

Authority and Servant Leadership: Effective Tool for Service in the Church & Society in Africa



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ABSTRACT: Authority is likening to a driving agent, which is divine or human. By experimental and analytical method, we explore the magisterial interpretation by evaluating modern trends on the application of authority. Research examines the Christian teachings from the Bible and Sacred Tradition. Jesus Christ had taught the principle of pragmatic authority based on Servant Leadership at the washing of His Disciples' feet. The quest for a Servant Leader: to feed the poor, to protect orphans, to fight for justice in Africa; is value-style of leadership in the 21st century world.

KEY WORDS: Authority, Magisterium, Sacrifice, Service, Servant Leader, Power.

INTRODUCTION

Authority *prima facie* is a system designed to create order; it is a process leading to the procedures of activity – bestowal of leadership. It is most often associated with an act that points to leadership, which principally envisions the ability to use power to dispense creative order. “The word “authority” comes from the Latin *auctoritas* which belongs to a family of terms meaning, “to cause to grow, to produce.”¹ Given this understanding, the researcher engages in a quest to establish that, the principal source of all human and angelic authority, powers and functions, do originate from God who is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus, God being the Trinity, establishes authority to create order in leadership and most importantly, to transmit service for *Common Good* and promote *Human Dignity* in order to establish true reign of justice, peace and love, and to build a harmonious human Society. The vision to lead is generic and a gift of God but the operation, execution and transmission are solely exercise daily to enhance a human or angelic being to act a free-being. A free moral agent who is gifted with intelligence to express his/her authenticity with a free-will. The Servant-leader must act as a moral agent who exercises and acts guided by free-will; it is a God-given authority leads to consequences that are either positive or negative. Since the moral agent is created by God with intelligence; this sets the order that wheels human society, which progressively moves human activity preferably on the path of success. Thus, our quest and search, ought to tune human activity towards servant leadership perfectly personified in Jesus Christ.

The research sets to examine the exercise of authority in a positive dimension, to create effective leadership. Ebener defines leadership as “an influence process through which a leader inspires or motivates followers toward a common goal or a shared vision.”² Authority exercised by the cognitive human training and intelligence leads to the glory of God personified in enhancing the democratic freedom of all human beings in every human setting. It is expected that every authority bequeathed to a human being, be they parents, teachers, politicians, scientists, or even the clergies in the world-order, is meant to produce effective and God-fearing ‘Leaders of Conscience.’³ It then means that if the proper dimension of servant leadership is used in human society and in the Catholic Church; it calls for setting Jesus Christ as the ‘Perfect Model’ - it will renew and transform human society. This is well captured once again by Ebener who taught that, “the leader creates a sense of shared vision about the future, articulates that shared vision, inspires commitment to that vision, and provides support and encouragement to the group in pursuit of that vision.”⁴ Today, the increasing activities of human beings in the present world-order are not commendable in many countries of Africa, Europe, America and Asia – though a few have done well, while many have been dictators.

¹ Potyin, Thomas, R. “*Authority in the Church*,” in *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, eds. Michael Glazier and Monika K. Hellwig, (Bangalore: Claretian Publications, 1997), 64

² Ebener, Dan. R., *Servant Leadership Models for your Parish*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 12

³ Shabayang, Barnabas Sama'ila Shabayang, *The Relevance of Theological Education in Forming Religious Leaders of Conscience in Africa*, in *Nigerian Journal of Religion and Society (JORAS)*, (Vol. 10, June, 2020). A Publication of Good Shepherd Major Seminary, Kaduna, ed. Odafe C. George, 157

⁴ Ebener, Dan. R., *Servant Leadership Models for your Parish*, pg. 12

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A retrospective view shows that the world has seen good leaders who used authority positively to serve their people –St. Pope John Paul II, John F. Kennedy, M. Ghadhi, Winston Churchill, Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, Kofi Anan, to mention just a few. At the same time, Africa in particular, and even the world in general, had experienced bad leaders like Adolf Hitler, Joseph Garibaldi, Joseph Stalin, Maputo Seseseko, M. Gadhafi, Sani Abacha, *et cetera*, these were really evil in actions and words. Instead of using authority to govern with equitable sense of justice focus on constructive development; they chose rather to use authoritative power to kill and wantonly destroy people and private and public properties. These evil actions, thus, set them and the legacies they left behind as bad examples against conventional right use of authority.

1. **Authority for Service in the Church and Society:** The Judeo-Christian civilisation espoused that God bestows in the human person a great capacity for intellectual, spiritual and physical activity. God bequeathed to the human person a capacity to engage in intellectual and spiritual activity. This gives the human person the capacity to develop the socio-moral propensity to exercise power to lead. The Holy Spirit bestows wisdom, and is the primary source of power to lead wisely. This ennoblement helps to transmit authority (acquired by grace through the baptismal character) to the human person by divine injunction to function; but each person is accountable for his/her actions. It is in this respect that the Bible teaches that God bestowed authority on Adam in the Garden and gave him power to name all the creatures He had made (Gen. 1: 29-31, NRSV). The authority that God bestowed on Adam was meant for him to be a custodian and a creative force to protect and nurture God's creatures to attained their fulfillment through service. But due to selfish quest of power to 'know good and evil,' Adam and Eve destroyed themselves by their wrong choices. However, it is to be known that creative service base on God's grace exercise in total freedom to do the right thing, leads the doer to become a servant leader that changes and promotes human development.

