

**FROM GLOBALIZATION TO
INCULTURATION
A Paradigm Shift in Negotiating the
HIV/AIDS Dilemma in the African Context
within the Framework of *Fides et Ratio*, art. 72**

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Introduction

To assert the global nature of HIV/AIDS is to state the obvious. Different studies and rationalities attest to the truth that HIV/AIDS does not have a well-defined geographically limited spread.¹ The cosmopolitan nature of HIV/AIDS as seen in the statistics does not however undermine the fact that the effects of this sickness are not felt proportionally from one nation to another. This paper proposes to situate the local as a veritable site of empowerment for communities dealing with HIV/AIDS, as it is the case with the African continent.

From a statistical standpoint and according to the logic of accountability and difference, to be infected by the HIV virus in a

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¹J. Moti, "The Welcome Address" during the 16th CIWA Week (March, 2005). He later pointed out that while diseases such as malaria, ebola could be geographically determined, HIV/AIDS is not geographically limited to any place. The reason is that it has already spread to every corner of the earth, to every age group, every level of society and to persons of all sexual orientations.

tropical climate is not the same as to be infected in a Mediterranean climate. To be infected by the HIV virus in the Western world, where HIV/AIDS is now being listed among the chronic diseases is not the same as being infected with the same virus in the developing countries where HIV/AIDS is regarded as *obiri na aja ocha* (that which terminates in the grave). Truly one is born within a determined geographical area that could open an oasis of opportunities through which one can negotiate the challenges of life. People's social context and environment have great influence in their welfare, existential vulnerabilities, ethical decisions and sense of purpose.

The uniqueness of this epidemic among a particular people makes it imperative for us to engage in a contextual understanding and appreciation of this problem within the cultural, political, religious and social situation of the African continent. In sub-Saharan Africa this sickness has claimed many lives and had paralyzed many hopeful projects and laudable aspirations of those who would have been the future of the black continent. This study is situated within the framework offered by Pope John Paul II in his epoch making encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, art 72 where he urged that theological reflection should take into cognizance the cultural and religious values of the people. The Pope had already made a similar appeal during his Papal visit to Malawi in 1989 when he called upon all African people to seek within themselves the solutions to many of the problems that define their social context. The late Holy Father requested African people to utilize the riches found in their culture and tradition in addressing their problems and moderating their aspirations in the global world order. John Paul II believed that within the cultural context of Africa lies the solution to her multiple problems.² The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in their wisdom underlined this basic truth when they said:

Christ Himself searched the hearts of men and led them to divine light through truly human conversation. So also his disciples, profoundly penetrated by the Spirit of Christ, should know the people among whom they live, and should establish contact with them. Thus they themselves can learn by sincere and patient dialogue what treasures a bountiful God has distributed among the nations of the earth. But at the same time, let them try to illumine these treasures with the light of the Gospel, to set them free, and to bring them under the dominion of God their Saviour.³

²Juan Pablo II, "Homilía en la misa celebrada en el Kwacha Park de Blantyre, Malawi", *Ecclesia* 2426 (1989) 22-23.

³*Ad gentes*, 11

This call to go back to one's root in order to be able to face the exigencies of life is in line with the African people's idea of progress⁴ which is built on the principle of autonomy and subsidiarity which recognizes that any solution offered to people should consider who they are and also what they could do for themselves.

In a more recent call after the last African Synod in 2009, the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI summoned the church in Africa in these self-awakening words: "Get up, Church in Africa, family of God, because you are being called by the heavenly Father, take the journey of a new evangelization with the courage that comes from the Holy Spirit."⁵ A very reputable African theologian, Laurenti Magesa underlined the need for African theologians to recognize the social context in Africa in their theological reflection and praxis.⁶

This article, will engage the ongoing debate on the problem of HIV/AIDS from the concrete reality of the African people. Given the inadequacies in handling the issue of HIV/AIDS in the world today, this study will demonstrate and put into perspective some of the deficiencies that have underlined the way HIV/AIDS has been handled since its ugly appearance in the 1980s. This work engages in a critical counter-argument of globalization by examining the degree to which an appeal to globalization and its logic of domination has undermined various local efforts to abate the spread of this devastating disease that leads inevitably to social death. On the other hand, I will opt for a new paradigm of inculturation which embodies a novel logic of recognition and offers a more holistic approach to the epidemic in the light of the recommendations from *Fides et Ratio*, art 72, where the role of social location, indigenous resources and local rationality are imperative in handling issues dealing with people's particular experience.

1. The Old Wine of Globalization and the Problem of HIV/AIDS

A fruitful discussion on HIV/AIDS implies a consideration of globalization as a meaningful and challenging framework. Most of the solutions that accompanied the spread of HIV/AIDS during the

⁴The African concept of progress as going back in order to move forward is in line with the idea of progress which C. S. Lewis described in his book *Mere Christianity* when he said "Going back is the quickest way on." The difference between the Igbo idea of progress and that given by Lewis is that while, the Africans encourage an attitude of going back as retrospection, Lewis presented it as an about-turn when one is on the wrong road. See: C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1952, 28-29.

