

OUR GREATEST LEGACY



PASTORAL LETTER 2009

MOST REV. VALERIAN M. OKEKE
Archbishop of Onitsha

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CHAPTER ONE

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

1. Retrospection and Gratitude

With humility and gratitude I remember the seventh anniversary of my Episcopal Consecration on the 9th of February, 2009. They have been seven years of God's grace and favor in spite of my unworthiness. We owe our infinite thanks to God. To Him be all glory and never ending praise for ever and ever.

2. In the same vein, we gratefully remember some of the events of last year, 2008. The inauguration of the Basilica of our Cathedral Church-the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity (in the month of March, 2008), and the Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee of His Eminence, Francis Cardinal Arinze (in the month of December, 2008) readily come to mind. We continue to thank God for these and many such occasions of grace.

3. Equally, we joyfully recall the availability and sacrifice of Christ's lay Faithful at the Onitsha Stakeholders' Forum held at Lagos and Abuja. Your joy, generosity and commitment are evidence of faith. May God keep you in his care?

4. Our major functionaries together with the priests, religious men and women and Christ's lay faithful, deserve our special thanks. May God be gracious to you?

Choice of Theme: Youth Education, Our Greatest Legacy

5. In profound appreciation of our responsibility and inspired by a burning desire to continue the ministry of Christ entrusted to us, we have reflected on some themes of vital importance to us as humans and for the reason of our vocation as Christians. These themes include: Life, Love, Faith, our identity based on our specific Glorious Heritage, the Common Good and lastly, the Family as it relates to human life of which it serves as its sanctuary. Widespread acceptance of these and feedbacks from our faithful and friends have encouraged us to delve into the area of Human Formation or Education of the youth especially as a legacy and patrimony to the generations yet born.

CHAPTER TWO

THE YOUTH AS OUR LEGACY

6. What we regard as our most important legacies in this earthly existence must in a very vital sense be linked to human beings. Creation as a whole is God's gift to human beings. It entails that stone monuments and great architectural legacies may be good, but in a real way, they cannot be the ultimate good. Human beings are the creatures that link the whole of creation to God because of their dual nature as spiritual and material, possessing soul and body. Thus if we want to improve

God's image in our society in a very effective way, then we must go down to the root – to the young, and create this image and fashion it, beautify it, and let it speak for God and for us. Thus we can say that our greatest possible legacy is the youth. They, the youth, bear our imprint in a formative sense. They bear our influence. They are the result of the modeling influence of our behavior. They carry our ideals to the unforeseen future. But, they can effectively do this only if they are properly educated; if they received a balanced formation, if they have respect for objective truth and prize the common good above personal desire.

7. It is not without reason that human nature is moved by the desire to plant and spread one's genes. This is what gives rise to the reproductive instinct. It is one of the greatest assurances of duration especially material duration, since these genes have the possibility of being transmitted and spread again to coming generations, farther away in history. But whereby this tendency ends on the biological level, its importance is very strongly diminished. That, in a general way, underlines the concern of parents for the proper upbringing of their children. If the children turn bad, the parents themselves suffer the odium of seeing their children as bad elements in the society. No amount of other achievements or other legacies will compensate for a situation where the human element is decidedly bad.

8. From the personal level, we can move to the communal. A tree does not make a forest. The society in which we live today will be managed tomorrow and led by the youths of today. The Church in which we worship will be peopled by the young of today and of the future. Our businesses, our institutions, our social positions will be manned, managed and occupied by them. Our faith will be carried on by them and spread to those who will succeed them and to others who may not have received that faith. Our lofty principles will be maintained by the youth, our houses, our family homes, our towns will be inherited by and lived in by them.

9. All these mean that on the horizontal level, that is, in so far as it has to do with our existence here on earth, there is no greater legacy we can leave for the sake of God himself and for humanity than a galaxy of well-formed, properly educated youths. The Scottish thinker, Edmund Burke, described society as a contract between the living, the dead and those yet to be born. If this contract is not to be messed up, the youth must be in position to carry its principles further, to make it part of their lives, maintain it and hand it over unsullied to those yet unborn. Thus the youth have great relevance for the present society and more for the future of that society. That is why they are described as the life-wire of the past, the destiny of the present and the hope of the future. This is not less so on the socio-political as in the religious plane. As Christians and as those entrusted with the mystery of God's kingdom, the youths are of utmost importance. The youths are veritably our greatest legacy, and that is why their condition should be of utmost concern to all.

10. The Education Youth as Human Capital and Legacy

1. Our emphasis on education of the youth is informed by the fact that there is an ocean of difference between a well-formed, properly educated human being and one who is not. This was observed many years ago by Aristotle who says: "For man" when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all: since armed injustice is the more dangerous, and he is equipped at birth with arms, meant to be used by intelligence and virtue, which he may see for the worst ends. Wherefore, if he has

not virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals, and the most full of lust and gluttony.”(cf. Aristotle, Politics, 1&2).

