

The Church on the Road to Emmaus

Situational analysis on conflicts, wars and instabilities in the AMECEA countries

Fr. Elias Omondi Opongo, SJ

Jesuit Hakimani Center, Nairobi

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Introduction

My dear friends in the Lord, your excellencies, bishops, brothers and sisters, I feel honoured to address this historic gathering of AMECEA bishops at a time that Africa has achieved, in the last decade, an enormous progress at the social, economic, political and religious spheres. I have the challenging task of analyzing the current social political situation in Africa, particular in the AMECEA region, in relation to conflicts and the response of the Church in forgiveness and reconciliation. The image that best captures my mind as I begin this presentation is the story of the *Disciples on the Road to Emmaus (Luke 24)*. We see Jesus coming to walk along with the disciples in their moment of distress, but at the same time bringing them hope and opening their minds to see the reality beyond the immediate suffering and fear.

My analysis will take four theological stages of journeying with Jesus and the disciples on the road to Emmaus. We are the disciples on the road, and we have the challenge of comprehending the conflict situation of our context in the light of faith. My prayer is that Emmaus will be a place of hope and safety for all of us in the AMECEA region, and Africa in general. Emmaus is indeed the place where we recognize Jesus in the breaking of bread, transforming our hearts not to worry about the historical sufferings of our time, but to be sources of life and hope, founded in the resurrection of Christ.

The first part, *Presence of Jesus in Our History*: In this section I will discuss the presence of Jesus in the Church in Africa. Africa is a continent of hope and new life despite the multiple social challenges of our times. Africans are a people of great religious faith and tradition, and the growth of Christianity today surpasses all other continents. The visit of Jesus to our historical social challenges, on our road to Emmaus, the place of hope, brings in a new presence to our lives. As such, we should never look at Africa as an “abandoned continent” because Jesus continues to be present in our history. The African Synods symbolize this great historical presence of Jesus as he leads us into a new evangelization.

In the second part, *Encounter with Jesus in Social Analysis*: I will examine the social, economic and political situation in Africa as some of the underlying causes of conflict. Here, like the disciples, we shall tell our story. We tell the story not so much to depict only the negative social, political and economic challenges. Instead we tell it in the light of social analysis which aims at engaging us into a faith that does justice. This discussion will deepen our understanding of the complexities of our context. AMECEA countries, like others in Africa, have the daunting task of understanding the impact of political and economic policies on the majority of the population, and advocating for changes that would safeguard human dignity. Social analysis informs our pastoral engagement in order to be efficient in responding to the needs of our context. Like the disciples in Emmaus, Jesus comes to listen to our story.

In the third part, *The Mission of Reconciliation in the Breaking of Bread*: The disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of bread, and only then could they understand what Jesus had been telling them earlier on. The Eucharist provides a non-threatening space for reconciliation of our communities torn by conflict. In the sharing of the body and blood of Christ, we partake in each other's joys and suffering and thus become united under this great symbol of faith. The Church has the great task of reconciling divided societies, advocating for justice and peaceful environment for tolerance and harmonious co-existence.

In the fourth part, *A Church of Hope, a Church of Resurrection*: The experience of resurrection had not dawned on the disciples on the road to Emmaus until they encountered Jesus. The presence of Jesus at their moment of distress brought in a new hope and a new life. The Church ought to be a great symbol of hope to its people. However, in order to be effective carrier of this hope, it has to be seen to live the values of the Gospel.

I will look at four distinctive characteristics of the Church that is committed to reconciliation, justice and peace. The Church has to be prophetic, vigilant, intrusive and in solidarity with the people of God. *Prophetic* by pronouncing the values of the Gospel without fear and being ready to accompany the people in their moments of joy and suffering; *vigilant* by being proactive in not only reading the *Signs of the Times*, but in anticipating those signs by advocating for immediate actions that have future positive impact on social transformation; *intrusive* by being part of the various processes responsible for the wellbeing of the human person, whether in the sphere of politics, economics, agriculture, trade or sciences. The Church ought to invest itself aggressively into these sectors in order to become both a partner and an active agent for change. This will guarantee the prophetic relevance of the Church. *In solidarity* with the people of God as an agent of forgiveness and reconciliation by living the experiences of the local Church and engaging the people in processes of change.

Part One

Presence of Jesus in the History of the African Church

The disciples on the road to Emmaus were at the nadir of the most distressing times in their lives. They had just experienced moments of great hope in journeying with Jesus in his ministry. They had seen Jesus perform miracles, cure the sick and feed the hungry. They had high hopes that the awaited Messiah has come to save them from sin and the oppression of the Romans. But these hopes were immediately dashed. Jesus chooses to visit them where they are, not where they would like to be. They certainly wanted to be with the glorious Jesus not the 'defeated' one. Similarly, Jesus comes to meet us in our history, joyful or ugly as it may appear. The various events in the Church in Africa have shown the presence of Jesus in our lives.