⁵Cf. Zenith, Oct, 25, 2009

⁶L. Magesa, "African Theology and the Local Church: Positive Tensions," *New People* 81 (Nov-Dec 2002), 111.

first decades of its existence were not sensitive to people's culture and their social context. The overarching principle and logic of globalization which promoted the spirit of domination and manipulation constituted a great hindrance for people to understand really the very meaning and how best to fight the epidemics from their own socio-cultural and economic milieu.

With the dominant logic of globalization, which tends to import goods and services baked in the Western liberal world to all the nooks and crannies of the global society, the way HIV/AIDS was presented and the solutions offered were problematized. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Africa is offering the Western world another opportunity to impose not their secular values and technical know-how to the African continent but also a foreign and unencumbered mentality and arbitrary sense of freedom. Godfrey Tangwa articulated what could be considered as a correct attitude in this age of Western globalization:

Globalization of western technology should not be accompanied by the globalization of western ways of thinking and acting, western ways, manners and style of doing things, western idiosyncrasies and eccentricities. Other cultures should be able to beg, borrow or buy western technology without having to take it along with all its Western packaging, its entire surrounding value system⁷

In as much as HIV/AIDS calls for global attention, care should be taken to see how solutions coming from outside should be incorporated within a given context like that of Africa. The preoccupation in this case is greater when what is recommended as a solution goes contrary to the identity of the people. It is therefore important that there should be coordinated efforts from both the local and the global community. Collective action should be regulated by the principle of solidarity, which calls for compassion for the needy, and principle of subsidiarity, which objects to any solution that does not respect the autonomy of a particular people.

Solutions such as the use of condoms constitute multiple problems since no effort is made to bridge the gap between the "out there" and the "here within." The use of condom promotes a kind of *ad hoc* solution to a problem that needs a holistic attention. The words of a Senegalese priest, Alexandre Mbengue are quite revealing:

...the question of condom does not, by itself, exhaust all human reflection on AIDS the health urgency should not function as a simplifying mechanism. The Church knows that the norm is there, but

⁷G. B. Tangwa, "Globalization or Westernization? Ethical Concerns in the Whole Bio-business," *Bioethics* 13 (July, 1999) 105.

so is its transgression. It knows that the human will is often torn down...but it says that condom is like the 'wide path' that the Gospel evokes, and which many follow, doubtless because of the panic caused by the ravage of the pandemic-notably this frightening palpable death that we attach to the faces and names of sick friends. This 'humanism' of the supporters of the condom at all costs, marked by fear, is not the humanism preached by the Church. The Church preaches a 'converted' humanism. It designates for man the 'narrow path' of a human that is, responsible and free-sexuality.⁸

The comparison made by Alexandre Mbengue that condoms are like the "wide path" which Jesus decried in the Gospels is of particular significance in our effort to undermine those arguments that support the use of condoms without making reference to the cultural values and traditional hermeneutics that inform the moral life of the people. The consumer culture that globalization tend to promote overtly contradicts wholesome efforts that are made to halt the spread of this epidemic. This tendency also paralyzes the culturally productive possibilities that are essentially life given in the context of HIV/AIDS.

The limits imposed by globalization with respect to the cultural context of the African communities make it imperative for the Church in Africa to supplement the help that comes from Globalization with inculturation. Africans need a globalization that has a human face. Inculturation in the work of evangelization is necessary and should prepare the ground for a globalization that is sensitive to the culture of the people. Through inculturation the Church in Africa will be able to reject some anti-Gospel tendencies associated with globalization such as consumerism, pragmatism, dependency syndrome and exclusivist attitudes that make people vulnerable to different social maladies⁹ as John Paul II observed in his *Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 39. He condemned those forms of globalization, which destroy local and traditional cultures, and uproot people from their native communities of flooding culturally homogeneous localities with waves of immigration. The consumer culture which typically results from globalization is both secularist and materialistic. The relationship between globalization and inculturation¹⁰ is crucial in determining the role of the Church in Africa in facing HIV/AIDS.

⁸A. Mbengue, "AIDS and Doctrine of the Catholic Church," in M- F. Czerny (ed.), *AIDS and the Church in Africa*, Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2005, 65.

⁹Some of these devastating effects of globalization have been highlighted in B.C. Nwachukwu-Udaku, "Africa and Globalization: Rethinking the Moral Principles of Cosmopolitanism in the Light of the Catholic Social Teaching", *Asian Horizons* 5 (2011) 152-167, at 159-162.

¹⁰D.V. Pcotti, "Interculturalidad y globalización," *Stromata* 56 (2000), 323-329.

