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**Pastoral Challenges to the Laity
in the Mission of the Church
in Kotido Diocese, Uganda**

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People <i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i> (18.11.1965)
AD	<i>Anno Domini</i> , In the year of our Lord
AIC	African Initiated Churches
AG	Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church <i>Ad Gentes</i> (7.12.1965)
AGIAMONDO	German Catholic Personnel Service for International Cooperation e.V.
AL	Francis, Apostolic Exhortation <i>Amoris Laetitia</i> (19.03.2016)
AMECEA	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa
AP	<i>Annuario Pontificio</i> , The annual Directory of the Holy See of the Catholic Church.
AT	Paul VI, Apostolic Letter <i>Africae Terrarum</i> (29.10.1967)
c.	<i>circa</i> , used to approximate the date when something happened.
CA	John Paul II, Encyclical Letter <i>Centesimus Annus</i> (1.05.1991)
Can	Canon
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
Cf.	Confer
CL	John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation <i>Christifideles Laici</i> (30.12.1988)
DA	John Paul II, Apostolic Letter <i>Dilecti Amici</i> (31.03.1985)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EA	John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation <i>Ecclesia in Africa</i> (14.09.1995)
EAM	John Paul, Apostolic Exhortation <i>Ecclesia in America</i> (22.01.1999)
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Commission
Ed.	Editor (s)
EG	Francis, Apostolic Exhortation <i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> (24.11.2013)
EN	Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> (8.12.1975)

FC	John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, <i>Familiaris Consortio</i> (22.11.1981)
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change
FY	Financial Year
GCD	General Catechetical Directory
GS	Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World <i>Gaudium et Spes</i> (7.12.1965)
Ibid.	Abbreviation of Latin <i>ibidem</i> , “in the same place”
IL	<i>Instrumentum Laboris</i> for the second Special Assembly for the Synod of Bishops for Africa in the Service of Reconciliation, Justice and Peace.
IYCS	International Young Catholic Students
KDP	Kotido Diocese Development Policy booklet
KY	Kabaka Yeka
LG	Dogmatic Constitution on the Church <i>Lumen Gentium</i> (21.11.1964)
LRA	Lord’s Resistance Army
LF	Francis, Encyclical Letter <i>Lumen Fidei</i> (29.06.2013)
NB	<i>Nota bene</i> , “Note well” or “take note”
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
MCCI	Comboni Missionaries <i>Missionaris Comboniani Cordis Iesu</i> (Comboni Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus)
MHM	Mill Hill Missionaries
NDP	National Development Plan
PP	Paul VI, Encyclical Letter <i>Populorum Progressio</i> (26.03.1967)
PT	John XXXIII, Encyclical Letter <i>Pacem in Terris</i> (11.04.1963)
PVD	John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, <i>Pastores Dabo Vobis</i> (15.03.1992)
RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
RN	John Paul II, Encyclical Letter <i>Redemptoris Hominis</i> (04.03.1979)
RM	John Paul II, Encyclical Letter <i>Redemptoris Missio</i> (7.12.1990)
RN	Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter <i>Rerum Novarum</i> (15.05.1891)
St.	Saint

SC	Vaticanum II, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy <i>Sacrosanctum Concilium</i> (4.12.1963)
SCCs	Small Christian Communities
SD	John Paul II, Apostolic Letter <i>Salvifici Doloris</i> (11.02.1984)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNCCLA	Uganda National Catholic Council for Lay Apostolate
UNLF	Uganda National Liberation Front
UPC	Uganda People's Congress
UR	Vaticanum II, Decree on Ecumenism, <i>Unitatis Redintegratio</i> (21.11.1964)
YCS	Young Christian Students
YCW	Young Christian Workers

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INTRODUCTION

When I was ordained a priest in 2005, the bishop entrusted me, among other responsibilities, with the coordination of pastoral activities in the Diocese of Kotido. This mission offered a privileged opportunity to witness both the fruits and the challenges of pastoral life among the people. Working closely with catechists, parish pastoral councils, ecclesial movements, families, youth, and lay associations, I came to appreciate the deep faith, resilience, and struggles of the laity in living the Gospel within a complex cultural environment. The pastoral office served as a unifying structure, harmonizing all apostolic efforts in the diocese. These experiences revealed the difficulties Christians face in building God's kingdom amid cultural tensions, economic hardships, and religious pluralism. They awakened in me a desire to study, systematically and theologically, the challenges that hinder the laity's mission in Kotido Diocese.

Encouraged by my bishop, Most Reverend Dominic Eibu, M.C.C.I., I was inspired to explore this topic as a contribution to the pastoral renewal of our diocese. His insightful reflections emphasized the urgency of understanding the pastoral challenges that affect lay participation in evangelization and leadership. This study, therefore, investigates these challenges in light of the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* by Pope John Paul II, which highlights the baptismal dignity, vocation, and responsibility of the laity in the Church and in the world. In particular, it seeks to contextualize the Pope's teachings on marriage, monogamy, and Christian formation within the pastoral realities of Kotido Diocese. Through this approach, the research aims to provide theological and pastoral strategies that promote authentic Christian living and effective evangelization among the lay faithful.

The study is guided by four central questions: What cultural factors limit the laity's active participation in the Church's evangelizing mission? How does polygamy affect their involvement in sacramental life? What influence do witchcraft and traditional beliefs exert on their faith and moral commitment? And finally, how does the inadequacy of catechetical formation hinder their effective apostolic work? These questions probe the

intersection between faith and culture, revealing how the social realities of the Karimojong people shape the lived experience of Christianity. Addressing them will shed light on how the diocese can foster deeper inculturation of the Gospel and strengthen lay engagement in the Church's mission.

In framing this study, I draw upon the theological insight of Fr. Jordan Nyenyembe of the Gaba Pastoral Institute, who observes that "behind every human problem, there is a theological question which demands a theological reflection to arrive at a practical solution."¹ His vision situates theology as a pastoral tool that interprets human experience in light of faith and seeks transformative responses. Pastoral theology, therefore, becomes a bridge between doctrine and life, between faith and culture. This perspective provides a fitting framework for the present study, which aims to interpret the cultural and pastoral realities of Kotido Diocese through theological reflection and pastoral application.

The mission of the laity, as emphasized in *Christifideles Laici* (1988), flows from their baptismal vocation to share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Christ. Lay people are called to be the "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" (Mt 5:13-14), witnessing to Christ in family, work, and public life. Yet in Kotido Diocese, this mission is hindered by persistent challenges such as polygamy, witchcraft, and insufficient catechetical formation. These issues affect not only personal faith but also the communal witness of the Church. Therefore, a renewed pastoral approach is urgently needed to form, accompany, and empower the laity to live out their Christian calling with maturity and integrity.

The purpose of this research is to identify and analyze the key pastoral challenges that hinder the laity from participating effectively in the Church's mission within the Diocese of Kotido. It examines how cultural traditions and social structures affect faith integration and the laity's ability to live their baptismal commitment. Grounded in the teachings of Vatican II and *Christifideles Laici*, the study emphasizes that all baptized Christians share equal dignity and responsibility in the Mission of the Church (CL 2). It further assesses the level of lay involvement in pastoral activities and proposes practical ways to strengthen catechesis, promote the sanctity of marriage, and nurture mature

¹ J. Nyenyembe, Book Launch; Church and State Relations: A manual for Africa, Nairobi (2021), in: <https://www.aciafrica.org/news/3777/kenya-based-catholic-priest-demystifies-churhcs-governance-role-in-new-book>, [14.08.2025].

discipleship. By integrating theology with lived experience, the research seeks to provide a model for contextual evangelization that unites faith and culture.

The overall objective of the study is to propose pastoral strategies and interventions that empower the laity to overcome these challenges and become active evangelizers. Drawing from *Christifideles Laici*, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, and *Evangelii Gaudium*, it recommends culturally sensitive and doctrinally sound approaches that promote formation, community engagement, and spiritual growth. Empowering the laity is not only a pastoral necessity but also a theological imperative rooted in baptismal dignity. Through effective leadership development and lay apostolate programs, the Diocese of Kotido can nurture a self-sustaining and missionary Church, thus contributing to pastoral renewal in the Karamoja region.

The value of this study lies in its capacity to illuminate the pastoral realities of the laity in Kotido and to provide constructive responses grounded in Catholic teaching. By analyzing the issues of polygamy, witchcraft, and inadequate catechetical formation, it explores their theological, moral, and social implications. The research not only identifies problems but also proposes realistic solutions that integrate the Gospel with local experience. It offers a model for contextual pastoral theology that respects indigenous traditions while remaining faithful to Christian revelation. Its findings will therefore assist bishops, priests, catechists, and pastoral agents in fostering more vibrant and participatory Christian communities.

Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to ongoing theological and pastoral reflection on the mission of the laity in frontier territories such as Kotido. It offers practical recommendations for pastoral planning, Christian formation, and diocesan policy that align with the Church's vision of inculturated evangelization. By emphasizing lived faith, it promotes an understanding of the laity as genuine witnesses of the Gospel, called to transform society through faith and service. The research thus serves as both a pastoral resource and a theological reflection on renewing lay participation in the life and mission of the Church.

This dissertation focuses on three major pastoral challenges, polygamy, witchcraft, and catechetical formation, that most significantly affect the laity's mission in Kotido Diocese. These are examined in light of *Christifideles Laici* and other key magisterial documents such as *Lumen Gentium*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Evangelii*

Nuntiandi, Catechesi Tradendae, Familiaris Consortio, and Evangelii Gaudium. Together, these provide a rich theological and pastoral foundation for understanding the laity's vocation and mission. The research is deliberately focused to ensure a deep and coherent exploration of these critical themes within the specific socio-cultural context of Kotido.

Thematically, the study investigates how entrenched cultural practices like polygamy and witchcraft limit the laity's participation in the Church's life and mission. These traditions, deeply rooted in Karimojong culture, often conflict with Christian teachings on marriage, morality, and divine providence. The study also explores how insufficient catechetical formation results in superficial faith and weak engagement in ecclesial life. By concentrating on these interconnected issues, the research seeks to generate practical pastoral insights applicable to the local Church without diluting focus through excessive generalization.

Geographically, the study is confined to Kotido Diocese, a semi-nomadic region characterized by underdevelopment and strong traditional values. This localized approach allows for a precise analysis of how faith interacts with culture in a pastoral setting. While occasional references to other African contexts provide comparative insight, Kotido remains the central focus. Understanding these local dynamics enables the formulation of pastoral strategies that respect culture while guiding it toward the Gospel ideal of transformation and renewal.

Methodologically, the research adopts an interdisciplinary approach, combining historical, analytical, and qualitative perspectives to ensure a holistic understanding of the issues. Historical analysis situates Kotido within broader socio-cultural and ecclesial developments, while analytical and qualitative tools, such as interviews and pastoral reports, offer firsthand insights from clergy and lay participants. This methodological synthesis ensures that the study remains both theologically grounded and pastorally relevant, uniting theory and practice in a single coherent framework.

The first chapter lays the contextual and theological foundation for the entire work. It presents the historical and socio-cultural background of Kotido Diocese, highlighting Uganda's political and social developments that shaped ecclesial life. It then explores the missionary history of Kotido, the cultural identity of the Karimojong, and the challenges facing evangelization in this environment. This context prepares the

ground for a theological reflection on the laity's vocation as articulated in *Lumen Gentium*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, and *Christifideles Laici*, which define the laity as co-workers in Christ's redemptive mission.

The second chapter examines the challenge of polygamy, a deeply rooted cultural institution among the Karimojong. It evaluates how this practice conflicts with the Christian understanding of marriage as a faithful and indissoluble covenant (FC 19). The chapter discusses its pastoral implications, especially the exclusion from sacramental life, and analyses diocesan strategies such as marital counselling, catechetical instruction, and gradual conversion as means of pastoral accompaniment. Through this, the Church seeks to reconcile cultural realities with the demands of Christian discipleship.

The third chapter turns to the issue of witchcraft and its enduring influence on the spiritual life of the laity. Despite widespread evangelization, belief in ancestral spirits and magical practices persists, leading to syncretism and weakened faith. The chapter examines the psychological and pastoral dimensions of this challenge and evaluates the Church's response through healing ministries, deliverance prayers, and ongoing catechesis, as inspired by *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN 20, 56). It emphasizes that authentic conversion requires not merely ritual participation but a transformation of worldview and trust in divine providence.

The fourth chapter focuses on catechetical and Christian formation as the cornerstone of all pastoral renewal. It highlights deficiencies in catechetical training, resources, and structures in Kotido, and emphasizes the importance of systematic, inculcated, and lifelong faith formation as articulated in *Catechesi Tradendae* and the *General Directory for Catechesis*. The chapter proposes practical measures such as strengthening lay leadership, contextualizing teaching materials, and promoting Small Christian Communities as vehicles for faith growth and evangelization.

The conclusion synthesizes the findings and proposes pastoral recommendations aimed at revitalizing lay participation in Kotido Diocese. It calls for renewed investment in catechesis, the promotion of Christian marriage, and the integration of faith and culture through dialogue and pastoral accompaniment. The conclusion envisions a laity that is well-formed, mature, and actively engaged in evangelization, a community capable of transforming society through the power of faith. In this way, the dissertation offers both

a theological reflection and a pastoral roadmap for renewal in the Church's mission in Kotido and similar contexts.

1. THE CONTEXT OF KOTIDO DIOCESE AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE LAITY

In this chapter, we will present the background to the area of study and outline the theology of the Laity. To introduce us to the area of study, the Kotido Diocese, and the analysis of the country's situation in Uganda, is paramount. Our approach in this study is on the historical and geographical overview of Uganda from the 19th century to the 21st century. The political, social, economic, and religious dimensions will be key in providing a clear picture of the country. The reason is that the establishment of colonial rule in Uganda came hand in hand with the Evangelisation of the region by different missionary orders. Secondly, the situation of Kotido Diocese has been discussed in a similar, but detailed approach, leading us to the Theology of the laity.

In the theology of the Laity, definitions and prominent theologians have been presented to help us appreciate the development of the theology of the laity in the Church. A brief conclusion marks the end of the topic.

1.1. Historical and Geographical Overview of Uganda

Kotido Diocese is located in Uganda, a landlocked country in East Africa, astride the Equator, located between 1°30' S and 4°N. Uganda has a surface area of 236,040 square kilometers, of which 36,330 square kilometers is water and 199,710 square kilometers is land.² Colonial powers encompassing two different types of societies drew their borders artificially and arbitrarily in the late 19th century. Consequently, in 1886, the Anglo-German boundaries solidified their spheres of influence in the specific

² Cf. *Constitution of the Republic of Uganda*, Entebbe, 1995, Second Schedule, article 5; B. Balletto, *Spectrum Guide to Uganda*, Nairobi 1998, p. 21.

territories.³ They comprised the centralized Bantu peoples of the south and the more decentralized Nilotic and Sudanic peoples to the north. Karugire reinforces a similar argument by observing that such a geographical entity did not exist until the early 1890s, when the British, through conquests, the signing of treaties and agreements, created the country.⁴ It is therefore the creation of the British during their colonial activities between 1890 and 1926.⁵ Uganda's final borders were drawn on 1 February 1926, when the constitution of Uganda began to enumerate the indigenous communities authentically considered Ugandan.⁶ The country has many ecosystems, from the tall volcanic mountains of the eastern and western frontiers to the densely forested swamps of the Albert Nile River and the rainforests of the country's central plateau. It is mostly a plateau with a rim of mountains.⁷

Economically, the country relies heavily on agriculture, with a significant portion of the population engaged in farming, cultivating crops such as coffee, cotton, cocoa, tea, and tobacco. Other crops, such as beans, groundnuts, millet, maize, soybeans, bananas, cassava, wheat, and rice, are also grown.⁸

Uganda has as its motto: "For God and My Country." This motto serves as a standard of good conduct for every citizen, and for leaders, taking up responsibility in the country means upholding this motto. However, since Uganda gained its independence in 1962, it has faced numerous political challenges.⁹ The churches in Uganda have operated within the historical context of a weakened state. Whereas the post-colonial state was strong enough, churches barely succeeded in controlling their roles. During the dictatorship in the 1970s and wars in the 1980s, the Ugandan state weakened significantly (which had diverse effects on the Church). Nonetheless, Churches have always assisted

³ Cf. J. F. Gjersø, *The Scramble for East Africa: British motives Reconsidered, 1884-1895*, "Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History" 43 (2015) no.5, p. 837.

⁴ Cf. S.R. Karugire, *The Political History of Uganda*, Nairobi, 1980, p. 17-99; R. O'Neil, *Mission to Upper Nile: The Story of St. Joseph's Missionary Society of Mill Hill in Uganda*, Binghamton 1999, p. 5.

⁵ Cf J.M. Waliggo, *A Brief Overview of Society and Church in Uganda Democratization and Reconciliation process and Development*, unpublished, [paper presented in Lubaga Social Centre, on 21.11.1994].

⁶ Cf. *The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda*, Third Schedule, Article 10.

⁷ Cf. The Uganda Guide, *Geography*, in: <https://www.theugandaguide.com/about/geography/>, [12.07.2025].

⁸ Cf. B. Linda, *Uganda Economy: Africa South of the Sahara*, London, 1997, p. 1084-1085.

⁹ Cf. V. K. Ssekabira, *The Church's involvement in politics in Africa and Uganda in particular*, "The Waliggo Journal of holistic theological reflection" (2009), no. 1, p. 125.

victims of political upheavals and consistently challenged governments in the face of human rights abuses.¹⁰

Kampala is the capital and largest city of Uganda. The city's coverage reaches the shore of Lake Victoria, the largest lake in Africa and the chief reservoir of the Nile River.

The History of Uganda is a narrative of movements in small groups of cultivators and herders over centuries. The cultures and languages changed continuously as people slowly migrated to other regions and intermingled. By the mid-19th century, when the first non-African visitors entered the territory, later the Ugandan Protectorate, there were distinct languages and cultures in Uganda.¹¹ The North of Uganda was occupied by the Nilotic and Sudanic language-speaking peoples. Bantu-speaking peoples inhabited the central, western, and southern portions of Uganda. As we shall discuss in the subsequent section, the history of Uganda is shaped by the Kingdoms of Bunyoro and Buganda. They had their earliest encounters with Europeans, and the European colonialists had great confidence in them to civilize the entire country politically and economically.¹² However, this did not take place smoothly as planned. When Sir Frederick Mutesa, the *Kabaka* [ruler] of Buganda, was elected as the first president of Uganda. As a monarch, he found it difficult to take orders from the national government headed by Apollo Milton Obote. In 1964, a referendum was held to decide whether the two counties Buganda had annexed should be returned to the neighboring territory of Bunyoro.¹³ Bunyoro won, but Mutesa refused to sign the transfer instrument, thereby creating a crisis for the government. The political situation deteriorated rapidly until 1966, when the Buganda government decided to expel the Ugandan government from its soil. The event played into Obote, whose national government responded by sending soldiers to the Kabaka's palace to investigate the presence of arms. The soldiers, headed by Idi Amin, overran the palace and forced the Kabaka into exile.¹⁴ Obote proceeded to suspend the constitution crafted for Uganda's independence, declared himself the executive

¹⁰ Cf. J. B. Kisoga, *Healing the wounds of Christian divisions: Theory and Practice of Ecumenism in Uganda*, "The Waligo Journal of Holistic Theological Reflection" (2009) no. 1, p. 49.

¹¹ Cf. Ibid.

¹² Cf. A. Reid, *Constructing History of Uganda*, Journal of African History, in: <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1530875/1/constructing%20History%20in%20uganda.pdf>, [22.07.2025].

¹³ Cf. S. Sajjaaka, A Political and Economic History of Uganda, 1962-2002 in: Bird, F., Herman S. W. (eds.) *International Business and the Challenges of Poverty in the Developing World*, London, in: <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230522503-6>.

¹⁴ Cf. Ibid.

president of the state and government, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. This marked the beginning of political struggles in Uganda till 1986.