2. However, life of virtue can only be acquired by learning and practice. Such a life can be attained by holistic. Such a life can be attained by holistic formation or proper education which takes care of the many dimensions of the human person. Well balanced human formation covers the formation of mind, spirit and body, corresponding to the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of the human person. Such education or human formation takes care of acquisition of knowledge and skills, ethical orientation, socio-cultural empowerment. The details of it Lay emphasis on the spiritual and moral formation without neglecting or diminishing the importance of intellectual, Physical and economic formation.
3. To promote the dignity of the human person and of human relationship based on esteem and mutual considerations, to protect the condition of brotherhood, our condition of being the children of the Father which raises our respect for each other above a social contract, the individual or social contract, the individual or social actor needs education and not only information. This education includes learning the expression of solidarity and brotherhood specific to human dignity which is learnt and defended by laws and juridical measures.
4. Our digitalized world of information and technological advancement tends to propound subjective ethics of absolute freedom. But to promote and protect human values and time tested objective moral principles, we need education which transcends information. If people are merely informed not educated, selfishness, pride, avarice and greed – thirst for power and money, injustice, oppression and violence will be the order of the day.
5. No doubt, education is an indispensable tool for the proper formation of the youth in order to become the greatest legacy and treasured patrimony which the present society will bequeath to the society of tomorrow. His Holiness, the great Pope John Paul II, confirms our thought in this matter as he declares that “education helps individuals to be more human, leads them ever more fully to the truth, instills in them growing respect for life and trains them in right interpersonal relationship.” (John Paul II, Evangelism Vitae, n. 97). This justifies our disposition that youth education which generates well-formed youths is the greatest legacy to bequeath – to the oncoming generations.

CHAPTER THREE

SOME USEFUL DEFINITIONS

It may be very necessary to contextualize the basic terms used in this discourse in order to have a clearer understanding. These terms include: Legacy, Education and Youth.

12. Youth:

This is a term that can be variously defined. For example, according to Britannica World Language Dictionary, Youth can be defined as

- The state or condition of being young
- The period when one is young; that part of life between childhood and manhood; adolescence
- The early period of being or development, as of a movement
- A young man; in the sense with plural:

Several youths; used also as a collective noun: the youth of the land.

Also, according to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Youth can mean:

- The fact or state of being young: youngness,
- The early part of life especially the period between childhood and adult age
- A quality or condition characteristic of the young
- Personified, or vaguely denoting any young person or persons
- Young people as a group, also a young person; especially a young man between boyhood and mature age.

However, for our discussion we are limiting ourselves to a simple definition and ordinary understanding of the word.

13. Youth here refers to the period of life immediately succeeding childhood and ending before the fortieth birthday. It is the state of being young, the time when all the energies and faculties of a person are functioning at the optimum. John Paul II of Blessed memory, conceived it “ not only as a period of life that corresponds to a certain number of years but as also a time given by providence to every person as a responsibility during which, he Searches for answers to basic questions; the meaning of life and how to live it” not only as a period of life that corresponds to a certain number of years but as also a time given by providence to every person as a responsibility during which, he searches for answer to basic questions; the meaning of life and how to live it” (John Paul II, *Youth Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, P. 121). Youth is mainly characterized with zeal, vigour, exuberance, spirit of adventure, creativity, physical strength, sociability, independence and quest for freedom.

This ordinary concept of youth will suffice for the pastoral purpose of this paper

Education:

14. Education is a term derived from the verb, to educate, which in turn is derived from the Latin verb, educare/educere, meaning, to lead forth.

While the verb, to educate, is understood to means to rear, to bring up, from childhood as to form habits, manners, mental and physical aptitudes, to provide schooling for and to train generally...education is defined to mean the process of bringing up (young persons) or the systematic instruction, schooling or training given to the young (and by extention, to adults) in preparation for the work of life. (cf. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary).

Education can also be defined as the systematic development and cultivation of the natural powers or the act or process of imparting knowledge or skill.

15. However, according to the New Catholic Encyclopaedia, “Education, like other generic terms, has both a broad and a restricted meaning, and an informal and a formal application. In its widest interpretation, education is the aggregate of all those experiences that enlighten the mind, increase knowledge, foster insight, develop abilities and attitudes, and strengthen the will. In the restricted sense, education implies the systematic acquisition of knowledge through recognized agencies and a controlled environment, particularly that of the school, on an elementary, secondary, or higher level, in order to attain social competence and optimum personal development. In a still specialized sense, education refers specifically to teacher training and those educational courses that professional competence demands.”

16. In our present discourse, we refer to education in its widest interpretation which we hereby summarize in very simple terms to mean, the process through which an individual is admitted into the society by being taught what is worthwhile in order that the person might play his or her role very well in the society; or the total process of human formation enabling one to develop all his/her potentials in order to be fully human, to fulfill his duties to God and make useful contributions to the society in which he lives.

17. **Legacy:** According to American Heritage Dictionary, legacy is a term derived from the Latin verb, legare, which means, “to depute, commission or bequeath.” It can be money or property bequeathed to someone by will or something handed down from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past. As an inheritance from the past, legacy can be the same as patrimony, though patrimony has come to be more associated with estates and endowments. In simple terms, legacy can be explained as follows:

Meaning of Legacy

18. In a general sense, legacy is something that is left behind by those who are no longer present for their followers or for posterity; something resulting from and left behind by an action, event or person. Technically, it is some material good bequeathed to something in a will. But we are not here restricting it to this legal meaning. The general meaning of legal meaning. The general meaning of legacy usually entails something left behind that is positive. We can, of course, speak of a legacy of hatred which is negative. But legacy is one of those concepts that have overwhelming positive conception. Thus when one uses the word without affixing another concept that is negative, the word legacy is taken to refer to something positive. It is in this positive sense that we should understand the word here. When therefore we refer to our greatest legacy, we mean the greatest bequeathal we can make to our family, the society or community, to the world, to God himself. *We depart with the assertion that the greatest legacy we can bequeath is human beings that are well prepared to answer as much as possible to the demand of their being fashioned in the image of God.* Human beings that harbor the highest ideals and that are so formed to bring these ideals to positive, practical ends in service of God and their fellow humans.

