



Mass Media and Christian Evangelisation in the Digital Age: Towards Sustaining 'Mission' in the Catholic Archdiocese of Jos

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ABSTRACT

Christianity has heralded a phase of religion that thrives on mission – the mandate to ‘evangelize’ or reach out to people who do not know Jesus Christ, his divinity and work of salvation. By the twentieth century when the global community began to grapple with the realities of modernity – part of which was a corresponding rise of immorality and loss of religious identity, even among traditionally Christian societies – the strategy of ‘mission’ changed to accommodate new ways of transmitting the word of God that would pierce the hearts of humans. In this information regime which offers the print, broadcast and social media platforms the impact of these on the new evangelisation is visible. The Pentecostal churches which are offshoots of the Catholic and Protestant churches have swiftly embraced this mass communication – aided technique for achieving mission thereby attracting unprecedented followership. The Catholic Church - although it imposes a strong, virile and seemingly unshaken image – is losing a huge number of its estimated one billion population, and if its media culture on mission does not change it would be a drawback. Drawing on the growing body of work which compares Catholic approach with Pentecostal mission strategy, the paper examines this distinction, and analyses the approach to the use of the media as a strategy of ‘mission’ in the Catholic Archdiocese of Jos – where Catholicism started in Northern Nigeria. Based on the analysis of mass media use in the Archdiocese, this paper argues that its communication strategy is, undoubtedly, driving the new evangelisation but needs to expand its media infrastructure for optimum results. The paper suggests that ‘mission’ can be strengthened through a robust and media-centred strategy.

Keywords: Mass media, Christianity, Digital Age, Evangelisation, Mission, Catholicism, Protestantism, Pentecostalism.

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1.0 Introduction

The digital technology has changed the way we engage with people and understand our world. We now do things differently than we were doing a few years ago, and this rapid change has continued to date.

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It has affected our cultures, economies, political activities, religions and general wellbeing. Like other realms of society that are responding to these transformations in order to gain stability and overcome daunting challenges brought by the new technology, Christianity is believed to follow this path. A number of Christian churches have reviewed their strategy of 'mission' by taking advantage of the digital technology to transmit the word of God to people who are yet to embrace and/or live out the faith.

Previous studies reveal that the Catholic church thrives on its numerical strength and sacramental resources rather than the utilisation of the mass media, while the Pentecostal churches continue to develop a powerful media infrastructure for advancing 'mission' (Ihejirika, 2008; Rausch, 2010). This paper examines this distinction in Nigeria, and analyses the approach to the use of the media as a strategy of 'mission' in the Catholic Archdiocese of Jos – where Catholicism started in Northern Nigeria. Based on existing literature and the analyses of mass media use in the Archdiocese, this paper argues that its communication strategy is, undoubtedly, driving the new evangelisation but needs to expand its media infrastructure for optimum results. The paper suggests that 'mission' can be strengthened through a robust and media-centred strategy.

2.0 The media in Catholic life

Evangelisation in Christendom suggests a mission to strengthen and expand the Christian community by reaching out to people who do not know Jesus Christ and his work of salvation. The stage is set when the distinction is made between 'evangelisation' and 're-evangelisation', both of which connote 'mission' but the first level is targeted at people who are ignorant while the second refers to those who have fair knowledge of Christianity but do not live out the faith. These categories of people at whom 'mission' is targeted are crucial to critical theological analysis (Koukoura, 2014). However, this distinction is not established in this paper because the communicative strategy for achieving 'mission' – whether evangelisation or re-evangelisation – is its driving force, especially in the age of technology. The traditional Catholic and contemporary Pentecostal approaches to the use of media in the evangelical mission are analysed to gain understanding about what works in the prevailing circumstance.

The Catholic Church is 'swiftly' responding to the needs of humanity in our changing world where new technologies have redefined our cultures, beliefs and personal identity. There is a new sense of mission to evangelize and deepen the faith of people because "many are moving ahead and getting in with their lives without any obvious need of God. If they have any idea of God at all, it seems to be an image of a God who is very far removed from the reality of their lives" (Celli, 2009, p. 3). The church popularized this new evangelization at the dawn of the third millennium to seek ways of proclaiming God's word more effectively that men and women may not lose their faith in spite of the influence of secularized culture.

The urgency of this phase of mission cannot be contested. The Papacy had institutionalized the policy by creating the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization to respond to this profound need. In that regard, the 13th Ordinary General Assembly, which was convened in 2012, was dedicated to the theme: "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith" to allow for frank articulation of ideas by the world bishops. The assembly, as expected, generated an action plan that aimed at accelerating evangelization of all people who live in a world of complexities.

