THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE YOUTH IN AFRICA

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Introduction

Pneumatology is an attempt to grasp the mystery of the Holy Spirit, the mystery which gives the youths the strength to bear witness to Christ. First of all, there is a focus on what the youths do. The article focuses on the ecclesial witnessing of the youths in Church and human society. The Church lives by witnessing to Jesus, the Christ. The Church in Africa lives out her life in the youth and continues Jesus’ witnessing in human society. The Church in Africa, the Family of God has a strong functioning body called the Youth Organization with various religious functions, clear rules and regulations. The youths witness to Christ through the living voice of the gospel and the Church’s kerygma, martyrria, diakonia and koinonia. In witnessing to Jesus, the Christ in Africa, the youths gather the Family of God as brothers and sisters endowed with the spirit of unity, justice and peace and lead all to the truth of Christ.

State of the Question

Theology cannot, knowing what its responsibility is towards witnessing to Jesus called the Christ, fail to speak in this direction about the Holy Spirit and faith. The questions, however, are: Who is a witness? Whom is he/she witnessing? What is a witness? What is he/she witnessing? How does he/she witness? Why does he/she witness?

In their relationship to God, the Deutero-Isaiah addresses the people of Israel as witnesses of Yahweh “you are my witnesses” (Isaiah 43:10). In this context, the concept of witness is bound with service – diakonia. In Johannine writing, the word witness is tied with martyrrein, “I testify on my own behalf” (John 8:18). In this vein, the word witnessing correlates a personal involvement and in this sense witnessing is understood as martyrria – a witness is a martyr. In the Acts of the Apostles, we come across the idea of the process and contents of the preached or proclaimed word, that is, the Word-event as a type of witnessing – kerygma. The Holy Spirit empowers the believing community to witness and share the Word of God, in a manner of koinonia. In the way of koinonia, the Holy Spirit makes the proclaimed word of God accessibly, concretely, and intrinsically present in the Church.
The proclamation of the Church transforms the living voice of the gospel, as a living validity to be shared within a living community. The definition of the content of the Church, its dimension of proclamation of the kingdom of God, service to humanity, witnessing (martyr) to the truth and communion between God and human beings and human beings among themselves, has remained the main subject matter of systematic theology. In taking up these concepts like proclamation, service, witnessing (martyr) and communion, the dominant themes of ecclesiology remain systematically tied to Christology, to the Person and work of Christ – a good ecclesiology is inseparably tied to Christology.

The Church emerges in time through the proclamation of the kingdom of God by Jesus Christ, in other words, the Church is the fruit of the proclamation of the kingdom by Jesus Christ. The theme of the Church is the theme of the kingdom and has a quite positive significance to the social, ethical and essential political peace, justice and reconciliation of humanity. At the same time, the Church is the substance of God’s action in the world which is related to faith, hope and charity and to the richer concept of the kingdom of God. In human hands, the Church becomes an instrument of forging peace, justice, and reconciliation.

The martyrria, witnessing is always an indispensable component of proclamation (kerygma). In its relation to martyrion, kerygma is a way of bearing witness to the truth and testifying to the truth of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Kerygma has a twofold meaning; first it means the act of proclamation through preaching, teaching and instruction and secondly, it is a call to conversion and to a new life of grace in Christ.

At all events, the Church always realizes herself in a twofold sense, namely, in serving (diakonia) and witnessing (martyria). In service and witnessing, the Church appears in the full sense of the word, and fully realizes herself in relation to Christ. Diakonia stands at the centre of the definition of the Church, expressing the Church as the nearness of God to men and women which is experienced in peace and justice, and above all in service to the poor and those who are farther removed from the welfare of the human society. Service expressed the most characteristic of Jesus and Jesus’ disciples, “the kings of the gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them that are called benefactors. But not so with you, rather let the greatest among you become the youngest and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater, the one who sits at table, or one who serves? (Luke 22:24-27). Service is a substantial function of the Church, which Paul sees as doulos, as attitude of a slave, who serves (Rom 6:18,22). In Johannine gospel, the word service (diakoneo) recalls the picture of a person, who is at a table, in order to perform a special service (John 12:2) and to wash and dry their feet (John 13:1-10).
The Son of Man comes to serve and not to be served and to give his life as ransom for many. Service as the irreplaceable function of the Church has a Christocentric root, it has its foundation on Jesus who came to serve. Besides, the Church is constantly called the community of those, who come into existence through service; the community that exists not to rule but to serve. Service and witnessing (*martyria*) are related, in that service is self-sacrificing, self-giving, self-suffering, and in fact sacrifice of one’s life.