Importance of Legacy:

19. It goes without saying that what we leave behind us by our cumulative life engagement is of utmost importance. Its importance derives from (1) human nature (2) from God's command or God's will and (3) from our involvement with one another in the community.

Human nature teaches us that there is deep in humans the desire for longevity or for immortality. This desire has personal, social and metaphysical dimensions. On a personal level, the desire for longevity or for immortality is encapsulated in the instinct of self-preservation. On the communal level, it is seen in the deep appreciation of memorable events and actions, that is, acts for which posterity will remember the person or those who have lived before. The same is seen on the metaphysical level in the desire for immortality which has been identified in scholastic philosophy as a strong reason which argues for the immortality of the rational or human soul.

20. Behind the desire to leave a legacy is the stark realization of the limitedness or finitude of our earthly existence. It also points to the fact that we do not have here a lasting home. Our earthly life is short and fleeting, and human beings seek remembrance that transcends this short life. They desire to leave legacies in their personal acts by creating something useful and lasting; by posting acts worthy to be recounted by history; by ensuring that their names are borne by their offspring; by the very act of bearing offspring; and by undertaking heroic sacrifices in favor of their community. In ancient times, there was deification of human beings, like Roman Emperors and Greek heroes.

21. The importance of legacy in human life is in direct link with the communal. It would be useless to strive to have a legacy if there were no human beings who will benefit from such a legacy or even know or remember that there was ever such a thing or such a human person. Thus real legacy is possible because of other fellow human beings, who will make use of the legacy left behind, or in whose nature, body, memory, etc., that legacy is ingrained. The importance of legacy is that our life is strongly bound up with the life of others. St. Paul reminds us that "None of us lives for himself alone, and none of us dies for himself alone." This linkage with other human beings is also a linkage with God who is the Father of all. Since God is eternal, there is here a promise that our earthly existence has a promise of eternity; that somehow, what is so fleeting is made highly valuable in God. It is this sense that gives meaning to our lives, to our tireless activities, to our arduous striving and all our endeavors. It is the ultimate assurance that the best of our human efforts will not be swept away without trace, like our material body.

Types and Gradation of Legacy

22. The things we create by our actions, what we leave behind or bequeath can be of many types. They can be individual in the sense that they concern the individual and are left behind by the individual. They can also be communal, in which case they arise from the collective actions of the community. A community that builds its road-networks and maintains them properly, a community that builds schools and manages them efficiently, can proudly say that it left these things as legacies to the coming generations. Legacies can also be structural, referring to the institutional and social structures that guide human beings. A legacy can be religious where it affects the type of worship or adherence that human beings prefer, when it refers to the actions that are taken with reference to the worship of God. Legacies can be economic if they are to do with the material goods left behind by the preceding generation. It can be political, when it has to do with the political ordering

of the society, the type of politics it plays, which eventually is inherited, both historically and culturally by the existing society.

These differentiations entail that there is room for gradation in whatever we can refer to as our legacy. It goes without saying that legacies cannot be equal in importance since they can embrace a whole array of mostly positive things. The criteria for grading legacies can include whether they are material or spiritual, where the spiritual is generally higher and more important than the material. It includes the propensity of a particular thing that can be called legacy to have lasting value. It also has to do with its tendency to create or engender goodness.

23. With the above criteria in view, one can easily notice that the economic and the material are more perishable. A child can squander the wealth accumulated by his father in a very short period, relative to the time it took to create the wealth. It means that if our legacy is just material, it does not have sure and lasting value. The legacy that has to do with the human person has more lasting value. But here it has to be distinguished whether a particular legacy has to do with the spiritual side of him. Where a legacy has spiritual dimensions, it becomes more lasting, and its being so makes it resemble the immortality that the human seeks and earnestly desires.

24. Our greatest legacy is thus the legacy that affects human beings, the one that influences their innermost spiritual nature in addition to affecting their material well-being. Man is made in the image of God, as we read from the Sacred Scriptures. The legacy that truly touches humanity improves **this image, and makes it nearer to God by improving it. It is in this sense that we can say that the greatest legacy we can bequeath to posterity is a galaxy of well-formed, well-educated youth that will be the link of the present society to the future one, those who will be influenced by and would continue whatever good work we can boast of while we are alive.**

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHALLENGING CONDITION OF THE YOUTH IN OUR COUNTRY

25. It is noteworthy that many well meaning individuals and groups are making genuine efforts to ensure the welfare of the youth in our midst. This concern is seen in the efforts of parents to care for their children and to ensure that their children receive quality education and healthcare; it includes the efforts of religious groups to bring up the youth in such ways that they will be lasting values to be society. It includes different programmes in the media directed to the needs of the youth. We must also note that in more recent times, some foundations have started giving scholarships to enable young people acquire higher education – a phenomenon that was widely present in the past but has for sometime almost come to be consigned the memories of history.