2. Inculturation: A New Wine and a Paradigm Shift

The concept of inculturation is realizable within a local Church set-up. Johannes Müller affirmed that each local Church should be faced with the challenge of making inculturation a way of being a Church if she wants to share the hopes and anxieties of men and women (GS 1) of our time.¹¹ This is to say, that the Church in Africa as an example of a local Church is like both a theatre for actualizing the work of inculturation and a starting point for inculturation. Inculturation, when placed in its proper context (that is the local Church) touches the totality of the Christian life¹² and vocation – faith,¹³ morality,¹⁴ liturgy,¹⁵ the organization of the Church,¹⁶ the nature of religious life,¹⁷ catechism,¹⁸ everything and anything in Christian tradition. To this list, Bishop Laurent Monsengwo added Theology,¹⁹ Christology,²⁰ Scripture,²¹ the Sacraments, and the Ecclesiastical

¹¹J. Muller, "Iglesia mundial como comunidad discente: modelo de una globalización humanizada," *Selecciones de Teología* 39 (2003) 3-10 at 10.

¹²Laurenti Magesa has outlined the possibility of inculturating the Christian life in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda in his work: L. Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 2004, 5-75.

¹³J. T. Ogundiyilemi, "Pastoral Perspectives of the Creed in Inculturation," in P. Chibuko & S. Eboh, ed., *Inculturation in the Third Millennium*, Port Harcourt: CIWA Press, 1999, 156-164.

¹⁴B. Bujo, "Can Morality in Africa be Christian," *African Christian Studies* 4, 1 (1988); "The Two Sources of Life: The Eucharist and the Cult of Ancestors in Africa," *African Christian Studies* 2, 1 (1986); J. M. Waliggo, "Making a Church that is Truly African", in *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency* 19-20; W. R. O'Neill, "African Moral Theology," *Theological studies* 62 (2001) 122-139.

¹⁵E. Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language, Introduction to Christian Worship: An African Orientation*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997.

¹⁶P. Osuchukwu, *The Spirit of Umunna and the Development of Small Christian Communities in Igboland*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995.

¹⁷M. Onyejekwe, *Rites of Initiation in Africa: The Igbo Experience, A Clue to Our African Understanding of Religious Consecration*, Doctoral Thesis, Roma, 2000.

¹⁸J. Anyanwu, "Challenges and Prospects of Inculturation and Catechesis in the Third Millennium," in P. Chibuko & S. Eboh, ed., *Inculturation in the Third Millennium*, Port Harcourt: CIWA Press, 1999, 108-120.

¹⁹African treasury of wisdom constitutes resources that could be of great value for a healthy inculturation of theology in Africa. The names which the Igbos of Nigeria used in addressing God constitute ethnographical materials for inculturation. Such names include: *Chukwudi* (God exists); *Chukwuebuka* (God is immense); *Chukwunyere* (God is magnanimous). For further reading see, L. Mbefo, "The Theory and Practice of Inculturation," in P. Chibuko & S. Eboh, ed., 48.

²⁰Some African authors have in the recent times utilized some of the African cultural resources embedded in some African names, titles and basic beliefs to argue for a possibility of inculturated Christology. Some of these studies include: C. Nyamiti, *Christ As Our Ancestor: Christology from an African Perspectives*, Gweu: Mambo Press, 1984; "Contemporary African Christology: Assessment and Practical Suggestions," in R. Gibelline, ed., *Paths of African Theology*, Maryknoll, New York:

laws.²² For him, everything about the Church's life needs to be inculturated.²³ We can say that inculturation is a way of being a local Church. The words of the Council Fathers in *Lumen Gentium* shows that the culture and way of life of the people are important in making the Gospel present among them. They said thus:

She (the Church) fosters and takes to herself, insofar as they are good, the abilities, resources, and customs of each people. In taking them up she purifies, strengthens, and ennobles them...The Catholic Church strives energetically and constantly to recapitulate all humanity with all its riches under Christ the Head in the unity of his Spirit.²⁴

In the Post-Synodal Exhortation, Pope John Paul II considers inculturation as an urgent priority in the life of particular Churches, for a firm rooting of the Gospel in Africa. It is "a requirement for evangelization, a path towards full evangelization; and one of the greatest challenges for the Church on the Continent on the eve of the Third Millennium."²⁵ In his first Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, Pope Benedict XVI affirmed that a genuine inculturation should follow the directives given by his predecessor John Paul II in the different Post-Synodal Exhortation; *Ecclesia in Africa* (1995), *Ecclesia in America* (1999), *Ecclesia in Asia* (2000), *Ecclesia in Oceania* (2001), and *Ecclesia in Europa* (2003).²⁶

Today, many priests are also proposing local solutions which are not contrary to the Christian message by responding to problems that affect the life situations of the people. For example, offering liturgical

Orbis Books, 1994, 62-77; E. Uzukwu, "A Perspective of African Christology," in E. Ikenga-Metuh, ed., *African Christian Theology: Africanizing Christianity*, Onitsha: IMICO Books, 1996, 152-168; J. S. Ukpong, "Christology and Inculturation: A New Testament Perspective," in R. Gibelline, ed., 40-61; C. M. Ukachukwu, "Jesu Kristi Oba: A Christology of Christ the King among Indigenous Christian Churches in Yoruba-land, Nigeria," *Asian Journal of Theology* 5 (1991) 311-330; *Christ: The African King*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993.