We have a litany of strategies that suit the new evangelization. Our focus is the use of mass media platforms to situate our topic in space and time. The church recognizes the vast resources of the mass media and believes that this renewed transformation is achievable through these media. Pope Paul VI had declared that "the church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims from the 'housetops' the message of which she is the depository" (McDonnell, 1989, pp. 18-19). He aptly captured the essence of the mass media in the task and mission of the church. It was in realization of this that Pope John Paul II emphasized that "it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message

and the church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the 'new culture' created by modern communications".

The chronology of human communication is fascinating. From the development of speech and alphabets which we now use, we moved to mediated communication and the digital media. Mediated communication entails sharing of messages usually targeted at a large audience. The digital media, on the other hand, comprise of channels that use computer based technology. Digital technology is changing the structure of communication all over the world by transforming the production, distribution and audience consumption of media content. It is simply a transformation from the invention of the printing press in the 15th Century to the adoption of the World Wide Web in the 1990s. The contemporary period which is characterized by the rapid transition is what is commonly referred to as the 'Digital Age', 'Information Age' or 'the Communication Age'.

The challenge here is how the mainstream and digital media which provide the platform for effective 'new evangelisation' can be put to positive use. These technologies have the potential to transform the relationship the media have with their audiences and create opportunities to build public values in entirely new ways. In this context, the mass media serve as channels through which the word of God is proclaimed to the world. Quinn, P., Mwangi, and Ogong'O (2005, p. 35) remarked that:

These modern means must be used for deepening faith. They are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard. They enable the Good News to reach millions of people. It is a proclamation "from the housetops", a modern version of the pulpit; a speaking to the multitudes. This use of the mass media presents a challenge – the challenge of touching individual hearts to evoke a personal adherence and commitment.

We are, therefore, concerned about how the abundance of mass media resources can be explored in deepening the Christian faith. The strategy of Christian evangelization is of essence in this discourse. Our goal is to seek ways of utilizing these media offerings, especially the digital technology, for sustaining 'mission'.

3.0 Christian evangelization in the digital age

We recall our mandate to go into the world to proclaim the Good news (Mk. 16:15-16), which empowers us as Christ's followers to invite the human family to meet with Jesus. This encounter is motivated by our action of sharing with others the free gift of salvation which we have received. It is an invitation of men and women, including Christians, would-be Christians and people of other faiths, to embrace that salvation emanating from the love of Christ. It entails an explanation of the gospel to those who have not understood the message. This establishes the fact that our duty is to evangelize the people that God may convert them. St. Paul says "How can they believe... without someone preaching to them?" (Rom. 10:14).

From the time of the Apostles to date, the methodology of evangelization has changed allowing the adoption of new techniques of proclaiming the word of God. This paradigm shift is necessitated by the dynamics of world systems characterized by modern technology which McLuhan and Powers (1989) had predicted would transform people and their cultures. The church recognizes this phenomenal stride and has remained committed to her vision in spite of the daunting challenges posed by the new technology.

Nigeria has attained a position of reckoning as the second most religious country in the world (WIN-Gallup International, 2012, cited in Oni, Oloyede, & Ifeduba, 2013, p. 3). In fact, Nigerians were once ranked "the most religious people in the world with 90 per cent believing in God, praying regularly and affirming their readiness to die on behalf of the belief" (Agbiboa & Okem, 2011, p. 112). Apart from her citizens' inclination to ethnicity backed by the federal character policy which defines the roles of state actors and determines the distribution of national resources, religious ideologies have increasingly shaped their attitudes in many ways. Of the estimated 170 million Nigerians, Christians and Muslims are almost equal

in number (Dowd, 2014; Egwu, 2015; Ojo & Lateju, 2010). These believers share in common the belief that God is supreme and deserves submission of self; that they conduct themselves in the manner that would please their creator. But these expressions are often characterized by extremism emerging from social insecurity, hunger, economic and political impasse which have resulted in the people's dependence on God. They look up to God for a bailout mediated by clerics and prophets who insist that nothing could take the place of religion in the lives of the citizens, and that their prevailing challenges were surmountable if only they believe. The WIN-Gallup International report suggests that when people have basic infrastructure and their living standards are favourable they would become independent and less religious. In contrast, if their living conditions deteriorate, they would recognize God and become notoriously religious. Oni, Oloyede, and Ifeduba (2013, p. 9) have explained that Nigeria's religious status "may be consistent with the fact that it belongs to the group of economically worse off countries". In developed economies – especially in Europe and some parts of the world where many religions were nurtured and spread across the globe – there seems to be apathy and nonchalance toward religion. Europe, for example, which was traditionally Christian, has witnessed closure and merger of some Christian churches in recent years as a result of the transformation brought by science and technology. Koukoura (2014), in his analysis of evangelisation in 'Christian' societies, reiterates that "[...] societies in the northern hemisphere, and particularly in Europe, are no longer Christian" (p.275). At a colloquium on communicating religious belief in a technological world, which was convened for Catholic sociologists, theologians, mass communicators, philosophers and researchers, the participants noted that they had "a role to play in the church's never-ending search for more meaningful and effective ways of communicating God's word and God's love to a noisy, distracted world" (McDonnell & Trampiets, 1989, p. 11). They gathered to explore the possibility of communicating faith in an electronic environment dominated by technological consciousness.