The importance of these efforts is hinged on the fact that what affects the society positively and negatively affects the youth all the more. In a vey objective way, it can be said that the situation of our youth has become critical and that most urgent actions are needed from all and sundry. No society lacks a measure of heroism, or of positive qualities, but a society that does not show adequate concern for the welfare of the youth and does not encourage the youth towards lofty ideals is doomed to extinction or at least, such a society is sure to have all-round difficult times in

the future. In this regard, it must be admitted that our society has not been doing too well in many aspects of life that strongly affect the youth.

The economic situation in our country has been far from being optimal. The country has been consistently performing well below its possibilities. Given the potentialities that the country harbors and the possibilities that are calculable on account of the wealth it has, it is saddening to notice how painfully low economic life still is in Nigeria, and how this situation discourages the youth. A bad economic situation is one where opportunities for decent life are very limited and where this is so, the desire, enthusiasm or zest to strive for high ideals of hard work is whittled down or substantially reduced. This is the situation where consistently poor economic situation has left the youth of our country. Mainly on account of this situation, one of the major plans of many of our youth is to leave the country, and never to return. This phenomenon is a sure sign that the situation has become critical. Our observation is further confirmed by the great teacher, Confucius, who says that a country is well governed when those inside it want to remain where they are, and those who are outside, desire to come inside.

26. The level of societal and public morality in our country is even more disheartening. So many moral ideals that should be deeply and relentlessly inculcated in the youth, to make them responsible, have virtually been abandoned in our public life. We now live in a society where most no longer believe that what is due to them should be given to them without going to pull some wire and greasing some palms. Worse still, our society is one which effectively teaches the youth that being in public office entails enriching oneself through every available means. Selfless service is an ideal that has gone down the drains. Each day in our numerous media, stories of corruption, embezzlement, robbery, murder, assassination, etc, are fed to the society. Hardly does the society hear that those involved in these acts are brought to book. Thus in addition to the widespread corruption that cripples our society, the impunity that goes with it makes the situation hopeless. This sad situation impacts very negatively on all our youth.

27. One major negative effect of the above situation is that in a society where age old ideals are made nonsense of, the youth lack veritable role models that could direct and inspire. In the absence of this, the type of personalities that receive collective honor and adulation of the society leaves much to be desired. Without effective role models, it is very difficult to see how collectively our youth will turn out to be the type posterity will be proud of. This affects the position of education, for education is not just merely a matter of gaining knowledge. The formative role of education is diminished where there are not enough role models to draw and inspire the youth to goodness. But over and above that, our educational institutions are in the process of free decay. Our public schools are in a very bad state because of lack of commitment and vision on the part of public authorities. The state of facilities in these institutions where our children are brought up has become the shame of our nation and a challenge to men and women of goodwill. It is infact a measure of the level of importance that is given to the welfare and future of the youth. Our governments do not appear to be aware that it is their responsibility to ensure quality education of its youth. They do not invest reasonably in education; they do not sub vent schools as even the colonial governments knew how to do; they do not make real efforts to subsidize education; scholarships for indigent and bright students have become a thing of the past. To fill this great void, private schools are springing up everywhere. But these are open to the highest bidders, and are often exploitative. In practical terms it means that children with rich parents have opportunity to acquire quality education, while those

with poorer ones will be left behind. The neglect of education by our governments is their greatest sin against the youth and society.

28. Furthermore, the amenities in our towns and villages are not in a better shape. Today majority of our new schools do not have reasonable playing grounds where our youth can exercise themselves, and perhaps shape their talents for competitive sports. No wonder, the performance of our country in international sports competitions has been epileptic and has never marched its great potentials. This goes for other social amenities that should be common in any reasonable society of today. Our infrastructural decay has become both alarming and saddening. Our youth who have lived only in this country do not know that regular supply of water is possible. Some do not know what running water-taps are. They cannot even imagine having electricity supply for just 24 hours without interruption. They will soon not be able to describe what a fixed telephone is since this has ceased to exist virtually through out the country given way to the more expensive cell phones. It means that everything that helps to make the life of the citizens progressively better and more comfortable is on the verge of complete disappearance.

29. When one looks at the political arena, it is not difficult to see why things are the way they are. The generality of our politicians are merely self-serving leaders who are in position primarily for their own well-being. Greed has become the order of the day among them. They amass so much wealth that they are able to buy their way out of the law courts and prisons when they leave office. Every member of our society, the youth not excluded, is aware of the level of corruption going on. In additions nobody ever sees those who are brought to book because of their acts. Since the society is in some way like a seamless whole, the situation in other spheres of life affects our religious practices. There are today so many fake and deceitful preachers with dubious motives among us in our society. They make lofty claims of calls and miracles which are only calculated to empty the pockets of credulous people. The more established religious group are some times more interested in erecting structures and mere adherence, in such a way that teaching of real Christianity that can elevate the people falls short. Our society is gradually becoming one in which religion is not much more than the promise of prosperity and miracles, fulfillment of private wishes, and solutions to all manners of private and pet problems. This is not the type of legacy that edifies our youth.

30. The level of violence in Nigeria also affects our youth very negatively. We continually live through violence of all sorts: political, inter-religious, inter-ethnic, just name it. Violence is practiced everywhere: at home, on the streets by law enforcement agents, by armed robbers, by hooligans and vandals. Thus the reality of the life of our youth is that it is surrounded by violence most of the time. This is hardly the optimal condition in which they can produce their best.

