to the synod which is a process and not merely an event. Our workshop was already a synod event by the sharing, the exchange of experiences, the spirit of communion between various church groups and communities.

We are conscious of the limitations of our work: some important issues for the future were not tackled. A comprehensive image of Africa cannot be drawn without addressing these issues like Traditional African Religion, Evangelical churches and movements, HIV-AIDS, the consequences of the crisis for Africa, environmental justice...

We commit ourselves to continue to contribute to the process of the synod, to the implementation of its results and recommendations, to monitor this implementation and to push forward its results.

Rome, Italy. 2nd October, 2009