This explains the rationale of the church's new vision, that is, "a new response to the needs of humanity and people today in a manner adapted to the signs of the times and to the new situations in cultures, which are the basis of our personal identity and the places where we seek the meaning of our existence" (Benedict XVI, 2012).

Our dynamic world is compelling us to critically think about our patterns of evangelizing the human family. Our cultures are changing and the people, to whom the gospel is preached, have shifted their attention to world pleasures which modern technology offers. There are economic and social concerns that turn people on rather than the message of salvation which the new vision seeks to achieve. For instance in Nigeria, some Christian clerics present the faith in the manner that is appealing to people's sense of comfort - miracles, absence of poverty, rapid promotions etc. They create fear in the people and make them to 'offer all to God the giver', so that they would reap from where they have not sown. Häring (1990, p. 95) warns that in this new age, "we must denounce that false dynamism which blatantly searches for what is sensational, the new just because it is new, developing misguided aims, and turn our eyes to the dynamic presence of God in salvation history". This departure from the mandate of Christ is not substantially established in the old generation churches, perhaps, because their members believe that the crown is worn when salvation is gained.

Priests who, by virtue of ordination, teach the faith are encouraged to deliver homilies that are apt and stimulating giving the essence of the word of God in the lives of the people who encounter the world in its transitional form. They should depart from the dull homilies of the early missionaries who merely read their 'articles' from the pulpit without relating the lessons to the reality of the times. In his post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, given the importance of the word of God, the quality of homilies needs to be improved. Those who have been charged with preaching by virtue of a specific ministry ought to take this task to heart. Generic and abstract homilies which obscure the directness of God's word should be avoided, as well as useless digressions which risk drawing greater attention to the preacher than to the heart of the Gospel message (Benedict XVI, 2010, p. 107).

The point of emphasis is that there should be deliberate effort to preach the word of God persuasively that those who listen to it may accept the message of salvation and encounter Christ. If we fail to do so then the attractions of the times will elude us and our new vision would wither away.

This era is that of technology offerings. Man's ingenuity is, once more, proved beyond the ordinary. We can affirm this because we meet and interact with one another beyond the confines of space thereby creating relationships that bind the human family. But communication experts have observed that the technology is a double-edged sword (Dominick, Messere, & Sherman, 2012) because it has the potential to build and destroy humanity. How effective can we evangelize the world in this complex circumstance? How can our priests say to young people 'Jesus said...' when the people can surf the Internet from anywhere and obtain information on Jesus' ministry and passion?

Pope Benedict XVI, in a message to mark the 45th World Communications Day, asserted that "there exists a Christian way of being present in the digital world: this takes the form of a communication which is honest and open, responsible and peaceful to others".

4.0 Utilising mass media platforms: The Catholic and Pentecostal approaches

Catholics and Pentecostals considerably constitute the world's Christian majority. Rausch (2010, p. 927) reveals that, "Of the world's 2.1 billion Christians, Roman Catholics number over one billion. That means that Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, and Charismatics together amount to close to 75 per cent of the total number of Christians in the world". Catholics celebrate their rich liturgy and invite members in state of grace to partake of the Eucharist. The Pentecostals believe that the contemplative Catholic spirituality does not appeal to this generation of Christians hence they invoke the Holy Spirit (the Pentecost, from which their name is derived) in their worship. Both groups have various strategies of achieving 'mission' including the use of mass media.

Many frontline Pentecostals had been devout Catholics who found 'no miracles' of prosperity in the church, the basis on which they set up their ministries to explore the option of 'performing out-of-this world miracles'. This search for miracles has continued since the early 20th century to date. The Catholic Church is losing its membership to the movement, even though this religious migration has also penetrated the Pentecostal family. There is research evidence that in Latin America, "some 8,000 to 10,000 Catholics leave their church every day to join Pentecostal churches [...] There are more Pentecostals at church on Sunday morning in Brazil than there are Catholics at Mass" (Rausch, 2010, p. 935). The scenario of Latin America, which was traditionally Catholic, is believed to be higher than Nigeria. However, the rapid drop in Nigeria's Catholic population accounts for this.