The upcoming Second African Synod acknowledges that our continent has been torn by conflicts, not just physical conflicts, but conflicts that express themselves by widespread situations of poverty, unemployment, marginalization, economic and political injustices. The Synod thus provides a great opportunity to increase the Church's active participation in reconciliation, social justice and peace as a means of bringing genuine change to Africa. The topic of the Second Synod is: "The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: 'You are the Salt of the Earth...You Are the Light of the World (Mt. 5:13). Hence, the Church will only be relevant if it retains its mission of being both the salt and the light against contextual injustices of our times. The first Synod took place in 1994 with the theme "The Church in Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000: 'You shall be my witnesses' (Acts 1:8). The emphasis was so much on the Church as a Family of God, calling on the *ubuntu responsibility on all of us*: our humanity is tied to each other and we have a mutual responsibility to each other. There is a clear transition from the first to the second assembly. While the first synod was taking place in May 1994 there were two contradicting events in Africa: On the one hand South Africa was witnessing the end of apartheid and the election of the first black African government into power, while on the other hand there was genocide going on in Rwanda leading to close to 800,000 deaths.

These two events, of conflict and hope for change, continue to mirror the history of Africa: *conflict and the need for reconciliation* is currently witnessed in northern Uganda, South Africa, Darfur, Ethiopia-Eritrea tensions, and Kenyan post-election crisis; and moments of hope are being witnessed through enormous efforts to build a new society founded in genuine reconciliation through post-conflict reconstruction in, for example, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi and Eritrea. The Second Synod is thus timely and responds to the needs of the African countries coming out of conflict or still experiencing conflict. In the same prayer as the Psalmist, the Church today has

the task of working for reconciliation in order to create a new spirit of hope and mutual understanding: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10). This new spirit can only be effective if we let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts (Colossians 3:15) through the love of one another expressed by efforts towards social change, democratic participation and economic development.

The increase in democratic space and the progress in economic development, marked by improved livelihood have brought new hope into many of our countries. The continent leads in the growth of Christianity putting it in the forefront for the re-evangelization of the world. There has also been a renewed awareness of the people’s right to participate in the social organization and political governance of their country. However, despite this outstanding progress, Africa still faces the daunting task of responding to challenges of unemployment, increase in poverty, poor governance, social-economic marginalization, poor distribution of resources and HIV/AIDS. Africa epitomizes the paradox of being a continent of hope while at the same time courageously facing the emerging challenges that threaten peace and stability.

At Jesuit Hakimani Centre (JHC) we have been analyzing the Kenyan post election situation in relation to political and economic stability of Africa countries. In Kenya we have lived great moments of hope following the 2002 General Elections that ended close to 40 year regime of the ruling party, Kenya African National Union (KANU). However, despite the economic and political progress that this new liberation brought, our hopes were dashed when the election irregularities in 2007 almost plunged the country into a civil conflict. The Kenyan story is a replica, historically and futuristically of many African countries. The unrest in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Cameroun, Ivory Coast and Nigeria have shown that democratic progress without economic integration and increased popular participation in the social organization, makes a country vulnerable to political instability.

Political leadership is largely responsible for the current unpredictable state of the continent, hence the need to advocate for accountable leadership. In many African countries, the discontent with poor political leadership has led to the search for alternative voices and mechanisms to social transformation. In fact, the shift of the centre of power from African governments to civil societies and non-state actors (religious institutions included) continues to be a present reality in a continent faced with mutating conflict situations, economic challenges and the struggle for democratic expansion.

The Church has played a critical role in creating an alternative prophetic voice that challenges poor political leadership and calls for responsible governance based on the values of the Gospel. The Church’s commitment to building the Kingdom of God on earth remains central to its commitment to social transformation of unjust structures. In fact religious faith and cultural values continue to invigorate new life through creative efforts to increase participation in governance, economic emancipation and social integration of the various ethnic communities.

Part Two

Encounter with Jesus in Social Analysis: Social, Political, Religious and Economic Situation of AMECEA Countries

The disciples on the Road to Emmaus are eager to tell their story following Jesus' question: "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied..." (Lk 24).