The submit of all authority as taught by Catholic Theology in the Catholic Church originates directly from God who is a Trinity of Persons (Matt. 28: 19ff). It flows through Peter, the Prince of the Apostles and to the rest of the Apostles by Christocentric power bestowed on them after the resurrection which was climaxed at Pentecost. By divine mandate then, the Apostles became the Magisterium – they served as the original source of authority to teach on faith and morals, preparing humanity for salvation. McCormick asserts that the “Magisterium refers to the teaching office and authority of the Catholic Church and also the hierarchy as holding this office.”⁵ All through the ages, the word Magisterium has evolved, developed and is a high reference point of theological teaching. To further clarify its significance and importance, the *International Theological Commission* teaches that: “Scripture and Tradition taken together, pondered upon and authentically interpreted by the Magisterium faithfully transmit to us the teachings of Christ, our Lord and Saviour, and determine the doctrine that it is the Church's mission to proclaim to all peoples and to apply to each generation until the end of the world.”⁶ This assertive statement underscores the point that from the moment Jesus gave the mandate and commanded the Apostles to go to the whole world to preach, teach and baptize (Matt. 28:19ff), the Catholic Church has remained faithful to this clear teaching; enjoining each leader to become a servant leader in humility, service and love to humanity. This in essence underpin the core value of servant-leadership as a desired value, virtue and skill to be acquired by all African Leaders – both civil and sacred.

Given the aforementioned serviceable mandate of authority, it is to be known that the Patrine ministry therefore is an office of the highest hierarchical order in the Roman Catholic Church, and at the same time it exercises the teaching authority that lies at the heart of the Church. The Council of Florence teaches that: “The Roman Pontiff is the successor of Peter, the true Vicar of Christ, the head of the whole Church, the father and teacher of all Christians.”⁷ Given this background knowledge, this research asserts affirmatively that the positive exercise of authority comes to fruition when it serves the divine mandate express concretely by human wisdom and in cooperation with God's grace. *Coren* teaches that “Catholics of course, know and acknowledge that the Bible is the word of God. They also know and acknowledge that Jesus Christ did not leave us a Bible but left us a Pope and a teaching office, the Magisterium. Through the Pope and the teaching authority of the Church, the truth of the Bible is guided and guarded through the ages.”⁸ Thus, the Magisterium, headed by the Pope in Rome, have received directly, the mandate, authority, power and direction to teach, baptize and evangelise the world (cf. Matt. 28:19ff, John 20: 21-23). This is the more reason Vatican I (1869-1870)⁹ emphasizes the primacy of the Pope to teach impeccably on matters of Faith and Morals, and to be infallible. The Church teaches clearly that, whoever succeeds Peter in this chair, holds Peter's primacy over the whole Church. “Therefore, the dispositions made

⁵McCormick, Richard, A., “Magisterium,” in *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, Gen ed. Richard P. McBrien, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), 805

⁶International Theological Commission, Volume I, “*Catholic Teaching on Apostolic Succession*,” ed. Michael Sharkey, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 67

⁷Heinrich Joseph Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Roy, J., Deferrari, (St. Louis: Herder Books Co., 1957), no. 1370 (hereafter cited as DS), “Council of Florence, Decree for the Greeks”: Repeated at Vatican I (DS 3059).

⁸Coren, Michael, *Why Catholics are Right*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2011), 103

⁹Heinrich Denzinger, Vatican I (1869-1870), on “Papal Infallibility,” nn. 3065-3075; *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, eds. Peter Hunermann, Robert Fastiggi and Anne Englund Nash, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), Forty-Third Edition.

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by truth endure, and St. Peter still has the rock-like strength that has been given to him, and he has not surrendered the helm of the Church with which he has been entrusted.”¹⁰ Avery Dulles reiterates further that: “The pope as bishop of Rome, is in an eminent degree responsible for the purity of doctrine. He can teach infallibly either as representative head of the College of Bishops, expressing the general consensus or *ex cathedra* as successor of Peter and supreme teacher of the visible Church.”¹¹ The power to teach is interpreted by ecclesialologists as a faculty of transmission of faith and morals in the world today. It is an exercise by the pontifical authority that sanctifies corrupt vibes that infiltrate peoples’ consciences via evil trends by the spread of discordant voices promoted by secularisation. It is as if to correct this perspective that John Allen reported an incidence that occurred during the visit of St. Pope John Paul II to Conakry of a request made by the then Archbishop (Cardinal) Robert Sarah to the pope to address and speak to the issues of politico-economic evils to root out corruption and doctorship in the African continent, he wrote:

When Pope John Paul II visited Guinea in 1992, Sarah publicly asked the pope to push African leaders to clean up their act. “Tell the African governments that reforms will be meaningless if they are tainted in blood, provoking considerable human and economic catastrophes,” Sarah told the pope.¹²

The above case is captured to demonstrate clearly, that most African Cardinals, Bishops and Priests are fearless and speak-truth-to-power. By dealing courageously with gross issues of injustices, political manipulations, stealing and corruption that presently bedevils effective leadership in the African continent.