At the core of the understanding the nature of the Church is the concept of *koinonia,* *fellowship,* *communion* or *community.* The nature of the Church as a communion grows from the message of the kingdom and service to humanity. The Church is a communion between God and human beings and between human beings among themselves. This communion is realized in the context of Baptism and the celebration of the People of God, the Eucharist which is the celebration of communion of all the believers in Jesus Christ. In the new era of the Church in Africa, the clearest and tangible expression of the Church as a communion is the Church as Family of God (*Ecclesia in Africa* 63).

In Christian theology, *diakonia,* *martyria,* *kerygma* and *koinonia* are four ways of witnessing in the Church to “Jesus, called Christ” (*Matt 1:16*). The theological basis of witnessing is the relationship of the person who is witnessing to the person who is being witnessed to. The primary qualification of a witness is based upon what the person, who is witnessing has seen and what he or she has heard about the one who is being witnessed to. This correlation forges a relationship that gives witnessing its theological foundation. Witnessing is making not only something known, but also making someone known. A person, who is witnessing has a good relationship to what or whom he or she is making known to another person.

In their special relationship to Jesus, called Christ, the youths are qualified by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to bear witness to Christ, in the Church as a community of *diakonia,* *martyria,* *kerygma* and *koinonia.* The presence of Jesus Christ in the Church is the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is promised to her. The witnessing persons or the youths are actually empowered by the Holy Spirit, who witnesses to Christ (1 *John 5:6-12*) and by the same Spirit, who is residing in them – “you are the temple of the Holy Spirit” (*1 Cor 3:16, 6:19*).

All the four elements are indispensable and interconnected with Christ’s *officium* – prophetic, kingly and priestly mission of Christ in the world. Proclamation as an event of preaching, teaching, instruction and call to conversion is a prophetic assurance which has come and become realisable in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus is a servant-leader, who gave his life for the life of the world. In the context of the Eucharistic *koinonia,* we share the life of Christ with each other – communion.
The Holy Spirit is present in the Person and work of Jesus Christ – *officium Christi*. Prominently, the witness of Jesus Christ (the prophetic office) is attested to by the Spirit; secondly, the work of reconciliation brought about by Christ (the priestly office) is made alive in the life of the believers by the Spirit; and thirdly, the service of Jesus Christ (the royal office) is incarnated in a community of faith through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit appropriates to the youths the work of Jesus Christ. This can be understood from two perspectives – the youth as object of the work of Christ and the youth as the subject of the work of Christ. In the former sense, the priestly office of Christ consists in the work of forgiveness granted to us, in redemption made available for us, and in the peace granted to us as sons and daughters of God, who is the Father of all and who cares for all. Jesus Christ completed his work of redemption, forgiveness, reconciliation and peace through his death, resurrection and glorification by the Father. In the latter sense, the participation in the threefold office of Christ answers theologically the question: who are the youths? The significance of the threefold power of Christ as priest, prophet and king is that it is through this expression that the ecclesial witnessing of the youths is well understood. The youths are called to participate in the royal freedom from the dominion and slavery of sin and through their holiness of life, they bring about the coming of God’s Kingdom in human society. This kingship is knitted together with the divine plan of God to care and nurture the earth (Gen 1:28); this involves civilization of love and integral development of the entire creation – the ecosystem. Through the dignity of the servant-king, they serve Christ in others and bring them to Christ, the King (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 36). In the participation in the prophetic office of Christ, they bear witness to Christ in both words and deeds - witness of life. In sharing in the priestly office of Christ, they join Christ by making spiritual sacrifices to God and offering their entire self and the whole creation to God in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. As priests, prophets, and kings, “all the works, prayers, apostolic labours, hardships, family life and even leisure, which are done in the Spirit become spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.”¹ The physical participation in the threefold office of Christ is the fruit of the internal participation and work of the Holy Spirit in an ecclesial community.

**Youths are Witnesses of These Things – The Community of Kerygma**

The word witness is derived from the Middle English *witan* to know, which denotes a form of knowledge and consciousness. In the ordinary usage,

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witness refers to evidence based on personal and immediate knowledge of facts, events or experiences. The person, who is witnessing is called a witness. A witness gives an evidence of what he or she consciously knows to be the truth. A person who witnesses has a great value of truth because he or she possesses the truth.

