

## **Crisis Management in Youth Leadership - an Evaluation of Paul's teaching in 1 Timothy 4:12**

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### **Abstract**

*Youths are considered important and cherished in every part of the world. The men, women and youths constitute the lay members of the church with each group contributing its own quota in both the church and the society. However, despite the importance attached to the youths and the fact that there cannot be a happy society without the youths, the Nigerian Christian youths have become victims of neglect and as such are exposed to certain untold predicaments resulting in difficulties in managing the affairs of the youths. This paper examined what youth predicaments are all about, the causes and consequences of these ugly situations. The paper recommended that the youths should not be abandoned, but be directed and educated, according to Paul's teaching (1Tim.4:12), towards acquiring knowledge necessary to face the challenges in the leadership cadre for the teaming population of the Christian youths in our contemporary Nigerian society.*

### **Introduction**

Aware of the predicaments besieging the youths activities and wrongful appreciation/evaluation from the elders and others outside their folk. This paper aim at acquiring knowledge to face the challenges of leadership for the teaming population of the Christian youths in our contemporary Nigerian society. It is regretted that these group identified by the general public as both the life wire in the church and society are besieged by myriads of predicaments ranging from crisis in faith, problem of unemployment, choice of career, bad companies and cult membership. Also seen is poor family background, financial constraints in pursuit of education, illiteracy and uncommitted attention to learning (especially open to examination misconduct), (getting rich quick syndrome through armed robbery, kidnapping, openness to exploitation in schools by lecturers and as thugs and agents of crime by politicians, etc. In the light of these predicaments, one wonders whether the youths can at all realize their potentials as leaders in a country where the youths are subjected to such deplorable situations. It is

against the above background that this paper will among others address the following:

- (a) Explanation of the position of the youth vis-à-vis youth leadership and crisis management in the church,
- (b) Paul's teaching on leadership 1Tim. 4:12
- (c) Implications to the Nigerian polity and the church
- (d) Summary and recommendations

Following the trend of the predicaments that besieged the youths of the society today, the theme of 2008 world wide catechetical week which was celebrated from October 7 to 14 was "pastoral care of the youth is a challenge to the church in Nigeria". In the booklet for the celebration published by the national Association of Directors of Religious Education (NADRE) for the Catholic Bishops conference of Nigeria (CBCN), certain crisis/crimes are associated with the youth which includes: drug addition, political thuggerys, cultism/demonism, unemployment/educational admissions and fallen standard, sexual immorality. (premarital sex, teenage pregnancy, prostitution, trafficking for sex trade, abortion, venereal diseases, HIV/AIDs pandemic, trial marriage, sexual abuse, immodest dressing, pornography, homo-sexuality, masturbation etc). Smuggling, drunkenness, exam malpractices, armed robbery, faking and forgery (419 syndrome/scheme) religious not (Jihad), foreign visa madness, quick wealth syndrome, alienation from ones root, family, emotion disorder, depression, ruined

future and suicide, Pentecostalism, practical atheism, alienation from their traditional roots, and so forth.

It is therefore, necessary to take cognizance of the youth and attend to their predicament as Ngwoke (2008) invited:

Any failure of leaders to take the youth into account whether in civil society or in the church would be a grave and dangerous omission. To disregard the persistent and sometimes aggressive voice of the young anywhere in the world, and the refusal to meet their demands some way (not necessarily all the way) is to invite disaster. This is because in any society, state or church, they form the most vocal and strongest opposition to established order; they are the most active force yet the least constructive in thinking in the society. They gleam with illusion, aspirations and dreams. They cannot but be given a hearing whether in the society or the church (p.20).

### **The Nature of the Church and the Place of the Youths**

The church as both people of God and communion is composed of clerics, religious and laity. The clerics are the Bishops, Priests and deacons, while the religious are drawn from both the clergy and the laity but marked with unique identity, vows or promise of evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty and chastity and the laity are those who are not clerics.

According to Dodo (1998),

The lay members of the church constitute about 99% of those that make up the church. In the church, through sacrament of baptism, they enjoy the status as physical persons, members of the people of God, equal in dignity, with rights and privileges pertaining to all other members and specific to their state (p. 21).

Among these rights include, the right to belong, to equality, to offices, to direct associations and to be involved in apostolate.