Asking questions about why many Catholics leave the church to join Pentecostal congregations is critical to this discourse. While people have different reasons for leaving some churches for others; for example, issues of alleged financial scandals (Fraser, 1999) or sexual scandals (Gamson, 2001), the inability to adopt communicative skills by some preachers to persuade their congregations and the non-utilization of the media to convey the gospel message by the churches are mainly responsible. The Pentecostals have taken these to heart, and have since followed the styles of early orators who had "great public resonance, because they articulated public speech and shaped the public opinion of their time. They played the role of today's politicians, who also take seriously the requirements of rhetoric in making a speech, placing importance on both the voice and physical gestures" (Koukoura, 2014, p. 282). It is this persuasive communication that enables them to stand out, thereby leaving a mark on their congregations. For Catholics, it is not liturgical. Pentecostals utilize the print, broadcast and social media to evangelize. They are aware that the 'mission' to proclaim the word of God to people who do not know Jesus Christ could be achieved through the numerous mass communication channels – TV, radio, newspapers, posters, banners, billboards, internet, etc. Ihejirika (2008) has noted that they have utilised all forms of modern media for evangelisation; the basis for which they reach out to a wider audience. However, he points out the Catholic Church has not done enough in that regard and warns that the new

evangelisation being undertaken by the church would not be achieved if the mass media were not utilized. Corroborating, the former Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Carlo Martini admits that:

My impression is that in our church we have not yet understood the new challenge of the media sphere. We are awkward in communication. We have an inferiority complex before the great secular press or television or radio. We still don't know or appreciate the new language of the media with their insistence on connotation and vibration. We are ignorant of the new idioms and concepts of the religious language of today (Martini, 1990, cited in Ihejirika, 2008, p. 83).

These observations by Ihejirika (2008) and Martini (1990) should remind the Catholic Church about her commitment to the new evangelisation and spur her toward establishing a vibrant communication infrastructure that would sustain the evangelical mission.

For the purpose of analysis of the Catholic mass media use in Nigeria, this paper examines the communication platforms of the Archdiocese of Jos. The choice of this community is based on the fact that Jos is predominantly Christian in North Central Nigeria (Danfulani, 2006) with a significant number of Catholics, Protestants and Pentecostals, and surrounded by states of the North East and North West where the Hausa-Fulani Muslims are dominant. In Nigerian history, Jos Archdiocese was the first territory of exploit by Catholic missionaries in Nigeria where three young Catholic priests opened a church in the Shendam area in 1907.

Apparently, when the Catholic Church exercises her teaching authority pertaining to faith, the mass media are used to transmit the message. They serve as vehicles for evangelization and catechesis. Our analysis of selected media platforms would enable us understand their peculiarities and usage because they are available to us.

5.0 The print media

The world still recognizes the 1450 revolution by Johannes Gutenberg, a Catholic and German, who invented the movable machine that “enabled printers to set type in form of letters and words and to use a screw-type press to press the inked-type onto paper” (Ukonu, 2005, p. 4). It took Gutenberg about twenty years to develop the right process for making the letters, arranging them in suitable press, developing the right ink, and bringing all the components together into a practical system.

In Nigeria, journalism started with Christian missionary activity of the 19th Century. It was pioneered by Rev. Henry Townsend of the Church Missionary Society, CMS, who established the *Iwe Irohin fun awon ara Egba ati Yoruba* (The Newspaper for the Egba and Yoruba) in Abeokuta on December 3, 1859. It became Africa's first and oldest vernacular newspaper. Townsend's goal was to use the press he had set up to print religious and educational materials for the mission schools he founded. Other newspapers that sprang up at that time were published by missionaries who brought Christianity to Nigeria. Christian evangelization blossomed in the early times with the establishment of newspapers by various organizations that had come to propagate Christianity and persuade local natives to accept and practice the new religion. Since this was to replace the traditional idol worship for which Africans were known, the religious groups sought ways of gaining foothold and attracting followership. One of such ways was the setting up of newspapers that could publish articles and news on the faith. (Duyile, 1987, p. 58) points out that:

All the religious activities of the period needed a vehicle of communication to assist the growth of religion that was spreading at the same speed with education.... Since all the missionaries came from a culture with dominant press influence, it was convenient for them to begin to think about setting up newspapers that would publish religious news and other news affecting their churches, their converts and the people, and their immediate environment.

The missionaries knew the power of the newspaper to influence the behaviour of those they came to evangelise. It was realized that the medium could contain homilies on Jesus Christ whom the missionaries

had come to preach. And since the natives, especially the fairly educated Egbas and Yorubas, could access the newspaper in their living rooms, the future was bright for the missionaries as the new religion they brought to the shores of Nigeria would spread like wild fire.