The word witness permeates all avenues of human life. In public life, people require a witness in a court trial, in order to judge a case correctly and justly. On ecclesial level, witnesses are demanded by the Church’s law for a valid and legitimate performance of certain ecclesial acts, for example, in Church marriages, two witnesses are required in the ceremony. In the early Church, especially during the time of heresies, the presence of two persons was required by the abjuration of a heresy.

In Christian theology, witness has a deep Christological root in Jesus Christ who is called the Christ. As the eternal Word of God, who took human flesh, Jesus of Nazareth was the most complete self-revelation of God in his humanity. As a sacrament of God’s visible presence in the world, Jesus was the greatest self-communication of God in the history of human salvation and the foremost witness of God in the world.

In the Scriptures, the same characteristics that marked Jesus as the witness of God marked the Holy Spirit as the witness of Jesus, the Christ. Jesus is the foremost witness of God and the Holy Spirit is the greatest witness to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, gave witness to Jesus Christ (John 15:26) and to the truth, guiding and directing the disciples of Jesus into all the avenues and paths of truth (John 16:13).

The disciples of Jesus, the ecclesial community called into being through the life, death and resurrection of Christ continues to bear witness to Christ, who is the Truth (John 14:6). The ecclesial concept of witness is firmly rooted in the work of Jesus, the Christ-Event. The Christ-Event is composed of “the historical life, death and resurrection of Jesus.” The first followers of Christ were the original witnesses to the earthly life and ministry, salvific suffering and crucifixion, redemptive death and resurrection of Jesus into glory of the Father. They experienced the Post-Easter events and directly carried this witness (the message of salvation) to all individuals, peoples, nations, cultures and human communities around the world. In this sense, witness is related to the proclamation of the Word of God and events of Christ with the word of mouth – witness as proclamation.

Another important dimension of witnessing is the aspect of relating it to the Christian concept of martyrdom. In his martyrdom, John the Baptist witnessed to Jesus Christ with his own life. In this understanding, a witness is someone who,

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because of his or her faith in and for love of Jesus Christ, undergoes suffering and death and to such “we are powerfully attracted, so great a cloud of witness is there given (Heb 12:1) and such a witness to the truth of the Gospel.” This is the sense in which Lumen Gentium 50 understands witness.

The other side of witness to be mentioned and discussed fully here is what the Post-Synodal Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa called the “ecclesial dimension of witness.” According to the document, “the Church must continue to play her prophetic role and to be the voice of the voiceless. But to achieve this effectively, the Church, as a community of faith must be an energetic witness to justice and peace, in her structures and in her relationship among the members.” In this way, the youths in Africa bear ecclesial witness to Jesus Christ through the words of their mouth (verbal witness), through their deeds and actions and through their daily life in the society by spreading peace in human society.

A further refinement of the above type of witness is found in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The example of the Samaritan is a good model of witnessing to Jesus Christ by serving those pushed out of the circle of the society. This model of evangelization is called evangelizing circle. The Samaritan was a bearer of the good news and a perfect model of how the youths can be witnesses in the prophetic and transformative message of the gospel in ecclesial communities. The youths extend their witnesses to Jesus Christ by showing him as a model for every human being that fears God and seeks God with sincerity of heart (Vatican II Lumen Gentium 16). According to Paul VI, “modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

Witness is a great concept embedded in the Scriptures. In the gospel, great prophetic figures such as John the Baptist, the deacon Stephen are portrayed as models of witnesses to Christ. Related texts to John the Baptist in the gospel create his image as a prophet. As a witness, the Baptizer knew Jesus as “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). In Johannine sense, to know Jesus is accessible through a God-given experience of the Spirit, and not through natural perception or by flesh and blood. One can truly be a witness to Jesus, when one perceives the divine presence of the Holy Spirit, which resides in him/her.

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The Youths in the Economy of the *Diakonia* of the Holy Spirit

We cannot separate the work of the Holy Spirit from the Person of Jesus Christ present in the organogram of the Church’s institutional structure. To preserve the unity of generations of youths, who are precisely the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church and human society, the Bishops of Nigeria have given a freehand to the young Catholic faithful in the country to operate as a statutory organ in the Body of Christ, the Church in Nigeria. The Church in Nigeria is not only an institutional structure, but also a living Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16). It is the Spirit indeed who guides the Catholic Youths Organization of Nigeria (CYON) through the Church.