The disciples tell their story but lack an in-depth analysis as to why what had happened, did happen. In fact, Jesus' intervention provokes them to understand deeply the significance of the suffering and the eventual resurrection. They should therefore see these historical events in the light of faith. Similarly, as we seek to understand social, political and economic contexts of AMECEA countries, we engage ourselves into a process of social analysis. In analyzing the conflicts in our context we raise the questions: *why is this happening and what are the factors behind it all?* It is thus important to clearly grasp the different factors that influence our society, the structural definitions, the leadership and community organizations, the internal and external elements that determine the wellbeing of our society, among others.

But in order to be effective we have to be moved by the situation before us. The Good Samaritan stopped to help because he was compassionate, and was thus moved interiorly to do something. The other persons who passed by understood the need to help but were not moved to help. We equally ought to seek not only to deepen our understand of the experience, but to let the experience touch us spiritually in order to make our response genuine.

In order to understand the current conflicts and situational injustices, it is important to identify the various multiple transitions that African countries have been going through. There are various historical and social-political factors responsible for the categorization below. The different transitions are not limited to specific countries since one country could be experiencing multiple transitions.

Liberalist-populist governments: In the post independence period most African governments enjoyed liberalist and populist governments. The centre

of power was mainly vested in the governments. The focus was to increase literacy through formal education, tackle poverty through creation of job opportunities, and reduce the death rates through improved medical services. These objectives still remain a reality far from achieved.

Liberationist/military – democrat government: This period has seen some military liberationist individuals formalize their governments through “democratic processes” which are often tailored to favour the liberationist. Several countries have gone through series of military resistance for independence or military coups that later transit into some democratic semblance. Such include Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, etc. It is often difficult for liberationists to cede power given that they still live in the liberationist frenzy and are hardly willing to realize that democracy is about checks and balances on the quality of leadership performance. This is the case in Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Zimbabwe.

Stale/stagnant democracies: Most African countries continue to experience stale democracies where there seem not to be development and human progress. In these situations democratic processes are manipulated to favour those in power and maintain the status quo. These countries could be “peaceful” but at the same time experiencing a deep discontent among majority of the population largely due to historical injustices, corrupt practices of government officials, poor infrastructure, partisan institutions of governance, lack of employment opportunities and unfair distribution of resources. Such is the case in Zambia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Tanzania.

Evangelization – Neo-evangelization: From the spiritual perspective we note that Africa is a continent in spiritual thirst. Many are in search for a deeper expression of their faith. Consequently, there has been a rapid increase in the number of Christians but at the same time an augmented number of churches. Many Catholics have joined the Pentecostal churches because perhaps these churches address a fulfilling need that they do not find in the Catholic Church. Politicians have taken advantage of multiplicities of religious faiths and have co-opted the latter into partisan politics. The confessions by several Churches in Kenya of their compromised partisan political participation in the last general elections stand out as a concrete example.

The Current Social, Political, Economic and Religious Situation

A quick look at AMECEA countries reveals a region faced with serious challenges ranging from social integration and political stability.

Countries	Social Integration	Political situation	Economic Integration	Religious Integration
Uganda	Rich cultural expressions; Inter-ethnic tensions and lack of national integration	Instability in the North and unpredictability of peace agreement continues to be a challenge; autocratic leadership with unlimited term on presidency	Steady economic growth, however more than 50% of the population living in poverty	Religious commitment to peace through Acholi Religious for Peace; high reverence to Uganda Martyrs devotion and inspiration; The Anglican – Catholic divide tend to polarize politics; increase of Pentecostal churches a challenge to Catholic Church
Kenya	Diverse cultural richness; strong civil society; increased ethnicism after 2007 General Elections; politics is ethnicized and politicized; lack of a national ideology/integration	Vibrant competitive multiparty system; post-election violence in January 2008 has divided the country along ethnic lines; Coalition government lacks political integration, hence very weak; yet to address distribution of national resources like land and economic wealth; constitutional reforms	Strong economy in the region; economic growth of 6% in 2007; more than 50% poor, and high unemployment rates; lack economic policies for equal regional distribution of national wealth	There is religious integration; common inter-religious initiatives for social change like <i>Ufungamano Initiative</i> . The Church has been actively speaking against social injustices.