²¹Some Igbo Scholars have also given some guidelines on how to inculturate biblical studies and spirituality in the Igbo/African context: R. C. Arazu, *Abu-Oma nke Bible*, Vol. I, II & III, Enugu: SNAAP Press, 1993; F. Nwachukwu, "Inculturation and the Translation of Biblical Personal Names. The Example of a Nigerian Language," *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology* 10 (1988) 93-113; E. Nwaoru, "The Case of the Daughters of Zelophehad (Num 27: 1-11): Hermeneutical Issues for African Inheritance Rights," in P. Chibuko & S. Eboh, ed., 51-64.

²²G. Nwagwu, "Canonical Science and Inculturation," in P. Chibuko & S. Eboh, ed., 51-64.

²³T. Henri, *Desafíos para el Papa del Tercer Milenio*, Santander: Sal Terrae 1998, 206.

²⁴Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium*, 13.

²⁵*Ecclesia in Africa*, 59.

²⁶Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 54. The Pope advised that Episcopal Conferences should endeavour to assure that the new adaptations in liturgical celebrations is in accordance with the laid down norms from the Holy See.

services, prayer sessions and healing masses for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. In this respect, some priests with the approval of their local ordinaries have developed a liturgy for healing, rituals for peace among feuding villages, contract rituals among business associates, and purification rituals following suicides.²⁷

Sometimes, the priests or pastors that are dedicating their time in healing ministries as a way to respond to the day to day needs of the people could be regarded as “good nurses but bad physicians,”²⁸ if we are to borrow the words of Leonhard Ragaz (1868-1945). Priests or pastors only show care and concern for the people but do little or nothing with respect to changing the unjust social structures in their communities, structures that promote the spread of HIV/AIDS.²⁹ It is ridiculous to acknowledge the number of Churches in Africa sub-Saharan, with many priests and pastors who engage in healing ministries but are unable most often, to condemn the structures of sin and underdevelopment in the country. Africans have been worldly classified as religious, yet the evil and corruption that is witnessed each day is alarming. The priests and pastors could be therefore, classified as good nurses (taking care of the sick), and bad physicians (not diagnosing well what is actually the cause of their sickness).

In this age of HIV/AIDS, inculturation must be holistic and must permeate all aspects of the life of the community. It should be an inculturation that will make it possible for priests and pastors to be both “good nurses” and “able physicians,” one that will empower the priests and the lay faithful to enter into dialogue with the socio-cultural, economic and political situation of the people. This dialogue will help in the promotion of justice, peace and development. Inculturation will also constitute a way through which the local Church will enter into dialogue with African Traditional Religion (ATR). This timely dialogue will help the Church to harness those positive elements and values that are embedded in ATR, such as the value of life, the sense of the sacred, the relationship between the individual and the community, respect for the elders, etc.

²⁷This example was given by Elochukwu Uzukwu in his article titled, “The Birth and Development of a Local Church,” in M. Browne, ed., *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books 1996, 7.

²⁸L. Ragaz, *Christentum und Sozialismus: en Von Christus zu Marx, von Marx zu Christus*, Hambourg 1972, 161.

²⁹Prof. Julio Martínez also observed this in the attitude of the Church which promotes campaigns directed towards helping the poor but sometimes do very little to transform the structures that generate poverty. See: J. L. Martínez, “El sujeto de la solidaridad: una contribución desde la ética social Cristiana,” en A. Villar & M. Garcia-Baro, ed., *Pensar la Solidaridad*, Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2004, 47-114 at 90.

Inculturation should not only be limited to the liturgical life of the Church. It has to constitute not only a *modus operandi* but also a *modus vivendi* of the people of God. In this way, people's way of life should be inculturated to reflect the Gospel message. The Africans are therefore called to inculturate themselves.³⁰ To inculturate oneself or a particular community means to utilize those values³¹ that are found in a particular community for a healthy development both spiritual and material. Inculturation ought to take the concrete living conditions of people seriously and make them the starting points of theological reflections, liturgical celebrations and pastoral orientations.³² It means to respond to one's chosen vocation in the light of the Gospel. In this way, inculturation has to do with all the necessary values that are indispensable in building up both a healthy Christian and human environment. Bénézet Bujo observed that,