The Catholic Church in Nigeria made her history in 1925 with the establishment of the *Catholic Herald* which had uncommon features and aesthetics. It contained news on baptized natives, list of children who enrolled in schools, some basic prayers such as The Lord's prayer and The Angelus, pictures of elders coming to church, witty sayings against slave trade etc. Other Catholic newspapers emerged as new independent missions, vicariates and dioceses were created. Most of them did not survive. Some appeared once or twice while others resurrected several years after they were launched. For example, the *Leader* of Onitsha Province, published in 1956 which served over 45 percent of the total Catholic population of Nigeria (Asuzu, 1987), the *Independent* of Lagos Province, inaugurated in 1960 and the *Socket* of Kaduna Province initiated in 1970, all experienced eventual collapse. Although it was attributed largely to lack of human and financial resources required to sustain them, some writers and religious historians have affirmed that their sudden coverage of social issues, especially politics, led to their exit. (McDonnell, 1989, p. 18) explains this systemic failure:

Given the magnitude and complexity of the problem of how to adopt and adapt communication technologies to the service of pastoral and evangelistic goals, it is not surprising that the church has often responded by simply acting as if the problem did not exist... We are now facing up to the issue and recognizing that we have a good deal to do in trying to understand the culture in which we live before we can even begin to try and speak words of wisdom to it.

In Jos Archdiocese, the Catholic Mass Media Practitioners had muted the idea of floating a newspaper or magazine that would tell the story of the Archdiocese correctly. The hierarchy of the Archdiocese endorsed the proposal and supervised the plan and execution of project through its communications office. Consequently, the *Communicator* was born. It collapsed and, years after, *Catholic Linklines* was established. Its circulation lasted for five months and no one saw it again. *NewsTime* followed three years after the exit of *Linklines*. It survived for just three months. After seven years of silence, the Archdiocese established *The Word of Life* and made a commitment that it would support it.

5.1 *The Word of Life* experience

“Unto us a child is born”, was the theme of the seven-paragraph editorial that heralded the birth of *The Word of Life* newspaper in December 2001. Its debut was likened to Jesus' birth in Bethlehem which was announced to the people who would call him the messiah. The name was coined in accordance with the proclamation of the word of God to human race. It meant that, as a Catholic voice, it would proclaim the word and domesticate it in the language that potential readers would understand the precepts of God and the challenges they pose to today's growing church. Through this effort of gathering 'facts' and reporting 'truth' from religious perspective, it was envisaged that the Archdiocese of Jos would expand both in size and pastoral ministry. In other words, the publication would be rich in pastoral and doctrinal issues, catechesis and scriptural reflections aimed at empowering the Christian community.

The second vision was that there would be a deliberate effort by news producers and publishers to design a model for featuring interreligious issues, especially as they border on Christian and Muslim relationship, with the aim of promoting unity and tolerance among the adherents of both religions who, for the first time, experienced a politically motivated religious crisis. The newspaper promised never to dabble into politics and other secular matters in order to maintain its neutral position as a trusted, competent and morally driven mass medium that identifies with the voiceless and downtrodden whose hopes had been dashed. The Archdiocese did not lose sight of the fact that *Iwe Irohin*, the first newspaper in Nigeria, “got entangled in the first press controversy in the history of Nigerian journalism” (Ukonu, 2005, p. 21) because it dabbled into the politics of the Egbas and Ijaye on the one hand, and the people of Ibadan on the other. The Archdiocese preferred to use *The Word of Life* to mediate between Christians and Muslims and sue for peace in the state through genuine dialogue.

The newspaper was truly caught in the web of the Jos crisis; as such, its maiden edition that was to be in circulation in September 2001, could not be printed at the press due to incessant hostilities that robbed the state of its peace. Since the inner pages of the paper had been printed in September while awaiting some breaking news for the cover, it was trapped at the press until December when the editorial board assessed the loss of property by Catholics in the crisis and made it a lead story for the paper. Its catchy headline: “Catholics lose N25m in Jos mayhem” (Kuptong, 2001) became the readers’ delight hence the newspaper recorded one hundred percent sale. At the newspaper’s first anniversary, the proprietor and Archbishop of Jos, Most Rev. Ignatius Kaigama, gave it a pass mark and recalled that “it emerged at the right time to fill a vacuum in the communication spectrum within the Archdiocese and beyond” (Jick, 2002, p. 1).

Many people have contributed to the growth of the newspaper in its ten years of existence. Priests, Religious and the Laity have promoted Christian values through their incisive articles while the editorial board has carried out its mandate effectively. Apart from *The Word of Life*, the parish bulletins and handbills containing Sunday readings and faith-based announcements have continued to strengthen communication in the Archdiocese. Occasionally, the secular newspapers and magazines publish news on the Archdiocese whenever events are organized.