How important is the Catholic Youths Organization of Nigeria (CYON) for ecclesial witnessing to Jesus, called the Christ? At the national level, there is the presence of Catholic Youths Organization, which goes with different names in different dioceses of the Church in Africa. In Nigerian context, we speak about Catholic Youths Organization of Nigeria, which is a statutory body. The CYON, like the Catholic Women Organization (CWO) and Catholic Men Organization (CMO), is a statutory body under the jurisdiction of the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria. The CYON places the identity and personality of the youths deeply into the framework of the Church as a family of God in Africa.

The Church authorities in Nigeria issued some guidelines and regulation to the formation and running of CYON. They have chaplains all over the country to help them apply the guidelines and prescriptions laid down by the ecclesial authorities. The CYON is an ecclesial element or body to be safeguarded in a sound evangelization of the Nigerian youths.

The organization empowers the youths to explore their own capacities and talents, and to survive, develop and control their *vocation* and future. The discovery of their abilities, identities, talents and capacities are manifested during their meetings at local and international levels. As a sign of maturity and means of communication, the CYON has offices, officers, funds and houses in many mega cities of Nigeria. Youths differ in their respective gifts of nature, abilities and interests, and they are qualified to hold offices by virtue of their character and ability to perform.

At best, the CYON addresses the question of reducing the shocking and growing inequalities among the youths. The CYON calls the youths to be of one mind and of one heart in a deep communion of faith, hope and charity, as well as in prayer and solidarity, in order to oppose everything that is negative in Nigeria and in a special way to oppose religious terrorism, political thuggery, ethnic tensions, tribal conflicts and misunderstandings, so that they may become truly sons and daughters of our Father, who is in heaven.

The CYON raises the question of ethnic and tribal unity in Nigeria. In Nigeria, we find first of all many ethnic groups thrown together by their colonial
history and some of these will be struggling for survival, while others are moving towards dominance. In some parts of Nigeria, there are variations of ethnic groups rooted in religious differences and, for that reason, there is the question of deep and sensitive handling of the programme of inter-religious dialogue and co-habitations of different ethnic and religious groups among themselves. In a society like Nigeria, which is religiously pluralistic, the youths see it as their *vocation* to promote unity among different religions and ethnic groups.

The formation of the CYON is very much the line of keeping the identities of Catholic youths. The purpose of the organization is to rally round all Catholic youths – both male and female from all ethnic groups – towards serving God, Jesus, called the Christ and men and women of the modern world with abundant generosity and effectiveness. The greetings of the youth give credence to this – *For God and for Youth! Through Christ!*

When we begin to speak about the pneumatological dimension of the Catholic Youth Organization in Nigeria, the greetings of the youths expand to grasp the Spirit of Christ – *For God and for Youth! Through Christ!* Expands to *For God and for Youth! Through Christ in the Spirit!* The Spirit is the source of contact with Jesus, Christ, with Christ’s life, with Christ’s mission. We read in the letter to the Romans that “whoever does not possess the Spirit of Christ, does not belong to him” (Rom 8:9). The prerequisite of belonging to Jesus Christ is the privilege to possess the Spirit of Christ. In this vein, “no one can say Jesus is Lord, unless he/she is under the influence of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3).

In Jesus Christ, God the Father and the youths are one through the action of the Spirit, who endows each individual with varieties of gifts for the service of the community. This Trinitarian circle completes the entire metaphor of *one body in Christ.* They are not opposed, but spring from the unity which is created by the Spirit of Christ. Today’s youths bear the responsibility “to preserve the unity which the Spirit gives and the peace that binds them together. There is one Body and one Spirit, just as there is one hope to which God has called them. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, there is one God and Father of all men, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all” (Eph. 4:3-6).

**The Eucharist as the Centre of Koinonia for the Youths**

The entire life of the Church’s mission and her activities are connected to the Holy Spirit, and to the sacrament of the Eucharist (*the Eucharistic faith*), the source and centre of the Church’s life. In response to the greetings of the priest, who says to the worshipping community “the Lord be with you” and the community answers positively with the words “and with your spirit”. The *spirit* that the worshipping community is wishing the celebrating priest is the spirit of the Beatitudes, namely, the spirit of peace, mercy, forgiveness, love, joy, courage, patience and tolerance. The African context particularly demands the spirit of
dialogue, humility, simplicity of life and reconciliation with God and fellow human beings. Many research works of African theologians have dealt with the theme of reconciliation, in theory, but in praxis people around those theologians have never experienced the ultimate value of reconciliation and peace.