No one could take seriously a theology which preached the necessity of inculturation, but simply ignored the surrounding social misery. He cited example with the request of an African student of a purely cultural Christianity to a Priest 'Father, if your God is talking to us more by means of our ancestral traditions and customs rather than in the drama of our million refugees in Africa, I should like to return to you my baptismal certificate, and I ask you to cancel my name in your register. For I have no interest whatsoever in such a God.'³³

For Bujo, the theology of inculturation is often preached triumphantly in African Churches, which is a pompous irrelevance, truly an ideological superstructure at the service of the bourgeoisie. Criticizing liturgical inculturation, he observed that:

It is irresponsible to celebrate the Eucharist with drums and dancing, while leaving the people to their fate (...) And it is irresponsible to press for the approval of African forms of marriage, if the modern socio-economic problems which conditions married life so thoroughly today, are either superficially or not at all taken into account and debated, oppression, exploitation, economic misery, corruption,

³⁰The Bishop of Kumasi Ghana who is the Chancellor of the Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), in his Opening Address during the 10th CIWA Theology Week March 8th -12th, 1999, asked the Staff and Student of CIWA to "inculturate themselves."

³¹Teresa Okure has maintained that inculturation is a way to preserve African cultural identity: T. Okure, "La globalización y la pérdida de la identidad cultural en África," *Concilium* 293 (2001) 753-762, at 761. See, also L. Magesa, "Africa's Struggle for Self-Definition during a Time of Globalization," *African Ecclesial Review* 40 (1998) 326-327

³²See, U. J. Njoku, "Challenging Our Understanding of Inculturation: Taking Human Suffering and Sitz-im-Leben Seriously in African Theologies," *Journal of Inculturation Theology* 8/2 (2006) 193-216, at 194.

³³B. BUJO, *African Theology in Its Social Context*, Nairobi: Pauline Publications 1992, 65-66.

violence to human dignity, etc. are surely the very stuff for an African Theology worthy of its name.³⁴

The basic difference between globalization and inculturation is that while globalization tends towards a hermeneutics of domination, inculturation favours a hermeneutics of recognition. In globalization the principle that regulates relationship is based on what people could do to transform a given circumstance. In inculturation however, people are requested to recognize those values that are found among them in order to address problems that underlie their circumstances, be they religious, social or cultural. While inculturation defines who a local Church is, a sound and healthy religious Globalization highlights the importance of the relationship between the local Church and the Universal Church. Today, for instance, globalization has made it possible for the internationalization of the Roman Curia. The Curia has come to include a new council concerned with promoting justice and peace among nations. A new International Theological Commission has been established. Contemporary means of communication make it possible for documents prepared in Rome or elsewhere to be almost instantaneously transmitted to distant parts of the globe. Popes have found it possible to make pastoral visitations to local Churches all over the world.³⁵

According to Dulles, the Church seeks to promote a sound process of globalization that is consonant with catholicity.³⁶ John Paul II affirmed that globalization will be healthy if it respects the principles of Catholic social teaching, which is based on the threefold cornerstone of human dignity, solidarity, and subsidiarity.³⁷

3. Indigenous Cultural Resources and the Prevention of HIV/AIDS: A Response to *Fides et Ratio* Art 72.

In response to the timely proposal of Pope John Paul II in *Fides et Ratio*, art. 72, it is important to engage the traditional treasury of the African people to underline how the African people could convert their life-giving cultural and human resources into possibilities of a more flourishing life and existence for the people and for the victims of HIV/AIDS. This indigenous treasury of wisdom is encapsulated in stories, proverbs, metaphors, myths, narratives, virtues, and sayings. The traditional treasury of wisdom include the different but

³⁴B. BUJO, *African Theology in Its Social Context*, 126-127.

³⁵A. Dulles, "The Catholicity of the Church and Globalization," *Seminarium* 40 (2000) 259-268 at 262.

³⁶A. Dulles, "The Catholicity of the Church and Globalization," 265.

³⁷John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in America*, 55.

complementary ways the Africans communicate their holistic worldview. It is also used to determine how best to approach the exigencies of life and human existence. This treasury could be studied and presented as a helpful instrument against HIV/AIDS, not only in the area of making the Africans to be aware of what HIV/AIDS signifies in their context, but, even more importantly, in helping them to look for ways of stopping its spread.

This section highlights the various elements of the African treasury of wisdom that could help the people to respond to the socio-economic and political situations that continue to fuel the spread of this incessant quagmire.

3.1. African Communal Virtues and the Prevention of HIV/AIDS

Among the Igbos of Nigeria, the concept of virtue is marked by excellence and victory. These two complementary aspects of virtue are seen in the person who performs a particular action represented by the word *di*. The word *di* means master, excellence, sovereignty, dominion and power. Therefore, for the Igbos/Africans, each person must strive to be a *di* of his/her profession or vocation, thereby uplifting both his/her identity and that of the community.