5.2 The broadcast media

This industry started with radio broadcasting in 1932 as an experiment of the empire service of the British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC. Full broadcasting services in the country began with the establishment of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service, NBS, in 1952, which metamorphosed into the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, NBC, in 1956. Television broadcasting began by the Western region in 1959 (Akinfeleye, 1985; Daramola, 2006). The government monopolized the sector for several decades until 1992 when the National Broadcasting Commission, NBC, Decree No 38 was promulgated allowing for issuance of broadcast licenses to private entrepreneurs to own and operate broadcast stations in the country (Akingbulu & Bussiek, 2010). The Decree prohibited the granting of licenses to religious organisations or political parties as enshrined in Section 10 of Decree No. 38 of 1992 (Oni et al., 2013). That, perhaps, explains why the Archdiocese of Jos does not own a radio or television station. It only features on radio and TV programmes once a while. It is either the Zumunta Mata group in a parish is singing on NTA’s *Christian Half Hour* or Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama discussing interfaith issues on *Meeting Point*, *Guest on 29* and *LightHouse Chat*. The audience also watch and listen to news on activities of the Archdiocese on PRTV, RayPower, AIT, NTA, Silverbird/Rhythm and Highland FM. They hear incisive radio commentaries by Clement Yelkopba and Boniface Gwotbit, worthy knights of St. Mulumba who reflect the philosophy of the church in their contributions. They watch the director of communication, Fr. Gabriel Gowok as anchor of *Christian Half Hour* on Sunday where he uses journalistic and theological ingenuity to impress his audience. These are, no doubt, our modest contributions to the cause of a new evangelization.

If we want to make a greater impact on our community that yearns for the word of God, we may strategise on the use of those media for the better. Have you wondered how miracle workers and prosperity preachers use radio and television to attract membership? Have you imagined the huge resources committed to television programmes through donations by the congregations? Can you learn any lesson from the programme of Marian Apostolate anchored by Patrick Oke? Have you listened to the programme of the Jos Archdiocesan JDPC/Caritas on Rhythm FM Jos? What has stopped the broadcast of the Angelus on RayPower Jos? We are not advocating for the initiation of TV miracle show, in which we direct people to parishes for casting and binding. It is important, therefore, for Catholics to identify and package rich programmes on liturgy, doctrine and social justice and sponsor them religiously. Suppose that a 30-minute Catholic programme, *The Beatitudes*, is initiated by the Archdiocese for airing on Highland FM. You could package it in series for four quarters.

The first may be ‘Catholic Liturgy’ which shall explain the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist including the revised Mass text. The second may be ‘Dialogue of Life’, which reflects the

philosophy of the Archbishop and the Archdiocese on interfaith relations. The third may be 'Jos Archdiocese Today'. This series will focus on the pastoral growth of the Archdiocese featuring events of parishes and pastoral areas as well as the contributions of the faithful to the development of Catholic communities. This could take the form of documentaries produced in a studio owned by the Archdiocese. The fourth may be 'Songs of Praise'. This part shall feature variety of Catholic hymns, solo etc. produced by local choirs and Catholic artistes to praise and honour God. Just imagine this scenario in the context of evangelization. Will people not understand the liturgy and desire to derive benefits from it? Will we not be changing the ideology of those who are opposed to genuine dialogue with adherents of other faiths? Will we not be telling our story and testifying about our pastoral progress which will motivate people towards goodwill? Will we not inspire people who experience God's presence in the songs our children sing?

Are these aspirations measurable? Yes, they are. We must take a bold step to make things happen. Let us come up with formula for sustained funding through levies, special collections, donations etc. This must be done now. The action is urgent. The charges on broadcast programmes, especially religious, are high because commercial television and radio stations are expensive to run. It is clear that the conditions are harsh for commercial stations and if they must generate substantial income for their operations and management, their service charge must also be high. The implication is that if we must effectively use the broadcast media beyond the irregular news coverage of our activities, our best bet is to pay.

5.3 The recording industry

This is another sector that aids evangelization. In the past, we saw in our small Christian communities, men and women of faith who followed the Zumuntan Mata and choir groups to their conventions with functional tape recorders to record the songs they produced. These groups preached Christ in their songs and people looked forward to encountering Jesus in the songs which they recorded for their everyday spiritual development. Today, even in typical rural settlements where this was common, the story is different. The women groups and choirs no longer undertake this exercise with zeal and the men, young and old, who recorded the songs have become fans of European soccer teams – Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester United, Barcelona etc. Many of them pay heavily to watch their teams and do not go to church anymore.