At the liturgy of the word, especially by the proclamation of the gospel, the priest greets the people again, with the words “the Lord be with you” and the people respond “and with your spirit.” The second greeting includes among its constitutive elements the spirit of the gospel. The priest is called to witness (marturia) to the spirit of the gospel that he announces. The faith-community desires to see in their parish priest the transparency of the spirit of the message he proclaims, becoming in some measure a reality in his life. The spirit in question here is also the spirit of courage, to be able to bear witness to the gospel at the point of being martyred for the cause of faith and justice – martyrdom. Deeply the spirit in this case portrays the spirit of sharing the gospel (euangelion) with others.

The Eucharistic liturgy lives in an ontological dimension of the eternal now, as a cosmic reality. At the beginning of the Preface, when the priest will offer the entire creation to God, from the rising of the sun to its setting, he dialogues with the people in this fashion: “the Lord be with you” and the people resonates with “and with your spirit.” Words and human language – the Lord be with you, and with your spirit – bring the priest and the worshipping community into communication with the entire creation and with one another. The dialogue creates solidarity between the members of the People of God – the clergy, religious and laity.

Epiclesis: When a priest prays over the bread and wine, he will ask God for blessings "by sending down your spirit upon them like the dewfall." The priest presents Jesus Christ to the worshipping community in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that men and women may come to put their faith and trust in the Son of God and come to accept him as a Saviour and serve him as their Lord in fellowship and communion of his Body, the Church. The new development that occurred today in theology in the Western Church is the new understanding of the Person of the Holy Spirit in the work of salvation. The liturgy is the accomplishment of Christ’s salvific work in communion with the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Church is a Eucharistic community called together to live the life of the Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, there is no Church. The Holy Spirit establishes the Church from the beginning and guides her throughout its continuing history.

During the sign of peace, the priest exhorts the people with the following words – “the peace of the Lord be with you always,” and the people answer “and

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with your spirit.” This is an exhortation that establishes essentially inter-relationship between persons and hence ultimately the affirmation of the persons in the community of faith, hope, and love. The sign of peace evokes the element of love in the faith community, that is, how the Christians love one another. The spirit we wish a priest is the spirit of love and service: the spirit of washing one another’s feet, in form of tolerance and mutual love, rather than being given to mutual hatred and distrust - love one another as I have loved you.

At the concluding rite, the priest greets the people with the words “the Lord be with you,” and they respond “and with your spirit.” The Church is a communion of the saints of all times, in all places. The spirit meant at this juncture is the spirit of evangelization or the missionary spirit – go to all nations, teaching them and baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19-20). In this sense, the new evangelization is the application of the New Testament mandate, the mandate that bears the authority of Christ himself (Matthew 28:18). This is a mandate communicated to us through the teachings of the Church, especially through the sending of the People of God into the world to bear fruit in good seasons.

The Spirit is the new and abiding presence of Jesus Christ in an ecclesial community, where the youths belong and carry out their mission. The mission of CYON is to unite the youths in Christ, who is the Truth through the Spirit. This Truth judges all forms of hatred, dispels hostility and cruelty that exist between individuals and individual youths, and between a youth of one ethnic group or the other tribal group. This Truth is a constant call for peace among the youths.

The foundation of CYON as a community of koinonia, which experiences and bases its existence and mode of being in Holy Spirit, is the key concept for solving the various problems of the youths and for bridging ethical and societal differences among the youths.

As an organization, the CYON has structures and boundaries, plays with power and financial muscles and tends to be conservative and counts on stability, numbers and members. In this forum of youth gathering, I see a tension between organizational character and charismatic dimension. The image of CYON that underlies our reflection is that of a charismatic community. This is seen as the strength of CYON when compared to other organizations like CMO and CWO. The CYON has the vocation of being a charismatic assembly, living and witnessing, like the early Christian community: “You shall be my witnesses”(Acts 1:8).