Thus, it was not just enough to simply be a medicine man, but the African should strive to be a master of medicine (*dibia*). Similarly, it was not enough also to be a hunter; the African should aim to be a master of the game (*di nta*). The African man is expected to be *dimkpa*, which literally means 'the husband of necessity.' This virtue shows that the Africans expect their sons to be manly, efficient, enterprising, full of vigour and able to cope sovereignly with any situation no matter how cruel and unbearable it is.

In this time of HIV/AIDS, therefore, these virtues have recognizable significance and will facilitate every effort that is being made in its prevention. For example, if one is *dimkpa*, he or she will be able to face the problems posed by the HIV/AIDS virus with equanimity rather than with resignation. If a particular community has so many people who are *dimpka*, the communal responsibility in solving the problems of HIV/AIDS will be assured. The campaigns with respect to the prevention of the disease will not only be technically oriented but personally and communally oriented using the testimonies of men and women who have distinguished themselves in keeping with ethos that are useful in the prevention of HIV/AIDS.³⁸

³⁸I have studied the African indigenous virtues in the light of HIV/AIDS prevention in my doctoral dissertation. See, B. C. Nwachukwu-Udaku, *SIDA en*

To be *dimkpa* is to have self-control, to be a master of oneself, and to have dominion over one's appetite for the good of one's life and that of the community. However, in campaigns against the spread of HIV/AIDS, young people should be instructed to be *di* in their respective vocations and professions. This will help to eliminate all forms of truancy, easy ways of life, desires for acquiring money without hard work, or "campus prostitution" among university students that may increase their vulnerability to different kinds of social disabilities including HIV/AIDS.

Those who serve in government as administrators should also be *di* in their respective areas of responsibility by providing the necessary social amenities that will improve the health and well-being of the people. Any person in government or any other sector of the community who is corrupt or encourages corruption cannot be regarded as *di* of his/her profession. One cannot even be a *dimkpa* because one lacks the control of the inordinate desire of acquiring material goods.

Women could also be regarded as *dimkpa* in the African context because whenever a woman performs an enviable act, the Igbo normally say that she has acted like *nwoke* (man) thereby eliminating all forms of derogatory patriarchy, logocentricism and masculinist signifying economies in defining the concept of women.³⁹ Thus, when a woman performs manly actions it is good also to refer to them as *dike* and *dimpka* as the case should be. This will also help in putting into perspective the over-flogged gender trouble in this time of HIV/AIDS.

In his book, *The True African: Impulses for Self-Affirmation*, Mbefo identified another African cultural ideal namely, *Nwokedeghete* (the nine-times a man).⁴⁰ He is the ideal of the complete human being, the

Africa: Reflexions y Propuestas desde el Pueblo Igbo, Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas 2009, 173-175.

³⁹I presented a paper titled "Unsettling Patriarchy: Reading Judith Butler in the Light of the African Two-Enroute Dimensional Ways of Understanding the *Feminine*" in my post-doctoral MA Degree in Philosophy in the School of Arts and Humanities at the Claremont Graduate University, CA. In the paper I argued that there are areas of interconnections, parallels, and disconnections between Judith Butler's feminist project and the predominant locus for feminism among the African women's movement in their constant search to define and redefine their statuses within the patriarchal socio-political space in the different communities of signification and life that define the African world.

⁴⁰This term "Nwokedeghete" could be compared to the nine-personality character that is developed in Enneagram which shows the fullness of the human personality. The nine personality character include; the reformer, the helper, the

fullness of the African cultural ideal.⁴¹ *Nwokedeghete* is who each African person seeks to be. As a virtuous man he has physical strength, which he acquired through relentless labour and therefore could be called *okolobia* (one who has dynamic athletic feature) and is strong physically. *Nwokedeghete* also depicts one who has a sound moral life.

Another significant virtue among Africans, which is of enormous importance in this time of HIV/AIDS, is the ability to fulfil one's promise, or to accompany one's word with action, which is graphically depicted in the Igbo word *Ekwueme*. The importance of this word is such that some people have their names as *Ekwueme* and also some age grade groups are called *Ekwueme*. Some traditional rulers take it as a title or motto of their leadership. To be *Ekwueme* is to be truthful to one's vocation, it is to be able to accept the consequences that constitute one's way of life.

This traditional virtue or cultural ideal is crucial in this era of HIV/AIDS, which could be summarized in three reasons. If an individual sees himself or herself as *Ekwueme* it may be difficult to betray himself/herself by not fulfilling the promises he/she has made with regard to marital fidelity or faithfulness to one's chosen vocation. Secondly, *Ekwueme* as a virtue will be a guiding principle for all leaders in their execution of public functions. A leader who is *Ekwueme* will not embezzle public funds; rather, he or she will shun all forms of corruption and will decry all despotic administrative tendencies. Thirdly, a community that promotes *Ekwueme* as a virtue will encourage her citizens to be reliable, trustworthy and honest. These qualities will surely aid in the formation of a healthy personality who will lead a responsible moral life.