1.1.1 The Kingdoms of Bunyoro and Buganda

The two kingdoms of Bunyoro and Buganda played a crucial role in the civilization and governance of Uganda. The reason is that they were the first kingdoms to come in contact with colonialists and missionaries who championed development in Uganda.

Henry Morton Stanley, the British-American explorer who reached Buganda in 1875, met Mutesa I, the King of Buganda.¹⁵ Although Buganda had not been attacked, Acholand, to the north, had been ravaged by slavers from Egypt and Sudan since the early 1860s, and, on the death of Kamurasi, the ruler of Bunyoro, his successor, Kabarega, had defeated his rivals only with the aid of the slavers' guns and the Buganda Kingdom.¹⁶ The Changing geopolitics among the kingdoms of Buganda and the neighboring kingdom of Bunyoro played a role in shaping British involvement in the region. An emissary from the Egyptian government, Linant de Bellefonds, had reached Mutesa's palace before Stanley, as the *kabaka* [king] was anxious to obtain allies. Henry Morton claims he managed to convert the king from Islam to Christianity.¹⁷ He readily agreed to Stanley's proposal to invite Christian missionaries to Uganda; unfortunately, he was disappointed after the first agents of the Church Missionary Society arrived in 1877, to find that they had no interest in military matters. Approximately two years later, in 1879, a group of French Catholic Missionaries, who had been based in Algiers, also began ministry in this region.¹⁸ Mutesa I attempted to limit their movements, but their influence rapidly spread through their contact with the chiefs whom the *kabaka* kept around him; inevitably, the missionaries became drawn into the politics of the Buganda. Mutesa I was not concerned about these new influences, however, and, when Egyptian expansion was checked by the Mahdist rising in the Sudan, he was able to deal brusquely with the handful of

¹⁵ Cf. Ibid.

¹⁶ Cf. R. B. Aardsma, *Challenging colonialism through Religion: Connections Between Colonialism, Power, and Religion in Colonial Uganda*, in: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/hilltopview/vol13/iss1/8>, "The Hilltop Review" 13(2022) no.1, p. 65 [14.07.2025].

¹⁷ Cf. J. R. Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, New York, 2017, p. 65.

¹⁸ Cf. Ibid., p. 22.

missionaries in his country. His successor, Mwanga, who became *Kabaka* in 1884, was less successful in administering the Kingdom. He decided to round up all the converts and missionaries and maroon them on one of the islands in Lake Victoria.¹⁹ The plan aborted, and the Christian converts and Muslims joined forces and ousted the king in September 1888. The Muslims in October turned against the Christians and proclaimed an Islamic state under King Kalema, the brother of the deposed king. Catholics and Protestants fled for their lives to Buddu and Akore, respectively. A civil war later erupted between Christians and Muslims. Mwanga, now repentant, joined the Catholics, who, together with the Protestants, welcomed him, as they did not have anyone with royal blood to sit on the throne in case they won the war.

1.1.2. The Uganda Protectorate

The creation of the Ugandan protectorate originated from the Buganda Kingdom. *Kabaka* Mwanga, who was restored to his throne with the assistance of Christians from the *Ganda* [Buganda Kingdom], soon faced European imperialism. Germany also had interests in East Africa, and in 1886, the Anglo-German boundaries solidified national spheres of interest.²⁰ It was later revoked when the Anglo-German agreement of 1890 declared all the country north of latitude 1° S a British sphere of influence. The Imperial British East Africa Company agreed to administer the region on behalf of the British government. In 1890, Captain F. D. Lugard, the company's agent, signed another treaty with Mwanga, whose kingdom was now placed under the company's protection. Lugard also signed treaties with two other chiefs, the rulers of the western states of Ankole and Toro. However, when the company became financially bankrupt, the British government, for strategic reasons and partly through pressure from missionary sympathizers in Britain, declared Buganda its protectorate in 1894.²¹

Britain inherited a country divided into politico-religious factions, which had erupted into civil war in 1892. The Buganda kingdom came under threat from Kabarega,

¹⁹ Cf. V. Kyeyune, *The Situation of the Catholic Church in the Central region of Uganda, Religie Swiata* (2021) no. 7, p. 193-209.

²⁰ Cf. F. J. Gjersø, *The Scramble for East Africa: British motives Reconsidered, 1884-95*, "The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History" 43 (2015) no.5, p. 837; see also Aardsma, p. 65.

²¹ Cf. R.J. Reid, *A history of Modern Uganda*, p. 21-25, 244-248.

the ruler of Bunyoro. A military expedition of 1894 deprived Kabarega of his headquarters and rendered him a refugee for the rest of his career. Two years later, the protectorate government brought the kingdoms of Bunyoro, Toro, Ankole, and Busoga under its jurisdiction. Treaties were made with chiefs north of the Nile. Meanwhile, Mwanga, who revolted against British overlordship in 1897, was overthrown again and replaced by his infant son.²²

A mutiny in 1897 of the Sudanese troops used by the colonial government led Britain to take a more active interest in the Uganda Protectorate. In 1899, Sir Harry Johnston was commissioned to visit the country and to make recommendations on its future administration. The primary outcome of his mission was the Buganda Agreement of 1900, which defined the Buganda boundaries both on the ground and on paper.²³ This formed the basis for British relations with Buganda for more than 50 years. Under its terms, the *Kabaka* was recognized as the ruler of Buganda as long as he remained faithful to the protecting authority. His council of chiefs, the *Lukiko*, was given statutory recognition. The leading chiefs benefited most from the agreement since they were granted land in freehold to ensure their support for the negotiations. Johnston made another agreement of a less detailed nature with the ruler of Toro (1900), and subsequently, a third agreement was made with the ruler of Ankole (1901).

Meanwhile, the British administration gradually extended north and east of the Nile. However, in these areas, where a centralized authority was unknown, no agreements were made, and British officers, frequently assisted by agents of Buganda such as Semei Kakungulu, administered the country directly. By 1914, Uganda's boundaries had been fixed, and British control had reached most areas.

Early in the 20th century, Sir James Hayes Sadler, who succeeded Johnston as commissioner, concluded that the country was unlikely to prove attractive to European settlers.²⁴ Sadler's successor, Sir Hesketh Bell, announced he wished to develop Uganda

²² Cf. V. Kyeyune, *The Situation of the Catholic Church in the Central region of Uganda, Religie Swiata* (2021) no. 7, p. 196-197.

²³ Cf. S. L. Lunyigo, *The colonial roots of internal conflict in Uganda: a paper presented to the international seminar on international conflict*, 21- 25.09.1987; sponsored by International Alert, London; Makerere Institute of Social Research, Makerere University, International Peace Research Institute Oslo, and the United Nations University, Tokyo; For a comprehensive study of the Agreement see J. V. Wild, *The story of the Uganda Agreement*, Nairobi 1950.

²⁴ Cf. P. M. Mutibwa, *White Settlers in Uganda: The error of Hopes and disillusionment, 1905-1923* in: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24520238/>, Trans African Journal of History, 5 (1976) no.2, p. 112-122, [14.07.2025].

as an African state. In this, he was opposed by some of his more senior officials and, in particular, by the Chief Justice, William Morris Carter. Carter was chairman of a land commission whose activities continued until after World War I (1914-1918). The commission urged that provision be made for European planters, but their efforts were unsuccessful. Bell had laid the foundations for a peasant economy by encouraging the Africans to cultivate cotton, which had been introduced into the protectorate as a cash crop in 1904.²⁵ Uganda became financially independent of a grant-in-aid from the British Treasury in 1914 due to the income derived from cotton.

In 1914, at the outset of World War I, there were a few skirmishes between the British and Germans on the southwestern frontier, but Uganda was never in danger of invasion. The war, however, did hinder the country's development. Soon after the war, it was decided that the protectorate authorities should concentrate, as Bell had suggested, on expanding African agriculture, and Africans were encouraged to grow coffee in addition to cotton. The British government's decision, which forbade the alienation of land in freehold and the economic depression of the early 1920s, dealt a further blow to the hopes of European planters. The part played by Europeans, as well as Asians, was now mainly on the commercial and processing side of the protectorate's agricultural industry.²⁶

As the output of primary produce increased, it became necessary to extend and improve communications. Just before World War I, a railway line had been built northward from Jinja, on Lake Victoria, to Namasagali.²⁷ In the 1920s, a railway from Mombasa, on the Kenyan coast, was extended to Soroti. In 1931, a rail link was also completed between Kampala, the industrial capital of Uganda, and the coast.

The depression of the early 1930s interrupted Uganda's economic progress. However, the protectorate's recovery was more rapid than its neighbors, and the later years were a period of steady expansion.

²⁵ Cf. D. Schalken, *The long-run local development effects of colonial industry: The case of cotton in Uganda*, in: <https://edopot.wur.nl/687992/>, A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's International development studies: Economics of development, Wageningen University and Research, p. 7-8, [14.07.2025].

²⁶ Cf. Ibid.

²⁷ Cf. Ibid.

The Legislative Council was instituted in 1920, but its membership was small (four official and two non-official members).²⁸ It had little impact on the protectorate. The Indian community, which played a leading role in the commercial life of the territory, resented the fact that it did not have equal representation with Europeans on the unofficial side of the council and so refused to participate until 1926. There was no evidence of a desire on the part of the Africans to sit in the council since the most politically advanced group in the community, the *Ganda*, regarded its *lukiko* [Buganda's Legislature] as the most important council in the country.

Given the Africans' indifference toward the protectorate legislature, they opposed the suggestion made in the late 1920s that there should be some form of closer union between the East African territories. The interest in tribal traditions was one source of this opposition. Furthermore, the fear of domination by European settlers among Africans and Asians was a second factor.

One of the significant developments was the emergence of government interest in education. The protectorate administration established an education department in 1925, and aid was channeled through the missionary societies, which had already established several reputable schools in Buganda.²⁹ The government also established schools. This led to the gradual replacement of older chiefs (men of strong personality who lacked a Western-style education) by younger, Western-educated men who were more capable of carrying out government policy and more amenable to British control. In Buganda, too, the government began to interfere more actively in the kingdom's affairs to increase efficiency. The main result was that the people showed less respect to non-Baganda chiefs, which caused some of the chiefs to resent the curtailment of their powers.

1.1.3 The People of Uganda

The people of Uganda constitute 56 ethnic groups speaking 56 indigenous languages.³⁰ In 2014, the National Population Council estimated Uganda's population to

²⁸ Cf. J. Kemigisha and M. Sekaziga, *100 years of the Ugandan Parliament: A history Hoax*, in: <https://thecitizenreport/100-years-of-the-ugandan-parliament-a-history-hoax/>, "The Citizen Report, " (2022) [15.07.2025].

²⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁰ Cf. *Constitution of the Republic of Uganda*, Third Schedule (article 10a), p. 189-191.

be 40.8 million, 55% of whom were under 18 years old. The population of Uganda in May 2024 was 45,905,417, with 22,314,289 males and 23,591,128 females.³¹ The average annual population growth rate declined from 3.0% in 2014 to 2.9% in 2024. The daytime population in cities was 5,547,647 persons. Kampala, the capital city, had the highest daytime population of 2,503,174 people, while Fort Portal City recorded the lowest figure of 176,994 people.

There has been a steady increase in population size over the years.³² The total population of Uganda was 45,905,417 people in 2024, an increase of 11,270,767 people from 34,634,650 registered in 2014.

Uganda is a country with a great variety of people and cultures. It is a nation where the people's faces are warm and kind, and their welcome is genuine. The hospitable nature of the Ugandan People shines. Among the major classifications, the Bantu, the largest group, makes up 65.7% of the population. These are found in the South, West, and some parts of Eastern Uganda. The Nilotics, the second largest group, make up about 13% of the population and are found in the central section of Northern Uganda. The Nile-Hamites, the third largest group, is found in the Northeast, constituting 12.7% of the population. The Sudanic people comprise 6% of the population and are in the North-West of the Country.³³

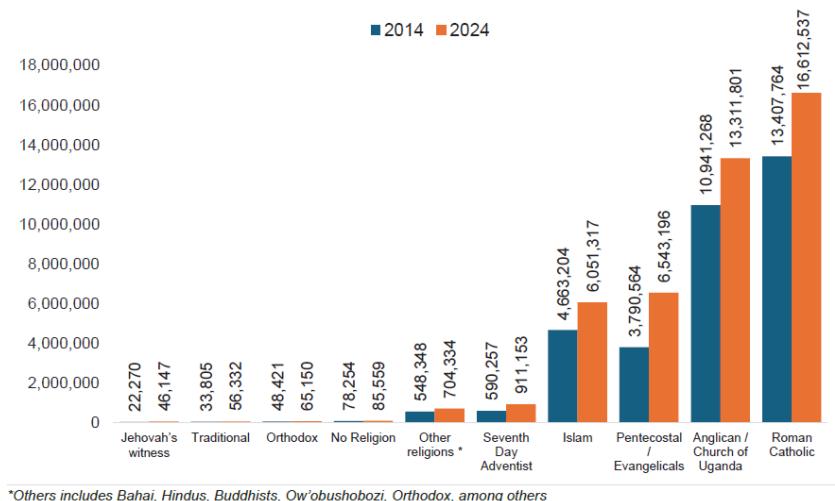


Figure 1.1: Total population by Census Years 2014-2024

³¹ Cf. Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2024, *The National Population and Housing Census 2024-Final Report -Volume 1 (Main)*, Kampala 2025, p. 42.

³² Cf. Ibid.

³³ Cf. B. Ssettuma Jr., *Coming of age in the priesthood, a centenary of Indigenous Catholic Priests in Uganda*, Kampala 2013, p. 67.

1.2 Uganda's Post-colonial Political Situation

Before the advent of British colonizers at the end of the 19th Century, Uganda was a territory comprising various independent traditional kingdoms and chiefdoms. The English policy amalgamated these indigenous groups into a single administration.

Uganda was declared a British protectorate in 1894, with over thirty indigenous groups, each with its own political system.³⁴ The political unit was a chiefdom or a kingdom. Every cultural group had a political system with a figure recognized as the king, or an elder uniting many extended families and clans.

In Northern and Eastern Uganda, there existed less centralized governments with varying chiefdoms or principalities, while in Central and Western Uganda, there had developed highly centralized systems of government based on a monarchical model. The most significant of these were the kingdoms of Bunyoro, Buganda, Nkore, and Toro. In each of these kingdoms, the king was the supreme ruler. He also "acted as the supreme court of appeal in disputes submitted to him from various clans under his control."³⁵

Some of these kingdoms had existed for several centuries, the oldest of them being Bunyoro-Kitara, which, later on, after its decline, came to be known as Bunyoro. From 1500 AD to 1800 AD, it was also the most powerful and extensive kingdom in terms of its military strength and economic abilities, boosted by its salt and iron deposits.³⁶ Salt and iron are both found in the territory and were the most valuable trade items at the time. The salt mines at Katwe and Kasenyi in Kasese district were the property of the Bunyoro Kingdom. The Kingdom of Toro usurped their ownership. The Bunyoro kingdom was so superior to the rest of the kingdoms that in 1520 AD, it conquered Buganda and Nkore, successively, without much difficulty.³⁷ At one time, it extended over most of what is now Uganda, and parts of Tanzania, Rwanda, and beyond, for it is said to have "stretched from Ituri Forest in Congo into Western Kenya, and from Buhaya to Lake Rudolf."³⁸

³⁴ *The Constitution of Uganda*, enacted on 8 October 1995, recognizes as Uganda's official indigenous groups the 56 that were in existence since 1 February 1926. See *Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995*, Third Schedule (article 10a), p. 189-191.

³⁵ K. Ingham, *The Making of Modern Uganda*, London 1958, p. 15.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16-18.

³⁷ Cf. S. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*, London 1980, p. 33.

³⁸ L. Pirouet, *Black Evangelist: The Spread of Christianity in Uganda 1891-1914*, London 1978, p. 39.

However, by the end of the 19th Century, it had lost most of its territory to other smaller kingdoms. The greatest beneficiary of decline was the kingdom of Buganda, which, "three or four centuries earlier, seems to have been amongst the smallest of these."³⁹ It gained greater power during the early 20th Century, with the help of the British.⁴⁰

In most ethnic groups of central and western Uganda, political leadership was acquired through heredity, while specific royal clans were accepted as permanent providers of candidates for political offices. In the kingdoms, the king possessed not only absolute political power but was also the supreme leader of the religious and cultural life of the people. The major kingdoms of central and western Uganda were originally divided into smaller parts (villages and clans, counties, and sub-counties) entrusted to the care of clan leaders or chiefs appointed by the king and directly accountable to him. The major kingdoms often exercised indirect rule over smaller ones, which had to pay regular taxes to them in the form of animals, crop produce, or minerals. During the arrival of the British in Uganda, some smaller kingdoms or semi-independent principalities in Western Uganda existed as vassal kingdoms. These include Buhweju, Buzimba, Kooki, Kitagwenda, Mpororo, Bunyaruguru, Busongora, Bwamba, Burega, and Mboga. The British tried to group all these under the three kingdoms of Toro, Nkore, and Bunyoro. This political situation had an impact on the direction the evangelization took in the area. L. Pirouet rightly observes: "The looser pattern of rule in the west, the multiplicity of small principalities which the British tidied up into three kingdoms, and their treatment of the traditional rulers and assumptions about the nature of their power affected the spread of Christianity."⁴¹

In the late 1950s, as a few political parties emerged, the African population concentrated on achieving self-government, with a focus on the Legislative Council. The Kingdom of Buganda intermittently pressed for independence from Uganda, which raised the issue of the protectorate's future status. Discussions in London in 1961 led to full internal self-government in March 1962.⁴² Benedicto Kiwanuka, a Roman Catholic *Ganda* who served formerly as the chief minister, became the first Prime Minister. In the April 1962 elections, he was displaced by Milton Obote, a Lango (Langi) who headed the

³⁹ D.A. Low, *Buganda in Modern History*, London 1971, p. 13.

⁴⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴¹ L. Pirouet, p. 41.

⁴² Cf. *Ibid.*

Uganda People's Congress (UPC) party.⁴³ At further discussions in London in June 1962, it was agreed that Buganda should receive a wide degree of autonomy within a federal relationship. With the emergence of Obote's UPC, which claimed support throughout the country apart from Buganda, and the Democratic Party (DP), which was based in Buganda and led by Kiwanuka, conservative *Ganda* leaders set up their rival organization, *Kabaka Yekka* (KY), [King Alone]. Uganda became independent on 9 September 1962, although it was divided politically on geographic and ethnic bases.⁴⁴ For a century, it was exposed to European culture, first through missionaries and explorers and then as a British protectorate.

1.2.1 Obote's First Presidency and the 1971 Coup

Milton Obote, through accepting a constitution that conceded what amounted to a federal status to Buganda, contrived an unlikely alliance with the *Ganda* establishment. The UPC and KY parties formed a government with Obote as Prime Minister and the DP in opposition. Obote agreed to replace the British governor-general by appointing Mutesa II as the country's first president to unify the alliance, but this move was unsuccessful. Although Obote won over some members of the KY and even DP so that they joined the UPC, tension grew steadily between the *kabaka* on the one hand and the UPC on the other.⁴⁵ The *Ganda* leaders particularly resented their inability to dominate a government composed of members of different ethnic groups. There were also divisions within the UPC because each member of parliament owed his election to local ethnic supporters rather than to his membership in a political party. Those supporters frequently pressured their representatives to redress what they saw as an imbalance in the distribution of the material benefits of independence.

Amidst this dissatisfaction among some of his followers and increasingly overt hostility in Buganda, Obote arrested five ministers and suspended the constitution in 1966. Outraged, the *Ganda* leaders ordered him to remove his government from the kingdom. Obote responded by sending troops under the leadership of Colonel Idi Amin to

⁴³ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Cf. J.R. Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, New York, 2017, p. xxii

⁴⁵ Cf. J.J. Carney, *Benedicto Kiwanuka and Catholic Democracy in Uganda*, "Journal of Religious History" 44 (2020) no.2, p. 225.

arrest the *kabaka*, who escaped to England, where he died in 1969.⁴⁶ When Obote imposed a new republican constitution, appointed himself executive president, abolished all the kingdoms, and divided Buganda into administrative districts, he also lost the support of the people of southwestern Uganda. Internal friction subsequently intensified, fostered by mutual suspicion between the rival groups, by assassination attempts against the president, and by the increasingly oppressive methods employed by the government to silence its critics.