Witnessing to Jesus, called Christ does not mean clinging to an ideology or holding on to a principle, but implies walking along the path of the one who gave his life for his friend (martyrdom/witnessing) and called his followers to do the same. This opens another aspect of witnessing as a service.
The vocation of a witness is not to be a boss, but a call to serve. In this sense, the very meaning of an executive officer in a Catholic Youths Organization of Nigeria (CYON), for example, is a position of a servant leader. The central meaning of witnessing is caught up in the term servanthood (diakonia). The ecclesial witnessing through diakonia-servanthood, however, is a very difficult model to follow, while the natural inclination of human beings is to follow the path of honor and recognition and loved to be served. To accept the servant model of ecclesial witnessing is a bitter pill for many youths to swallow.

*Martyria as Way of Inculturating the Linguistic Diversities of Africa*

Ecclesial witnessing involves a function of a baptized person within the Church and society. The spiritual side of ecclesial witness stresses the function of youths within the Church. The content of ecclesial witness implies the way youths devote their energy to the increase of the glory of God by engaging in prayers (especially Our Lord’s Prayer), listening and doing the word of God, love for the Church, compassion and charity to the People of God, commitment to sacramental catechesis, Eucharistic adorations, actively participating in the liturgical celebration of the parish community, especially within the context of Eucharistic assembly, performing works of mercy, and especially being heralds of good tidings that advance true civilization of love and culture of life.

Prayer in its pure form is a basic content of ecclesial witnessing. This includes creating of places of silence for the youths, providing models of liturgical life in parishes. Majority of the youths are actively involved in the world and have less time, and perhaps ever less inclination to pray or attitude of indifference towards prayer. Listening to the word of God is a priority for ecclesial witnessing of the youths. Indeed, the sense of youth witnessing grows from the listening to the “creative word of God that comes from the mouth of God.”7 Briefly, it can be said that the ethos of the research is rooted in ecclesiality, that is, in their functions and activities as living organisms and dynamic witnesses of Christ in the Church.

The witnessing of each individual youth will therefore depend on the Holy Spirit and on the sacramental reality of the Church. We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who makes us sons and daughters of the Father. In a sense, the vocation of the youths demands that the young people be consecrated in the Spirit of the Truth. In such a state of vocation of life, it is very essential to consider the youths and the question of witnessing to the Truth from a pneumatological angle. In order to place the theology of the youths more

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effectively to the service of the Truth, we have to make much more notice of its pneumatological and charistimatic dimensions. In virtue of the salvation given to us in Christ, we have to ask the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised the disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will comfort them, and teach them all things (John 14:26). By receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit through baptism, youths become permanent witnesses of the encounter with Jesus, called the Christ. They carry on their witnessing through the proclamation of the Word of God and participation in the celebration of the sacraments. Words and sacraments are the two foundation stones of the youth witnessing.

The Church is the rock on which ecclesial witnessing is laid upon. The strongest basis for ecclesial witnessing in the Church and human society is the transcendence and immanence of God in the Person of Jesus, the Christ. Jesus gave the apostles a final command to make disciples of all nations. The apostles, who received the mandate of witnessing to Jesus’ Truth, passed on their mission of witnessing to the early Christian communities, who were viewed as the Church receiving her mission of witnessing from Jesus through the apostles. Since the day of Jesus’ resurrection, the Church has always considered witnessing as one of her primary responsibilities to men and women in the world.

Jesus gave the Church the gift of the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill her mission of witnessing to the men and women in the world. At the very beginning of Catechesi Tradendae, one encounters the relationship between Christology and Pneumatology in the work of saving history of humanity, especially from the scope of the theological thinking of John Paul II. The two constants in the study of the Person of Jesus, the Christ consist in discovering the relation of Jesus Christ to the Father and the Holy Spirit, the former involves “his relation to the one and the only God named Father,” that is, the relation of Jesus to God as Son and the Second Person of the Trinity and the latter involves a Trinitarian theology of the relation of Jesus to the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit guides the Church and strengthens her in faith. Faith enables us to assent to the word of God in the Holy Scriptures, helps us to grow in personal relationship to the Holy Spirit in the Church and prepares us to bear witness to Jesus, called the Christ to men and women in human society. The study of Catechesi Tradendae reveals that true catechesis gives birth to faith and aims at leading the children of God to faith.