Sudan	Diverse cultural, religious and racial categories; tensions exist between the Arab North and Black African South; lack of inter-ethnic integration in the South;	Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in January 2005 yet to be fully implemented especially on the distribution of wealth; Darfur region still in conflict hence weakening political situation	The South is still marginalized despite producing most of the oil; the government gets millions of dollars from oil revenues but lacks accountability; majority of the populations still very poor	Inter-religious tensions between Muslims and other faiths; lack full religious freedom. The Church has been actively speaking against injustices
Ethiopia	Diverse cultural and religious categories; inter-ethnic tensions due to the regional administrative divisions along ethnic lines	The disputed 2005 elections led to political suppression of the Opposition; political leadership seems to marginalize “opposition” regions; next general election could divide the country further	Has marked positive economic growth and increased industrialization. However, 70% of the population still below poverty line.	Dominantly Orthodox; new wave of Islamic fundamentalism coming up; Catholics very active in provision of social services
Eritrea	Integrated inter-ethnic relationship; increased national pride in the Eritrean identity	Lack of political freedom; forced military service for everyone including seminarians; highly authoritarian government	Post war effect has left the country very poor; low development, lack of employment; perennial drought and lack of sufficient food	Dominantly Orthodox, while Catholics are among the minority religions.
Tanzania	Integrated national identity marked by	Popular government	Enjoyed economic	Major religions mainly

	harmonious co-existence.	elected by more than 60% of the electorate; weak Opposition which means less checks and balances on the government	growth; increased economic opportunities in recent years due to liberalization of the economy; but 60% of the population still live below poverty line;	Christianity and Islam; occasional inter-religious tensions but generally live in peaceful coexistence.
Malawi	Integrated national identity; peaceful co-existence between various ethnic communities	The government is weak due to rebellion within the president's former party; country could degenerate into political crisis	Slow economic growth; periodic famine due to poor harvests; poor economic policies and large external borrowings	The country is mainly Christian but with an increasing Islamic population. Occasional inter-religious tensions
Zambia	Peaceful coexistence between communities and a sense of national pride. Social integration is evident.	Increase in democratic participation; There is clamour for a new constitution. The government is determined to control the process	Economic growth, but most of the population still poor. There is a scandal of the abuse of multinational companies. For example the condition of workers in Chinese-run mines in Kitwe	Peaceful co-existence between various religious faiths. The Church has been speaking strongly against injustices.

Current Social Political and Economic Challenges in the AMECEA Region

The table above notes the remarkable political and economic progress that AMECEA countries have registered. It is evident that people's livelihoods have improved and a new wave of hope created. However, these countries are yet to experience democratic and economic stability that can bring full human development and integrated peace. There is an enormous marginalization of the larger part of the population despite the gains made. For example, Kenya

registered about 6% economic growth yet the cost of living has gone up more than 12%, hence majority of the population do not enjoy such a growth. On the other hand, while Zambia has been stable for many years and registered democratic progress, corruption and lack of agrarian reform has seen Zambia experience food shortages despite having 70% of arable land. Tanzania is equally very peaceful and enjoys a steady economic growth, but poor political leadership and corruption has marginalized majority of the people who still live in abject poverty.

Ethiopia and Eritrea have rich cultural heritage and deeply religious in their identity, but the boarder tensions that have led to inter-state wars remain a big challenge for peaceful co-existence. The two countries have perennial droughts and food shortages, and have failed to institutionalize accountable leadership. Ethnic discrimination and religious tensions have weakened the little democratic progress that has been made. Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia experience the challenge of poor use and distribution of national and natural resources, particularly given the large amounts of mineral resources. The governments of these countries have signed mining contracts with multinational companies that reap the respective countries of the maximum profits while leaving them very poor. The working conditions in these mines are also humanly degrading while at the same time having serious impact on the environment. Conflict and insecurity have hampered social integration and fair economic distribution in Uganda and Sudan. The northern Uganda conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Uganda government has impoverished the North and retarded the country's full economic development.

Economic disparities evidenced by inequality of household incomes, ownership of land as well as poor economic performance of a country, can also lead to conflict. These conditions breed general discontent against the government, leading to civil strife and protests, formation of armed guerrilla groups which lure the unemployed youth to the power of the gun, hence creating an alternative source of income through extortions and criminal activities. In Kenya this has been noted by the growth of militia groups during election periods and their subsequent mutation into extortion rackets and criminal menace.

Sudan equally faces the problem of equitable distribution of resources and integral development. The country is notably the biggest country in Africa and has endured the longest and bloodiest fratricidal conflict in the continent, lasting more than 40 years. The country is endowed with enormous wealth mostly natural resources like petroleum, mica, chromites, gypsum, marble, mica, gold and diamonds, a large proportion of which is in the Southern part of the country.

In January 2005 the Sudanese government and the SPLA/M signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that officially brought an end to the protracted conflict which has cost more than two million lives. Recent International Crisis Group (ICG) briefing indicate that the CPA is at risk of collapsing and the

country relapsing to war given that the risk of new fighting is growing in the oil-rich Abyei area. ICG states that there are three main factors that put CPA at risk: “First and foremost, some in the NCP continue to view full implementation and the promised 2009 elections as a threat to its survival and are undermining core aspects of the deal. Secondly, the SPLM remains divided on its priorities, between those who favour a southern-first strategy and those who support a national agenda. The infighting has weakened CPA implementation, and the SPLM should use its May 2008 National Convention to reconcile the splits. Thirdly, the international guarantors and the UN remain dangerously disengaged, due in part to preoccupation with Darfur and in part to a lack of consensus on the way forward.” (ICG, March 2008).