31. To crown it all, there is hardly any possibility that is given to the youth to be able to escape, even momentarily from almost an all-round deteriorating condition. There is hardly any locus of formation that is tailored to feed the youth with the best ideals which will in turn enable them to make more positive impacts on the society. Our educational institutions should serve his purpose, but it is obvious that they are in sorry states of decay because of neglect and abuse. Our universities and institutions of higher learning are most of them places where violence and murderous cultism are the order of the day. Unfortunately, those in authority give the impression that they can do nothing to counter the ugly situation.

32. Consequently, the cumulative effect of all the above is that our youth are badly formed. The low level of their formation or upbringing may not be obvious when they are within the confines of this country. But in the present steadily globalizing world, it is more and more difficult for youths trained in the Nigerian condition to compete favorably with their counterparts in other parts of the world. Thus collectively a country like ours is turning its young ones to be second-rate in comparison with the youth of other better organized countries. Hence, the challenging condition of our youth today calls for positive action.

CHAPTER FIVE

NEED FOR WHOLISTIC UPBRINGING OF OUR YOUTH

33. The biblical saying, *train up a child in the way he should go and when he grows, he will not depart from it*, remains true, today as it real need for proper upbringing and that there are many lasting values that must be inculcated in the young for optimal benefit to them and their society. Of utmost importance is the acquisition of virtue. Virtue (*virtus*) which comes from the Latin *vir*-man literally means manly excellence or moral power, which is the ability and the propensity to do good constantly and habitually. Virtue which is good habit perfects the human person- intellect, skill and character and makes the whole being good. Thus a virtuous person does not do good things haphazardly but rather does so because it is in his nature, through habit. Virtue perfects the character of a person and makes him a good human being. Such should be the general aim of all attempts to train the youth. In other words the aim must include to enable them acquire virtues so that doing good becomes their Second nature. The proper upbringing of the youth must take care of the many aspects and many dimensions of the human person the spiritual and corporeal, the intellectual, emotional and Physical.

34. It goes without saying that religious Christian upbringing is of foremost importance. The human person must first and foremost be brought to the knowledge that he is a steward entrusted with so many things by the master who is God Himself. This recognition is in itself an exercise in responsibility. It is a first lesson in bring dutiful and responsible towards all that one meets in life. Such attitudes should start in respective families through examples and positive teachings. It should continue in schools and in other social settings especially at the parish level where serious deep and inspiring catechesis should be a way of life.

35. The school plays an indispensable role in the formation of the young people. Proper upbringing of our youth requires quality education, which in turn requires quality schools, quality programmes and intelligent and hard working teachers. Schools with dilapidated structures and schools just meant for profit are most unsatisfactory for the upbringing of our youth. In the same way poorly paid teachers will not deliver the type of good that is necessary from the schools. Such are against proper educational upbringing of our youth. In fact because of such conditions, the teaching profession can no longer attract intelligent and talented people. A profession as teaching should be such that can attract the best brains, for otherwise our youth will be taught by second and third rate teachers, and so cannot be greater than their teachers.

36. Again, cultural upbringing of the youth is a very important part of their education. One may not expect that all aspects of ay culture can be and must be learnt in school. Since culture is the

way of life of a people, parents should endeavor to bring up their children in the particular culture that is their heritage being particularly careful not to teach them what is contrary to revealed truth or Christian ideals. For example, superstition, human sacrifice, killing of twins, slavery etc which were erroneously practiced thousands of years ago cannot be taught today as our culture. But family values: respect for life, truth, honesty, hard work, natural virtues like justice, prudence, fortitude and temperance; the virtue of love and respect for others can and should be taught in the families. Culture speaks of people's roots. It makes real citizens of people who share common borders, common principles, common language, dance, attitudes to life etc. young people brought up in the positive aspects of culture are prepared to live these aspects and transmit them to the next generation. In this regard it is necessary to decry the practice of some parents who on account of ignorance or misconception bring up their children without teaching them their mother tongue. This phenomenon which results in children born and bred in Nigeria who do not master any Nigerian native language is becoming a shameful aberration. It is based on the misconception that if a child does not speak or understand any Nigerian native language, he thereby belongs to a special class. This is a huge disservice to any child who was brought up in that manner. He loses *a whole language and the culture that is vehicle by that language. Such a child will turn out to be a person of no culture, no identity and no psychological foothold.* Though with Nigerian parents, such a child is neither Igbo, nor Hausa, Yoruba, Ijaw, Efik nor Idoma. Culturally, he lacks an identity. He is like a no person. A good upbringing will not only teach a child his culture but will also encourage him to learn the cultures of those around him so as to interact and integrate better.

37. Socialization is another very important part of the upbringing of the youth. It makes them able to go through whichever community they must live in and become responsible members of that community. Real socialization enables the youth to know and enjoy their right entails a corresponding obligation towards their fellow human beings, towards the society and towards God. Proper socialization makes the youth to be less selfish, less self-indulgent and be hard working. It makes them to develop altruism or positive feeling for the other and be able to offer their time and talents to God in religious engagements in their parishes and dioceses.