It is therefore, out of place to consider the laity as visitors in the church or for laity to consider the church as *Uka Fada* (i.e. church of the clergy). All members, clergy, religious, and laity are called to the apostolate and to the vineyard of the lord, although, at different times and for different functions but for one unique prize, eternal life and union with God. On this bases, the fathers of the second Vatican council were explicit in their words in various places on the indispensability of the laity and their apostolate in the church and beyond as aptly expressed by John Paul 11 (1988) that Indeed, the church can never be without the lay apostolate, it is something that derives from the lay man's very vocation as a Christian, and the church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy. For the gospel cannot become deeply rooted in the mentality, life and work of a people without the active presence of lay people. Therefore, from the foundation of the church, very special care must be taken to form a mature Christian laity. The lay faithful belong fully both to the people of God and civil society.

The lay person therefore is a citizen of the church and the society. They are open to the apostolate of the church and her mission both as individuals and within their groups. It is within the group of the laity and their right to associations that we locate the Christian youth of the church. The youths remain greatest asset to the church and every human society. They form the greatest part of the societal population, their viable workforce and contributors to its development. In the church, they form the vibrant brigade of Christians. They are seen within the church in such lay associations like the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON). The Anglican Youth Fellowship (AYF), YCS, NFCS, CBO, CGO, Mary League Girls, MDO, MOW, Scouts and so forth and in many Pious Organizations especially Charismatic Renewal, Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion, CBIU.

The human beings are classified into childhood (morning life), youth (noon life) and Old age (evening life); or rather into infancy, childhood, adolescence, youth, adult and old age; or still into minor or major (from 18 years of age); and other classification according to, biological and physiological changes in the body, or due to psychological, sociological, economic factors. For the purpose of this paper we settle with the classification of youths according to age bracket of 14 to 35 years as contained in the constitution (Rules and Regulations) of the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (C.Y.O.N) Awka Diocese (2004:4). On the indispensability of the youths, John Paul 11 (1998) said that Youth make up an exceptional potential and a great challenge for the future of the church. In fact,

the church sees her path towards the future in the youth-beholding in them a reflection of herself and her call to that blessed youthfulness which she constantly enjoys as a result of Christ's Spirit.

While the Catholic Bishops conference of Nigeria added. The church sees her path towards the future in the youth. Representing great potential for the church and the society, as well as great challenge, the impact of young people cannot be ignored. Young people themselves long to be actively involved in the social and cultural life. Many of them manifest zeal imbued with the spirit of Christ and inspired by obedience and love for the church.

### **The Nature of Church Leadership Praxis**

The nature of Church leadership or authority, as affirmed in Hill (1998) "is mainly ministerial, imitating Christ who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as ransom for many" (p.30). There is no place for absolutism or dictatorship but rather solicitude and service.

The exercise of this authority must be within the framework of the pastoral finality and the supreme law of the church which is the salvation of souls, and to be exercised for the good of the community of faith, i.e. for common good and not for private aggrandizement. According to Monroe (1992), "this authority requires cooperation, collaboration and solidarity. The legislator calls for the observation of the principle of solidarity in relation to conflict of competence" (p.14).

## **Predicaments in Youth Leadership**

In the Pastoral Epistles it is stated that “to aspire to leadership is an honorable ambition” (I Tim 3:1). Paul in his letter to the Corinthians exalted leadership as one of the myriads of the gifts which the one Holy Spirit bestows on the members of the people of God for the stability of the physical body of Christ-Church (I Cor. 12:28). Leadership is a vocation, as Obiefuna (2004) remarks,

Leaders are, therefore, to feed the people of God (Jn 21:15-19), to direct and lead them by word of mouth and practical examples, convinced that theirs is divine assignment, they are expected to brave themselves for war against the problems of self, those around them and contemporary times. Convinced too, that they did not struggle to get to the position of leadership and honour as the sons of Zebedee wanted (Mk 10:34-45, matt 20:20-23), or to be the greatest (Mk 6:19-24), and that they did not take the honour upon themselves but were called by God (Heb 5:4) they know they share in the biblical dictum of Luke 10:16; “whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me”. They are therefore to be the examples others will follow. They are not to lead others astray (p.105).

Leadership is therefore the ability to show the way, to influence people, to command respect and followership and more so to effectively harness the human and material resources for the achievement of the cooperate goals of a given community or organization.