Catechesi Tradendae raised the further issue of the incarnation of faith in an existing culture:

As I said recently to the members of the Biblical Commission: 'The term "acculturation" or "inculturation" may be a neologism, but it expresses very well one factor of the great mystery of the Incarnation.' We can say of catechesis, as well as of evangelization in general, that it is called to bring the power of the Gospel into the very heart of culture and cultures.\(^\text{10}\)

The saving message of Jesus Christ is witnessed in every culture of humanity and through the instrumentality of healthy organisms, cultures and persons. In this context, the youths in Africa are the instrumental persons in witnessing to the saving message of Jesus Christ and the transmission of the Christian faith in the continent. Faith and culture enable them to hear the voice of the Church in Africa crying for justice, peace and reconciliation in the darkest regions of the continent. According to Nwaigbo:

The challenge is to create a new self-awareness which will help people to understand the nature of their vocation as God’s Family. As children of God who are divided among themselves, they need to address the problem of their common cultural heritage as a natural family that was crucified in the past and to examine their relationship with each other as people drawn into the new life of God through the event of the Resurrection.\(^\text{11}\)

The theology of the Resurrection opens another source of African theology. African cultures were dead in the past, but today they are resurrected in the new light of the grace of the theology of inculturation.

In a theological sense, culture is the sacred remains of God’s creation. God declared creation to be good and beautiful. In this view, creation faith tends towards human culture. Faith and culture are not opposed to or independent of one another, but in a real setting of Christian life, they occur in theological mixtures. Culture is fundamental to humanity. It is fundamental to human nature as to express what Aristotle would call the *nutritive*, that is the most organic dimension of our nature. In this sense, faith without culture is futile. It cannot bear seeds.

The Christian faith has its own provisional validity, particularly, it is ordered by God, by Jesus, called Christ, who is the gospel of love, by the Church who is the bearer of the seeds of grace and salvation of the human family and by

\(^{10}\) *Catechesi Tradendae*, 53.

religious hope which opens the Kingdom of God, but it cannot be detached from
the living and healing cultures of humanity. God is the polar star of the Christian
faith and a living culture. Without God, both faith and culture become idolatrous.
What one must not allow is for a living culture to be detached from the Christian
faith. In contemporary society, only in the condition of having an ultimate
intention can faith and culture be virtuous rather than vicious. None of them
should be understood in mutually exclusive sense. Faith, even if we consider it in
a pure transcendent sense, devoid of the contents of culture, becomes a variegated
and complex phenomenon.

Accordingly, faith is not simply an affair of the transcendence. Faith
without culture is dead. It is not a living faith, because it cannot give life. A living
faith takes root in a culture, especially in a culture of life. Culture of life is
transformative, it is nutritive, it transforms human life and human society and it is
like a seed and considered as symbol of life of men and women in the world.
Certainly, seeds grow out of trees as the trees’ crowns, as trees are spreading
unrestrictedly in the natural rays of sunlight and sunshine, and at the same digging
their roots ever deeper in the earthly soil.

A living faith is like a tree that grows in two directions, that is, in the
upward direction and in the inward direction. The upward movement of faith
takes the direction of the heavenly life, the transcendence, the divine and it is open
to the velocity and flow of the spirit, while the inward movement of faith takes the
direction of the earthly life, the immanence, the human (humus), and is rooted in
human culture. Like a tree, a living faith bears seeds of peace, justice and
reconciliation.

The twenty-first-century may be considered as an age in which the
geography of faith and culture is changing. God is no longer seen by some men
and women of this age as the polestar of faith and compass of culture. According
to Nwaigbo, the advances in culture of science, medicine and globalization of
human behavior and culture have twisted the geography of the living faith and
nutritive culture of the contemporary society. The progress of the contemporary
age blinds men and women of today to the appropriate appraisal of their human
conditions. It induces them to spurn the polar star of the living faith and compass
of human life. The contemporary age has initiated a new order marked with the
culture of death and secularism. The Year of Faith is the contemporary refinement
of this position.

In the Year of Faith, the Synod for the Transmission of Faith reminds the
world about the sources of spreading the faith in remotest and darkest heart of the
earth: “these, then, are the four elements which comprise the storehouse of
memory which the Church hands down: the profession of faith, the celebration of

12 Ferdinand Nwaigbo, Faith in an Age of Reason and Science (Frankfurt am Main: Peter
Lang Verlang, 2001), 124.
the sacraments, the path of the commandments and prayer. The Church’s catechesis has traditionally been structured around these four elements."^{13} This includes the social doctrine of the Church, which is the storehouse memory of justice and peace in the world. All these are paths leading to witnessing in the contemporary world.