Contrary to the globalization promises of poverty reduction and development “the actual number of people living in poverty has actually increased by about 100 million. This occurred at the same time that the total world income increased by an average of 2.5 percent annually”¹ Worse still little or no structures have been established to address the growing problem of the increasing number of the marginalized among the marginalized. Secondary marginalization has grown rapidly in poor countries. Among the population in the secondary marginalization are the HIV/AIDS victims, orphans, street children, disabled or handicapped, victims of civil wars and genocide, child soldiers, bonded laborers, drug addicts and ex-convicts. These have all been disregarded as non-players.

The Church has to be *vigilant* in identifying economic policies that give false economic growth that is not reflected on the lives of the people. As such it has to provide alternative mechanism to measuring economic, social and political wellbeing of the human person. Pope John Paul II asserts: “Moreover, one must denounce the existence of economic, financial and social mechanisms which, although they are manipulated by people, often function almost automatically, thus accentuating the situation of wealth for some and poverty for the rest. These mechanisms, which are maneuvered directly or indirectly by the more developed countries, by their very functioning favor the interests of the people manipulating them at in the end they suffocate or condition the economies of the less developed countries.” (*Social Concern*) It is important for the Church to be familiar with the subtle economic policies that often tie African governments to contracts that make them poorer.

Hence, we note that in order address the various levels of conflicts and achieve full economic and democratic integration centred on the human dignity, the AMECEA countries will need to address:

- a) Poor distribution of national resources
- b) Lack of democratic structures that would otherwise ensure larger participation of the populations in the organization of the society
- a) Authoritarian regimes that marginalize specific groups of people

¹ Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: Norton, 2002), p.5.

- b) State failure to guarantee the security of the population, especially of the marginalized communities
- c) Border dispute between states especially when there is natural wealth at stake

The envisioned social change for AMECEA countries will have to focus on the common good of the society. The Church reiterates that, “The best way to fulfill one's obligations of justice and love is to contribute to the common good according to one's means and the needs of others, and also to promote and help public and private organizations devoted to bettering the conditions of life ([*The Church and the Modern World*](#), no.30).

Democratic reforms, particularly in the developing countries, ought to be geared towards fostering accountability, transparency, efficiency, freedom from corruption and security of persons and property, etc.² Increase in democracy creates opportunity for creativity for new ideas and a favorable climate for economic development. Such an environment facilitates trade and benefits of globalization most effectively by expanding participation in political, economic and social systems.

Part Three

The Church of Hope, the Church of the Resurrection:

The Church’s Response to Political and Social-Economic Challenges

The intervention of Jesus on the road to Emmaus focused mainly in interpreting the human suffering in the light of faith. The message of Jesus is that we should never be weighed down by the complexities and details of the challenges of our social context. The Church has a *prophetic* role to play in transforming the social injustices into experiences of hope.

The disillusionment on what democracy can offer has created a new crisis in Africa leading to conflicts and protests for change. In the AMECEA region today, and in many African countries, the hitherto stable countries are facing the impatience of their people who can no longer bear the rise of the cost of living. The Basic Needs Surveys carried out in Kenya (Jesuit Hakimani Centre, 2008), Zambia (Jesuit

² According to the 2002 United Nations Human Development Report (UNHDR), since 1980, 81 countries have democratized while 33 military regimes have been replaced by civilian governments. The report adds that, of the world's nearly 200 countries, 140 now hold multi-party elections. These could not be fully democratic but 82 of them are and these are home to 57% of world's population.

Centre for Theological Reflection, 2008) and Uganda (John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre, 2008) have all shown that the cost of living has been going up between 10-22%. Most people can no longer bear these costs. This means that the biggest challenge for most African countries today is sustainable livelihoods. If democracy is to gain any relevance it has to address the question of unequal distribution of resources, lack of participation in the organization of the society and accountability.

The sustainable livelihood crisis has been witnessed in several countries in Africa. Increasing food prices have emerged as a major indicator that most African economies are unsustainable, and that the rising oil prices will destabilize democratic and economic gains further. The hard economic times have been marked by the food riots in Cameroun, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Kenya etc; violence against immigrants in South Africa has confirmed the xenophobic attitudes provoked by lack of employment for many South African youth; and lastly we have equally witnessed post-election violence in Kenya which to a great extent touches on issues of poor distribution of resources and the need for political and economic reforms. Unless these issues are addressed African countries will be faced, in the next two decades, with a major crisis that could spiral into a “people’s revolution” consequently unseating the wealthy from their comforts. In other words we need a new philosophy of development, and in this case I would propose social development that touches on the entire human person.