CHAPTER SIX

AGENTS OF EDUCATION

38. The Venerable Fathers of the Second Vatican Council have rightly observed that the education of youth, and indeed a certain continuing education of

adults have been rendered easier and more necessary by the circumstances of our times. (*Vat. II, GE, Preface.*)

39. Hence some have described the work of education as a synthesis of many interests which principally include- the parents, the church, the school and the state. The agents of education are therefore the parents, the church, the school which here includes the teachers and the state.

40. **Parents:** Since the family is the first school, the smallest social unit, the first community, the first church, the basic centre of reference for a child, it falls on parents as a natural duty to be the first educators of their children. The fathers of Vatican II direct as follows. "As it is the parents

who have given life to their children, on them lies the gravest obligation of educating their family. They must therefore be recognized as being primarily and principally responsible for their education. The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. It is therefore the duty of parents to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow-men which will promote an integrated, personal and social education of their children. The family is therefore the principal school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society.” (Vat. II, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 3).

41. Studies in social and moral sciences, anthropology, psychology, ethics and moral theology agree on the fact that the family is the best school where personal virtues can translate into social virtues. Given that the family is the only structure that can transform the individual virtues into social functions for the benefit of the society; the family creates human capital for the good of the society. The family teaches that one can only become happy if one makes the other person happy. If we do not learn these in the family, we may not learn them anywhere else. The family generally creates virtues and not vices because the family is there for the good of the inmates, and they know it. In the family every gesture you make communicates. The parents speak to the children even when they do not use words. Consequently, the parents should be aware of their indispensable formative/educative role and endeavor to transmit to their children all the social, spiritual, moral and cultural values that will make them good, responsible human beings.

Jesus Christ our Lord and Redeemer has been called the Teacher per excellence. This is because he revealed a new vision of human nature and a new meaning and goal of human existence. The new “revolutionary” vision and teaching of Christ which is the good news emphasizes the primacy of love, the equality and brotherhood of all men and women before God, the proper development of talents and the exercise of self discipline. In all, it is a way of life.

It is the true meaning of man’s nature, the goal of human existence and life in Christ that the Christian parent is expected to transmit to the children. The family as the microcosm of the society, the domestic church, the sanctuary of life and the basic school of gospel and cultural values has the undeniable natural duty to teach the children, initiate them into life and inculcate in them the most cherished human values. Such Virtues like truth, love of neighbor, Sense of justice, honesty, chastity, Sincerity, tolerance etc, start in the family and develop further through the school, church and other organs of formation. The role of the parents is truly indispensable.

42. The Church: Like parents, the church as Mother and Teacher is under an obligation to provide education for their children. Moreover, the Church has an educational mandate from her divine Lord when he said, “Go *therefore, make disciples of all nations..... teaching them....(Mtt: 28:19ff)*.”

Therefore as the Father of the Vatican Council II stated, “For her part, Holy Mother Church, in order to fulfill the mandate she received from her divine founder to announce the mystery of salvation to all men and to renew all things in Christ, is under an obligation to promote the welfare of the whole life of man, including his life in this world insofar as it is related to his heavenly vocation, she has therefore a part to play in the development and extension of education.” (Vat. II, *Gravissimum Educationis*, preface).

As the mother of all the children of God born in baptism the Church has an interest in the healthy growth of her children and has a duty to educate and initiate them into the true life which is life in the spirit of Christ. The Church uses every noble means and partners with other agents to achieve her educational function. In addition, the church highly respects other education institutions or functionaries which contribute to the formation of the human person and development of the human person and development of character.

43. The Church however, does not limit her educational role to her children since nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in her heart, as she is a community composed of men, united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, press onwards towards the Kingdom of the Father and are bearers of a message of salvation intended for all men. (Vat. II, Gaudium et Spes, I).

The church has the mandate to teach all nations; therefore all the arms of the church, the parish, the diocese, the family...will continue to fulfill this obligation to God's children who are willing to learn.

44. **The School:** This has a special role to play in the education of the youth as well as the on-going education of adults. According to the Venerable Fathers of Vatican Council II, among the various organs of education, the school is of outstanding importance. In nurturing the intellectual faculties which is its special mission, it develops a capacity for sound judgment and introduces the pupils to the cultural heritage bequeathed to them by former generations. It fosters a sense of values and prepares them for professional life. By providing for friendly contact between pupils of different characters and backgrounds, it encourages mutual understanding. (Vat. II, Gravissimum Educationis, 5). The school also provides a centre for interaction between the teachers, families, students and community.

45. The role of teachers in the school is certainly unique and indisputable. Many a time it is the teachers who give fame and quality to a school. Without good teachers, the quality of a school diminishes. The vocation of teachers is therefore regarded as one of the most noble and of highest importance. This is because they help parents in carrying out their duties and act in the name of the community by undertaking a teaching career. Consequently, the vocation of teaching requires special quality of mind and heart, careful preparation and a constant readiness to accept new ideas and adapt the old. (Vat. II, Gravissimum Educationis, 5). The transforming effect of teachers' role is captured by the psychologist J.B. Watson who says, "Give me a dozen healthy infants...and my own specific world to bring them up and I will guarantee to take anyone at random and train him to become any type of specialist." The teaching profession imposes a very grave obligation on the teachers to assist the parents, the church and the entire community in the formation of character, transmission of values, acquisition of skills, development of talents and initiation into life. Any one who does not feel the inclination, have the required skills or a sense of calling, should not embrace the teaching vocation. Accepting the teaching profession only in order to have a job without the necessary qualifications including intelligence and good character is to do a disservice to the community.