By independence, the export economy was flourishing without adversely affecting subsistence agriculture, and the economy continued to improve because of the high demand for coffee. To answer accusations that the profits from exports did not benefit the producers enough, Obote attempted in 1969 to distribute the benefits from the prospering economy more widely. To this end, he published a “common man’s charter,” which focused on removing the last vestiges of feudalism by having the government take a majority holding in the shares of the larger, foreign-owned companies. To unite the country more firmly, he also produced a plan for a new electoral system in 1970 that would require successful candidates for parliament to secure votes in constituencies outside their home districts.⁴⁷

The new proposals met with a cynical response in some quarters, and the government was overthrown before they were instituted. Obote had relied heavily on the loyalty of Idi Amin. Unfortunately, Amin had been building support for himself within a small section of the army by recruiting from his own Kakwa ethnic group in the northwest.⁴⁸ The army, which had been composed of Acholi and their neighbors, Obote’s own Lango people, became sharply divided. Simultaneously, a rift developed between Obote and Amin, and while the former delayed arresting the latter, Amin took advantage of the president’s absence from the country to seize power in January 1971.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Cf. A. Tertit, *Research Report no.26, The common Man's Charter, on the move to the left in Uganda-dissemination and attitude*, in: <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:276744/FULLTEXT01.pdf>, “Scandinavian Institute of African Studies,” Upsala, 1974, p. 11, [15.07.2025].

⁴⁸ Cf. J.T. Lowman, *Beyond Idi Amin: Causes and drivers of Political Violence in Uganda, 1971-1979*, in: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/13439/>, Durham E-Theses, Durham University 2019, p. 37-39.

1.2.2 The Tyranny of Idi Amin

Amin's coup was widely welcomed, as there was hope that the country would finally be unified. Several Western countries, including Britain, feared the spread of communism and were also relieved at Obote's overthrow. They had become suspicious that his policies were moving to the left.⁴⁹ Amin promised a return to civilian government in five years, but problems with his leadership soon became apparent. Amin had little Western-style education and no officer training, so he often resorted to arbitrary violence to maintain his position. In one incident, he destroyed the one potential center of effective opposition by a wholesale slaughter of 600 senior army officers loyal to Obote.⁵⁰

To win more support among the Ugandan population, Amin ordered all Asians who had not taken Ugandan nationality to leave the country in 1972.⁵¹ He was selective in his execution of this policy toward Indians loyal to him. His move won considerable approval in the country because many Africans believed that they had been exploited by the Asians, who controlled the middle and the higher levels of the economy. Unfortunately, the action isolated Uganda from the rest of the world community. Although a few wealthy Ugandans profited from Amin's actions, the majority of the commercial enterprises formerly owned by Asians were given to senior army officers who rapidly squandered the proceeds and then allowed the businesses to collapse.

Most people in the countryside survived the total breakdown of the economy that followed in the mid-and late 1970s because the fertility of Uganda's soil allowed them to continue growing food crops. In the towns, an all-pervasive illegal market developed, and dishonesty became the only means of survival. This economic and moral collapse led to criticism of the government, and during this period, the country experienced several serious military attempts.

⁴⁹ Cf. A. Tertit, *Research Report no.26, The common Man's Charter, on the move to the left in Uganda-dissemination and attitude*, in: <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:276744/FULLTEXT01.pdf>, "Scandinavian Institute of African Studies," Upsala, 1974, p. 13-16, [15.07.2025].

⁵⁰ Cf. J.T. Lowman, *Beyond Idi Amin: Causes and drivers of Political Violence in Uganda, 1971-1979*, in: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/13439/>, Durham E-Theses, Durham University 2019, p. 39.

⁵¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 95-98.

In an attempt to divert attention from Uganda's internal problems, Amin launched an attack on Tanzania in October 1978.⁵² Tanzanian troops, assisted by armed Ugandan exiles, quickly put Amin's demoralized army to flight and invaded Uganda. With these troops closing in, Amin escaped the capital. A coalition government of former exiles, the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF), with Yusufu Lule, a former leading figure in the DP, as president, took office in April 1979. Because of disagreement over economic strategy and fear that Lule was promoting the interests of his own Ganda people, he was replaced in June by Godfrey Binaisa,

but Binaisa's term of office was also short-lived. Supporters of Obote plotted Binaisa's overthrow, and Obote returned to Uganda in May 1980.

1.2.3 Obote's Second Presidency

In December 1980, Obote's party, the UPC, won a majority in highly controversial elections for the parliamentary seats.⁵³ The DP leadership reluctantly agreed to act as a constitutional opposition. Yoweri Museveni, who had played a significant part in the military overthrow of President Idi Amin Dada, refused to accept the UPC victory. He and Lule formed the National Resistance Movement (NRM), an opposition group. Museveni led the movement's guerrilla group, the National Resistance Army (NRA), and waged an increasingly effective campaign against the government.

With the support of the International Monetary Fund and other external donors, Obote made a concerted effort to rebuild the economy. Initially, his efforts seemed successful, but the extraordinary inflation rate resulting from an entrenched illegal market system worked against him. Urban wage earners were unable to keep pace with rising prices, and salaried civil servants grew frustrated at the government's inability to increase their pay in line with their needs. In addition, the guerrilla war drew strength from the fact that it was based in Buganda, among people already suspicious of Obote. That strength grew as an ill-paid, ill-disciplined, and vengeful army, consisting of Acholi and

⁵² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁵³ Cf. S. Janne, *A Divided Country- Micro Historical Perspective to Presidents and Authority in Uganda*, in: <https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstreams/3d2753fc-8b96-4762-a457-8f905f83d4c5/download>, master's Thesis, University of Jyväskylä, Social and Public Policy, Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy, 2008, p. 63-64.

Lango, ravaged the countryside for loot and took vengeance on their longtime Ganda enemies.⁵⁴

A split within the army between its Acholi and Lango members led to Obote's overthrow and exile in 1985, followed by the seizure of power by an Acholi general, Tito Okello. This, however, could not prevent a victory for Museveni's National Resistance Army, and Museveni became President on 29 January 1986.⁵⁵ While a new constitution was drafted, an indirectly elected National Resistance Council, dominated by the NRM, acted as the national legislature.

1.2.4 President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni

President Museveni's government instituted moral and economic reconstruction policies to alleviate the problems that emerged during the UNLF (Uganda National Liberation Front) in 1979 and Obote in 1980.⁵⁶ However, sporadic military resistance to the new government continued, particularly in the north and east. Arms were plentiful, and dissatisfied people used them for selfish motives. The National Resistance Army, despite the president's injunctions, sometimes proved as heavy-handed in dealing with opponents as Obote's forces had been.

Amidst such a difficult situation, security did improve, at least in most parts of central, southern, and western Uganda, and observers claimed that human rights were more widely protected.⁵⁷ A constitutional amendment made in 1993 restored the monarchies, and the Ganda, Toro, Bunyoro, and Soga crowned their traditional rulers. The new constitution was promulgated in 1995, and presidential elections were held in May 1996, in which Museveni easily won the majority of votes. He was reelected in 2001, having won 69% of the votes, while Kizza Besigye, his major opponent, received 27%.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Cf. Ibid.

⁵⁵ Cf. Ibid.

⁵⁶ Cf. B. Maryke, *African Leadership and the Role of the Presidency in African conflicts: A Case Study of Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni*, in: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za>, A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (International studies) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Stellenbosch, 2012, p. 61 [16.07.2025]; See also K. Karugire, *Roots of instability in Uganda*, Kampala 1988, p. 32.

⁵⁷ Cf. Ibid., P. 59.

⁵⁸ Cf. Ibid.

During the 1990s and continuing into the 2000s, Uganda faced an increase in rebel activity, particularly from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Joseph Kony. Established in the late 1980s, the LRA abducted and enslaved tens of thousands of children to serve as servants or soldiers in its fight against Museveni's government. Its vicious attacks on civilians in the northern part of the country, including rape, murder, and acts of mutilation, such as cutting off the ears, noses, lips, and limbs of their victims, terrorized and displaced more than one million Ugandans, creating a humanitarian crisis in the early twenty years.⁵⁹ After years of refusal, the LRA agreed to meet with government officials for peace talks in late December 2004. However, the talks broke down in early 2005, and the LRA resumed its brutal attacks on civilians. Peace talks resumed in July 2006, and although a cease-fire agreement was reached in late August, talks again broke down, and negotiations to end the decades-old conflict continued intermittently. In late 2008, Uganda began a joint military operation with armed forces from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Southern Sudan (now South Sudan) to target LRA bases in the DRC. The campaign's goals were to capture or kill Kony and to destroy the organization's command structure. The operation was poorly executed, however, and ultimately failed. Kony escaped, and the LRA, which dispersed throughout the northeastern DRC and into Sudan and the Central African Republic, continued its acts of terror in those countries.

Though the West praised the country's continued economic growth, inflation and unemployment were problems in the early 2000s, given Uganda's dependence on fluctuating markets for its agricultural produce.⁶⁰ To enhance economic activity in the region, Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya launched the East African Community Customs Union on 1 January 2005. Burundi and Rwanda joined them in 2009. Oil discoveries beginning in the first decade of the 2000s also bolstered economic projections for Uganda.

Meanwhile, in the 2005 referendum, Ugandan voters overwhelmingly endorsed a return to multiparty politics.⁶¹ Museveni, who had long argued against a multiparty democracy on the premise that it would divide the country along ethnic lines, embraced the referendum and accepted the results in the face of pressure from

⁵⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 61-62.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Cf. T. Dagne, *Uganda Current Conditions and the Crises in North Uganda: CRS Report for Congress*, Washington D.C, 2009, p. 2.

international donors. The next year, the country held its first multiparty elections since 1980. A constitutional amendment that eliminated existing presidential term limits, also passed in 2005, allowed Museveni to stand in the 2006 presidential election.⁶² Representing the NRM, he was reelected. However, the contest was clouded by allegations that Kizza Besigye, the leader of the opposition group, Forum for Democratic Change FDC, was imprisoned in the months leading up to the presidential election to stop him from participating. Besigye was released in January 2006 and stood for the presidential election in February. Although he lost, he managed to garner almost two-fifths of the vote.

Museveni and Besigye were the two front-runners in the 2011 presidential election, in which Museveni was re-elected for his fourth term with 68% of the vote. Besigye, who garnered 26 % of the vote, rejected the results of the election.⁶³ The basis of his rejection was supported by observations by international monitors, who cited an increased military presence on voting day as intimidating and noted that too many voters were disenfranchised. They also observed instances of ruling party members giving money and gifts to election officials and others, actions construed as bribery.

Corruption, a long-standing problem in the country, continues to escalate. Although much appeared to be done to combat it, extraordinarily little was accomplished in the fight against graft. A former head of the country's Anti-Corruption Court complained that only low-level cases were being tried and that high-level perpetrators of corrupt practices went unpunished.

1.2.5 Uganda's Socio-Economic Situation and Development Policy

Uganda is endowed with abundant resources, and the major thrust of the National Development Policy III is to harness and sustainably use the country's natural resources for socio-economic

⁶² The original Ugandan Constitution in Article 105(1), stipulated a two-term limit for the President. However, this was removed by a 2005 constitutional amendment. While the 1995 Constitution also included an age limit of 75 for presidential candidates, this was removed by a 2017 amendment. As a result of these amendments, there is currently no term limit and no age limit for the Ugandan presidency, allowing President Museveni to remain potentially in power for life.

⁶³ Cf. B. Maryke, *African Leadership and the Role of the Presidency in African conflicts: A Case Study of Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni*, p. 59-60.

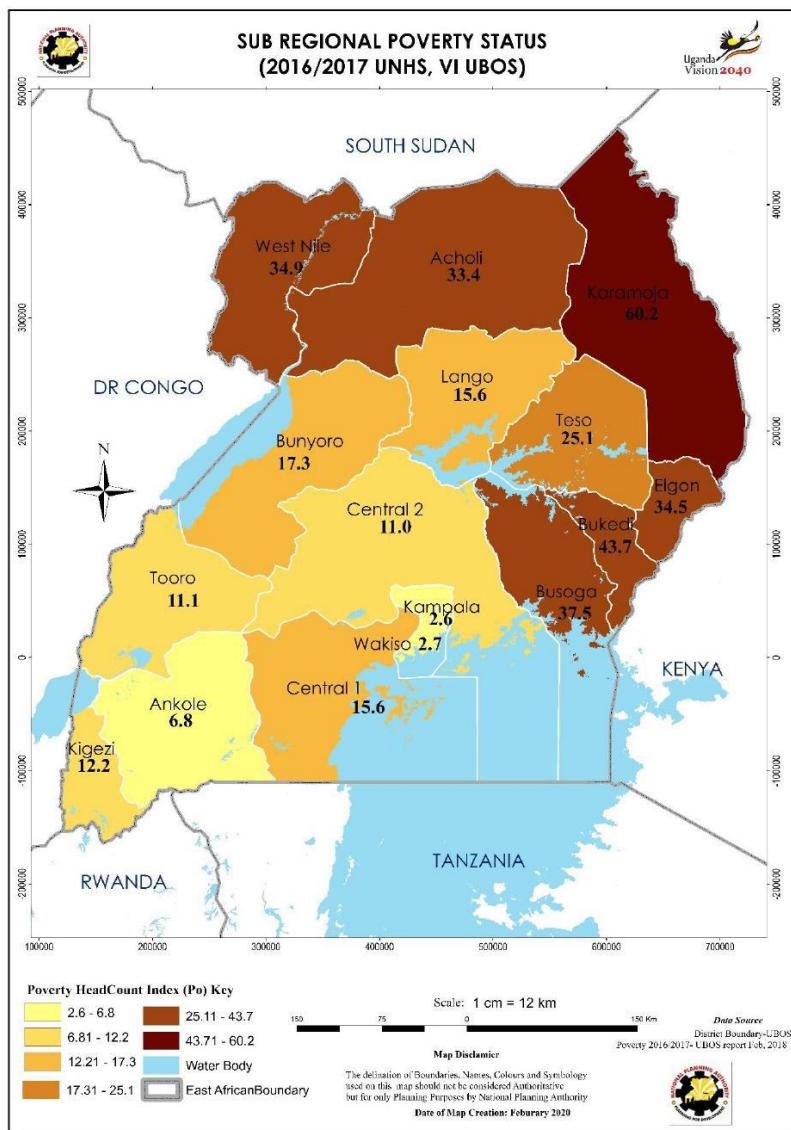
development. This is aimed at benefiting the current and future generations of Ugandans. The national development plan aims at harnessing both government and private sector strengths, in a mixed economy approach, to grow Uganda's real economy through the domestic production of goods and services of at least the necessities of livelihoods: food, clothing, shelter, medicines, security, infrastructure, health, education, and service delivery.⁶⁴ Uganda is projected to be a middle-income country, and the delivery of National Development Policy III will enable Uganda to achieve its target.

The National Development Plan III had set a target for poverty reduction from 19.7% in the financial year 2012/2013 to 14% in the financial year 2019/2020. However, poverty reversed to 21.4 %.⁶⁵ The number of poor people increased from 6.6 million in 2012/2013 to 8.03 million. This was disproportionately concentrated in the sub-region of Bukedi, Busoga, Bugisu, Teso, West Nile, Karamoja, and Bunyoro, compared to other parts of the country.

The poverty levels in West Nile, Acholi, and Karamoja remain significantly above the national average. Below is a table showing changes in poverty in targeted areas by the National Development Plan III:

⁶⁴Cf. National Planning Authority, *Third National Development Plan III 2020/2021-2024/2025*, in: <https://www.npa.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/NATIONAL-PLANNING-AUTHORITY-STRATEGIC-PLAN-202021---202425.pdf>, [22.04.2025].

⁶⁵ Cf. Ibid.



Sub-region	Poverty rate 2016/2017	Poverty rate 2012/2013	Percentage
Bukedi	43.7	29.4	14.3
Busoga	37.5	22.8	14.7
Bugisu	34.9	25.8	9.1
West Nile	34.9	42.0	-7.1
Karamoja	60.1	74.5	-14.3

Acholi	33.1	45.5	-12.1
Teso	25.1	20.8	4.3
Bunyoro	17.3	8.5	8.8

Table: Changes in Poverty in targeted regions between 2012/2013 and 2016/2017.⁶⁶

1.3 Christian faith in Uganda

The context and situation of the history of religion in Uganda can only be understood and described through the historical study of the country.

Before the British conquest, the region was inhabited by several independent kingdoms with centralized monarchies like Buganda, Bunyoro, Busoga, and Toro. There were also chiefdoms and egalitarian polities in the North and East of what came to be called Uganda.⁶⁷

Christianity arrived in Uganda beginning in the central region of Buganda during the third missionary movement that started in the 19th century.⁶⁸ The events that shaped the history of Christianity in Uganda started with Buganda's contact with foreigners. By the time catholic missionaries arrived in the Buganda kingdom, the kingdom had already come into contact with foreigners. Mutesa I, the king of Buganda during that time, had already come into contact with Arabs, who, during their trade activities, introduced Islam to the kingdom. In fact, between 1867 and 1876, the king permitted the adoption of the Islamic calendar, and the King and his subjects even observed Ramadan during that period.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Cf. Ibid.

⁶⁷ Cf. F. Tusingire, *The Evangelisation of Uganda: Challenges and Strategies*, Kisubi 2003, p. 7-10.

⁶⁸ Cf. National Planning Authority, *Third National Development Plan III 2020/2021-2024/2025*, in: <https://www.npa.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/NATIONAL-PLANNING-AUTHORITY-STRATEGIC-PLAN-202021---202425.pdf>, [22.04.2025].

⁶⁹ Cf. S.R. Karugire, *The Political History of Uganda*, Nairobi 1980, p. 60-62.

In 1862, the first two Europeans, John Hannington Speke and James Grant, reached Buganda and were received by King Mutesa I. Henry Morton Stanley, who reached Buganda in 1875, followed in their footsteps. He taught the king a few rudiments of Christianity and Western wisdom, upon which the king asked him to send teachers to teach him and his subjects such wisdom. Political analysts also argue that the King sought to establish another force to counter Arab and Islamic influence in his kingdom and to find an ally against Egypt, which was threatening to annex his kingdom.⁷⁰ Following the invitation of King Mutesa I, Stanley wrote in the Daily Telegraph in November 1875 about the opportunity of evangelization in Uganda. The Church Missionary Society of the Anglican Church in England responded to the challenge. Their two missionaries, Lt. Shergold Smith and Rev. C.T. Wilson, reached Buganda in 1877.

Cardinal Lavigerie also responded to this opportunity to the evangelization of Uganda by sending his missionaries. Therefore, his missionaries, the Missionaries of Africa, commonly known as the White Fathers, reached Buganda on 17 February 1879, in the persons of Fr. Simeon Lourdel and Brother Amans. Monsignor Livinhac, their leader, followed them later.⁷¹ Both were received and allowed to teach the King's subjects, although they were not permitted to move into the kingdom for security reasons.

By the end of 1880, four religions, as it seemed to the people, operated in Buganda: Traditional Religion, Islam, Protestantism, and the Roman Catholic Church. This generated much tension as the religions furiously rivaled each other. This was made worse by the national animosities that existed between the countries from which the first missionaries came, that is, Catholics from France and protestants from England. Mutesa I, a mature, wise king, was able to hold back the tension from the eruption. After he died in 1884, tension erupted under the young King Mwanga, his successor, who, inexperienced and afraid of losing his sovereignty, decided to purge his kingdom of foreign influence. So, he began the persecutions of 1885-1887, in which more than two hundred people lost their lives. The most remembered are the twenty-two martyrs who were burnt at Namugongo on 03.06.1886.⁷²

⁷⁰ Cf. Ibid.