The Power and Authority given to Peter and to the Apostles to teach and baptize all nations came from the Scriptures and Tradition (Jn 20: 21-23). Saint Peter, the Prince of the Apostles was chosen by Jesus Christ with authority to lead the other eleven. Coren once again teaches, “in the New Testament, the names of Simon Peter or *Cephas* are mentioned almost 200 times while the names of all the other apostles combined are mentioned not fewer than 140. Peter is mentioned first in the list of apostles by Matthew “to single him out as the most prominent one of the leaders of Christ’s followers, and St. Paul later spent fifteen days with him to prepare for his own journey of conversion.”¹³ It therefore means that the ministry of preaching, proclaiming and evangelising in the Catholic Church is considered by divine mandate and which points to the servant leadership style. This model of leadership serves the purpose of kenotic or sacrificial mentoring that is principally at the heart or is a core value of service of the Word of God to humanity; that energizes, renews, transforms and beautifies human society.

Authority as service to lead and govern in the Catholic Church is transmitted by Apostolic succession. It is bestowed through sacramental order making the baptized “Christians as living stones in the new building that is the Church founded on Christ, offered to God’s worship in the Spirit who has made them new...”¹⁴ It creates and generates a Trinitarian Family by the reception of baptism thus creating an *Ecclesial Family on Mission* setting its inclusive and eternal privileges for the recipients. These settings and configuration are not only based on physical realities but are strictly metaphysical and by sacramental order vivifies the human societal structure even in the Church. That is why the Holy Roman Catholic Church has a disciplined-order of authority which was given to her by God from Apostolic era, and is still manifesting its rich quality of servant-leadership in the acts of love, preaching and charity by the Trinitarian Character of the Paschal Mystery – Cor Unum, Caritas International, St. Vincent de Paul Society.

2. The Doctrine of the Trinity as pivotal to the quest of the Servant Leader: In the Catholic intellectual and theological framework, perfection, standards, model of leadership and sacrificial or kenotic love amongst other attributes of God, flow from the essence, metaphysical and operational mystery that is God. This wholistic and value truth is well captured in what St. Pope John Paul II wrote: “**The Triune God is “God for us.”**¹⁵ We human beings are made in the image and likeness of God, thus reflect strong element of God-ordered-standard of perfection. Christian theology espoused that God is more than the human mind, soul, intellect or reason can perceive, understand or even explain. Even the greater reasons theology uses human language in series of symbols, metaphors and signs to illustrate and capture deeper essence and meaning. Just as Jesus Christ invited humanity to “be perfect as our heavenly Father is Perfect”, (Cf. Matt. 5: 48). The Trinity is the perfection of excellent and liberative power (by the Paschal Mystery) to serve and lead human persons using all democratic and transcendental skills of leadership known to human intellectual process. Leonardo Boff taught this salient truth when he wrote:

¹⁰Heinrich Denzinger, Vatican I (1869-1870), on “Papal Infallibility,” n. 3057; *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*.

¹¹Dulles, Avery Cardinal, *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company), 85

¹²Allen, John, “Papabile of the Day, “1 March 2013 in *The Next Pope: The Leading Cardinal Candidates*, ed. Edward Pentin, (Manchester, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 2020), 473

¹³Coren, Michael, *Why Catholics are Right*, 103

¹⁴International Theological Commission, Volume I, *Catholic Teaching on Apostolic Succession*, 98

¹⁵Pope John Paul II: A Reader, “*The Triune God and Jesus Christ*,” eds. Gerald O’Collins, Daniel Kendall, & Jeffrey Labelle, (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press), 2007, 42

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The divine perichoresis precludes any superimposition upon or subordination of one person or another. All are equally eternal and infinite. The perichoresis permits us to say: There are not first and three persons, and thereupon their relation; the three are intertwined, and live their relation of eternal communion from the outset. Therefore, there is one God: God-Trinity.¹⁶

As Christians, we command respect to serve as the conscience of society by the operational mandate that we are configured to become children of God by our baptismal character. The Holy Spirit bequeaths this sacramental ennoblement as it bestows the gift of grace given to Christians to exercise the servant leadership in their daily encounter with the world. To be servant leaders in the current hard times of crises of Covid-19 (omicron), it demands huge sacrifice. It requires a person to be generative of God-given virtues in order to change the evil structures from the inside-out; by a deliberate drive that comes from internal conversion of the “I-Me-Myself” syndrome that promotes the egocentric manipulations that are found where Christians serve in public or private offices. The imprint of the trinitarian servant leadership relates to that perfect coinherence (unity) which poses as catalyst to conversion; when this happens, it becomes an inherent quest that moves the christian leader in his/her disposition to striving to do God’s will on earth.