46. **The State:** The state is not only an interested party; she is a stake holder in the education of her citizens. The Fathers of Vatican Council II give directives on this insisting that all its citizens have access to an adequate education and are prepared for the proper exercise of their civic rights

and duties. The state itself, therefore, should safeguard the education in schools. It should be vigilant about the ability of the teachers and the standard of teaching. It should watch over the health of the pupils and in general promote the work of the schools in its entirety. In this however, the principle of subsidiarity must be borne in mind, and therefore there must be no monopoly of schools which would be prejudicial to the natural rights of the human person and would militate against the progress and extension of education, and the peaceful co-existence of citizens. It would, moreover, be inconsistent with the pluralism which exists today in many societies. (Vat. II, Gravissimum Educationis, 6).

47. From the above it is very clear that it is the duty of the state to harmonize all interests and balance all the functions with respect to the education of her citizen. It is the duty of the state to ensure quality education, set good standards for the teacher and students, enforce rules, and encourage the extra- talented students through scholarships to indigent but deserving students. It behooves the state to ensure the training of teachers, provide good remuneration for and adequate incentive to teachers, and co-operate with parents, teachers and the church in the proper education of young people.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NEED FOR ON GOING EDUCATION OF THE YOUTH

48. According to His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, “If technical progress is not matched by corresponding progress in man’s ethical formation, in man’s inner growth (cf. Eph. 3:16; 2Cor. 4:16), then it is not progress at all, but a threat for man and for the world” (Benedict XVI, On Christian Hope, Spe Salvi, no. 22.).

Man’s Knowledge is growing but to benefit maximally from it man needs continuous learning as well as balancing his knowledge.

49. We have earlier said that for education to be balanced it has to take care of the different dimensions of the human person – namely the mind, the spirit and the body often referred to as the cognitive, the affective and the psycho-motor domains. In ordinary parlance we can simply call it the head, the heart and the hands:- where the head refers to intellectual development, creativity and insight; the heart refers to ethical or moral formation, character formation, life of love and virtue; while the hand refers to acquisition of skills, development of talents, trade, competence, and self reliance.

50. Although proper education will address all the dimensions of human formation, it is good to note that each group needs the other for effective holistic education. For while intellectual development and skills acquisition can be taken care of in the school, moral and character formation need the consistent and combined efforts of the school, the parents, the community and the church. This is where our society and the state need to do more to fulfill their roles. In this area of on-going education some parents also fail in their duties. Parents who fail to teach their children the dignity of labor or the relatedness between success and hard work obviously fail in their duties. Of course when the child is not initiated into the life of virtue in his family, he becomes a burden to the society and to himself.

51. However, the most important truth about knowledge is that it grows. Consequently, learning is on-going. To stop learning is to grow old, whether one stops at the age of seventeen or at seventy-seven. **It is said that in the field of knowledge there is no graduate. Also, that the illiterate of the twenty first century is not necessarily the person who cannot read and write but the one who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.**

52. It follows that we need to evolve a system which will address the on-going holistic education of our youth. We have to develop youth programmes, create favorable environment which will generate opportunities that will turn the youth into human assets capable of meeting the challenges of their time and making positive contributions to the society of tomorrow. When we ensure the on-going formation of the youth we can confidently say we are passing on to the next generation a legacy of greatness and glory.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOW TO PREPARE OUR YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE:

Towards a future of hope and promise

53. The youth as we have mentioned are the hope of the future. If this is so they must be well prepared and equipped to face that future with confidence. The future world and society is one that is becoming more and more sophisticated and demanding. The greatest disservice to the youth is to make them to go through their formative years in such a way that they will not be able to face the future with trust in their ability. The youth of today are living in a world that is gradually becoming a global village, through availability of information, of contact and influence. Opportunities are becoming more and more competitive internationally. It is no longer a world where one lives and dies in one's village of origin. While the youth must be rooted in their culture, they must extend well beyond this and in some ways become citizens of the world.

54. To prepare the youth adequately for the future, they must be:

Rooted in Faith:

Proper education of the youth must include the true anthropology of the human person as a creature of God. True knowledge of man as created in God's image (Gen. 1:2f), will help the youth to be men and women of faith. Existential emptiness often generates crisis in the youth. But as people of faith they will be able to give meaning to their earthly life by recourse to the deposit of Christian revelation.

55. Rooted in Knowledge:

The age old saying that knowledge is power is as true today as it was thousands of years ago. It will be stating the obvious to say that no one can go through life today without the knowledge that will enable him/her to fit into this complex world. Therefore those who discourage the youth from gaining proper academic knowledge by organizing magic centers for examinations or by selling marks to students are preparing them to be dwarfs in the midst of giants. Students who drop out of

school due to laziness or related vices are preparing themselves for a show down and shameful future.

56. Rooted in Culture:

As already mentioned, some parents alienate their children from their culture roots like language, food, dressing etc. this is a disservice to the young people as it places them at a disadvantage. The youth should know their culture but should not be limited to it since the world is fast turning into a global village. Somehow the demands of globalization make this cultural identity all the more necessary as it provides an anchor in troubled waters. When they are denied their cultural roots, they lack identity and cannot contribute their quota to the rich heritage of humanity.