⁷¹ Cf. J.M. Waliggo, *The Catholic Church in the Buddu province of Buganda*, Kampala 2010, p. 20.

⁷² Cf. B. Ssettuma, *Coming of Age in Priesthood: A centenary of Indigenous Catholic Priests in Uganda*, Kampala 2013, p. 64.

In 1888, Mwanga decided again to round up all converts and missionaries and maroon them on one of the islands in Lake Victoria. The plan was aborted, and the Christian converts and Muslims joined forces and ousted the King in September 1888. The Muslims who joined in October turned against Christians and proclaimed an Islamic state under King Kalema, the brother of the deposed King. Catholics and Protestants fled to Buddu and Ankore, respectively.

The above conflict erupted into a civil war. Mwanga, now repentant, joined the Catholics and Protestants. They welcomed him because they lacked a royal heir to inherit the throne if they won the war.

The beginnings of the missions in Uganda were modest. Their success was due to the combination of several aspects, such as the proclamation of the gospel in the past, the sacrifices of the missionaries, the establishment of local Church structures, and educational and medical missions.⁷³ Missionary structures and centers developed and could be elevated to ecclesiastical status: vicariates and dioceses. Currently, there are nineteen dioceses in Uganda, divided into four archdioceses.⁷⁴ Gulu Archdiocese, located in the north, comprises four dioceses of Arua, Nebbi, Lira, and Gulu. Mbarara Archdiocese in the west encompasses five suffragan dioceses: Mbarara, Hoima, Fort Portal, Kasese, and Kabale. The Tororo Archdiocese, located in the eastern part of Uganda, comprises five suffragan dioceses: Tororo, Jinja, Soroti, Moroto, and Kotido. Kampala Archdiocese has five suffragan dioceses: Kampala, Lugazi, Masaka, Kiyinda-Mityana, and Kasana-Luwero. The local churches in Uganda overwhelmingly have their own authorities and priests. In some churches, there is a great number of vocations, but the need overwhelms because there are only a few dozen priests for every several hundred thousand believers. In Uganda, five Major seminaries have been established, and the education of the clergy is a priority. Numerous local religious congregations have been established, such as the Brothers of Charles Lwanga (1927)⁷⁵, the Sisters of Bannabikira (1910)⁷⁶, Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Reparatrix (1927), Little Sisters of

⁷³Cf. M. Boguszewski and R. Pokrywinski (eds.), *Catholic Church in Selected African Countries: Historical–Pastoral Perspective*, in: <https://d1wqxts1xzle.cloudfront.net/>, “Bernadium” (2021), p. 26.

⁷⁴Cf. V. Kyeyune, *The Situation of the Catholic Church in the Central region of Uganda, Catholic Church in Selected African Countries: Historical-Pastoral Perspective*, *Religie Swiata*, (2021) no.7. P.194

⁷⁵ Cf. *Zakony i zgromadzenia zakonne na świecie*, blog, <http://zakony-na-swiecie.blogspot.com/2014/08/bracia-sw-karola-lwangi.html>, [17.07.2025]. NB. The congregation of Brothers was founded in 1927 by Bishop Henry Streicher.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Zakony i zgromadzenia zakonne na świecie*, blog: <http://zakony-na-swiecie.blogspot.com/2009/07/zakony-wedug-miejsca-zaozenia-afryka-m.html>, [17.07.2025]. The Daughters of

Mary Immaculate of Gulu (1936), Missionary Institute of Jesus the Divine Master (1967), Apostles of Jesus (1968), Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church (1970), Brothers of St. Joseph the Worker (1973), and Daughters of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus (1937).⁷⁷

The pastoral work is based on catechists who minister on the spot in the outstations, to which priests commute to discharge their pastoral responsibilities. In some regions, their number may exceed the number of parishes even twenty times. There is, therefore, a need to develop a network of catechetical centers and small communities. Local Churches have specific structures both at the national episcopal level and in the dioceses themselves. These vary according to needs and opportunities available. Individual dioceses, however, have commissions in place: biblical, liturgical, family, Men's Guild, youth, catechetical, prayer groups, ecclesial movements, vocations, small groups, dialogue, social communication, justice, and peace. All this testifies to the ongoing analysis of the current state on which pastoral plans are drawn. The Church in Uganda shares poverty with the entire society, although she makes many efforts to overcome it by pointing to concrete economic, educational, and mental causes. It often refers to the inadequate funds for day-to-day operations and the implementation of numerous pastoral and social programs.⁷⁸ The lack of financial resources prevents the proper formation of clergy, catechists, and the work of various committees. On the other hand, the concern for the self-support of local churches is always present. Even if missionary support is granted by richer countries or international organizations to the poor Churches, work must be done to create awareness among the faithful about the need to maintain basic structures autonomously. According to the Second Vatican Council, the autonomy of the local Church to function, establish roots in the people, and culture testifies to the maturity of the ecclesial community(AG15).

Furthermore, the Churches in Africa have become objects of great concern and appreciation by the universal Church and her representation in the form of the Holy See. A case in point is the three consecutive pilgrimages of the Popes to Uganda in fifty years.⁷⁹ Uganda was visited by Pope Paul VI in 1969, Pope John Paul II in 1993, and

Mary, Sister *Bannabikira*, is a pontifical religious congregation of women founded on December 3, 1910, by Bishop Henry Streicher. They work in 16 dioceses in East Africa and live in 75 convents.

⁷⁷ Cf. Uganda Catholic Secretariat, *Uganda Catholic Directory*, Kisubi 2017, p. 479-500.

⁷⁸ Cf. M. Boguszewski and R. Pokrywinski (eds.), *Catholic Church in Selected African Countries: Historical-Pastoral Perspective*, p. 27.

⁷⁹ Cf. L. Sanyu, *Consecutive Apostolic journeys to Uganda, Religie Swiata* (2021) no.7, p. 145-146.

Pope Francis in 2015. What remains a distinctive feature of the Church in Uganda is its presence among the very numerous tribes. They speak 56 languages.⁸⁰ Missionaries have always manifested great sensitivity and skill in learning new languages for evangelization. The demands are great, and the Church has not always been able to meet them. On a practical level, this means the difficulty of handling translations of Scripture and other religious texts, which have to be translated into many languages. In this context, there is a much greater problem of inculturation in the missions: the dialogue between faith and culture is more than the ability to speak a certain language. Faith is not transmitted independently of the cultural context, but the transmission itself is already entangled within it. It involves moral issues, especially marriage, liturgy, and leadership. Pope Paul VI, in his *Motu Proprio*, 1967, affirmed that the African, in accepting Christianity, need not renounce himself (AT14). At this level, however, numerous theological difficulties arise in understanding the intersection of faith and culture. A specific language has been developed to describe different concepts such as translation, accommodation, inculturation, acculturation, incarnation, or contextualization.⁸¹ The general idea is to avoid two extremes in approaching the mission. The first is not realizing the value of particular cultures and copying everything related to the faith in a Western way. Everything is then pagan and somehow diabolical. The second aspect, more characteristic of modern times, is the opposite of the latter, in which everything African is taken as good, which enables the emergence of various kinds of religious syncretism.⁸² It must be remembered that culture in Africa, like culture in general, is strongly connected to religion, which does not only mean the influence of primitive religions. Christianity has been present in Africa for a long historical period, and it must also be embraced as an element of local culture. The religious situation in Africa is a point of reference for the call to action of the Catholic Church. It has specific characteristics due to its historical destiny and anthropological background. This affects the internal and external difficulties that the Church encounters. Besides the spread of Christianity, we have to deal with the following religious groups: primitive religions (about 50% of Africans are still under their

⁸⁰ Cf. M. Boguszewski and R. Pokrywinski (eds.), *Catholic Church in Selected African Countries: Historical-Pastoral Perspective*, p. 27.

⁸¹ The concept of culture and, therefore, of inculturation comes from cultural anthropology, but it has moved to missiology, and it has its place within it. The particular culture can receive and transmit the universal faith because the Holy Spirit is at work in the process. A kind of incarnation of faith in culture takes place. Cf. J. Różański, *Wokół koncepcji inkulturowej*, Warszawa 2007, p. 4-5.

⁸² Cf. Ibid.

influence), Islam, neo-traditional movements, and Pentecostal groups.⁸³ The Catholic Church considers new religious movements a major threat. The great religious challenge is the mushrooming Pentecostal movement. In 1970, they accounted for less than 5% of all Africans; now there are 12%, which is a double increase. They originate from the so-called African-initiated churches (AIC). Taken together, they make up the second-largest group of Christians. They preach a gospel of success or easily draw the faithful away from the Catholic Church. They introduce numerous paraliturgical gatherings that dilute attendance at catholic liturgies.⁸⁴ Primitive religions are still firmly entrenched, which, with poor catechesis, leads to religious syncretism.

1.3.1 Catholics today compared with other religions in Uganda

The population characteristics by religion in Uganda were dominated by the Christian religion (81.7%) and the Islamic faith (13.2%).

Figure 1.3 reveals that Roman Catholics constitute the largest religious institution, accounting for 16.6 million people of the total household Population, and Anglicans/Church of Uganda at 13.3 million people.⁸⁵ Pentecostal/Evangelicals have risen from 3.8 million people in 2014 to 6.5 million people in 2024. Religious affiliation remains a central aspect of Uganda's population, with 85,559 people identifying as having no religion.

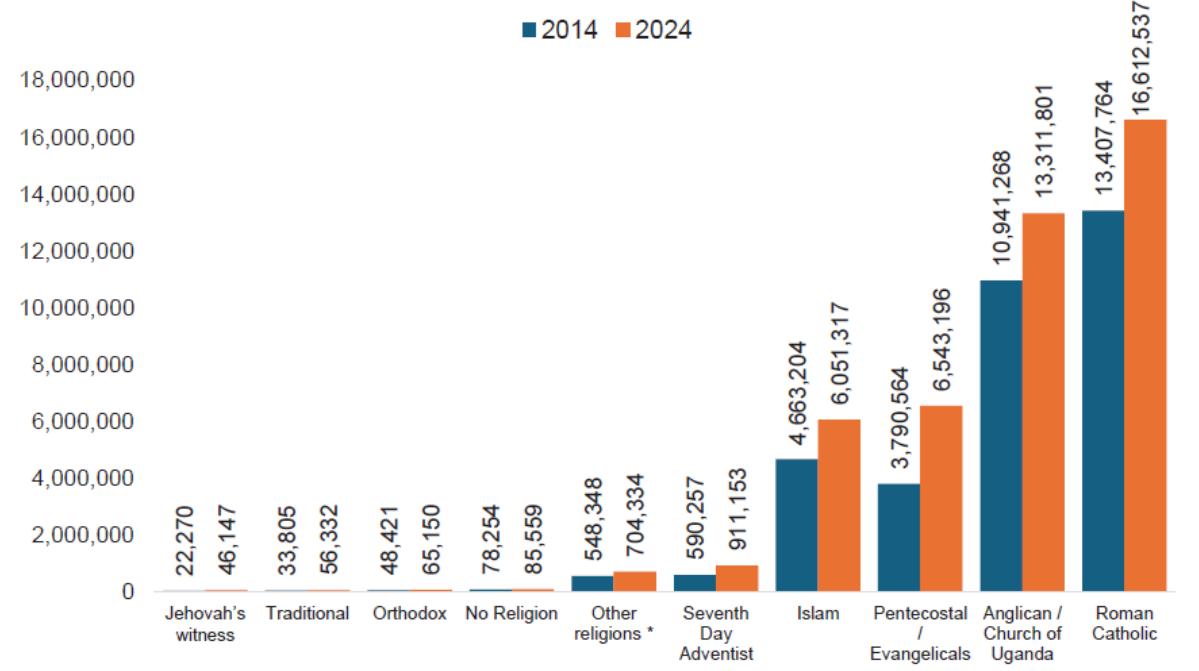
Figure 1.3: Showing the Distribution of Household Population by Religious Affiliation.⁸⁶

⁸³Cf. M. Boguszewski and R. Pokrywinski (eds.), *Catholic Church in Selected African Countries: Historical–Pastoral Perspective*, p. 30.

⁸⁴ Cf. S. Mugisa, *The Gospel of Prosperity and Healing Ministry in African Pentecostalism: A Theological and Pastoral Challenge to the Catholic Church in Uganda* (PhD dissertation written at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw), Warsaw 2021, p. 29. See also W. Kluj, *Koncepcja Istoty Najwyższej – Boga w tradycyjnej religii afrykańskiej według Johna S. Mbitiego* [Concept of the Highest Being – God in African Traditional Religion according to John S. Mbiti], „Annales Missiologicae Posnanienses” (2001) p. 59-77.

⁸⁵ Cf. Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2024, *The National Population and Housing Census 2024 Final Report–Volume 1 (Main)*, Kampala 2024, p. 29.

⁸⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*



*Others includes Bahai, Hindus, Buddhists, Ow'obushobozi, Orthodox, among others

According to the current population information from the 2024 National Population and Housing Census, ten years ago, the number of Catholics increased by 3,204,773, while the Pentecostals experienced a significant increase in their numbers by 2,752,632 persons. This is almost double their number ten years ago. The Anglicans/Church of Uganda came second in growth rate in the past ten years, with 2,370,533 persons. The Muslims came fourth with an increase of 1,388,113 people.

The mushrooming influence of Pentecostals in Uganda is a threat to the main religions of Roman Catholics and Anglicans, as they fish from these two main Churches. Pentecostals have a vibrant way of praying, accompanied by loud music during prayers. They preach a gospel of prosperity that appeals to the youth who desire a luxurious lifestyle. The Pentecostal way of praying has no moderation of the music they play and no controlled liturgical seasons. In that way, they are very lively and appealing. This attracts the youth and other people who like to live in a good mood all the time, to escape their problems.⁸⁷ Samuel Mugisa, in his doctoral dissertation, further explains this point.⁸⁸ He states that religious plurality is a reality in Africa, where Christianity and

⁸⁷ Cf. Daily Monitor, *Role of the Catholic Church in bringing peace to Northern Uganda*, in: <https://www.jpduganda.org/2015/07/02/tax-litigation-at-your-door/>, [15.04.2020].

⁸⁸ Cf. S. Mugisa, *The Gospel of Prosperity and Healing Ministry in African Pentecostalism: A Theological and Pastoral Challenge to the Catholic Church in Uganda* (PhD dissertation written at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Warsaw, Warsaw 2021, p. 29).

Islam coexist with Traditional African Religion. Uganda is experiencing a wave of new religious movements, including some evangelical or Pentecostal churches that sometimes spring up spontaneously. In the observation of Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG 63), such movements offer an attractive faith and a great simplification of the Christian message. They emphasize healing and mix their rituals with those of the traditional religions. Some end to fundamentalism, while others propose a spirituality without God.

Ogbu Kalu identifies the Pentecostal movement as the “third response” of Africans to mission Christianity. For him, African Pentecostalism embraced the spiritual ecology of Africa as mapped out in the traditional worldview.⁸⁹

The Muslims are increasing because they allow polygamy, and they work hard to marry Christian girls who bear them Muslim children. Some of these girls end up being forced or lured to convert to Islam. Those who fail to convert to Islam, nevertheless, all their children must be Muslim. In Africa, from a cultural point of view, the family system is patrilineal. The husband is the head of the family and always has the last say on major decisions in the family. The girls, therefore, who get married to Muslims cannot override their Muslim husbands regarding the decision of their children's religion. Muslims always try to make the impression of being marginalized as a way of attracting attention from the government. They have two to four wives, each wife bearing six children on average.⁹⁰

The achievements of the Catholic Church in Uganda are embedded in the spiritual, social, political, and economic life of the people. Compared to other religions in Uganda, it is rare to doubt the leading role of the Catholic Church in the various spheres of life of the people. From 1879, when the first Catholic Missionaries arrived in Uganda, to 1896, 32,753 neophytes had converted from African Traditional religions to the Catholic Faith.⁹¹ By 1906, there were 100,025 Catholics.

During 1916, there were 150,603 Catholics, 218,824 by 1926, and 227,597 by 1927. “One can identify the blood of the martyrs, disposition of the people, and missionary methodology as among the most evident factors behind achievement.”⁹² In 1937, the Catholic population increased from 227,597 to 366,000. The Catholic

⁸⁹ Cf. O. Kalu, *Preserving a worldview: Pentecostalism in the African Maps of the Universe*, “Pneuma: Journal of the Society of Pentecostal Studies,” 24 (2002) no.2, p. 110-137. See also Adeboye, *A starving man cannot shout hallelujah*, “African Pentecostal Churches and the Challenges of Promoting Sustainable Development” (2020), p. 119.

⁹⁰ Cf. Ibid.

⁹¹ Cf. F. Tusingire, *The Evangelisation of Uganda: Challenges and Strategies*, Kisubi 2003, p. 130.

⁹² Ibid.

Population is higher compared to other religions. Their vote is always important during the contest for the national Presidency. For this reason, the president of Uganda, who is Anglican, always tries to appoint a Catholic to be his vice president.⁹³

The exact number of Catholics between 1937 and 1991 has been problematic to ascertain. But those after 1991 indicate an increase. According to the 2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census Report, in 1991, there were 7,426,511 Catholics of the 16,671,705 Ugandans.⁹⁴ By 2002, 10,242,594 of the 24,433,132 Ugandans were Catholic. According to the Uganda National Population and Housing Census 2024, Catholics comprise 16,612,537 people out of a total population of 45,905,417 Ugandans.⁹⁵

Uganda is the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to be blessed with saints and the first to localize Church leadership in Africa. The first indigenous archbishop, Joseph Nakabaale Kiwanuka (1899-1966), South of the Sahara, was from Uganda. He was ordained a priest in 1929, ordained bishop in 1939, and appointed archbishop of Rubaga in 1960.⁹⁶

The Catholic Church in Uganda has established educational facilities at all levels. They include numerous nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary institutions of education, which are exemplified by the existence of Catholic-founded colleges, major seminaries, St. Augustine's Institute, and the Uganda Martyrs University at Nkozi in Uganda.⁹⁷ The objective of Catholic institutions, centres of spiritual formation, is to impart knowledge and skills to students for integral human development. They help transmit good values for the growth of the church and the country at large.

In jurisprudence and politics, the late Benedicto Kiwanuka is a representative personality who, as the most effective indigenous lawyer during the pre-independence years, eventually rose to the positions of the first Prime Minister of Uganda and the first indigenous Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Uganda.

⁹³ Cf. Daily Monitor, *Role of the Catholic Church in bringing peace to Northern Uganda*, in: <https://www.jpduganda.org/2015/07/02/tax-litigation-at-your-door/>, [24.04.2025].

⁹⁴ Cf. Uganda Bureau of Statistics, *2002 Uganda Population and Housing Census: Analytical Report*, in: <https://wp.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/03-20182002-CensusPopulationCompositionAnalyticalReportpdf>, [24.04.2025].

⁹⁵ Cf. Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2024, *The National Population and Housing Census 2024-Final Report -Volume 1 (Main)*, Kampala 2025, p. 42.

⁹⁶ Cf. J. N. Kiwanuka, *Biography*, in: <https://www.catholic.hierarchy.org/bishop/bkiwa.html>, [24.04.2025].
⁹⁷ Cf. Uganda Catholic Secretariat, *Uganda Catholic Directory*, 7th ed., Kisubi 2017, p. 48-52.