Further, it involves the willingness and concern on the part of the leader to render an unreserved service to God and to his fellow human beings in the spirit of love and sacrifice. Certain predicaments are evident in youth leadership which includes among other things:

- ❖ Lack of adequate knowledge of the position of authority which is for service and never to lord it over ones subjects. An authority that is collaborative and consultative and never an act of one person or clique. This is seen in the general conduct of the affairs of the organization.
- ❖ Lack of moral authority to lead as St Paul exhorted the Roman's (Rom 2:22-24). "You who preach against stealing, yet you steal, you forbid adultery, you despise idols, yet you rob their temples... It is because of your fault that the name of God is blasphemed among the pagans". If you steal, cheat or commit well known immoral acts, it is difficult for you to direct the affairs of the youths effectively.
- ❖ The disposition to be double faced in allegiance i.e. being servant of two masters is still problem to youth leaders. From whom do youths you receive orders, from the church authorities or from the local communities? Once a youth leader is submerged in this doubt of allegiance, there is bound to be crisis in his leadership. What is your faith and understanding of the culture of the community? What is the church's position on certain areas of culture that conflicts with your faith? What affiliation do you give to such issues? These are problems among youth leaders. What of



- participation in community cultural festivals that are contrary to church doctrinal teachings?
- ❖ Lack of courage to endure to the end or embrace the cross in leadership offices. The adage holds that uneasy lay the head that wears the crown. Are you afraid of the cross and are you ready to sacrifice your talents, your time, and your resources for the progress of the organization? Can you take the extra miles for the benefits of the organization or are you considering the personal benefits before you make yourself available. This is a challenge and a problem and as such can engender disorder responses to issues that provoke crisis in youth leadership.
  - ❖ What of your attitude to accountability with required honesty and transparency. Anyone who handles public money especially in the church is bound to give account to the donors. What is your reason for coming into youth leadership? Is it to make money, get connections or to embezzle funds? This is dynamite to crisis in many youth projects. This attitude cast doubt on your integrity and engenders crisis in youth leadership.
  - ❖ Openness to external and unnecessary influences and directives outside the frame work of constitution. This concerns procedures in making decision or withdrawing and making expenses with reference to the executives or the general body as specified in the statues / constitution of the organization.

Over emphasis in divisive leadership praxis that exalts and struggle for the benefits of people from your zone, region or your friend. Paul said to the Corinthians that such things will not be mentioned among you (I Cor. 1:10-11).

- ❖ What do we say of youth leadership participation in partisan politics in the midst of members with different party affiliation? The laity is to make the church present in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that the Church can be the salt of the earth. The Apostolate of the lay person is that of the social milieu or temporal sphere are all parts of the earth.

The jurisdiction of the laity extends to both the church and the social milieu. This is the position of the Fathers of the second Vatican council, the new code of canon law and the articulated exhortation to the catholic laity of Nigeria as cited by John Paul II (1981) thus:

Having being called by Christ Himself; you are his chosen partners in evangelization. As lay people you know that your special Apostolate is to bring Christian principles to bear upon the temporal order that is to bring the spirit of Christ into such spheres of life as marriage and family, trade and commerce, the arts and the professions, politics and government, culture and national and international spheres. In all these areas, lay people must play their distinctive roles. In the society, you are called to be the leaven for Christ, to witness to Christ in the school, in the government office, in the town development union, in age grade meetings, in the

university, in the market, in the trade union and in politics. In all these secular states, you will promote justice, unity, honesty and public spiritedness. Together you seek Gospel-inspired and concrete answers to problems of bribery and corruption, lack of discipline and enthusiasm and other such ills (pp81-82).

The lay person can accomplish this task, only in communion with God and the Church shown in sound moral principles. They cannot transform the ills of the society or be truly the salt of the earth and the light of the world, if they are found wanting in moral authority. Hence CBCN exhorted, as cited in Ojo and Nwadike (1990) thus,

In this critical period of our history, we exhort all our followers to rededicate themselves to the principles of our Catholic Faith and Morals. We must all take on the challenge of personal holiness, which must show itself in positive active involvement in the world around us. Jesus calls each of us to be a light in the darkness, salt of the earth and a haven of goodness in our corrupt society. (p.22)

The CBCN (1993) calls on the Christians to be part of the democratic and electoral processes in these words? “We urge capable men and women to consider carefully whether they can indeed render glory to God and virtuous service to the nation in standing for electoral public office”(p.86). You as lay persons, have a unique opportunity and crucial responsibility to show the power that faith has to transform the world and renew the family of man. It is in this

direction that Arinze (1990) affirmed: “party politics is his closer area of Apostolate. The Catholic layman may, and should engage in party politics otherwise he could become irrelevant in society, or an Apostolate balloon. Indeed, it is largely through the political activity of the layman that the church can be made present in the world of today (p.66).