57. Rooted in Virtue:

Virtue as we have explained is good habit or the power to do good constantly and habitually. Skills perfect some aspects of the human person making one clever, capable or smart in an area of life but virtue perfects the whole human person making him good. A virtuous man is a good man. Since virtue is acquired by repetition of good acts turning into a good habit and human beings are creatures of habit, the youth must be schooled in those values that make for effective and useful human existence. It must be second nature to them, giving them greater ease of operation in what is good.

58. Rooted in Love:

St. Paul tells us that the greatest of the theological virtues is love. The youth must learn that real fulfillment is not based on what one can get but on what one can give freely to God, to his society and to his fellow human beings. *They have to discover the truth in the wise saying that life without faith is meaningless, without hope is empty and without love is tasteless and valueless.* The youth have to be educated to discover the treasure of a life lived in love.

59. Inspired by Hope:

The youth must be drilled in looking forward, and taking account of the unseen but sure future. They have to be formed in such a way that the hope for the good they harbor will be a foretaste of the eventual Christian hope. The Christian hope is based on faith in God, who is love, God who can do all things, who is the ultimate answer to the human problems. The old saying that hope never dies is inspired by the strength and courage which come from hope. But the audacity of hope is inseparably tied to tenacity of purpose and hard work anchored on solidity of faith. With hope in the loving father, God of providence, the youth goes ahead to event the tomorrow of their dream neither folding their hands nor blaming others.

60. Inspired by Hard work:

There is no progress without hard work. To know that nothing comes from nothing is a very useful advancement in the upbringing of the youth. Hard is the price that must be paid for what is good and honorable. *Professor J.S. Mbiti* has a beautiful saying that *“if you do not change, change will*

change you.” Life is on-going and change is inevitable. If you do not work hard to influence change or become drivers of change you will be compelled to become its passengers. To be actual protagonists and victims of history should be the desire of the youth in that case, hard work is a sine qua non.

61. Inspired by Rights and Responsibilities:

Proper education of the youth instills the sense of right and responsibility. The balanced youth knows that he has rights as a human being and as a child of God. In addition, he knows that these rights also impose responsibilities on him which he must not evade. On who always seeks his rights without the corresponding responsibilities is irresponsible, selfish and immature.

62. Inspired by Good Examples:

Formation of the youth calls for good example from the elders, (teachers and families). No doubt, examples speak louder than words. The youth must be able to look models as guides in their own lives. Such role models must be real, inspiring, encouraging and available to the youth.

63. Inspired by the Great Beyond:

A balanced perspective of life here on earth, includes the conviction that we have here no lasting city. It is part of our religious conviction that helps in an immense way to give meaning to the routine of daily life.

CHAPTER NINE

HOLY FAMILY YOUTH VILLAGE:

Testimony of our commitment.

64. We are convinced that patrimonies and legacies of monuments, money, estates, palaces, gold and silver are good but far less important than quality human beings who can equally provide these things for themselves. In one of our previous pastorals, we contended that the youths who are the elders of tomorrow and future of our race are what the present generation bequeaths to the future. (cf. you and the common Good, 2007, pg.44)

65. Given that we are privileged sharers in the ministry of Christ-who came that they may have life in abundance (Jn. 10:10), knowing that success comes not by wishing but by working, in our desire to contribute positively to the well being of our youth nay our society as well as bequeath a befitting legacy to the future, we have embarked on this novel but great project. The Holy Family Youth Village is a hostel complex for university students. The youth village is our modest effort to offer our students an enabling environment for learning and character formation. There we shall make effort to supply what the present system in the university seems to ignore, such include the spiritual, moral, affective, and physical formation. The physical environment of the youth village is colored by an atmosphere that promotes studiousness, leisure, practice of faith, healthy interpersonal relations and sense of solidarity.

It is our fervent hope that with the services we shall offer the inmates, positive effects will emerge which will inspire the replication of such ideas in different other places – by men and women of goodwill in our communities.

66. I avail myself of this opportunity to register our sincerest gratitude to all our sons and daughters, friends, benefactors and well-wishers both at home and abroad for your goodwill, generosity and countless sacrifices. May God inscribe your names in the book of life.

Our other programmes for the youth will continue to unfold with time for we share the conviction in the wise saying that *it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.*

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

67. The youth collectively constitute the greatest legacy that any human society can leave behind them. If so it requires very special effort from all to ensure that all is well with them. Such efforts to be holistic start from the religious and goes to all aspects of human life – social, political, educational, cultural, national, global etc. Our future to a very large extent depends on the state of our youth. The legacy we live behind will either speak for us or against us. Thus we cannot ignore the responsibility of making this greatest legacy as beautiful as possible. In our effort to devote ourselves for the wellbeing of our youth, we have St. John Bosco as a shining example. Don Bosco as he was popularly called worked assiduously for the proper upbringing of the youth. We ask the Good Lord to give us the same spirit that inspired him.

68. PRAYER:

Lord, you called John Bosco to be a teacher and father to the young. Fill us with love like his: May we give ourselves completely to your service and to the salvation of mankind.

Through Christ Our Lord!

(Collect of the memorial of St. John Bosco, 29th January).

Given in Onitsha, at the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity,

On 25 February, Ash Wednesday, in the year of Our Lord 2009.

MOST REV. VALERIAN M. OKEKE

Archbishop of Onitsha