Imagine yourself in a typical Catholic bookshop where you find variety of CDS/DVD containing the rosary, Latin hymns, songs like 'Take and Sanctify', 'I will Bring my Gifts with Thanksgiving and Love', 'Priestly People', 'Daukaka ga Allah a cikin Samaniya' etc. If you are in your car or sitting room, even in the kitchen with two or three people and you are listening to these songs, do you know how many people would ask you to get them copies? Do you realize the impact it would have on people?

Is it impossible to record Fr. Peter Uchu and Fr. James Davou who travel long distances to facilitate workshops on the new Roman Missal and make available copies to Catholics? The book on the revised Mass text which is in circulation is quite enlightening but since we are not a reading community, the audio visual materials would complement the print.

Can we not produce good documentaries on pastoral visits of the Archbishop and make them available to deaneries and parishes and for the archives? Can we not put on CD the beautiful prayer for political, ethnic and religious peace in Plateau State and make our Catholics and other Christians recite it at prayer time? Can't that prayer be recorded and aired on our radio stations? Do we have a documentary on the Archbishop reflecting his over three decades of priestly ministry or account of his interfaith programmes in Plateau State as Archbishop? Do we have clips of the visits of the former Papal Nuncios, Archbishops Maria Vigano and Renzo Fratini? What about the visit of Anthony Cardinal Okogie to the Archdiocese? Our challenges are not on account of anyone's failure but that of a system that has not paid off in the last two decades. We have the office of Social Communications with a dynamic director as the administrative head. But who, and what affairs does he direct in an office without technical and communication staff?

What communication equipment does he supervise and who handles the routine field work and archival maintenance which he directs?

From the foregoing, the need for paid staff of creative disposition is inevitable. The communications office requires only two staff – the Technical/Operations officer who combines field coverage and post production operations and the Communications Officer/Librarian who writes production scripts and handles documentation of all materials as well as performs secretarial duties. When this is done in addition to provision of basic equipment, the Director of Communications can now direct and the office will function effectively as an organ that aids the promotion of the new evangelization.

6.0 The new media paradigm

The new media are computer based media that allow easy, person-to-person communication. They are the latest and most friendly communication forms that bring the world together. The Internet, for instance, has opened the opportunity to enhance information flow and improve shared ideas across national frontiers. It is a medium of Mass Communication that has greatly changed the behaviour of man. In fact, one way to describe it is that “it appears to be the largest, most uncensored communication environment that has existed in human history.... It is instantaneous and interactive, allowing users more control in shaping their message” (Rodney, 2005, p. 2). It allows users to surf channels and go to sites suitable to them. It transforms the production, distribution and audiences’ consumption of media content. What is challenging to Christian evangelization is that the new media technology poses danger to the world’s population. Okoro (2006, p. 6) observes that “there is a deluge of media materials promoting anti-spiritual themes. Electronic games and violent films today dot the length and breadth of the online world”. He says a recent study in the United States of America revealed that almost 80% of the video games that the youths are exposed to contained violence in all dimensions.

Children born into the digital age are now regularly seen with cell phones, laptops etc. Those who cannot afford these spend hours in cyber cafes “looking for romantic topics and even watching pornographic pictures” (Okalawon & Igbokwe, 2004). The way they act and behave now is attributed to technological advancement which has made it possible for them to spend less time interacting with friends and learning about our cherished values (Danaan, 2006). We must admit that the Internet is relevant to the church in many respects. Although it does not substitute for real interpersonal community, it attracts people to a fuller experience of the life of faith and often enriches the religious lives of users. If it is utilized by the church, it would strengthen her catechetical, evangelical and other communications efforts.

A Catholic scholar, Angela Santana, who recently undertook research on New Media, New Evangelisation at St. Mary’s University San Antonio, Texas, remarked that

The Catholic Church was once a pioneering force in communications. Its members have travelled the globe preaching and converting hundreds upon hundreds, thousands upon thousands to a radical message. Its members, inspired by the Holy Spirit, compiled the Bible [...] Today, however, the Church has fallen short of that reputation. It is lagging behind others in adopting new forms of communication. It is lacking in its efforts to utilize the new media [...] The rest of the world is leaving the church behind (Santana, 2010, p. 4).

She found out that some pastors of Pentecostal and Protestant churches have established a relational community with their congregations using new media platforms. This has enabled the people to gain insight into their pastors’ thoughts, daily life and spiritual reflections on a regular basis. For instance, she noted that within the Protestant community, individuals and groups have created new accounts on Twitter dedicated to spreading prayer requests to people all over the world. That is, if a person posts his prayer request on Twitter, his friends could then pass on his request to their friends, and those friends could pass it on similarly until hundreds of people have been exposed to one prayer request in a matter of minutes.