Catholic Theologians have taught with explicit clarity that the source of authority originates in the love and power of God as Perfect Trinity. Prominent among these Theologians is the famous African Saint Augustine (354-430). MacCormack wrote: “In the *Trinitate*... Augustine explains the doctrine of the Trinity in light of Scripture and the creeds. In Books 8-15, devoted to seeking traces of the Trinity in the soul, Scripture is the denominator by which the capacity of the mind to comprehend its likeness to God...”¹⁷ Once the Servant-leader reflects on the Scriptures daily, guidance and divine instructions is given to humble leadership skills and effective administration.

To further illustrate the fact that the human person in his/her soul is created by God to relate to Him perfectly, Gerald O’Collins relates this amazing pragmatic psycho-social relational leadership skill driving to an imprint in the consciousness of intellectual input started by Augustine of Hippo. He began a constructive intellectual discourse whereby he captured his discussion on the Trinity stating thus: “Whereas true self-love illuminates the origin of the Holy Spirit and the “personified” mutual love of Father and Son. Over the centuries Theologians have followed Augustine or else taken up other analogies from experience and philosophy such as the “I-Thou-We.”¹⁸ This expression is not only trinitarian, it invites us, baptized Christians to transcend and get converted from the egoistic exploits of “I-Myself-Me” syndrome which is an evil tendency that corrupts what ought to be the realisation of the effective Servant leadership skills expected to be operational in each human person. Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah further reiterate on the need of Christian Leaders in Africa to rise to the occasion, “In all situations of conflict, no matter the dangers, Christians are called upon to respond with the weapons of their moral authority,” He clearly taught that “Besides condemning ills in the society, Christians “can do much more depending on the conflict,” all these came at the heels of celebrating his forty-fifth priestly anniversary and the tenth episcopal consecration (19/12/2021) titled “Firmly Rooted and Aiming Higher: Faith in a Time of Crisis.”¹⁹

Proposing perichoresis and coinherence (inter-penetration and cohesion) that are at the core of the essence of the dogma of the Blessed Trinity to serve as the pivotal model for an effective and efficient servant-leader in human society requires an inward and convertible experience. For in the inter-connectedness, harmony and flawless purity is required; that encompass the internal/eternal penetration of the Trinity to lead the servant-leader to a grace-filled-lived life. Such the world expects and desires in the Christian person who becomes a leader in the Church or in the society. This desire to be influenced by the perichoresis of the Trinity serves as quintessential essence for modelling the Trinity to be the focus of the baptized person who becomes a servant leader in the Church or in the Society. The Trinity poses as the best model that guarantees *Ecclesial Servant Leadership* in the Church; because of the internal cohesion that arises as a result of sacrificial or kenotic love. This is rightly captured in the charism of St. Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis – modern apostles and missionaries to the “Gentiles” to the poor of the world. Most illuminatively, Pope Francis, who is praxis oriented in expressing his pastoral zeal, is rightly captured a true Servant-Leader in the 21st century, he wrote:

Jesus does not remain indifferent; he feels compassion; he lets himself be involved and wounded by pain, by illness, by the poverty he encounters. He does not back away He didn’t sit down at a desk and study the situation, he didn’t consult the experts for

¹⁶Boff, Leonardo, “Trinity”, in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, eds. Jon Sobrino, Ignacio Ellacuria, SCM Press Ltd, 1996, pg. 85

¹⁷MacCormack, Sabine, “Augustine on Scripture and the Trinity,” in *A Companion to Augustine*, eds Mark Vessey and Shelley Reid, (London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2015), 399

¹⁸Gerald O’Collins and Edward G. Farrugia, eds., *Theology of Trinity*, in *A Concise Dictionary of Theology*, Revised and Expanded Edition, Edinburg: T&T Clark, 2000, pg. 274

¹⁹Kukah, Matthew Hassan, *Firmly Rooted and Aiming Higher: Faith in a Time of Crisis.* Reported by Magdalene Kalia, in *Aid to the Church in Need*, www.acf/hppf/

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pros and *cons*. What really mattered to him was reaching stranded people and saving them like the Good Shepherd who leaves the flock to save one lost sheep.²⁰

Making the doctrine of the Trinity a serviceable instrument of love that flows from consciousness, love, charity and sacrifices, we will be able to translate these virtues to real issues of justice, feeding the poor and the hungry.

The Trinity thus, serve as pivotal point for the African Catholic Priests, Consecrated Persons and Scholars to be ever pragmatic in the service of love which is urgently needed in the midst of poverty. These are called to design and test the instrument of theological truth on the altar of servant leadership. Stan Chu Ilo affirmatively wrote: "In the face of suffering, we cannot (as African intellectuals) remain indifferent nor can our theologies be valid in Africa if the stories of our people do not inform our theological methods."²¹ Hence, setting in Africa the paradigm of constructive and creative conversation that becomes serviceable to solve theological issues is momentous, considering the current challenges posed by the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic²² and the Pandora of negative threats of hunger, massive immigrations (due to lack of employment opportunities in Africa), wars and famine, terrorism and economic woes.