The contribution of the Catholic Church to development in Uganda is indelibly written in the annals of Uganda.⁹⁸

Uganda has been blessed with two cardinals: Cardinal Emmanuel Kiwanuka Nsubuga (1914-199) and Cardinal Emmanuel Wamala (1926-). Today, Uganda has six (6) major seminaries that train and form priests for the Catholic Church. There is a progressive increase in the number of seminarians in the seminaries. The numbers vary from diocese to diocese, with some dioceses having few vocations to the priesthood. Some factors contributing to this are cultural factors.⁹⁹

1.3.2 Some Challenges Faced by the Catholic Church in Uganda

In chapters two to four of my presentation of the pastoral challenges to the laity in the mission of the Church, I shall discuss witchcraft in detail. Associated with witchcraft is syncretism as a fruit of African religious dualism. In many parts of Africa, the beliefs in mystical powers generated by divinities or gods are part of the traditional African culture. This has led many Africans to syncretism. This fusion, or an amalgamation of pagan religions, practices, and cultures with Christianity, is one of the pastoral challenges to the Christian faith or Catholic faith in Uganda (see Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Uganda, 50 years of independence: celebrating our Heritage, Kampala 2012, nos. 45-61).¹⁰⁰ In Uganda today, Catholic Theologians and pastoral agents have an enormous task in addressing these religious challenges to the faith, which is embedded in the lives of Africans. Due to attachment to their religious beliefs and

⁹⁸ Cf. Daily Monitor, *Role of the Catholic Church in bringing peace to Northern Uganda*, in: <https://www.jpduganda.org/2015/07/02/tax-litigation-at-your-door/>, [24.04.2025]. See also Uganda Episcopal Conference, *The Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Uganda, Fifty Years of Independence: Celebrating Our Heritage*, Kampala 2012, nos.6-44.

⁹⁹ Cf. P. Adinda, *AMECEA Online News*, in: <https://amecea.blogspot.com/uganda-two-major-seminaries-share-fence.html>, [24.04.2025].

¹⁰⁰ See also the Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Uganda in preparation for the apostolic visit of Pope John Paul II to Uganda in 1993: *Let Your Light Shine*, Kisubi 1992, nos.21 &22. The Bishops noted in these two numbers religious fundamentalism, new religious movements, and, within the Catholic Church, an infectious craze for visions. They reiterated that these phenomenon demands deeper Christian catechesis and constant counseling. The second number noted the problem of dualism, where several members of the church still live in two conflicting worlds: one Christian, the other non-Christian. During times of crisis or death, sickness, misfortune, and fear, they rely more on traditional practice and rituals than on the saving power of Christ. Christian family life is often compromised by polygamy, unions that are not blessed in the Church, and the separation of spouses.

practices, many Ugandan people, after converting to Christianity, continued to profess their former religious beliefs. This was caused by the failure of the evangelizers to understand the African cultures well and apply a suitable catechesis.

Another challenge is mushrooming religious denominations and sects. These mushrooming religious denominations and sects seem to focus more on wealth acquisition and the gospel of prosperity. In 1914, a sect led by a chief professed to be based on the Bible. It eschewed medicine and doctors, depended upon faith for healing, admitted polygamists to baptism on the ground that monogamy was not taught in the scriptures, and did not insist on a prolonged catechumenate before administering the rite. For some time, it attracted throngs, but within a few months, it began to wane.¹⁰¹ Towards the end of 1999, a cult emerged in Kanungu, Uganda, headed by Joseph Kibwetere, Dominic Kataribabo, and Credonia Mwerinde, which led to the massacre of over 700 of its adherents.¹⁰² In western Uganda, there is also a sect started by Desteo Bisaka, whose followers call him “mighty god,” the powerful one, *Owobusobozi Bisaka*. The sect has existed for over thirty-three years and has swayed some Christians.¹⁰³

Pope Francis, in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, states that the Catholic faith of many peoples is being challenged by the proliferation of new religious movements, some of which tend to fundamentalism (EG 63). Others propose a spirituality without God, and Pope Francis discusses this phenomenon in a two-dimensional manner. First, as a human reaction to a materialistic, consumerist, and individualistic society, and secondly, as a means of exploiting the weaknesses of people living in poverty and on the fringes of society, people who make ends meet amid great human suffering, and are looking for immediate solutions to their needs. We must recognize that if part of our baptized people lacks a sense of belonging to the Church, this is also due to certain structures and the occasionally unwelcoming atmosphere of some of our parishes and communities, or to a bureaucratic way of dealing with problems, be they simple or complex, in the lives of our people. In many places, an administrative approach prevails over a pastoral approach. The administrative approach focuses on administering the sacraments apart from other forms of evangelization (EG 63). Pope Francis makes a

¹⁰¹ Cf. K.S. Latourette, *A History of Expansion of Christianity: The Great Century in the Americas, Australia and Africa* (A.D. 1800-A.D. 1914), London 1943, p. 417.

¹⁰² Cf. P. Atuhaire, *Uganda's Kanungu cult massacre that killed 700 followers* “BBC.com,” in: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-51821411>, [25.04.2025].

¹⁰³ Cf. P. Kamara, *Owosobozi a god among men*, NTV News report, in: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U4sQ1W-tGr4>, [25.04.2025].

fitting analysis of the situation encountered by some Christians in our catholic settings in Africa, especially challenged by poverty, disease, psychological traumas, misunderstandings, death, inadequate faith formation, and so forth. All these challenges demand the attention and a listening ear of the religious leaders and pastoral agents in specific settings.

Poverty is one of the biggest problems in Uganda today. Recent research reveals that over 21.91 % of the population in Uganda is impoverished.¹⁰⁴ The poverty headcount ratio increased to 21.4% in the financial year 2016/2017. In absolute terms, the number of poor increased from 6.6 million in 2012/2013 to 8.03 million in 2016/17. The observed increase in the headcount poverty rate was a setback to the progress made during the last decade. It also jeopardized the likelihood of achieving the NDP II target of reducing poverty to 14.2% by FY 2019/2020. On a negative note, in 2019/20, the headcount poverty rate increased to 20.3%, albeit above the NDP II target rate. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health measures are partly responsible for the observed increase. This is because, before March 2020 (COVID-19 lockdown in Uganda, the poverty rate was 18.7 %, but after the COVID-19 pandemic, the poverty rate increased to 21.91%.

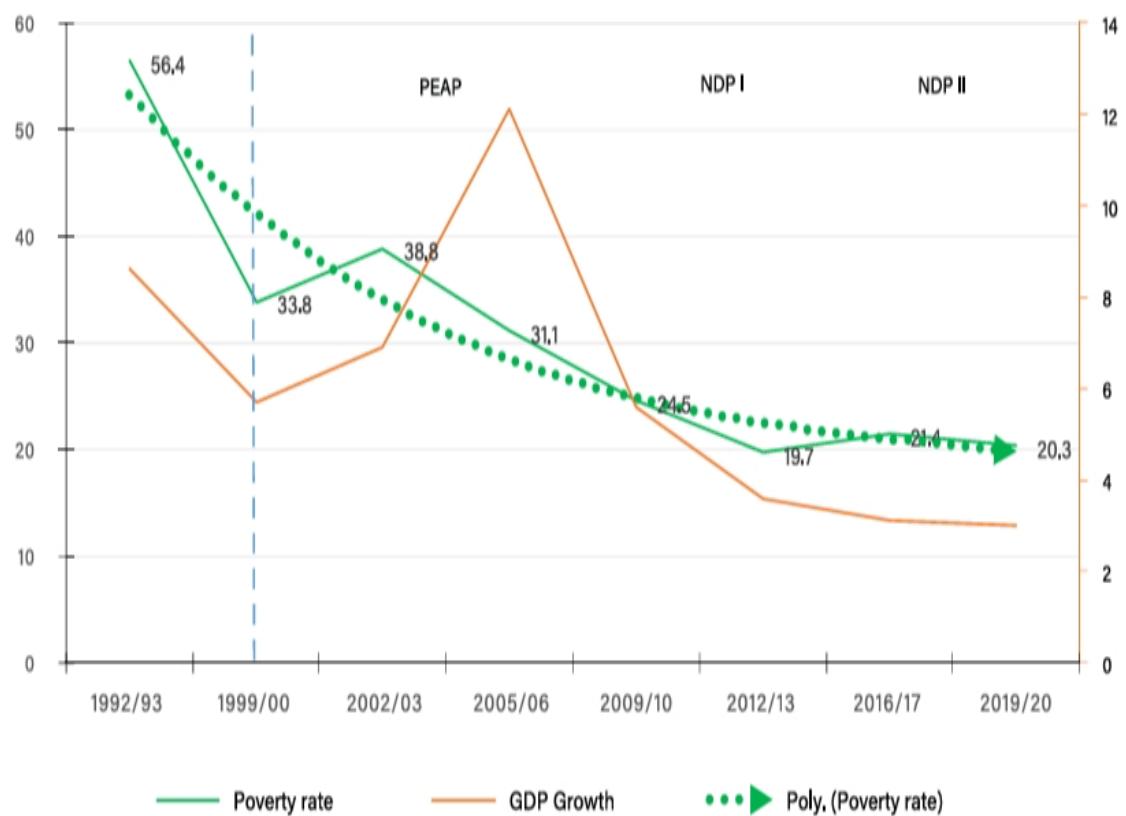
Poverty, therefore, has affected the evangelization and poses a big challenge to the lay apostolate. Many Christians are willing to support and actively participate in pastoral activities, but most are poor. Christians are swimming in abject poverty, living below the poverty line. It has caused low self-esteem among potential leaders in the Church. Poverty is the root cause of many evils in areas such as child sacrifice, witchcraft, theft, and family breakdown, to mention but a few, which are attributed to poverty. The conditions created by poverty have led to a decline in their commitment to church programs under the pretext of making ends meet.

Figure 1: Poverty trends in Uganda (1992/93-2019/20)¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, *Poverty Status report: Jobs, Informality and Poverty in Uganda; Insights on performance before and during COVID-19*, Kampala 2023, p. 6-7.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Ibid., p. 7.

Figure 2.1: Poverty trend 1992/93-2019/20



Source: MoFPED (EDPRD) staff computation based on UNHS 1992/93-2019/20 data sets.

Another difficulty faced by the Catholic Church is in the institution of marriage. Family life and marriage are threatened by cultural factors of polygamy and consumerist behaviors by young people who have little regard for church marriage. The sacraments of initiation remain the only mark of being a Christian. In the area of marriage, some cultures promote polygamy and demand a lot of payment of dowry for the girl being married. This has watered down the teaching on marriage as taught by the Catholic Church (Eph 5:31-32; 1 Cor 7:39; CCC1645; FC 19). The challenge of polygamy will be discussed exhaustively in the next chapter.

1.4 Diocese of Kotido

The Diocese of Kotido was erected on 20 May 1991 and was detached from Moroto Diocese, which formerly constituted the Karamoja region.¹⁰⁶ It comprises the civil and political districts of Kotido, Kaabong, Abim, and Karenga. Kotido Diocese borders South Sudan from the North, Moroto District from the South, Turkana region of Kenya from the East, and Lira and Pader districts from the West.

The Catholic Missionaries arrived in Karamoja in 1933, and the region became part of the former apostolic prefecture of Gulu.¹⁰⁷ The Karamoja region was entrusted to the Comboni missionaries and headed by Monsignor Antonio Vignato. According to the memoir letter of Fr. Giuseppe Garavello to the Pastoral Department of Moroto Diocese, Karamoja territory belonged first to the Mill Hill Missionaries. Later, it was transferred to the Comboni Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. He wrote: "Karamoja districts were originally part of the Eastern Province and hence were entrusted to the Missionary Society of St. Joseph (Mill Hill Missionaries). Due to a lack of personnel, the Mill Hill Missionaries were unable to take over the evangelization of Karamoja from the administration of the Eastern Province to that of the Northern Province, and Karamoja also incidentally changed its ecclesiastical status. It came under the administration of the Catholic Vicariate of Gulu, then directed by Msgr. Antonio Vignato."¹⁰⁸ In 1965, the Diocese of Moroto was erected, and Bishop Sisto Mazzoldi, M.C.C.J., became its first resident bishop. In 1981, bishop Paul Kalanda succeeded bishop Mazzoldi. In 1991, Kotido Diocese was erected, a territory detached from Moroto Diocese, and bishop Denis

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Uganda Catholic Secretariat, *Uganda Catholic Directory* 7th ed., Kisubi 2017, p. 322-323.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. M.M. Lubega and B. Barrolo, *The Dawn of Christianity in Karamoja: Selected Memoirs of the First Missionaries in Karamoja- Uganda 1933-1965*, Moroto, 2008, p. 14-15. See more...An apostolic prefecture is a 'pre-diocesan' missionary jurisdiction where the catholic church is not yet sufficiently developed to have made a diocese. Although it usually has an embryonal See, it is often not called after such a city but rather after a natural feature, or an administrative geographical area, which may be a name used by the local inhabitants, or one assigned to a colonial authority, depending on the circumstances under which the prefecture was established. If a prefecture grows and flourishes, it may be elevated to an apostolic vicariate, headed by a titular bishop, in the hope that with time the region will generate enough Catholics and stability for its catholic institutions to warrant being established as a diocese. Both these stages remain missionary, hence exempt, that is, directly subject to the Holy See, specifically the Dicastery for Evangelisation, rather than as a diocese normally would belong to an ecclesiastical province. The full sequence of development is an independent mission, apostolic prefecture, apostolic vicariate, and apostolic diocese; however, steps may be skipped at the papal discretion, and the next steps may be a bishopric or an archbishopric.

¹⁰⁸ M. Luigi, "Divina Maternita," fra I Karimojong, in *La Nigrizia*, Giugno 1933, p. 82.

Kiwanuka Lote became the first resident bishop. When His Excellency Denis Lote Kiwanuka was elevated to the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Tororo as Archbishop, Rev. Fr. Bernard Charles Phelan MHM was elected Diocesan Administrator on 18 September 2007. On 19 December 2009, the diocese received a new bishop in the person of His Excellency Giuseppe Filippi, M.C.C.J., of the Comboni Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who was appointed as the second bishop of Kotido Diocese.

1.4.1. Statistics

The Diocese of Kotido covers an area of 13,550 square kilometers.¹⁰⁹ According to the 2024 population census, it has a population of 726,824 people.¹¹⁰ The number of Catholics in 2023 was 216,846 people. The number of parishes increased from 10 to 12 in 2025. The diocesan priests are 22, while the missionary priests are 12. The indigenous sisters working in the diocese are 28, and the missionary sisters are 7. The catechists are 132.

The table below summarizes the annual statistics of Kotido Diocese 1992-2024.

Year	Catholics	Total Pop.	Par	% catholic	Dioc. priests	Rel. priests	Total of priests	Cath. per priest	Male religious	Fem. religious	Sem	baptisms	source
1993	1992	1991											
85,877	84,506	83,155											
198,000	216,467	217,000	8	8	5	5							
42.8	39.0	38.3											
5	5	5											
14	14	14											
19	19	19											
4,520					4,376								
22	22	22											
26	26	26											
7	7	7											
1,076	1,070	-											
Ap 1994 ¹¹³	Ap 1993 ¹¹²	Ap 1992 ¹¹¹											

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Uganda Catholic Secretariat, *Uganda Catholic Directory*, 7th ed., Kisubi, 2017, p. 322.

¹¹⁰ Cf. Uganda Bureau of Statistics, *City Population-Statistics, maps and charts*, in:

<https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uganda/admin/04-karamoja>, [27.04.2025]. NB. UBoS in the final data declaration did not publish the population size of Kotido district, which is reflected in my citation. The actual population size for the population of the Kotido diocese, without the Kotido district, is 509,090 people. This leaves a population gap of exactitude.

¹¹¹ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 1991, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City, 1992, p. 343.

¹¹² Cf. Annuario Pontificio 1992, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 1993, p. 344.

¹¹³ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 1993, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 1994, p. 345.

2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994
134,000	130,475	133,474	134,000	130,150	117,647	114,232	110,907	107,000	101,558	93,050	89,078	86,764	86,756	85,877
315,000	305,000	295,783	293,000	283,640	602,003	259,629	241,000	234,000	234,000	201,500	201,095	201,652	201,674	200,599
10	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	8	8	8	8	8
42,5	42,8	45,1	45,7	45,9	19,5	44,0	46,0	45,7	43,4	46	44,3	43,0	43,01	42,8
9	10	12	12	11	12	10	8	9	6	6	5	6	5	5
9	10	10	10	10	10	13	13	14	16	14	14	12	12	12
18	20	22	22	21	22	23	21	23	22	20	19	18	17	17
7,444	6,523	6,112	6,090	6,197	5,347	4,966	5,281	4,652	4,616	4,652	4,688	4,820	5,103	5,051
11	12	13	13	13	13	16	17	18	21	19	19	16	17	16
26	32	36	30		25	24	26	24	26	26	26	30	28	24
6	10	8	11		10	8	11	12	13	14	7	6	6	10
10,984	3,224	3,796	3,257		3,415	917	3,851	2,935	2,507	3,750	3,409	2,741	1,133	1,069
Ap 2009 ¹²⁷	Ap 2008 ¹²⁶	Ap 2007 ¹²⁵	Ap 2006 ¹²⁴	Ap 2005	Ap 2004 ¹²³	Ap 2003 ¹²²	Ap 2002 ¹²¹	Ap 2001 ¹²⁰	Ap 2000 ¹¹⁹	Ap 1999 ¹¹⁸	Ap 1998 ¹¹⁷	Ap 1997 ¹¹⁶	Ap 1996 ¹¹⁵	Ap 1995 ¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 1994, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 1995, p. 345.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 1995, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 1996, p. 355.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 1996, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 1997, p. 356.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 1997, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 1998, p. 362.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 1998, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 1999, p. 363.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 1999, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2000, p. 385-386.

¹²⁰ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2000, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2001, p. 309.

¹²¹ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2001, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2002, p. 310.

¹²² Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2002, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2003, p. 337.

¹²³ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2003, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2004, p. 336.

¹²⁴ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2004, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2005, p. 375.

¹²⁵ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2005, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2006, p. 380.

¹²⁶ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2006, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2007, p. 381.

¹²⁷ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2007, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2008, p. 380.

	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
212,096	202,380	202,038	193,010	184,067	175,564	169,215	163,132	174,300	173,460	167,565	151,000	146,000	141,200	
552,123	536,042	499,442	481,623	463,638	460,418	528,000	512,000	383,000	370,000	357,000	345,000	333,611		
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	
38.4	37.75	37.8	38.8	38	37.8	36.75	30.8	34	45.3	45.2	42.2	42.3	42.3	
20	18	18	18	15	17	15	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	
6	9	12	12	9	10	9	9	8	9	9	9	9	9	6
26	27	30	30	24	27	24	25	24	25	25	25	25	25	16
8,157	7,482	6,433	6,433	7,669	6,502	7,050	6,525	7,262	6,938	6,702	6,040	5,840	8,825	
7	9	13	13	9	10	9	11	10	11	13	14	16	8	
34	31	30	32	34	35	36	35	32	34	33	27	31	26	
7	9	9	9	14	14	16	17	18	14	13	10	7	5	
9754	6,461		10933	8,686	7,342	8,683	8,256	9,044	6,491	7551	6076	13663	12901	
Ap2023 ¹⁴¹	Ap2022 ¹⁴⁰	Ap2021 ¹³⁹	Ap2020 ¹³⁸	Ap2019 ¹³⁷	Ap2018 ¹³⁶	Ap2017 ¹³⁵	Ap2016 ¹³⁴	Ap2015 ¹³³	Ap2014 ¹³²	Ap2013 ¹³¹	Ap2012 ¹³⁰	Ap2011 ¹²⁹	Ap2010 ¹²⁸	

¹²⁸ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2008, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2009, p. 373.

¹²⁹ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2009, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2010, p. 372.

¹³⁰ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2010, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2011, p. 374.

¹³¹ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2011, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2012, p. 374-375.

¹³² Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2012, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2013, p. 375.

¹³³ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 20014, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2015, p. 375.

¹³⁴ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2015, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2016, p. 374-375.

¹³⁵ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2016, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2017, p. 373.

¹³⁶ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2017, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2018, p. 374.

¹³⁷ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2018, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2019, p. 373.

¹³⁸ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2019, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2020, p. 372.

¹³⁹ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2020, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2021, p. 372

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2021, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2022, p. 373.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Annuario Pontificio 2022, *Kotido Diocese*, Vatican City 2023, p. 376.