Like fellow citizens in the digital age, some priests and Religious in the Archdiocese are active users of these social networking sites. This is a step in the right direction. They can interact with their fellow pastors on mission and share knowledge and experience for pastoral good. Pope Benedict XVI (Emeritus) had demonstrated this with the launch of his channel on Youtube which would provide people direct access to his teaching. Those who visited the site could post comments. Although the Vatican admitted that it was not yet possible to respond to the comments, they would be studied with attention and would help the church to listen to new voices.

Vatican II document urges members of the church to disclose to their pastors “their needs and desires with that liberty and confidence which befits children of God and brothers of Christ [...] The faithful are to manifest their opinion on those things which pertain to the good of the church”. While we applaud the efforts of the church’s hierarchy for putting in place a dynamic administrative structure involving the vicars general, deans, parish priests and chaplains, it would not be out of place to, in the first instance, open an email address devoted to suggestions from Priests, Religious and Laity as well as those in public domain. The address should be publicized for the people to know that they may express themselves freely to their Archbishop with the aim of advancing evangelization. The password should be known to him alone to enable him select constructive views that would add value to the church. This may be replicated in parishes, pastoral areas, chaplaincies and institutions. This ‘blank cheque’ communication being advocated will be abused by our people as some would generate and spread unfounded rumours about parish projects, performance of parish priests, conflict in church councils etc. The laity must be warned against this act while the clergy should be careful in analysing what is brought before them.

7.0 The microphone and camera in public domain

In every mass media discourse, the microphone and camera are mentioned because both equipment are used for sound pick up and capturing of visual image. We often use them in group and mass communication to reach a number of persons. For instance, when Catholics congregate for Eucharistic celebration, especially on Sunday or holy day of obligation, the microphone is used by the priest. When we want the visual elements that would enable us hear the voice and see the action, the use of camera is inevitable. The manner in which the equipment are used can aid evangelization or jeopardize its vision. We are familiar with a story once told by a priest who went shopping for public address system and was asked if he wanted the ‘Catholic PA system’ or ‘the original Pentecostal PA system’. I am sure as a Catholic; he would not deny the faith but wondered why the Catholic PA system had no ‘original’ coloration which connotes durability and effectiveness in the Nigerian market.

This is true of our churches. Until recently, we had amplifiers with very low inbuilt system and microphones with poor sound pick up. Even presently, the situation has not changed in some churches. The congregation is cut off from the Mass and only sees the priest as an entertainer rather than a minister. As a church, we should insist on a PA system that can effectively synchronize sound which includes high capacity amplifier, long lasting directional microphones and loud speakers. We should be interested in the functionality of the system, especially the pick-up pattern of the microphone. Microphones pick up sound from three directions – all round (omnidirectional), front and rear (bidirectional) and front (unidirectional). When using the omnidirectional microphone, speak across rather than into it. This could be placed on the altar when many priests are concelebrating the Mass so that, for instance, the parts of the Eucharistic prayer which may be uttered by more than one priest could be picked from all directions. When the priest is alone, either on the pulpit or the altar, the microphone should be held close to his mouth at approximately a 45-degree angle to achieve optimal sound pick up.

We should learn to test the microphone before the Mass or any programme to check if it is on. Do not blow into the microphone. Simply speak into it or lightly scratch the pop filter. If you hit the microphone or blow into it, the force can drive particles through the grille screen and onto the diaphragm. This implies that high sound sources can result in perforating the microphone diaphragm (Alten, 2008). When you are interviewed by a television reporter or featured on a television programme, you should look into the

camera and never turn to the direction of the anchor/presenter because the camera is the eye of the audience.

8.0 Conclusion

The realization of the church's new evangelization is possible when we utilize the various mass media platforms to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. Our pattern of proclamation must change with the times. Let us use the mainstream media effectively by packaging rich Catholic programmes for television and radio as well as newspaper and magazines. In this regard, the different organs of our church and the lay faithful should support the initiative through funding.

Catholics are urged to use the new media to advance the new vision. We must bring Christ to Internet users whose exposure to the new technology often limits their knowledge of God's word. We should reorganize our Communications department to make it functional that it can offer media education to priests, religious and laity of our Archdiocese to increase their understanding of the impact of social communications on their work and society in general. Adequate funding of this department for procurement and maintenance of equipment as well as the engagement of full-time staff with requisite knowledge of the media culture are strongly advocated.

For us to truly fulfil our task of evangelizing the world in the digital age, we should not remain in the realm of social analysis but we should be involved in social action by integrating the mass media in our pastoral plan. The strategy of setting up schools, hospitals and vocational centres which facilitated Christian evangelization in the early times may not be effective today. The commitment to reach out to others in the changing world requires positive media use by the church.

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