### **Managing the Crisis in Youth Leadership**

The Church in fidelity to the biblical injunction on peaceful settlement (Matt 18:15-18) accepted the options of alternative dispute settlement instead of the formal judicial process. According to Green (2005), the available alternative to conflict resolution include “the direct intervention of the faithful and especially those that exercise authority in the church (Bishops, Judges, Chaplains, Parish Priests etc in setting disputes amicably or through the employment of the services of serious minded/prudent persons, that both command the confidence and have easy access to the persons or parties involved in conflicts” (p.331).

This is achieved through the extra judicial conciliation processes of mediation and arbitration through the stable organs in conflict resolution commission. There is need to adhere to the due process established in the Church and be disposed during any crisis to yield to intervention of reconciliators, mediator or arbitrators. Sometimes you see people taking cases beyond the confines of the church.

What are the reasons for these conflicts among you? (James 4: 1-3) placed the origin of conflict inside the human person in these words: “Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your

cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it, so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you got on your pleasure”. But how can we build peace without option of justice and forgiveness as John Paul 11 (1997) advised: No process of peace can ever begin unless an attitude of sincere forgiveness takes younger generation endless resentment, producing a desire for revenge and causing fresh destruction. Offering and accepting forgiveness is the essential condition for making the journey towards authentic and lasting peace.

At present our associations are destroyed by insincerity and lies. People steal from the Church and other human organizations/associations (i.e.) deception and fraud in our action just like that manifested by Ananias and Sapphira in the early Church. The dialogue between Jesus and the woman of Samaria opened up yet other important requisites for the worshippers of God. Jesus declared clearly, “But the hour will come in fact it is here already when true worshippers will worship the father in spirit and truth; that is the kind of worshippers the father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23). Our people say “Eziokwu bu ndu” (truth is life). Truth should therefore be in the lips of Christians, title holders both in the Church (e.g. Knights) and in our cultural societies. This is our challenge as St. Paul in (Eph. 4: 25) exhorted.

Therefore, putting away false hood let every one speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one another.

Prayer is our weapon within our environment crowded with conflicts between principalities and powers. It is the divine armour that endows us with the required resources to hold our ground and resist negative influences on our calling to authentic Christian lives.

Furthermore, we should have more moments of listening just like Samuel who said: "Speak Lord your servant is listening (I Sam 3: 10) and not the other way round; seen in most of our prayers i.e. 'listen Lord your servant is talking' and speaking on the top of his voice.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The youth have the option to love the Church and the visible ecclesiastical authority. This is the noble challenge of the youths since there are selected because of dedication and obedience to Church affairs and the welfare of the society. Jesus Christ has assured us on the continued existence of the Church in the midst of many tribulations through his prayer (Matt. 16:16-20). The Church has weathered the storm of Italian renaissance, English reformation and French Revolution. The church has responded to issues of Church and Churches. It is left to say that every youth leader must know that his/her house is built with glasses and as such will not allow stones to touch it. He/she must have integral personality devoid of shameful and scandalous acts. Your home must be in order, properly swept before you can lead others. Furthermore, those who enjoy the power of governance should make effort to choose collaborators based on genuine qualities required for such offices. There is need to avoid rancour and disorder among the rank and file of the organization by avoiding policies directed to favour one area against the common good. The common good is primary in any organization. The psalmist (132:1) exclaims, "How good and how pleasant it

is, when brothers live in unity: and Ben Sirach (25:1) added: “There are three things my soul delight in and which are delightful to God and to men: concord between brothers, friendship between brothers, friendship between neighbours and wife and a husbands who lives happily together. Let the youth take interest in the option of choosing leaders with the required pedigree and whom the spirit will use to work as indicated in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1 and 6) on choice of Mathias and deacons respectively. This paper, hopefully, will help the youths by challenging and motivating in them a display of authentic leadership skills in accordance with the church position that will really end crises in their leadership cadre.

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