The Role of the church in Social Development for Social Transformation

One could perhaps ask, what has the Church to do with development? The Church has indeed a *vigilant* role to play in social transformation: working against social injustices and instituting just structures within the society. As we know, the Church has been at the forefront in the provision of social services in Africa which has consequently been key to development. Social development refers to integral processes of change that touch on individual, society and structural transformation. In this sense then, social transformation is well defined as an integral development processes that put the human person, and hence human dignity, at the centre of development and change.

Social development is therefore key to liberating human person from oppression of poverty and suffering. Social development stands for initiatives that address the needs of the individual, society and the structures of governance. The epic of Jesus’ message that touches on spiritual and physical well being of the human person is in the Gospel of John: “I came that they may have life in abundance.” (Jn 10:10). The concept of development has

constantly been used to refer to the material consumption and progression in a society. Thus, material consumption and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) become the indexes of progress. But the debate has recently shifted to focus on social development that considers the human person as the primary object of development. The Catholic Bishops of Kenya stated that “Justice demands that all citizens have a right to share in the wealth of our country...It follows that all should have some share in land ownership, in available material resources, in political aspirations, in education, in government services, etc. The use of unjust means of any form, by anyone, is against justice.” (“*Pastoral Letter in Response to the Attempted Coup of 1st August, 1982*).

Development without Human Face

The Church has the role of bringing the voice of conscience to the processes of development. Subsequently, development without a human face is development founded on a false premise of self-enrichment and promotion of statistical development, and not human development. In fact, the Church in the AMECEA region and Africa in general has been promoting development directly or indirectly through provision of social services such as education (academic and moral values), hospitals, vocational training and social centers. The economic growth has been realized in all the AMECEA countries. Sudan has been leading with the huge annual increase of oil production, while Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Ethiopia and Tanzania have realized impressive returns from agriculture, trade and tourisms.

The Church has to be *intrusive* in promoting faith grounded on responsible citizenship which holds leadership accountable to the common good. In other words, we need an alternative discourse that can promote sustainable livelihood while at the same time increase popular participation in structures of governance. The Episcopal Conference of Uganda reminds us that the “Citizens... must aid in keeping the country at peace, in finding better means of production, better ways of living, in enforcing respect for the laws of God, in influencing public opinion, in raising the level of public morality and in securing social justice (Episcopal Conference of Uganda, *The Christian and His Country*). In order to increase the citizen participation, it would be important to reconcile divided communities. Hence, the mission of reconciliation is a central pastoral commitment. The prayer of Jesus is our prayer too: “May they be one, as we are one.” (Jn.17)

Part Four

The Mission of Reconciliation in the Breaking of Bread

In the midst of violent contexts in the AMECEA region, the Church has become more overt in working against factors that ignite,

exacerbate or increase conflicts. This is evident through the Church's schools and colleges, hospitals, formation and trainings in leadership and human development as well as statements against social injustices. However, new trends of conflict have challenged the Church to play an active role in mediating various levels of conflict. Currently, within the AMECEA region, there are social, economic and political conflicts that could degenerate into political-economic crisis in Malawi, Zambia, Eritrea, Sudan, Uganda and Kenya.

Like the Emmaus disciples, we should not be overwhelmed by the details and complexities of human suffering. Instead we need to create channels of hope based on faith in the resurrection Jesus. The disciples recognized Jesus in the breaking of bread. His death and resurrection became real at the Eucharist and their eyes were opened to look at their reality from the perspective of life and hope, and not death and hopelessness. Following the post election crisis in Kenya, Jesuit Hakimani Center undertook the pastoral task of healing the wounds of division. I was invited severally to give conflict analysis and healing sessions to different communities in the country. I was once invited to a parish to carry out a healing process. Prior to the exercise I was warned that the parishioners were divided between those who were for justice and those for peace. I had the difficult task of harmoniously linking up the two concepts in order for them to understand that we cannot separate justice and peace. However, the most consoling aspect was that despite the strong divisions among the congregation, the Eucharist continued to provide a non-threatening environment, a place of dialogue and understanding. Similar initiatives for peace and reconciliation mushroomed into multiple activities for peace and reconciliation throughout the country, and developed into what we now call in Kenya *Channels for Peace* under the auspices of the Episcopal Conference.