African Catholic Theologians must be ready more than ever, to create pathways to solution-driven theology and should never remain on the "dog-in-manger", complaining about what the colonial or the early European Missionaries did wrong or did not do right so as to set Africa and Africans on the clock of positive progress. We have templates already set up for us to build upon by other Catholic Theologians in America, Europe and Asia. Leonardo Boff wrote and reiterated that "The Trinitarian dynamics enable us to construct a social and ecclesial critique and to discover in the perichoresis of the divine persons inspiration for participation in our human relationships. Undeniably, human beings have a basic aspiration for participation, equality, respect for differences and communion with God."²³ It therefore means that participating in the Church that is Catholic and Apostolic requires both physical and spiritual integration for one to become an adopted child of God (cf. Rom. 6). Participating in the spirit of the Risen Christ makes an opening for Collegial Spirit of leadership beyond the Pope, Bishops, Priests to incorporating all the baptized Lay Persons in the Catholic Church into a bond of unity of love, peace and harmony.

3. Humility: the softener in the exercise of Authority in the Church and Society: God exercises supreme power and authority over human beings and angels based on His capacity to transmit these virtues of humility, silence, love and justice to humanity. The flow of the dynamics of servant leadership offers varied leadership models in the Catholic Church (primacy of the pope) and in the world (democracy, monarchy, dictatorship), but some are more effective than others. In this research, we specifically choose to utilise servant leadership model that helps in rendering pragmatic transmission of authority in the world. "The term servant leadership was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in 1970."²⁴ Theological studies have categorised Jesus Christ as the best teacher and preacher with great communication skills and the ever-effective message deliverer. Jesus is best known in the use of parables, storyline, metaphors and proverbs to deliver His message clearly to his audience. During Jesus' public ministry, the Scriptures lucidly revealed that throughout His apostolic exercise of service in the spread of the Goodness of His redemptive work, the exercise of servant leadership style was at the core of His service to humanity. No wonder it is a model that captures the spirit of Vatican II leadership style.

After the twenty-first Ecumenical Council of Vatican II (1962-1965), reforms and recommendations were made in the way and manner parishes and dioceses would be governed. At the centre of all these reforms and renewals, the use of authority and the moderate use of power to govern the Church; as the spirit of collegiality was offered as a better option than papal primacy (dominated by Clericalism). Thus, replacing the pyramidal model of the Church with the collegial model.²⁵ Collegiality accommodates a more integrated and community life of the Church with an expressed reality of the setting of the Church being the Family of God on mission.²⁶ Collegiality enhances the easy flow of authority and the dispensing of power from the Pope with the Bishops as principal

²⁰Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy: A Conversation with Andrea Tornielli*, trans, Oonagh Stransky, New York: Random House, 2016, pp. 64-65

²¹Ilo, Stan Chu, *A Poor and Merciful Church: The Illuminative Ecclesiology of Pope Francis*, New York: Orbis Books, 2018, p.174

²²Dealing with the issues of poverty, hunger and pain created by Covid-19 demands urgent pastoral strategies; conferred: Nwosuh, Cosmas, K., "Pandemics and Christian Response through the Ages" in Abuja Journal of Philosophy and Theology, *Pandemic, Faith, and Politics*, Vol. 11, 2021, pg. 1-20

²³Boff, Leonardo, "Trinity", in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, pg. 86

²⁴Robert K. Greenleaf, *The Servant Leader Within: The Transformation Path*, ed. Hamilton Beazley, Julie Beggs, and Larry C. Spears. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003, pg. 4

²⁵Pyramidal structure of the Church, a model that has the Pope at the peak of the pyramid, exercising power that streams down to the lay people in the Church.

²⁶The Ecclesial model "The Church as God's Family" was proposed after the First African Synod in 1994, in this rich biblical model, "The Synod Fathers acknowledged it as an expression of the Church's nature particularly appropriate for Africa."

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collaborators. Despite the deep and difficult debate that ensued at accepting it as a new reality in the governance of the Church; Cardinals (Joseph Frings, Paul Emile Leger, Franziskus Konig, Leon-Joseph Suenens, Albert Mayer) who promoted its entrance prevailed at the end.