The social doctrine of the Church is faith doing justice, a concrete direction emerging from conflict, oppression and injustice towards commitment to the transforming charity of Christ and works of social justice in the world. The social doctrine of the Church appears as path of witnessing, because in faith, we are doing the work of justice in the world. This path receives new light from Jesus’ teaching on the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) and in the forces of the new evangelization in Africa today.

The question, therefore, is what contribution have the youths made towards incarnation and inculturation of the Year of Faith in Africa? Does the theology of the Holy Spirit capture and incarnate the existential realities of life and African self-understanding of faith? How far is the concern for language actually penetrating into the flesh and worldviews of the CYON? Does the profession of faith, the celebration of word and sacraments, the keeping of the commandments and prayer life of the youths reflect indigenous perceptions and dimensions that are incarnated in our local languages?

The celebration of the Eucharist among the youths, especially at the national level would serve to produce a contextual celebration that articulates some major Nigerian languages. In celebration of the Eucharist, parts of the Mass can be responded to by at least few major ethnic languages, instead of foreign English language. This will serve as a new Pentecost, that is, the unity of all the Nigerian languages in the youths through the Holy Spirit.

**Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

We have dealt with the ecclesial witnessing for Jesus, called the Christ by the youths in contemporary Nigeria, Africa. Catholicism cannot dispense faith in Jesus Christ as a Saviour nor theology of Jesus as Christ. This conviction is accompanied with the commitment to the community of faith called the Church, and understanding of the nature of this ecclesial community, which is a station for a transparent witnessing to Christ. The youths are called through catechesis to continue Jesus’ witnessing to God’s reign in the world: “You are witnesses of these things” (Luke 24:48). Witnessing, evangelizing, and catechizing form an interface for the basic understanding of responsibility of the Church in Africa in the new evangelization. Catechesis is a type of ecclesial witnessing about faith in

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Jesus, called the Christ and the message of his gospel. Witnessing is very important for a fruitful evangelization. Today, as many young people are distancing themselves from Christ and their Catholic roots, there is a need for youth catechesis in developing a mature and adult faith in an ecclesial community and bearing witness to Jesus, called Christ.

There is a need to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the youth – both in private and public life. The Spirit of God sustains peoples’ efforts to bear witness to Christ. Hence, a call today for a new understanding of the indispensability of the role of the Holy Spirit in the plan of God’s salvation is to be promoted in evangelizing the youths, so that they may hear and know the riches of the mystery of Christ. Life in the Spirit enables the youths to understand the equality of all persons as based upon the fact that we are of the same nature and origin, we are redeemed by Christ, and enjoy the same calling and destiny. The youths in general are captivated by the Spirit of Christ. They are awaiting a new star to point out Christ to them and to inspire them in Christ’s Way, Truth and Life. They are ready to welcome popes, bishops, priests, spiritual directors and chaplains who are ready to do this. Therefore, the Church in Africa has to be prepared to assume this ecclesial responsibility.

At the end, we recommend that Catholic chaplains with visionary leadership and penetrating insights into the doctrines of the Church are needed in all the private, state and federal universities, polytechnics and colleges of education, particularly, in a country like Nigeria, where the teeming population of Catholic students are brewed regularly from Catholic secondary schools all over the country. In these chaplaincies, the regular sacraments of confessions and the Holy Eucharist are to be administered as events that are meaningfully celebrated in the daily life of the youths.

Moreover, youth chaplains are to see to it that the vocation of the Catholic youths to the priesthood, religious life, lay state is strengthened and nourished by an active proclamation of the word of God, liturgical worship, catechetical instructions, catechetical workshops and seminars, and other spiritual guidelines. There is a need for a guideline, for parameter, for role model, and for great discipline in the life of the family, in the Church, and society to influence the youths of today. The youths of today need solid role models who will guide, direct and lead them to Christ.

In the same vein, an adequate training of youth chaplains is an indispensable responsibility of ecclesiastical authorities. Theological Education of youth chaplains should be considered a priority in the Church today. Most of the youth chaplains have only formal theological training from the major seminary. Youth chaplains should be sent to higher educational institutions of Theology, where they will be grounded in different disciplines of theology and techniques of imparting the Christian doctrines to the youths.