In order to achieve a harmonious coexistence between people and build the Kingdom of God founded on the Second Synod values of *reconciliation, justice and peace*, the Church has to play an active role in mitigating conflicts within the AMECEA region. In fact, the Church has already been active in this mission as noted in the mediation process of the northern Uganda conflict, given that the Church has been part of the initiative for conflict transformation by the Acholi Religious Leaders for Peace. Similarly, the Church played a complementary role in bringing to an end the Sudanese conflict. The Church equally has important tasks in: *promotion of faith that does justice* by being *prophetic* and increasing participation of the people of God in the process transformation of factors that contribute to conflict. This would entail bringing in more Catholic professionals to be active participants in the

Church's initiative for peace and justice; *conflict prevention* through early warnings of possible situations of conflict, hence increasing the vigilance commitment for social change; *human rights monitoring* by working with the civil society and decision makers in networks of collaboration; *conflict resolution* by increasing skills that can help people transform their own conflicts.

Working for peace and justice is indeed a deliberate commitment by the Church to build the Kingdom of God on earth. It is a Kingdom built on Gospel values of love, forgiveness, tolerance, mercy and generosity. This process includes diverse and focused activities, immediate and short-term, that promote peace and curb violence in conflict settings, at both the micro and macro levels of the society. The participation of the Church in peace-building and conflict resolution is thus a foresight that not only contributes to eventual ending of particular conflicts but also conservation of limited resources and preservation of human life.

However, besides intervening in conflict and reconciling divided societies, the Church has today an important task of proposing alternative mechanisms for change that address full human development. There is a need for a new discourse against economic and political liberalism. Hence, the Church has to speak out for the poor by promoting social development as an alternative approach to integral development that responds to needs of the entire person. As Pope Paul II asserts, "To ignore this demand could encourage the temptation among the victims of injustice to respond with violence, as happens at the origin of many wars. Peoples excluded from the fair distribution of the goods originally destined for all could ask themselves: why not respond with violence to those who first treat us with violence?" (Social Concern)

The discussion above shows that the Church is an important agent of change, particularly in transforming conflicts in Africa in line with the Second Africa Synod's theme of reconciliation, justice and peace. Thus, the primary focus of the work for reconciliation is social justice which entails establishment of a harmonious coexistence between individuals, and assurance that every human person has a role to play in the society, and that the society has the responsibility of providing the necessary provisions for a decent life.