Finally, *Ekwueme* represents an ideal character who immunizes himself/herself against all selfish viruses that are invading the immune systems of all due to societal imperfections and structural sins that are fast becoming the bane of the African people. The time of HIV/AIDS is a time for the Africans to immunize themselves from corruption and other structural and personal sins that are making them vulnerable to all kinds of diseases. They could achieve this by having recourse to all the communal traditional virtues and narratives by which Africans are known and respected.

achiever, the individualist, the investigator, the loyalist, the enthusiast, the challenger, the peacemaker.

⁴¹L. N. Mbefo, 34.

3.2. *Traditional Personal Identity of Women and the Prevention of HIV/AIDS*

In this final part of my reflection, it is important to highlight the cross-cultural benefits that a positive understanding of women underlines in the context of HIV/AIDS. Statistically women are the most affected with this deadly virus,⁴² not only because of their biological nature which expose them to HIV/AIDS infection due to the larger absorbing surface of the female sexual organ,⁴³ but also because of the patriarchal nature of the African society with different delimiting structures of power.⁴⁴ However, it is most interesting to excavate and make present how any attempt to recuperate the identity of women in the traditional African society is quite illuminating in empowering them to regain their identity in the African world.

The pre-colonial and pre-Christian African woman identity shows that in the African traditional social space, women did contribute in making the African community a place of life and well-being. It is therefore imperative to go back to that identity in order to appreciate how the identity of women is not inconsequential in any attempt to liberate them from the shackles of HIV/AIDS infection. The pre-colonial and pre-Christian woman was politically, socially and economically empowered. She was not merely regarded as *oriaku* (one that simply enjoy the wealth of the husband) but rather as *odoziaku* (one that actively takes care of the wealth of the husband). The pre-colonial and pre-Christian African woman recognized that *Nwanyi bu nwa* which gave her equal identity with men, although the social roles were different. Therefore, she participated actively in the political, social and economic life of the community.

⁴²This claim has received a fascinating attention in the works of E. Chitando, "The Good Wife': A Phenomenological Re-reading of Proverbs 31: 10-31 in the Context of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe," *Scriptura* 86 (2004) 151-159; T. Okure, "HIV/AIDS and Africa: The Real Issues," F. Nwaigbo *et al.*, ed., *The Church and HIV/AIDS in West African Context*, Port Harcourt: CIWA Publications 2005, 66-68; K. Kelly, "Conclusion: A Moral Theologian Faces the New Millennium in a Time of AIDS," in J.F. Keenan, *et al.*, ed., *Catholic Ethicists on HIV/AIDS Prevention*, London: Continuum Publishers Group, 2002, 325.

⁴³M.G. Gecaga, "HIV/AIDS Prevention and Rehabilitation Projects in Kenya: A Locus of Interfaith Dialogue and Window of Hope for Women and Children," *Voices from the Third World*, (December, 2005) 117-118.

⁴⁴Most feminist authors have recognized some power structures within the heterosexual matrix that continue to marginalize women. See. J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 2009; *Undoing Gender*, New York: Routledge, 2004; E. Grosz, *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies*, New York: Routledge, 1995; T. Armour, J. Butler, & S. M. St. Ville, ed., *Bodily Citations: Religion, Gender, Theory, and Religion*, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2006.

In the political scene, African women were known for exercising different kinds of 'sanctionary measures' for the protection of their identity, examples of which are "sitting on men"⁴⁵ who mistreated their wives; mass boycott of funerals and non-compliance with the community rules like *Ibo ama* (sweeping of the village road), among others.

On the social level, women exercised their social power by fighting against all the social norms which were not gender sensitive, such as imposition of tax. They also had the right to healthy interaction within the community through the formation of different kinds of associations. Agbasiere observed that "in Igbo/African society, physical separation of the sexes has always been minimal and it is not observed up to the age of puberty [...] from puberty onwards, both sexes share in a number of social activities including farming and communal labour."⁴⁶

On the economic level, women were allowed to own property, although they did not have the right of inheritance. During the pre-colonial period, women owned property and kept a different account from their husbands and at times, a woman could even lend money to her husband with interest.⁴⁷ These different rights that women had in the pre-colonial era helped to create a healthy atmosphere of freedom for women. The women were free because they were not dependent.⁴⁸

The economic, social and political freedoms that women had in the pre-colonial and pre-Christian era were considered as a kind of empowerment. This type of freedom should be advocated with respect to women in this time of HIV/AIDS. Our recommendation is that for any prevention campaign against HIV/AIDS to be effective,

⁴⁵Van Allen described the concept of 'sitting on men' as a political action whereby women gathered at the compound of a man who maltreated his wife. The women were said to dance, singing scurrilous songs detailing their grievances against him, and often insulting him along the way by calling his manhood into question,' banging on his hut with pestles used for pounding yams, and in extreme cases, tearing up the roof of his hut. Sometimes the women would stay at his hut all night and day until he repented and promised to mend his ways: Cf. J. Van Allen, "Aba Riots or Igbo Women's War? Ideology, Stratification and the Invisibility of Women," in N.J. Hafkin, & E.G. Bay, ed., *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976, 61-62.