The victory at accommodating Collegiality as a reality of governance and effective leadership in the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council (1965) was very much appreciated by Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, Religious, Theologians and the Laity. It attracted positive remarks. Karl Rahner for example, referred to it as “one of the central themes of the whole Council.”²⁷ The spirit of Collegiality disposes the leader to work in collaboration with others to deliver the essentials of the goods of the Kingdom of God. This is a drive and an actual reality of what the ministry of Jesus Christ was in assigning tasks and responsibilities to the apostles and what the Lay Baptized Persons became for the early Church as recorded in Acts chapters 1-6. Grandfield further reiterates the essentials that need to be driven home on the receptivity of Collegiality as it translates from the Pope to the Bishops, Priests and to the Laity in the Catholic Church. He wrote: “Collegiality challenges Bishops and Believers to enter into dialogue with each other and with the Pope. It is necessary for them to communicate the validity of their experiences to correct false impressions, and to be open to change and reconcile.”²⁸ This all-important point of integrating, incorporating and inviting the Laity in the Catholic Church in the twenty first century to exercise the charism of their baptism and authority in their homes, business centers and offices as evangelisers, care givers and disciples of Jesus Christ is a clarion call. This act is a clear pointer to embracing the features of the Servant-leader.

If the emergence of the Laity in the Catholic Church as servant leaders in Africa becomes a reality; it leads to the quest of faith-bearing-fruits, which is a most desired virtue for the Church of the 21st century. The servant leadership model incorporates the Laity in the Catholic Church, inviting them to reflect on the spirit of the Second Vatican Council’s vision of the pastoral theme of *Lumen Gentium*. This reflects the reality of the Church that emerged from the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This is the expressed reality of a Church that was driven by charism, service, liturgy, love, charity and martyrdom. Moving on into the middle of the twenty-first century, the Catholic Church in Africa is charged to move fast to embracing the craft of Servant leadership and the exercise of authority as modelled by the current Pontiff. He is gradually positioning himself as the true model of the servant leader, per practical examples displayed every day. Pope Francis exercises a pragmatic ministry of availability in love especially towards the poor and the vulnerable of society. He further teaches with passion, love, charity and compassion reflecting on the practical daily experiences of people. He charges Cardinals, Bishops and Priests to work passionately and for all persons that “the evangelisers must have the smell of the sheep” supporting and standing by the poor, the weak and all God’s people.”²⁹ This effective servant leadership style can only happen if the baptized Catholic, Clergy or Consecrated Person are driven by the deep love of God in humility.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus Christ teaches: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5: 3). This text has many implications and various interpretations. Stan Chu Ilo asserts: “Being poor in the Lord is also to be understood in terms of the existential condition of social injustice and brokenness in our society and how God can intervene in our long nights and dark days to put us from the depth and restore us to wholesomeness of life.”³⁰ The charisma to identify and lift the destitute and those who suffer in Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia or on the African continent and the world at large can only be achieved by one who is humble and driven by the servant leader kenotic service. These are our expectations in Africa amidst the harsh realities of the economic turn-down brought by Covid-19; as this scenario constantly generates the shameful embarrassment of hunger, wars created by terrorism (*Al Shabbah, ISWAP, Boko Haram and Isis*) in this 21st century. Humility and love are the virtues that direct the human person to seek to do God’s will. Pope Francis is an epitome of a humble servant leader by continuing the mission of Christ which was started and exemplified by Pope St. John Paul II who applied his Patrine ministry and actually identified with the poor and the vulnerable of human society. He reiterates that the pragmatic nature of evangelisation in the twenty-first century is availability, affectivity, presence and sacrifice.

The quest to enthrone Christocentric presence (cf. Lk 4: 19ff) in the lives of the poor, orphans, displaced people and refugees has been the perennial message of Pope Francis to the whole world. Professor Stan Chu Ilo corroborated this view when he wrote that: “Francis was unequivocal that the church in the face of so much human suffering should not be a comfortable or complicit church. Rather, the Church should be bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the street.”³¹ For this is the

John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, “Ecclesia in Africa”*, Year of Publication: 1995, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, Kolbe Press, (6th Reprint 2009), nn. 63, 47: AAS 88 (1996), 39 - 40, 30

²⁷Karl Rahner, in Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1967, I: pg. 195

²⁸Granfield, Patrick, *The Limits of the Papacy*, New York: Crossroad, 1990, pg. 87

²⁹Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy: A Conversation with Andrea Tornielli*, no. 24, trans, Ooath Stransky, New York: Random House, 2016,

³⁰Ilo, Stan Chu, *A Poor and Merciful Church: The Illuminative Ecclesiology of Pope Francis*, pg.186

³¹Pope Francis, *The Name of God Is Mercy: A Conversation with Andrea Tornielli*, no. 49.

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exemplary servant leadership that rescues and salvages the poorest of the poor in the midst of massive suffering in the African Continent due to the ravaging attacks of terrorism, bandits and Covid-19 pandemic. It is at difficult times like now that the conscientious servant-leaders are required in all African countries to stamp out poverty and provide food for the hungry.