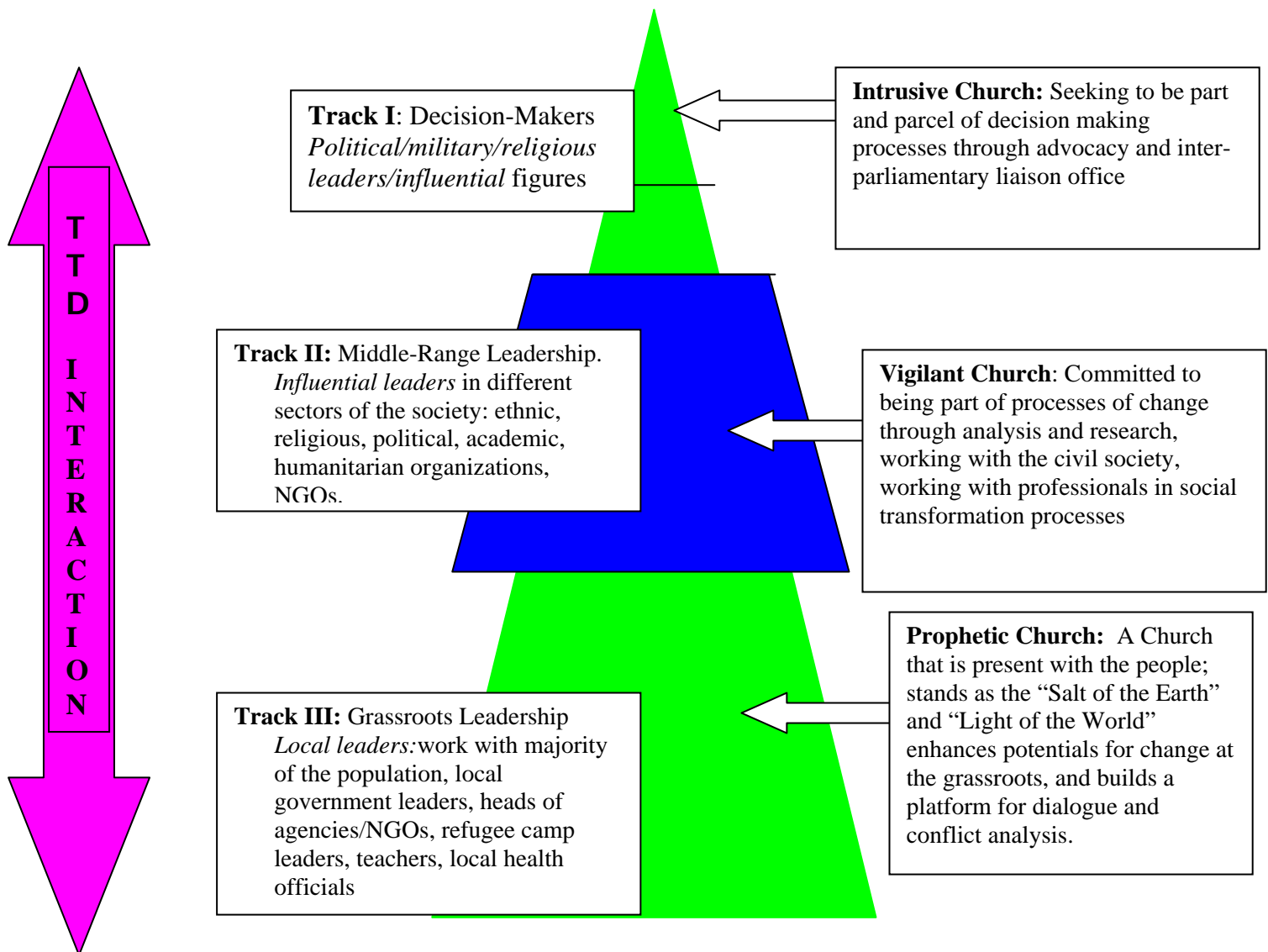
Conclusion

The discussion above shows that the Church has four main crucial roles to play in transforming conflicts in Africa in line with the Second Africa Synod’s theme of reconciliation, justice and peace.

The first is that the Church should never lose its *prophetic voice*. It has to be the “salt of the earth...the light of the world” with the conviction that we all have an obligation to transform the situations of injustice in our midst.

Secondly, the Church has to be *vigilant*, always committed to making “visible the real presence of God’s saving action in time and space.”(*Lineamentat*, #84). Vigilance calls for a foresight in anticipating the impact of political, economic and religious policies on the population. The Church has to include Catholic professionals in the analysis of social contexts in order to give informed challenge and advice to the government.

A Prophetic, Vigilant and Intrusive Church



The third, the Church has to be *intrusive* as an agent of social change. The Church has the liberty to intervene against societal and government practices that violate human dignity: “Whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men and women are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury.” ([*The Church and the Modern World*](#), no.27)

The fourth is that the Church has to live in *solidarity* with its people as an agent of forgiveness and reconciliation. The vital interventions for change in conflict and post-conflict periods are mediation through dialogue and conflict intervention, and an integral process of forgiveness and reconciliation that seeks to heal the wounds of conflict, respectively. The Church is a Family of God. Hence, “to shed a brother or a sister’s blood is to shed one’s own blood, the Blood of Christ.” (*Lineamenta* #39). Like Christ, we ought to counter the evil of domination and oppression with the Gospel of love because a “just society cannot be achieved without the component of love.” (*Lineamenta*, #50). In fact, while justice is a necessary pre-requisite to peace it ought to be administered within the whole framework of forgiveness and reconciliation. On the other hand, economic and development progress alone is not enough. There has to be investment in national identity, economic integration of the poor and the marginalized, and increase in democratic space.

In his message on the World Day of Peace (2002), Pope John Paul II reiterated that there can be “no peace without justice and no justice without forgiveness.” In the same line, most African cultures advocate for restorative justice, which seeks to “rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator...”³ This is carried out through rituals of retribution, forgiveness and reconciliation, which make the entire process meaningful, engaging and binding. However, besides the rituals there has to be a change of heart in a process through which the Church facilitates the “formation of conscience and formation in the faith” (*Lineamenta* 90).

The future of the African Church is founded on a Church that is committed to reconciliation that reunites divided people into one family of God, stands up for justice for the poor and marginalized, and promotes true peace founded on Gospel values of love of God and neighbour.

Hence, the Church in AMECEA region has to lead its people to Emmaus where the focus is building the Kingdom of God on earth that promotes life to its fullness. This is done through strengthening of the existing initiatives for social change and initiating new approaches that promote full

³ D. Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*. (New York: Doubleday, 1999).

human development. We can only do so much to change the conflict situations in our society. Our focus ought to be the Kingdom: “Seek first the Kingdom of God and all shall be given to you.” (Mtt.6:33).

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