⁴⁶J.T. Agbasiere, *Women in Igbo Life and Thought*, New York: Routledge, 2000, 45.

⁴⁷P. Uchendu, *Education and the Changing Economic Role of Nigerian Women*, Enugu: Fourth Dimensional Publishing, 1995, 60.

⁴⁸Women's freedom, situation and context in a liberal society constituted an inspiring subject of an interdisciplinary study. See, J. De La Torre, ed., *Mujer, Mujeres y Bioetica*, Madrid: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 2010.

attention should be directed as to how contemporary women could regain their lost traditional values which will constitute resonant resources for their empowerment.

Conclusion

In this study, I have emphasized the need for a paradigm shift from the deflecting and dominating model being promoted by globalization to a paradigm that considers the identity and social context of the people. Inculturation as a new paradigm with its social and religious implications will help to inaugurate a change of mentality and perspectives among individuals, communities and social groups with respect to HIV/AIDS. This change in perspective is overtly important since HIV/AIDS affects people whose life, narratives and history are situated within a given social and historical context of impoverishment.

To pitch our tent on the unprecedented value of the theology and praxis of inculturation in negotiating and abating the spread of HIV/AIDS in the black continent has helped us to see the concept of action as *actus exercitus* not merely as an idea, nor as a *fictio mentis* i.e. something merely thought about. It is an action, an intellectual *cum* practical exercise that brings together all the essential dimensions of human existence. These actions help to bridge the gap between transcendence and history, thought and reality, personal and social existence, individual aspirations and common good, religion and culture, the one and the many. These dimensions are therefore crucial in providing holistic solution to the victims of this epidemic. For example, the idea of "one" and "many" as seen in the philosophical inquiry will help to dispose us not merely to look and contemplate at the seemingly over exaggerated statistics of the infected by the virus (the many: paradigm of domination – globalization). Instead we consider how to take care for one infected person or one infected community (paradigm of recognition – inculturation) and by so doing, we are better empowered to assist the many brothers and sisters of Jesus whom the infirmity of HIV/AIDS is making unjust claims to their destiny and faith.

With the paradigm of inculturation, our reflection has once again enriched our appreciation of the role of social location in the area of morality and allied disciplines with their autonomous and intercultural rationalities. Thus, theological disciplines should be developed in a way as to respond to the needs of the people in a

concrete context⁴⁹ of HIV/AIDS. Ecclesiology, for example, should have a social context whereby the Church in Africa realizes that her children are subjected to great suffering. A message of hope and life ought to be present in the day-to-day mission of the Church in Africa along with a development of an indigenous ecclesiological image that empowers the local Church, making it most effective in this time of HIV/AIDS. Moral theology is expected to consider the experience of the people within their social milieu, thereby entering into dialogue with issues of sexuality and reproduction. An Inculturated Moral theology will unassumingly utilize some of the local and cultural resources like taboos in the area of sexuality to deconstruct some of the pseudo post-modern illusions of sexual revolutions that tend to see people as mere objects of sexual satisfaction and aggrandisement. Scripture and biblical sciences ought to be interpreted with cultural categories and project the epidemics of AIDS as a sickness and not as a divine punishment (*castigo divino*), thereby eliminating power structures and condemning pseudo-attitudes that could lead to stigmatization and exclusion against the victims of AIDS.⁵⁰ Spiritual theology is expected to recognize and appreciate the personal experiences of those suffering from HIV/AIDS to direct them to God without excluding them from the social spaces of their communities. Pastoral Theology clarifies the Church's ministry of providing services and moral support to the victims of AIDS and their caregivers. The history of the Church ought to lay hands on the ancient writings and oral traditions that embodies the origin and biography of a particular people and find in them the settings for learning and practising hope⁵¹ in the midst of suffering and necessity.

⁴⁹This basic truth and challenge constitute a leitmotif in the recent scholarly works of James F. Keenan, S.J. See his: J. F. Keenan, "Theological Ethics Out of Latin America, Africa, and Asia," *Asian Horizons* 4 (2010) 13-30; "Contemporary Contributions to Sexual Ethics," *Theological Studies* 71 (2010) 148-167; "What Happened at Trento 2010?," *Theological Studies* 72 (2011) 131-149.

⁵⁰See, B.C. Nwachukwu-Udaku, "The Dangers of HIV/AIDS Stigmatisation," *Reach-out Journal of Philosophy* 1, 8 (June 2009) 32-36.

⁵¹Pope Benedict XVI in his second Encyclical Letter, *Spe Salvi* (2009) discussed the fundamental settings for learning and practicing hope which include: prayer, action, suffering and judgement.