4. Authority of the Servant Leader as Sacrament of Presence and Love: A servant leader is a fearless preacher of truth, love, justice, reconciliation and dialogue. Jesus Christ had taught in Matthew 5: 1-8, the beatitudes and in accounts of the last judgement in (Matt. 25: 31-46) the service of practical and sacrificial love that are sacramental in nature by those who practice them. These virtues are personified individually in the persons of Bishops Matthew Hassan Kukah, Godfrey Onah, Stephen Mamza. Earlier on Pope St. John Paul II, in the Year A.D. 2000, had called for the celebration of the jubilee year, and reconciliation was the highlight of this beautiful celebration. John Paul II was very explicit with language and expressed why he was recalling the past. Firm and fearless, he said:

The Church is 'not afraid of the truth that emerges from history and is ready to acknowledge mistakes wherever they have been identified, especially when they involve the respect that is owed to individuals and communities [...] She entrusts the investigation of the past to patient, honest, scholarly reconstruction, free from confessional or ideological prejudices, regarding both the accusations brought against her and the wrongs she has suffered.'³²

The Pontiff drove the peddles of the authority of the Church to view, survey, and re-examine critically the evil done by the Church through bad leadership of previous Popes, Bishops and Priests. Wanting to correct that error and setting the records straight, he sought the right occasion that would provide "Healing of Memories." Shabayang reiterates that "The Church knew very well that 'free from confessional or ideological prejudices regarding the accusations brought against her and the wrongs she has suffered,' will put her on the spotlight of dialogue. Thus, we arguably state that Pope St. John Paul II was aware that in order to engage others in dialogue, asking for forgiveness will open new vistas for reconciliation leading to healing.³³ It actually did the Catholic Church much good at the memorable event of March 12th, 2000.

The authority of the servant leader can best be captured in the activities of St. John Paul II and Pope Francis that focused on power, humility and centrality of love. These virtues do not only drive the energy, motivate actions and passion of the Bishop or Priest in the 21st century to register the signatures of exemplary servant leadership; but create the visible presence that heals, reconciles and make Christ felt, received and celebrated by the Laity in the Catholic Church and humanity at large. Shabayang underscores the visible sacrament of presence and love expressed by John Paul II in these beautiful words: "Recapitulating the central role and importance of prayer in the life of the Priest, the Pontiff placed paramount importance on the ability of the Priest to trust in the power of prayer. Trust by the grace of Christ in his prayer and the prayer for him of the People of God."³⁴ It bears fruits, through the collaboration of the ordained Priest with the Laity of the Church. That is why during the Jubilee Year 2000 A.D, John Paul II asked "the Lay People to pray for the Priests of the Church"³⁵ when he said:

Pray for us... dear Christian people, who have gathered around us today in faith and joy. You are a royal people, a priestly race, a holy assembly. You are the People of God who, in every part of the earth, share in Christ's priesthood. Accept the gift which we renew today in the service of this, your special dignity. O priestly people, thank God with us for our ministry and sing with us to your Lord and ours: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for the gift of the priesthood! Grant that the Church of the new millennium may count on the generous work of many holy priests! Amen.³⁶

From the foregoing, it demonstrates that the ordained Priest in the Catholic Church must work and integrate the Laity in his apostolate and make it possible for them not only to pray for the success of his apostolate but collaborate with them as Christ did with His disciples while on earth. When this mentorship is realised, it points clearly to the transmission, bequeathal and celebration of the servant leader found in our midst.

5. The Servant Leader as creator of wealth and health: The servant leader primed by the Christocentric value, bestows dignity and self-esteem marshalled out practically in areas of providing food for the hungry, healing the sick and setting the captives free (c.f. Lk 4: 19ff). In the 21st century, we must create wealth and build small scale business to sustain and grow the economic base of families, clans, communities or villages.

The foundation was laid already by Jesus Christ in John 6: 1-25 when he said to Philip, "Give them something yourself to eat..." The charismatic nature and motivation that Jesus Christ initiated and provided food for the hungry and downcast became the

³²John Paul II, *General Audience Discourse of September 1, 1999*; in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Eng. Ed., September 8, 1999, 7

³³Shabayang, Barnabas Sama'ila, *African Catholic Priest as Elder, Reconciler and Mediator: A Reflection of Christ's Kenosis in the teachings of St. Pope John Paul II and the African Bishops*, (Kaduna: Benwood Graphix, 2017),336

³⁴Shabayang, Barnabas Sama'ila, *African Catholic Priest as Elder, Reconciler and Mediator: A Reflection of Christ's Kenosis in the teachings*, pg. 337

³⁵Weigel, George, *The End and the Beginning: Pope John Paul II – The victory of Freedom, the Last Years, the Legacy*, New York: Doubleday, 2010, pg. 241

³⁶John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 33: AAS (1995), 25-26

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parameter of engagement. The Catholic Church all through the centuries became faithful to imitating and integrating the charism of praying and serving the poor in human society as these are the treasures of the Church. St. Oscar Romero said: "The world that the church ought to serve is, for us, the world of the poor."³⁷ This exclusive charism envelopes the Church's passion demonstrated by St. Francis of Assisi, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Damian the Leper and St. Teresa of Calcutta. In Europe, America and some small African parishes, parish priests have operated and started "Soup Kitchen." These little initiatives provided immediate remedy from instant hunger that can kill. In Nigeria, some bishops like Matthew Hassan Kukah (Sokoto) and Stephen Dame (Yola), have built shelter, created small scale business for internally displaced persons and some priests, like the late Rev. Fr. Ojukwu have operated soup kitchen in Abuja, Rev. Fr. Professor Stan Chu Ilo, operates "Canadian Project for Charities." These charitable initiatives and charism of many lay and religious congregations have help to be generate employment, save lives of the hungry, destitute and the poor in villages and sub-urban communities, thus, they are pragmatic theological reflection that continued to the mission of Jesus Christ on earth.