2023	216, 846	553,779	10	39,2	20	10	26	8,340	11	32	6	4,759	Ap 2024 ¹⁴²
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From the above table, we note that the number of Catholics served by a priest in the Diocese of Kotido from 1999 to 2023 ranges from 4,616 to 7,228 Catholics. This almost doubles the national average of Uganda, where a priest serves 3,314 Catholics.¹⁴³ In addition to other difficulties associated with services, poverty, bad roads, insecurity, illiteracy, and strong cultural beliefs, the laity needs to be engaged to facilitate the mission of evangelization, which the Lord has charged them to perform. The limited number of priests will find their function easier to execute as several lay people are engaged in the mission.

1.4.2 The People of Kotido Diocese

The general name that encompasses all the natives of the Kotido diocese is the Karimojong. They comprise ethnic groups as the Dodoth, Ethur, Ik (Teuso), and the Jie.¹⁴⁴ The Karamojong are pastoralists who used to depend exclusively on animals for survival; they additionally diversified their livelihoods by practicing subsistence farming to supplement their food. Among the 200 to 500 million pastoralists worldwide in 2019, 75 % of countries had pastoral communities.¹⁴⁵ The Karimojong, living in the northeastern corner of Uganda, are just a fraction of these people.

The Karimojong, living in the northeastern corner of Uganda, are just a fraction of these people. According to anthropologists, the Karimojong are part of the group that migrated from present-day Ethiopia around 1600 AD.¹⁴⁶ They split into two branches, one moving to present-day Kenya to form the Kalenjin group and the Masai cluster. The

¹⁴² Cf. *Annuario Pontificio 2023*, Kotido Diocese, Vatican City 2024, p. 518.

¹⁴³ Cf. *The Catholic World Report, Catholicism in Uganda, the Youngest Christian Populace*, in: <https://www.catholicworldreport.com>, [27.04.2025].

¹⁴⁴ Cf. *Constitution of the Republic of Uganda*, Kampala 1995, Third Schedule Article 10(a) Uganda's indigenous communities as of 1 February 1926.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. C. Mbow, C. Rosenzweig, T.G. Benton et.al, *Food security*, in: <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/4/2019/11/08-chapter-5>, IPCC SRCCl p. 439-442, [04.05.2025].

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Go visit Kenya, *Karamojong People, and their Culture* in Uganda, in: <https://www.govisitkenya.com/karamoja-people.html>, [09.05.2025].

other branch, called Ateker, migrated Westwards. Ateker further split into several groups, including Turkana in present-day Kenya, Iteso, Dodoth, Jie, Karamojong (Bokora), and Kumam in present-day Uganda, also Jiye and Toposa in South Sudan, all of them together now known as the Teso cluster or Karamojong cluster.

It is said that the Karamojong people were originally known as the Jie. The name Karamojong is derived from the phrase *ekar ngimojong*, meaning [the old men can walk no further].¹⁴⁷ Their situation was caused by drought and resultant famine. The internal and external conflicts were exacerbated by the outbreak of human and cattle diseases among them. Consequently, people began to discuss the possibility of moving to new places. The older men urged them not to do so. They were worried that the young men would be killed by hostile tribes or be eaten by wild animals. In their response, the young men mocked their fathers with the word *akar ngimojong*. *Akar ngimojong*, in turn, called the young men *Atesia*, meaning [graves]. The word *Atesia* also meant children. The *Akar ngimojong* remained settled near Mt. Moroto in the region presently known as the Karamoja sub-region. Later, they acquired the name Karimojong (tired old men). The young men who were called *Atesia* moved southwards, where they finally called themselves Iteso. According to tradition, the people now known as the Karamojong cluster or Teso cluster are said to have migrated from Abyssinia between 1600 and 1700 AD as a single group.¹⁴⁸ When they reached the area around the modern Kenyan Ethiopian border, they are said to have fragmented into several groups, including those that became Turkana, Toposa, and the Dodoth. The group that became known as the Toposa continued to present-day South Sudan; the Dodoth settled in Apule in the northern part of present-day Karamoja.

The Turkana settled in Kenya, where they are now, and today's Jie of Uganda are thought to have split from them, moving up the escarpment into today's Kotido District.

The main body continued southwards, consisting of seven groups or clans who settled in today's southern Karamoja, merging to become the three clans now existing: the Matheniko in the east around Moroto Mountain, the Pian in the south, and the Bokora in the West.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Cf. D. Akabwai et.al., Karamoja People: Uganda's Patriarchal Warriors and the most feared tribe with the most fashionable hairstyles, a research conducted by Feinstein International Centre at Tufts University, in: dakabwai@iconnect.co.ke, [12.05.2025].

However, a significant group went west and formed the Iteso, the Kumam, and the Langi. This group is associated with the phrase “the old men can walk no further,” referring to the Karamojong.

In the 2024 census, the population of Kotido district was projected to be 219,734, Kaabong district was at 264,631, and Karenga district was at 100,375 people.¹⁴⁹ Abim, one of the districts in Kotido diocese, is not a pastoralist area because the climate favors farming. The population of the Abim district was 144,084 people. The area is inhabited by the people known as the Ethur. They are Western Nilotes comprising the Joabwor and Joakwar. Linguistically, they speak a dialect akin to Luo. This could have been because of proximity and association with the Luo-speaking tribes, such as the Acholi and Lango. Smaller relict communities of the *Ik*, referred to as the Teuso by the Karamojong, occupy the mountainous northeastern border with Kenya. In the part of Karenga are the Nyangia, who originally spoke languages belonging to the Eastern Sudanic family of Kuliak or Rub languages, which are also scattered throughout the region.

Karimojong speak the *Karamojong* or *Ngakarimojong* language. It is a Nilotc language of the Nile-Saharan language family spoken by at least 370,000 people in Uganda.¹⁵⁰ The name approximates “the old men who sat down,” dating from a time of migration 300 or more years ago, when this group refused to travel further to what Teso is now.

They are cattle-keeping people practicing transhumance, which is reflected in their language and traditional religious beliefs. Settled Cultivation is recent, and words associated with it are usually borrowed from neighboring languages or introduced as a result of colonialism, English, and Kiswahili. There are closely related languages and dialects spoken by many more people, including Jie, Ngidodos, Iteso (Uganda), Ngiturkana (Kenya), Toposa (Southern Sudan)

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Uganda Bureau of Statistics, *city population*, in: <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uganda/admin/04-karamoja>, [04.05.2025].

¹⁵⁰ The population of the Karamojong has grown since then to 1,496,117 people according to the census of 2024.

1.4.3 The Current Status of the Laity in Kotido Diocese

Kotido diocese does not have a fully-fledged commission for the Laity at the diocesan level, though it exists at the national level with the Uganda Episcopal Conference. However, a priest chaplain in charge of ecclesial movements and Associations oversees the activities of the laity in the diocese. The laity is active in various movements and associations in the diocese in the following categories: Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Legion of Mary, and associations include married couples, Young Christian Students Association, St. Peter the Apostle, Holy Childhood, Pontifical Missionary Union, choirs, youths, Women Guild, Men's Guild, altar servers, Xavierians, friends of the environment, disabled people, etc.

The Diocese of Kotido, in its policy document, states that the Holy Spirit keeps calling lay Christians to offer themselves as ministers to the community through associations and ecclesial movements. Various documents of the Church, namely *Christifideles Laici*, affirm the importance of ecclesial movements serving the Christian community through faithfulness to their vocation (CL31). The movements have formation programs for their members and ongoing formation for couples in their vocation of church marriage. Secondly, to inspire and

Witness to other couples who have not yet embraced the sacrament of matrimony to come to sacramental life. This was to counter rampant polygamy in the diocese.

In the Kotido diocese, there has been a small-scale formation program for married couples since 2010, organized by the office of the Pastoral Coordinator. Parishes need to embrace it at the parish level rather than at the diocesan level. This helps to attract many couples to attend the course at a lower cost. The frequency of formation programs should be quarterly to cover the needed material and accompaniment of the couples. The same applies to other associations and movements. The Christians who get catechized and converted and belong to a church movement or association must become agents of change for others who are trapped in a pagan situation or lapsed. The witness of transformed Christians positively impacts others to embrace the faith. In Uganda, in the late 1990s to 2000, a similar apostolate existed in the Lira diocese, where Fr. Russo MCCJ used converted witchdoctors to preach to people and other witchdoctors regarding the emptiness and deception in the practice of witchdoctors. The witchdoctors play on the

psychology of the victims to attain money for survival. In this way, many people were invited to shun witchcraft from the dioceses and many institutions.

The parish must become a boiling point for formation programs for intended groups. The Diocese values the presence of various movements within the Diocese as gifts of the Spirit serving the Christian community. The Diocese welcomes the variety of gifts necessary for the growth in maturity of the Christian community (KDP 2015, n.40.2).

The Church never tires of inviting the laity to renewal and growth. The laity must open themselves with honesty and openness to Christ Jesus the Saviour. There must not remain any page of their lives unturned as the sacred scriptures instruct: "You must give up your old way of life; you must put aside your old self, which gets corrupted by following illusory desires. Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God's way in goodness and holiness of truth" (Eph 4:22-33).

To be "salt to the earth and light of the world" (Mt 5:13-14), the Lay faithful must be convinced and firm in the faith and be enlightened about the same. The formation and training of the Laity, among other things, in spirituality, Holy Scripture, theology, liturgy, social doctrine of the Church, and leadership are important. They need to know their faith and role in the Church and Society. The laity are particularly called to be faithful witnesses of the Gospel in the Cultural, social, political, economic, scientific, and technological fields.

Bishop Henry Ssentongo of Moroto Diocese (a neighboring diocese occupied by the same ethnic group) pointed out pertinent areas applicable for special attention in the formation of the laity.¹⁵¹

-incompatibility of the Christian Faith with cultural and religious practices, e.g., witchcraft, revenge, polygamy, etc.

-sacrament of matrimony, as many Christians do not receive sacraments because of their marital status.

-justice and Peace, e.g., the problem of raids.

¹⁵¹ Cf. H.A. Ssentongo, *Pastoral Letter of Moroto Diocese: Life to the Full*, Moroto 1999, p. 19-20.

- education of the children
- the necessity and dignity of work.

The local Church in Kotido is still grappling with the same challenges twenty-six years after Bishop Henry Ssentongo's pastoral letter in 1999.

1.5. The Theology of the Laity

The Hebrew word *am* was translated in the Septuagint by the Greek word *Laos* (Ex 19:3-7; Dt 7:6; 14:2). Both in Hebrew and Greek, the respective words referred to “people,” including their leadership- the priests, prophets, and rulers (Is 24:2; Jer 26:11). The whole Church is the *Laos*, the people of God. Whether in pre-Christian or post-Christian times, leadership existed in service to the people. The laity as a people have their mission. The relationship between leadership and laity is complementary.

There are various senses in which the terms “lay,” “lay person,” and “laity” can be used. A starting point is the distinction between “ordained” and “lay.” Every Church and Christian body in the world has found it necessary to develop a class of people solemnly set apart for the service of the Church, endowed with all authority to carry out the ministry of the word and sacraments. As it stands today, in most cases, they are required to devote their time to serving the Church. In most churches canonically, and some countries legally, ministers of the Gospel are debarred from taking up any form of lucrative employment, and from gaining their livelihood outside their service of the Church. In exceptional circumstances, Churches may find it necessary to do without such a full-time ministry, as the Church in the very earliest times (e.g., Paul, a tentmaker) seems to have done, and in more recent times (e.g., in the communist bloc, non-stipendiary ministers in the Christian Churches). There are other distinctions, e.g., between those who live by the gospel and those who live in the world; those who have renounced the world in the monastic movement (which began as a lay movement) and those who have not.

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (LG 31) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 897) both define the term ‘laity’ as all the faithful, except those in

Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is the faithful who, by Baptism, are incorporated into Christ, are placed into the people of God, and in their way, share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and the world. Their secular character is proper and peculiar to the laity. Although those in Holy Orders may sometimes be engaged in secular activities or even practice a secular profession, due to their particular vocation, they are principally ordained to the sacred ministry. Similarly, the religious give outstanding and striking testimony that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the Beatitudes.

Because of their special vocation, it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will (LG 31). They live in the world, are involved in temporal matters, and direct them according to God's will. They live in the world, engaged in every work and business of the earth and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence. The laity, being called by God, are led by the spirit of the Gospel; they may contribute to the sanctification of the world, as from within, like a leaven, by fulfilling their particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope, and charity, they must manifest Christ to others. It pertains to them in a special way to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are so strongly associated that they may be affected and grow according to Christ and the glory of the creator and redeemer.

The laity forms over 99% of the parish community (EG102), and their role goes beyond participating in liturgical activities. The Church has progressively recognized the laity's role in writing several documents stipulating their activities. The documents of the Second Vatican

Council, specifically the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, 21.11.1964), the Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 18.11.1965), Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes divinitus*, 7.11.1965), and other magisterial documents like the Code of Canon Law (25.01.1983), Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici* (30.12.1988) of John Paul II, Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful. These particularly exhaust the role of the laity in the life of the Church.

In this subsection, we shall look at the prominent Theologians whose ingenuity and inspiration shaped the theology of the laity in the nineteenth century. Their views consequently became part of the discussions in the Second Vatican Council in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People. The subsequent Popes utilized their ideas in developing the theology of the laity.

1.5.1 John Henry Newman (1801- 1890)

Newman is one of the most significant contributors to highlighting the role of the laity within the Church.¹⁵² He displayed his contribution in his essay "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine," which appeared in the Rambler (1859). It was controversial at the time, and it is so even today. The truth is that it has been embodied in the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*.

Newman was concerned with the overall understanding of how Tradition is present and promulgated in the Church. As such, his work, even if it contains some imprecise phraseology, represents an important milestone in Christian thought, one that has had a lasting significance and continues to be relevant in modern thinking.

1. For Newman, the Church mustn't be merely a legal institution managed by officials. She is the Body of Christ, with each limb and organ irreplaceable. She is a community with diverse members who share a common mind of faith that cannot stray into error.

2. Newman demands respect due to the consent of believers. Here he is thinking not of teaching authority but of the importance of belief lived in unity and conviction, which, as a testimony from the practice of faith, is particularly important for the faithful passing on of Revelation.

3. The role of the Papacy and the Episcopate is intrinsically tied to the preservation of the Faith, if Newman stresses the importance of the *sensus*

¹⁵² Cf. H. Geissler, *The witness of the Faithful in matters of Doctrine according to John Henry Newman*, in: <https://www.newmanfriendsinternational.org/newman/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/on-consulting-english1.pdf>, [16.05.2025].

fidelium (sense of the faithful).¹⁵³ He also stresses the irreplaceable mission of the shepherds. He writes graphically of the fourth century when there were indeed great Episcopal figures and doctors of the Church, but also when many pastors did not fulfill their mission because they had fallen victim to heresy, compromise, or apathy. Newman hoped that such a period of confusion would never again befall the Church. In the view of Newman, the problems in the fourth century were fundamentally caused by the failure of many bishops. The fourth century can teach us that collaboration, in fact, the mutual support of courageous bishops and committed laypersons, is fundamentally important. In this sense, the Church needs shepherds who fearlessly proclaim and defend sound doctrine: confessors of faith, like Athanasius, Hillary, or Augustine, in whom the faithful can find direction and support.

4. What effectively is the *consensus fidelium* at its core? With great theologians, Newman describes this consensus as a witness for the apostolic doctrine, as leadership by God's spirit, and as an answer to the prayers of the faithful. The *Consensus fidelium* may be seen as a fruit and converging manifestation of the *sensus fidelium*, which is a gift of God that enables the faithful, in profound agreement with the Church and under the guidance of the magisterium, to adhere to the Truth and to apply it faithfully in daily life.

Like Mohler,¹⁵⁴ Newman describes the *sensus fidelium* as the ecclesial mind or conscience. As individual conscience enables one to spontaneously choose between good and evil, the ecclesiastical conscience helps God's people instinctively to accept the truth and reject error. Even some years before the Rambler article, Newman wrote: "In that earliest age, it was simply the living spirit of the myriads of the faithful, none of them known to fame, who received from the disciples of our Lord, and husbanded so well, and

¹⁵³ Cf. International Commission of Theologians, *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church* (2014), in: <https://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/congregations/cfaith/cti-documents/rc-cti-20140610-sensus-fidei-en.html>, [17.05.2025].

¹⁵⁴ Johann Adam Mohler (1796-1836) was a 19th-century German Theologian who stressed the importance of the laity in the living tradition of the Church. He believed in the laity through their lived faith and experience to contribute to the Church's understanding and transmission of doctrine. He saw the laity as active participants in the church's life, not just passive recipients. He emphasized the unity of the church and the interconnectedness of the clergy in his writing on symbolism. He situated the doctrinal development with a Christological model of the church as human and divine, with one dimension that changed by nature and one that did not. See, K. Parker and C.M. Shea, Johann Adam Möhler's influence on John Henry Newman's Theory of Doctrinal Development: The case for a Reappraisal, *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses*, 89 (2013), no.1, p. 73-95 in: <https://poj.peeter-leuven.be/content.php?id=2985323&url=article>, [24.07.2025].

circulated so widely, and transmitted so faithfully, generation after generation, the once delivered apostolic faith, who held it with such sharpness of outline and explicitness of detail, as enabled even the unlearned instinctively to discriminate between truth and error, spontaneously to reject the very shadow of heresy.”¹⁵⁵

Catholic Action had been around for at least a century. It took off in the 1920s and 1930s, as a church-supported response to *fascism*, *Nazism*, and *communism*. Pope Pius XI, its most notable champion, earned the name “Pope of Catholic Action” for his efforts on its behalf. In the encyclical *Ubi Arcano* (1922), Pius XI called for the participation of the Laity in the work of the hierarchy, and under their guidance and direction. The theme of Christ's Kingdom was emphasized in the letter *Quas Primas* (1925). Inspired by these teachings, movements sprang up under the general title of Catholic Action.¹⁵⁶ In 1927, Pope Pius XI gave the term its classical definition as the “participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy.”

Catholic Action, in its day, marked a giant step forward in the Church's thinking about the laity. Giving the laity meaningful roles in the Church's mission was a new development at the time. But Catholic Action also had a serious built-in limitation, its definition of apostolate. Repeatedly, you found sentiments like this in the literature of Catholic Action: “The apostolate of the Laity is a participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy.” This implies that the right and duty to share in the mission of the Church is a concession to the laity on the part of the hierarchy- something that comes to them on loan, so to speak- and in the end, what lay people do by way of a postulate naturally is decided by the clergy. Sixty years ago, people were prepared to accept that approach.

A distinction is normally made between general and specialized Catholic Action. General Catholic Action organizations, such as the Holy Name Society or the Legion of Mary, are open to all Roman Catholics. Specialized Catholic Action groups are limited to members of a given profession or interest group, such as workers, students, doctors, lawyers, or married couples. The most famous of specialized groups is the Jocists (*Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne*; in English-speaking nations called the Young Christian Workers (YCW). The group was founded in Belgium after World War I (1919) as Young Trade Unionists, an organized association of factory workers, by Father (later Cardinal)

¹⁵⁵ Historical Sketches. I, London, 1872, p. 209.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. L. Civardi, A Manual of Catholic Action, Tr. C.C. Martindale, London, 1935, in: <http://www.academia.edu/33957274/LAITY-From-Pay-Pray-Obey-to-Co-Responsibility-for-the-Church>, [17.05.2025].

Joseph Cardijn. In 1924, its name was changed to "Young Christian Workers," and by 1928, it had spread to 68 countries. It worked under the principle of See-Judge-Act.

The International Young Catholic Students (IYCS), also known as the Young Christian Students (YCS), has its roots in the development of several YCS national movements in the late 1920s in Belgium and France.¹⁵⁷ Since its inception, the Young Christian Students' movement has progressed in the Spirit of the Specialized Catholic Action Movements that Cardijn inspired through the methodology of See-Judge-Act. In 1946, just at the end of the Second World War, international coordination was established in Paris. The International General Consultative status with the Economic and Social Commission (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, and an operational status with UNESCO in 1998.

