

EDITORIAL PREFACE

The Church in Africa is undergoing hard times in her continuous attempt to properly harmonize African culture with Christian faith. The Church in Africa, though not without many difficulties, has continued to make serious effort to situate herself properly within the African Socio-cultural milieu. This is because, most Christians in Africa see the content of Christian faith as being in constant loggerhead with their cultures. Sometimes, this constant confrontation between Christian faith and African cultures leads to religio-cultural identity crisis among Christians in Africa. As a result of this crisis, neo-paganism and syncretism have been on the increase despite the heavy presence of the Church in Africa. To exacerbate the situation, the current tendencies in mass media outfits, academia and public debates have continued to question the relevance of Christianity in the world, and as a substitute to Christian teachings and morals, presented the African society with a way of life that is overly individualistic and excessively materialistic.

Commenting on this constant tension between Christian faith and traditional cultures, Joseph Card. Ratzinger (The Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI), in his meeting with the Doctrinal Commissions of Asia on 3rd March, 1993 at Hong Kong, said that it is "difficult to see how a culture, living and breathing the religion with which it is interwoven, can be transplanted into another religion without both of them going into ruin. If you remove from a culture its own religion which begets it, then you rob it of its heart. Should you implant in it a new heart, the Christian heart; it seems inescapable that the organism which is not ordered to it will reject the foreign body."

Faced with a situation like this, *which is both momentous and fascinating*, the Church in Africa has constantly provided many opportunities and platforms for the Christian faith to dialogue with African traditional cultures. The Church in African engages in this project and pursues it because, "from the time the Gospel was first preached, the Church has known the process of encounter and engagement with cultures". Consolidating on such opportunities, we have chosen the theme: **THE CHURCH IN AFRICA AND THE CHALLENGES OF CULTURE**, for this volume 27 of NACATHS journal.

We hope that a proper dialogue with African Traditional Cultures will provide a veritable avenue for Christian faith to thrive in African soil and thus facilitate a more effective evangelization in Africa. *The Church being very conscious of its universal mission enters into communion/dialogue with different forms of culture, thereby enriching both itself and the cultures themselves.* We believe that constant interaction between Christianity and African culture will advance effective inculturation which will lead to "intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures."

Consequently, the various articles in this journal thus make an urgent call on all to develop a theological consciousness that will promote genuine inculturation in Africa. The contributors suggest that all Christians in African should cooperate in this enterprise of imbuing our culture with a Christian spirit and allowing the good qualities of our

culture to enhance our Christian faith. By so doing, Christianity and African culture will be mutually enriched and this when reflected in the everyday life of an average Christian in Africa, will certainly ensure a better living condition for Africans.

Articles contained in this journal are contributed by different Catholic theological seminaries and Institutes in Nigeria. There is no unanimous referencing method in this journal but articles are referenced according to the style adopted by each of the seminaries or institutes.

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Editor