6. Conclusion: Way Forward Providing Service to the Poorest of the Poor: The ability of our Catholic Theologians, Scholars and Pastors to identify and provide effective leadership in the area of housing for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is the most urgent task in the face of the ongoing massive attacks by Boko Haran in the North East, Southern Kaduna, the Middle Belt, in Nigeria. Added to the continuous terrorism attacks by El Shabbah in Somalia; Isis in Mombasa, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal.

Preaching in defense of truth, maintaining justice, democratization of just structures to promote the Christian faith have been the clear mission and focus of following Bishops: Matthew Hassan Kukah of the Diocese of Sokoto; Godfrey Onah of the Diocese of Nsukka; Stephen Dami of the Diocese of Yola and Oliver Doeme of the Diocese of Maiduguri. These have been at the forefront of providing clear leadership to the vulnerable and persecuted in Nigeria. These Pastors of souls have proven to be excellent servant leaders to Christians, Muslims and African Traditional worshippers by creating wealth in defense of the marginalized, Compassionate to the vulnerable of society, upholding the Truth and faith, human dignity and freedom. They continue to provide shelter, food, clothing and accommodation to many poor people, mitigating the sufferings of the Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria; so too are some bishops in South Sudan. This pragmatic ministry and mission tallies with the vision captured by Ilo who wrote:

The measure of the true value of any religion is not the beauty of its creeds, rituals, and rites, nor is it in the ordered nature of its ranks, the splendor of its officials, or the political and economic power and influence they wield. The true value of religion is how it embodies and mediates beauty by projecting the ideals of selfless love and friendship; how it transforms people into loving and loveable creatures who transmit truth and goodness in the world; and how it transforms the hearts, souls, minds, and wills of people such that they are at home with God, nature, and humanity (in all its diverse expressions), and at peace with reality³⁸

The genius and germ of servant leadership is ever-green, a magnate of pragmatic love and ecumenical in spirit, empathic and compassionate. The true marks of a servant leader are: compassion, empathy and care-giving to the downtrodden, the marginalized and the poorest of the poor. These virtues must be first the primary duty of the church in Africa in the 21st century. The Church must plunge herself and deeply commit her resources in serving the poor, providing food for the hungry and giving compassionate attention particularly to Nigerians, Cameroonians, Congolese in The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambiquans, Malians, Senegalese, South Sudanese who are exposed to constantan security threats, and have *Internally Displaced Persons* whose homes have been destroyed. The church must ensure freedom of captives who are in the hands of militants, gunmen, kidnapers, Boko Haram, Janjaweed, terrorists and suicide bombers.

The transmission of authority and power exercised in the Catholic Church within the formative spheres (the Priesthood and Religious circles) must be authenticated by proper training of formators. Formators must be well grounded in the exercise of authority bearing in mind that authority and power in the Catholic Church are not to be exercise the same ways as in the public domain which is based on democratic or monarchical structures, but be exercise as means of ecclesial service for the sake of creative leadership and followership. This is corroborated by Ebener that:

Power is the science of leadership what energy is to the science of physics. The power of the leader as shared or combined with the power of others in the group, enables the group to reach its common goal." The Second Vatican Council teaches on the exercise of power and transmission by collaborative ministry, every baptize Catholic is commission to share in the power bequeathed to

³⁷Oscar Romero, acceptance speech of awarded an honorary doctorate by the university of Louvain (Belgium), echoes themes of "theology of liberating" in *Foundations of Theology Study: A Source Book*, eds Richard Viladesau Mark Massa, New York/Mahwah, NJ. Paulist Press, pg. 309

³⁸Ilo, Stan Chu, *Someone Beautiful to God: Finding the Light of Faith in a Wounded World*, New York/Mahwah, NJ. Paulist Press, 2020, pg. 5

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humanity for salvation. However, it is important to know that “authority is power that can be used to gain compliance. Power can also emerge from other personal, social, and spiritual sources.”³⁹

The transmission of the God-given power bequeathed to human beings if rendered as service in the spirit of humility created towards transformation or the life of people made in the image and likeness of God. Authority and Servant Leadership of course, can serve as a veritable tool of effective renewal of energy to revive and vivify human society for good if all men and women treat each one as equal. Leadership in the Church and human society requires training, openness, sacrifice, faith, love, humility, respect and continuous dialogue with cultures, creed and gender.

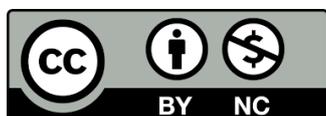
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