1.5.2. Yves M.J. Congar (1904-1995)

In a personal letter written to Richard J. Beauchesne (1974), Congar said,

"This coherence [of my work] is that of life. I am a truly reflective person. I have little, too little, questions and methods. My publications respond to calls that I have felt and that were linked to occurrences. I have attempted to serve theologically the people of God, this church that I love, in its historical life. For sure, life itself is coherent. This is why, although I have often utilized successive categories of analysis and exposition, about the theme that I was studying, without taking the time, and without having the time, and without having the strength to construct a synthesis by itself, there exists in my work, which is successive and multiple, a coherence, a progressive development."¹⁵⁸

Briefly stated, one can say that Congar's concept of Laity and ministry can be sketched in the following way: He began in the 1940s to view the position of the laity from the perspective of the Church-Ministerial Priesthood-Universal Priesthood. In other

¹⁵⁷ Cf. D. Lord, *Part of words of a lyric composed indicating the spirit of the movement*, in: <https://www.godsongs.net/2012/12/for-christ-king-army-of-youth.html>, [10.07.2025].

¹⁵⁸ Y. M.J. Congar, O.P.: *Evolution, Evaluation and Ecumenical Perspectives*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences 1974, in: <http://webzoom.freewebs.com/beautiful-oak-tree/A-THESES-IN%20TOTO.pdf> or <http://www.academia.edu/4934110/LAITY-AND-MINISTRY-IN-YVES-M-J.CONGAR-O.P-EVOLUTION-EVALUATION-AND-ECUMENICAL-PERSPECTIVES>, [17.05.2025].

words, he was trying to fit the life reality of the Laity into the hierarchical model of the Church. The institutional Church is the instrument of God's life that expresses this life externally. Congar explains: "The Church institution is the instrument organically associated with the Church-Body of Christ...it is not without reason that the eucharist and Church are both together the reality and bear the name 'Body of Christ.' " Congar illustrates the faithfulness of the Fathers of the Church to the traditional meaning of ecclesia, in defining the church as *Congregatio fidelium* (congregation of the faithful), *Societas fidelium* (society of the faithful), *Collectio* (collection), *Adunatio* (Bringing together), *Collegium* (college), *Unitas* (Unity), *Corpus* (Body), *Communio* (Communion), *Coetus* (The gathering), *Populus* (People)...*fidelium* (of faithful) or *Christianorum* (of Christians), *Catholicorum* (of Catholics). The Church is, however, equally an institution or structure. It consists of the means destined to realize communion or community. Congar defines the institution as the hierarchical pole of the Church. This latter aspect of the Church (i.e., the institution) consists of the totality of means which the Lord has placed at the disposition of the faithful to lead them to communion with him. It is at the heart of ecclesial reality.

In the 1960s and after, Congar moved to the sequence: *Church-Universal Priesthood-Ministerial Priesthood*. This represented a change, which meant that the structure of the Church was at the service of its life. And the laity was a significant part of that life. Congar established ministries within the Church-Community and the Community-Community, in turn, within the world community. The Church came to be defined in its service to the world. The beginnings of this view can already be traced in his work on the Laity. This position became more explicit after the Second Vatican Council. Congar explains the meaning of the Vatican II Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, as follows: since "Christianity has to do with mankind, with people, it has the same matter and the same purpose that the world has: the realization of the human adventure. However, mankind has within itself something beyond that which is purely "terrestrial," namely, what *Gaudium et Spes* calls the integral vocation of man. There is no question here of subordinating the temporal to the spiritual. It is a question of referring both the spiritual and the temporal to eschatology. The Church as a messianic people is the universal sacrament of salvation.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Y. Congar, *Vatican II: L'Église dans le monde de ce temps* II, *Commentaires, Unam Sanctam* 65b, Paris 1967, p. 307-309.

To better situate the ministerial priesthood within the Christian community, as a special ministry and apostolic succession, Congar distinguishes between the Jesus of History and the Christ of Glory. In the Jesus of History, we find two aspects: a life of service and a life of mission (i.e., Jesus' having been sent by the Father in the Spirit), or what Congar refers to, respectively, the Christological and Pneumatological aspects. The entire Christian community shares the Christological aspect of the historical Jesus; the Apostles, and eventually the ministers, share the Pneumatological dimension of the historical Jesus.

Interestingly, Congar distinguishes three levels of ministries: (1) occasional, spontaneous, and temporary ministries within and outside the Christian community, such as the ministry of a mother who catechizes little children; "*le Seigneur et l'Esprit mènent le jeu*". (2) There is a second level of ministries, analogous to the first, but more stable, given their direct link with the habitual needs of the Church as a community of faith, of cult, of loving service, and of witness. Permanent Catechists and lectors would be examples of such ministries; (3) finally, there are the officially recognized ministries or offices *à base sacramentelle*; namely, the diaconate, the presbyterate, and the episcopate. Distinctions elucidate this latter ministry in comparison with the two former ones. One cannot separate the ordination (which can be by election or designation) from the charism, for the latter must be there to be recognized publicly and officially by the Church. The charism of the ordained minister must eventually, through prayer and faithfulness, be submitted to the law of development and growth. In fact, Congar would say "*le laïc peut être plus prêtre que le prêtre ordonné*" (the lay person can be more priest than the ordained priest).¹⁶⁰

1.5.3. Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

The teaching of the Second Vatican Council concerning the laity was an enormous and lasting achievement, even though it constitutes only a beginning. The starting point is that "the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (LG 1). In this

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Y. Congar, *Ministères et communion ecclésiale*, Paris 1971, p. 43-46.

vision, the “People of God” (of whom the hierarchy is a part) are spoken of before receiving specific treatment. Secondly, from the floor of the Council emerged a document that may not be the most perfect or desirable, but one in which the spirit of the times was embodied, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*). The Church is at the service of the world, and nothing in the world is outside the concern of the Church. That surely represents a paradigm shift, establishing the principle that the institution of the Church is at the service of the world.

In this perspective, all the other pronouncements of Vatican II are situated, including the Decree on the Apostolate of the laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*). The Decree of the Apostolate of the laity has two focal points: first, lay people are called to be saints; second, lay people are called directly by Christ to participate in the apostolate and mission of the Church. It is therefore quite clear that all Christians are in any state or walk of life. They are called to the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of love, and by this holiness, a more human manner of life is fostered also in earthly society....The forms and tasks of life are many, but holiness is one....Therefore, all the faithful are invited and obliged to holiness and the perfection of their life (LG 40 & 41). The crucial statement is this: “The apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the Church. Through Baptism and Confirmation, all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself.” (LG 33). This is a different perspective on what was considered “Catholic action.” The laity’s participation in the mission of the Church is by no means necessarily a sharing in the apostolate of the hierarchy. The laity has an apostolate that is properly their own, an apostolate to which they are called directly by Christ in baptism and confirmation and which, as the constitution says, is “communicated and nourished” by the Eucharist and the other sacraments.

Lumen Gentium makes another point about the lay apostolate that has emerged as exceptionally important in the light of Postconciliar developments concerning lay ministry. The apostolate proper to Catholic lay people, it says, does not take place within the structures and institutions of the Church, but out in the secular world. The laity has the special vocation to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will (LG 31). Consequently, "Christ ... fulfills His prophetic office ... not only by the hierarchy who teach in His name and with His authority but also by the laity ..." (LG 35). "They [the laity] are, by [reason of] knowledge, competence or outstanding ability which they may enjoy, permitted and sometimes even

obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church" (LG 37).

Apostolicam Actuositatem develops and expands a number of these points. Of particular importance is what it says about individual apostolate, which it calls "the starting point and condition of all types of lay apostolate" (AA 16), and about "group apostolate." Of the latter, it declares that lay people, "while preserving the necessary link" with ecclesiastical authority, possess "the right to establish and direct associations and to join existing ones" (AA 19). The Church, it notes approvingly, has "very many apostolic enterprises owing their origin to the free choice of the laity and run at their discretion" (AA 24). "Training for the apostolate should begin from the start of a child's education. It is more particularly adolescents and youth who should be initiated into the apostolate and imbued with its spirit. This training should be continued all through life" (AA 30).

Major developments since the Council include the publication in 1983 of the new Code of Canon Law for the Western Church, with its fairly extensive treatment of lay people's rights and duties, and the 1987 general assembly of the World Synod of Bishops, which focused on the laity, with the subsequent publication of John Paul II's post-synod document *Christifideles Laici* (1988). The fundamental objective of the formation of the lay faithful is an ever-clearer discovery of one's vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live to fulfill one's mission. The central elements of this formation process, John Paul lists as "receptive listening" to God's word and the Church, fervent and constant prayer, the help of a wise spiritual director, and discernment that involves applying one's God-given talents to the circumstances of the world around one.

All this is a work in progress. Speaking of the laity's role, Pope Benedict XVI says lay women and men "should not be regarded as 'collaborators' of the clergy, but, rather, as people who are genuinely 'co-responsible' for the Church's being and acting."¹⁶¹ It is therefore essential that a mature and committed laity be formed, which can make its specific contribution to the ecclesial mission, respecting the ministries and tasks that each one has in the life of the Church, and always in cordial communion with the Bishops. Both they and the clergy stand to benefit from such an understanding of the

¹⁶¹ Benedict XVI, *Message on the occasion of the sixth ordinary Assembly of the International Forum of Catholic Action*, in: <https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/pont-messages/2012/documents/hf-ben-xvi-mes-20120810-fiac.html>, [28.05.2025].

laity's role. Words are one thing; the practical implementation is another. The Theology of the laity has come a long way. It still has an exceedingly long way to go.

The task ahead has been set: "Let sacred pastors recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the layperson in the Church. Let them willingly make use of his/her prudent advice. Let them confidently assign duties to him/her in the service of the Church, allowing him/her freedom and room for action. Furthermore, let them encourage the layperson so that they may undertake tasks on their initiative. Attentively, in Christ, let them consider with fatherly love the projects, suggestions, and desires proposed by the laity... A great many benefits are to be hoped for from this familiar dialogue between the laity and their pastors: in the laity, a strengthened sense of personal responsibility, a renewed enthusiasm, and a more ready application of their talents to the projects of their pastors. The latter, for their part, aided by the experience of the laity, can more clearly and more suitably come to decisions regarding spiritual and temporal matters. In this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each one of its members, can more effectively fulfill its mission for the life of the world." (LG 37, inclusive language added)

1.5.4 *Christifideles Laici*

According to Cardinal Eduardo Francisco Pironio, the then-Argentine Catholic prelate who served in numerous departments of the Roman Curia from 1975 to 1996 and was president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity from 1984 to 1996, *Christifideles Laici* is a "Small Summa for Catholic Laity."¹⁶²

It has five chapters besides an introduction, which comprises numbers 1-7, and a short conclusion in number 64 consisting of an appeal and prayer. The apostolic exhortation focuses on three themes: Vocation, Communion, and Mission of lay people, and two biblical images: Jesus as the true Vine (Jn 15:5, 16) and the Vineyard parable (Mt 20:1-16). These themes and images are intensely ecclesiological as they are based on the central image of the true Vine and developed in the first three chapters of the document under the ecclesiological headings of Church as Mystery, Church as

¹⁶² Cf. Pironio, Cardinal Eduardo, *The Laity as Agents of Evangelization*, "Origins" (1989), p. 700.

Communion, and Church as Mission. In choosing these headings the pope articulated an understanding that the vocation and mission of lay people are integral to and inseparable from, that of the entire people of God, and in so doing he was likely mindful of the principle enunciated by Yves Congar, who stresses that “there can be one sound and sufficient Theology of the Laity” and that is “total ecclesiology.”¹⁶³ The pontiff had earlier underscored this point in his introductory letter to the working paper, where he affirmed that the “synod on the laity also seeks to confirm the church’s vocation, to strengthen her and give fresh impulses and motivations so that they may be able to respond to pastoral needs with complete fidelity to the spirit who guides her.”¹⁶⁴ The themes and images are also predominantly Trinitarian as they reflect on God’s presence and actions in history and the lives of each Christian. This presence and action of God are manifested as a Trinity. The Father calls for communion in Jesus Christ, his son, and to mission through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 1, comprising ten (10) paragraphs (8-17), defines the lay faithful position in the Church by rendering the Dignity of the Lay Faithful in the Church as Mystery under the title, “I am the Vine and You are the Branches” (Jn 15:5; CL 8&9). This emphasizes the Church’s internal nature

in which the lay faithful are seen not simply as laborers who work for the vineyard but as themselves being part of the vineyard. After discussing the mystery of the Vine and giving a basic positive description of the lay faithful, it stresses that Baptism is the Trinitarian source of the Lay Christian’s dignity, identity, and new life. The lay faithful are sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Jesus Christ, characterized by their secular character or presence in the world (CL 10, 12, 14, and 15). This forms the positive definition of lay faithful. All the faithful are called to holiness, which is lived out in the world.

Chapter 2, entitled “All Branches are of a single vine”, explores the mystery of communion as the faithful’s participation in the Church. It deals with three topics: Ministries and Charisms, Universal and Local Churches, and Associations and Movements. It traces the ecclesiology of communion from the Second Vatican Council (LG 11), which states that the sacred and organic nature of the priestly community is

¹⁶³ Y. M.J. Congar, *Lay People in the Church*, revised ed., London, 1985, p. xvi.

¹⁶⁴ John Paul II, *The Pope’s Letter to Bishops on the Synod working Paper*, “Origins” (1978), p. 20.

brought into operation through the sacraments and exercise of virtues. This implies that the Church is alive, human, and divine. It sustains itself by union with the head, Jesus Christ, through the seven sacraments. The faithful are incorporated into the Church by baptism, more perfectly bound and endowed with a special strength of the Holy Spirit by confirmation to spread the faith by word and deed. They take part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, the source and summit of the Christian life, where they offer the divine victim to God and themselves along with it. Then, strengthened by the body of Christ in the Eucharistic Communion, they manifest concretely the unity of the People of God which this holy sacrament aptly signifies and admirably realizes. Those who approach the sacrament of penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him and are at the same time reconciled with the Church, which they have wounded by their sins and which, by charity, example, and prayer, labors for their conversion. In the sacred anointing of the sick and prayer of the priests, the whole Church commends those ill to the suffering and glorified Lord that he may raise them and save them (Jas 5:14-16; Rom 8:17; Col 1:24; Tm 2:11-12; 1 Pt 4:13). Those who have received Holy Orders are appointed to nourish the Church with the word and grace of God in the name of Christ. Lastly, in virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony, they signify and share the mystery of the unity and faithful love between Christ and the Church (Eph 5:32). Christian married couples help one another to attain holiness in their married life and the rearing of their children. Hence, because of their state in life and their position, they have their gifts in the people of God (Cor 7:7). *Christifideles Laici* continues to elaborate on these themes of ministries and charisms as stipulated in the following sections (CL 21, 22, 23, 24) and explicitly deals with the lay faithful participation in the Church (CL 25-30). Lastly, it deals with the role of pastors in the service of Communion.

Under the title "I have appointed you to go forth and bear fruit," the third Chapter reflects on the role of the lay faithful in the Church as mission, highlighting the need for co-responsibility, new evangelization, and the myriad of ways in which lay people can serve the individual human person and society. The lay faithful have a mission to communion (CL 32), the proclamation of the Gospel (CL 33), New Evangelization (CL 34-35), and service to person and society (CL 36-44). For a long time, the laity has been consumers of what the clergy deliver to them based on the apostolic mandate from Jesus to the eleven, "Go into the whole World and proclaim the Gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15). For most centuries, the Laity did not feel the obligation to participate actively in

the affairs of the Church till Vatican II. The subsequent Popes, Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, all consistently remind us to sanctify the divine calls we received through the sacrament of Baptism. According to Pope Pius XII, the laity are on the front lines in the mission of the Church. For almost 60 years, the Church has been proclaiming the Gospel, but it is still not vibrant in most areas, as it looks like a job. The call to witness the Good News in whatever we do is the invitation the Gospel extends to everyone in the church, home, farm, business sector, school, hospital, and prison. This makes the laity possess a stake in the Church, but not as mere consumers. They take on the task of self-evangelization. We could compare it to a beggar who has found help from someone telling another beggar where he got help, or a sinner having been forgiven, telling another sinner where he found forgiveness.

Chapter 4 discusses the variety of lay vocations based on the image of the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16), where the householder calls laborers to his vineyard at various times during the day; some are called at dawn, others at nine, still others at midday, at three, and the last at five. It focuses on issues relating to young people, children, and older people (CL 46-48), women and men (CL 49-52), and the sick and suffering as models and opportunities of service (CL 53&54), the various states of life and vocations. The issue of young people, women, and children is critical in Uganda. According to the 2024 census, Uganda has a youthful population. The census results released by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics indicate that Uganda has a total population of 45,935,046 people.¹⁶⁵ Children under 18 account for 50.5 % of the total population, while those aged 18-30 constitute 22.7 %.¹⁶⁶ This calls for the catechesis of children and youth to realize a meaningful witness to the Gospel. When they become adults, it will be easier to mature in faith, and at this level, faith becomes inseparable from the lived experiences of young people.

The last chapter returns to the Johannine image of the vine (Jn 15:1-8). It deals with the formation of faithful lay. The dimensions of formation include liturgical, doctrinal, catechetical, social, political, and human values. The formation is executed in the context of the Church, whose leadership the Pope takes the primary role of chief

¹⁶⁵ Cf. New Vision, *Uganda Census 2024 Preliminary results released* (27.06.2024), in: <https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/uganda-census-2024-preliminary-results-NV-191057>, [21.10.2024].

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Ibid.

formator of the lay faithful. This is in collaboration with other pastoral agents, namely the bishops, priests, and catechists. The ambiance of formation starts from the Christian family, small Christian community, parish, School, and Catholic Universities. Other avenues include groups, associations, and movements. Besides that, it also delves into sub-themes on a continual process of maturation (CL 57), the need to discover and live one's vocation and mission (CL 58), a total integrated formation for living and integrated life (CL 59-62), a reciprocal formation receive and given by all (CL 63) and finally an appeal and prayer (CL 64). The appeal makes concluding remarks drawn from the entire exhortation, which, according to John Paul II, consists of the call the Lord addresses to everyone, yet in a particular way to the lay faithful, both women and men. In the appeal to prayer, the Pope dedicated to the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of the Redeemer, with a formulary of the prayer at the end of the exhortation.

As we conclude the presentation on the contents and summary of the apostolic exhortation, we will now critically analyze its theological themes after a brief discussion of the content.

There were two hundred thirty-two (232) participants or synod Fathers in the 1987 synod including "one hundred fifty-three (153) representatives of episcopal conferences, fourteen (14) representatives of assemblies of the Patriarchs and bishops of oriental Churches, twenty-three (23) cardinals or bishops of the Roman Curia, ten (10) representatives of the unions of Superiors General, and thirty (30) other bishops directly nominated by the Pope."¹⁶⁷ These thirty other bishops could nominate fifteen percent (15%) of the synod Fathers.¹⁶⁸ Amongst the delegates from episcopal conferences, 47 were from Africa, 36 were from Asia, 65 were from the Americas, 75 were from Europe, and 7 were from Oceania.¹⁶⁹ Of all the Synod Fathers, 114 participated for the first time at the Synod, and 63 were members of religious orders. It is worthwhile to recall the background of the key figures who guided the synod. The Relator was Cardinal Hyacinthe Thiandoum, who succeeded Marcel Lefebvre in 1962 as the first autonomous archbishop of Dakar, Senegal.¹⁷⁰ They appointed a Special Secretary, the Key Theologian of the

¹⁶⁷ Cf. P. Coughlan, *In the Hour of the Laity: Their Expanding Role: Exploring Christifideles Laici*, Newtown, 1989, p.10; see also Gerald O'Connell, *The Synod on the Laity: Dichotomies or Distinctions? "The Month" (1988)*, p. 572.

¹⁶⁸ This 15% enabled the Pope to restore any imbalance that could arise between different tendencies or countries, but it also provided him with the opportunity to strengthen his position. See also J. Kerkhofs, *The members of the synod, "Concilium" (1986)*, p. 47-48.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. G. Connell, *The Synod on the Laity: Dichotomies or Distinctions? "The Month" (1988)*, p. 572-573.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 574.

Synod, Pierre Eyt, Co-adjutor Bishop of Bordeaux and member of the International Theological Commission, who served as Secretary to the Tübingen Theologian Walter Kasper at the 1985 extraordinary synod, where the latter was Special Secretary under the leadership of Cardinal Godfred Danneels, Archbishop of Malines-Brussels. There was some expectation that Thiandoum and Eyt would perform as successfully as the Danneels-Kasper team. The two officials were supported by twenty (20) expert assistants chosen by the Pope based on the advice of the Synod Secretariat and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the then-prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. Gerard O'Connell felt that the list of expert assistants "left the distinct impression of being a more conservative hue than one might have hoped for, and he recalled that the absence of an Asian expert was a sore point with some of the Asian delegates at the synod."¹⁷¹ One of the three Synod presidents designated by the Pope was Cardinal R. Vidal of Cebu, appointed to replace Cardinal Jean Marie Trinh Van Can of Hanoi, who was not allowed to leave Vietnam.¹⁷²

The other two Presidents were European; one of them was Cardinal Pironio, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity from April 1984, and the other was the major archbishop of Lwow of the Ukrainians. A distinctive feature of the 1987 synod was the presence and participation of sixty (60) lay auditors of whom twenty-eight (28) were women, including five (5) religious women, a figure that Gerald O'Connell described as a historic maximum.¹⁷³

The Pope appointed lay auditors based on the recommendations of the Synod Secretariat, who made their decisions according to five selection criteria: different conditions of lay life, continents and countries, sectors of Christian movements, professional and cultural milieux, and states of life (including religious and secular institutes).¹⁷⁴

As auditors, the lay participants did not have the right to vote except that an opportunity availed itself since all of them participated in the discussions in the *circuli*

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 575.

¹⁷² Cf. Editor, *Asian Voices in the Synod, East Asian Pastoral Review* (1988), p. 11; See also Gerard O'Connell's notes that "in fact the Vietnamese Cardinal is ill", *The Synod on the Laity: Dichotomies or Distinctions*, "The Month" (1988), p. 575.

¹⁷³ Editor, *Asian Voices in the Synod, East Asian Voices in the Synod*, "East Asian Pastoral Review" (1988) p. 11; Gerard O'Connell, *The Synod on the Laity: Dichotomies or distinctions*, "The Month" (1988), p. 573; Kerkofs observes Lay auditors took part in the second Vatican council from 12.09.1963 onwards, *The members of the synod*, "Concilium" (1986), p. 51.

¹⁷⁴ G. O'Connell, *The Synod on the Laity: Dichotomies or Distinctions*, "The Month" (1988), p. 578.

minores or small language groups, with six (6) of them appointed as experts or assistants to the Special Secretary and two sitting at the table of the presidency. These *circles* focused on four (4) themes suggested by the Relator, namely the secular character of the vocation and mission of the laity, lay associations and their relations with the pastors, ministries of lay people in the Church today, and the vocation and mission of women in the Church and the world.¹⁷⁵

The seventeen lay people (10 women and 7 men) addressed the synod assembly, each given twenty minutes, while interventions of the Synod Fathers were limited to eight minutes.¹⁷⁶

Five (5) speakers were special invitees and not part of the sixty (60) layperson delegation.¹⁷⁷ John Paul II singled out the importance of the presence of laypeople in his homily at the closing mass of the synod. For him, in a certain sense, the experience of this synod was unprecedented. He hoped it would become a model, a reference point for the future.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, in the synod, the lay presence was more evident in numbers and their manner of participation than in previous ones, such as the 1980 Synod on the Family and the 1983 Synod on Penance and Reconciliation. Joseph Thomas notes that the three issues generated a lively debate on the role of the synod floor; namely, the place and role of Women in the Church and Society, the growth of new movements with approved lay associations and lay ministries.¹⁷⁹

The write-up on the vocation and mission of lay people in the first three chapters of the apostolic exhortation, under the themes of the Church as mystery, communion, and mission, follows closely the structure of John Paul II's homily at the concluding Mass of the 1987 synod.¹⁸⁰ In Hermann Pottmeyer's understanding, *Mysterium*, the first of the two motifs of the synod, refers to the theological aspect, and *Communio*, the second, to

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 577; See also B.L. Mathaler, "Synod of Bishops", (Seventh General Assembly, 1987), New Catholic Encyclopedia: Jubilee Volume: The Wojtyla Years (Detroit: Gale Group in Association with the Catholic University of America, 2001), p. 158.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. P. Coughlan, *The Hour of the Laity: Their Expanding Role: Exploring Christifideles Laici, The Pope's Key document on the Laity*, New Town 1989, p.10.

¹⁷⁷ Paul VI opened the Synod to non-members and the practice of inviting non-members to be present at meetings of the Synod was confirmed by Pope John Paul II, see Jan Kerkhofs, *The members of the Synod, "Concilium"* (1986), p. 49; See also G. O'Connell, *The Synod on the Laity: Dichotomies or Distinctions, "The Month"* (1988) p. 573.

¹⁷⁸ John Paul II, *Homily at the concluding Synod Mass, "Origins"* (1987), p. 390.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. J. Thomas, *L'Exhortation Les Lai's fideles du Christ': Plaidoyer Pour l'engagement temporal "Etudes"* (1989), p. 689.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Homily at Concluding Synod Mass, "Origins"* (1987), p. 390-392.

the institutional aspect of the Church.¹⁸¹ Avery Dulles also observes the Extraordinary Evangelization, ecumenism, and social transformation in the light of an ecclesiology of Mystery and Communion.¹⁸²

Joseph Komonchak goes further to note that the Church as a mystery was presented as “an antidote to the reductive anthropology …and as a way of responding to the signs of a return to the Sacred,¹⁸³ and many Synod participants viewed the notion of the Church as communion as holding the key to many of the contemporary problems of the Church.”¹⁸⁴ During the extraordinary Synod, twenty-seven (27) Fathers spoke on the mission of the laity under the theme of communion.¹⁸⁵ The structural similarity between the two post-synodal documents underlines the intimate link between these two synods, rooting them in the fertile soil of the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, Vatican Council II was a constant reference point at every stage of the synod on the laity process, and at least 97 of the two hundred twenty-four (224) footnotes cited from the apostolic exhortation refer to the documents of Vatican Council II.¹⁸⁶ The Pope himself, in his introductory letter to the *Instrumentum Laboris*, stressed that the Second Vatican Council's reminder contained in the theme chosen for the 1987 synod, “The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and the World twenty (20) years after the Second Vatican Council,”¹⁸⁷ was not a mere chance.”¹⁸⁸

Like the final report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod, which challenges itself to present the Church primarily as a mystery, *Christifideles Laici* explores the baptismal dignity and identity of the lay faithful within the context of the Church as a mystery from the first chapter. Adopting this approach, these two post-synodal documents follow *Lumen Gentium*, which takes mystery as its starting point in exploring the nature of the Church (LG 1-8).

¹⁸¹ Cf. Hermann Pottmeyer, *The Church as Mysterium and as an Institution*, “Concilium” (1986), p. 99.

¹⁸² Cf. A. Dulles, *Catholic Ecclesiology Since Vatican II*, “Concilium” (1986), p. 4.

¹⁸³ Cf. J. Komonchak, *The Theological Debate*, “Concilium” (1986), p. 55.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. G. O’Connell, *Statements of the Synod Fathers*, “The Month” (1986), p. 124.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Cf. P. Coughlan, *The Hour of the Laity, Their Expanding Role: Exploring Christifideles Laici, The Pope’s Key document on the Laity*, Newtown 1989, p. 7.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. The General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, *The Instrumentum Laboris or Working Paper for the 1987 World Synod of Bishops*, “Origins” (1987), no.1, p. 1.

¹⁸⁸ John Paul II, *Letter to the World’s Bishops on the Synod Working Paper*, “Origins” (1987), p. 20.

The Evangelisation of Uganda began in the Buganda Kingdom with the welcome of the missionaries by Kabaka Mutesa. It gradually spread to other areas of the country. The beginnings of Christianity were marked by challenges such as religio-political wars between different faiths, inadequate infrastructure, and diseases. The people who stood their ground to resist threats from the King and other faiths besides the missionaries were laypeople. Some of them shed their blood in Namugongo, thereby providing a heroic witness to the faith on which Uganda continues to mark every 3 June...

The evangelization of Kotido was accomplished by the Comboni missionaries who crossed from Sudan to Uganda. They worked among poor pastoralists, the Karimojong people, with dedication. However, given the challenges of the time and current difficulties, the laity is a force to rally with in the mission of evangelization. This is also connected with some improvements in civilization that have taken place.

2. THE CHALLENGE OF POLYGAMY

Polygamy has long been a contentious and complex issue within the Christian Church, particularly in the Church's engagement with non-Western cultures. This challenge became especially pronounced during the sixteenth century, when European missionaries began encountering societies, particularly in Africa and India, where polygamous practices were not only culturally ingrained but also integral to social identity. As the Church sought to engage with these communities, it was faced with the difficult task of reconciling its doctrinal stance on marriage with local traditions that accepted polygamy.

This chapter aims to explore polygamy as a potential obstacle to the full participation of the laity in the Church's mission. The study will focus specifically on the Kotido Diocese, located in Uganda, which presents a rich cultural and historical backdrop for understanding the practice of polygamy. The research will consider various dimensions of polygamy, including its artistic, theological, and pastoral implications, and how these impact the Church's ability to engage with and empower its members.

To structure this discussion, the chapter will begin by providing clear definitions of key terms, particularly marriage and polygamy, which will help contextualize these practices within their respective religious and cultural frameworks. The research will then delve into the historical and cultural roots of polygamy in the Kotido region, examining how this practice shapes family structures, social roles, and community dynamics. The study will also discuss the theological implications of polygamy, exploring how Church doctrine addresses this issue and the tensions it may create in promoting inclusivity within the Church.

Additionally, the chapter will assess how polygamy is handled in pastoral practice and whether the Church's current approach accommodates the participation of polygamous families in the mission of the Church. The concluding section will provide recommendations on how the Church can navigate this issue, emphasizing pastoral

sensitivity, theological clarity, and practical inclusion, thereby ensuring that all members can fully participate in the life and mission of the Church.

From the outset, it is pertinent to situate polygamy within the context of marriage by first defining marriage. Marriage is a union between a man and a woman as husband and wife. In the modern world today, this of course excludes same-sex marriage, the union between two people of the same gender. Marriage is “a legally recognized relationship, established by a customary, civil or religious ceremony, between two who intend to live together as sexual and domestic partners.”¹⁸⁹

On the other hand, Polygamy is a marriage to more than one spouse at a time (It is also called plural marriage or union). The term polygamy refers to two kinds of plural unions: polygyny, the marriage of one man to more than one wife; and polyandry, the marriage of one woman to more than one husband.¹⁹⁰ In today's usage, “polygamy” is often used as a synonym for polygyny, and that will be the sense of its usage in this chapter and the entire research work. Also in this research, the term will be used to designate only socially recognized, customary, and legal forms of simultaneous polygamy, as against serial polygamy (a situation whereby a man engages in a series of successive marriages and divorces).

Bruno Novelli, a social anthropologist who dedicated his time to researching and studying the Karimojong aspects of life, defines polygamy as the practice of having more than one wife with the intention of enlarging one's possibilities in facing life's difficulties by creating and maintaining further alliances with other clans.¹⁹¹ He states that among the Karimojong, a man may marry more than one wife through traditional payment of bride wealth, or the custom of 'widow inheritance,' whereby a widow is taken by a close relative of her deceased husband. Older men with plenty of cattle can afford to marry more than one wife. Polygamous unions among younger men tend to be a result of their 'inheriting' the wife of the deceased male relative.

¹⁸⁹ Microsoft Encarta Dictionary, “Marriage,” Available:1993-2005, (Microsoft Corporation, [CD-ROM],2006), see also Chijioke Azuawusiefe, *Polygamy and pastoral care for people in Polygamous marriages in Africa*, “Grace & Truth,” n.2,2001, p.67-80; See also F. Pierli and M.T. Ratti (eds.), *Collaborative ministry in the family*, “Tangaza Occasional Papers” (2001) no.2, p.67-68.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Britannica Online Encyclopedia, “Polygamy (Marriage),” accessed on [4.12.2024], see also Chijioke Azuawusiefe, *Polygamy and pastoral care for people in polygamous marriages in Africa*, p.67-80; see also B. Kisembo, L. Magesa, and Alward Shorter, *African Christian Marriage*, Nairobi 2010, p. 86-90.

¹⁹¹ Cf. B. Novelli, *Karimojong Traditional Religion: A contribution*, Kampala 1999, p. 255; see also A.P. Zani, *The Family, its African Socio-Cultural Context*, “The model of Church as a family” (1999), p. 46.

According to the Code of the Canon Law and the Catechism of the catholic church, the concept of marriage is seen as “the marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life and which of its very nature is ordered to the full well-being of the spouses and the procreation and upbringing of children, has between the baptized, been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of Sacrament”(Can. 1055§1; CCC 1601; G S 48§1). This marriage covenant is realized in monogamy (marriage to only one person at a time), which the church maintains is God's original plan for marriage.

Since the “unity of marriage, distinctly recognized by our lord, is made clear in the equal personal dignity which must be accorded to man and wife in mutual and unreserved affection,” polygamy is therefore “contrary to conjugal love which is undivided and exclusive” (GS 49 §2, CCC1645). Polygamy, the Church further affirms, contradicts the moral law, and directly negates the plan of God, which was revealed from the beginning, because it is contrary to the equal personal dignity of men and women who in matrimony give themselves with love that is total and therefore unique and exclusive (CCC2387). The church's preference for monogamy derives from such Biblical passages as these: “Then God said: 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...' God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them...That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, becoming one body.” What therefore God has joined together, let no man or woman put asunder (Gn 1:26-27; 2:24; Mt 19:4-7; Eph 5:31; 1Cor 6:16).

2.1. Factors for the practice of Polygamy in Kotido Diocese

Paolo Poli, a Capuchin missionary in the Central African Republic, has explained the causes of polygamy in a way equally relevant to the Karamojong Society. He has grouped the varied factors into three main sub-headings: Biological factors, Socio-economic factors, and cultural factors.¹⁹² We shall therefore develop each causal factor below.

¹⁹² Cf. P. Poli, *Chiesa e Poligamia in Africa: Fra Tradizione e cambiamento*, Bologna, 1996, p.85; See also A. Shorter (ed.), *Church and Marriage in Eastern Africa*, Eldoret 1975, p. 99-100.

2.1.1. Biological factors

Under the biological factors, we shall examine sterility, pregnancy, and the breastfeeding period, and finally, the desire for sexual satisfaction.

The first wife is culturally recognized in Africa, south of the Sahara, as a true wife with a special position of respect. The Karimojong people respectfully call her *toto k'Ekal*, meaning 'the mother of the home.' Her sterility rarely leads to divorce but to polygamy. Since Children occupy a principal place in the family for descendants, a husband who does not have them with his first wife is likely to marry the second wife for the important purpose of procreation. Divorce is not the real remedy to sterility, but recourse to another wife.¹⁹³ A sterile wife is supposed to adapt to a new situation of polygamy and be ready to live with a second or third wife, even if it may be an unpleasant situation. The social pressure imposes on her the acceptance of other wives. In addition, most women are hardworking, especially in the fields or gardens.

The sterile wife is still needed in the family for economic production. That is why sterile wives are not divorced. In the context of the Central African Republic, where Poli did extensive research on polygamy, about ninety-four percent of husbands whose first wives had no children became polygamists.¹⁹⁴ Although no official statistics are available for the Karimojong, it is evident that some African men have entered into polygamous marriages due to the sterility of their first wives and the cultural emphasis on the need for children.¹⁹⁵ Yet this does not mean that the sterility of the first wives is the only reason for polygamy. It is simply to state that it is one of the main factors for polygamy. Otherwise, there are some Karimojong men with sterile wives, and they have remained monogamous.

Among the Karimojong people, married women were supposed to abstain from sex at certain times, especially for proper spacing of children. Such intervals can last even more than one year.¹⁹⁶ In about the seventh month of pregnancy up to the eighth month,

¹⁹³ Cf. Ibid., p.86-92.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Ibid., p.87.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. C. Amone, "Intercultural Dialogue during the European civilizing mission in Africa: The Acholi Encounter with the British colonialists in Northern Uganda 1898-1962," in Interculturalism at the crossroads: Comparative Perspectives on Concepts, Policies, and Practices, ed. Fethi Mansouri, Paris, 2017, p. 305.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. P. Poli, Chiesa e Poligamia., p.93-97.

from the birth of a child, when it is still breastfeeding, the husband is culturally not supposed to have sexual (conjugal) acts with his wife. In total, he is supposed to abstain from sex for about a year. It is believed that the child can become sickly if the husband continues with conjugal acts with his wife who is about to give birth and who still breastfeeds the child. In this case, the husband can choose to abstain from sex, commit adultery, or opt to marry a second wife. Traditionally, polygamy was the normal way to solve the problem.¹⁹⁷ It was the main way to avoid adultery. In addition, a pregnant wife who is left with about two months to have a child or is breastfeeding is not supposed to get involved in heavy work. Traditionally, Karimojong saw polygamy as a remedy to the labor gap created by their situation. A second wife could be necessary to provide labor and help the one who is pregnant or breastfeeding.

Traditionally, the Karimojong, like many Africans south of the Sahara, seems not to consider marriage for sexual enjoyment. The emphasis is on procreation and the desire for numerous descendants, as well as prestige and honour. However, sexual satisfaction cannot be ignored as one of the secondary motives of marriage. When the first wife has produced about five or more children, the wife may lose interest in such conjugal acts, while the man may remain sexually active. The effects of giving birth several times may be seen in the first wife, who may appear quite elderly and less attractive to the husband. The first wife who notices this challenge may allow him to marry a second wife as a way of preventing him from committing adultery.¹⁹⁸ She may allow him to bring home as his second wife a lady he has impregnated due to his adulterous acts. Usually, a younger lady than the first is married as a second wife. She is a much-loved lady, and the Karimojong call her *nakicolongo*, translated as “the one who mounts a man.”

In a traditional African context, a wife's ill health is not typically seen as a reason for husbands to abstain from sex. If a wife were sick for an extended period, the husband's family might encourage him to consider a second marriage.¹⁹⁹ The reasoning behind this idea is that the second wife would help care for the sick woman and ensure the children are taken care of. Additionally, it has been claimed that if women are regularly absent

¹⁹⁷ Cf. P. Poli, *Chiesa e Poligamia in Africa*, p.93-97.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Ibid., p.104.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. D.G. Maillu, *Our kind of Polygamy*, Nairobi 1988, p.18.

from home due to work in distant places, they might ask their husbands to marry a second wife.²⁰⁰

However, it is possible to challenge such arguments. The family would not apply the same principle if the husband were ill. Moreover, it seems unreasonable that instead of caring for his wife during a time of need, he would devote his time to entertaining his new wife. Regarding the issue of women working far from home as a reason for polygamy, one could argue that in the past, husbands and fathers used to work extremely far from home but visited their families regularly. As a result, there was no need for additional wives. Women working far from home could do the same, and again, there would be no need for polygamy.

In any event, Christian marital vows include the promise of support in health and sickness, which cannot simply be ignored in challenging times. This commitment underscores the importance of mutual support and care within the marriage, regardless of the circumstances.

2.1.2. Socio-economic factors

The two factors responsible for polygamous marriages under this sub-section can be seen in the need for human labor and the need for wealth. They are linked and interrelated as one leads to another.

Crop production for sustenance is one of the important economic activities practiced by the Karimojong and African societies in general. A polygamous man provides gardens for each wife for subsistence farming. The wife and children are supposed to till the land for their food. The husband rotates from one wife to another to assist in garden work and spends a few days with them, including meeting his sexual obligations. Each family is to work on the farms to prepare the land, plant the crops, weed, and harvest the crops when ready. Sometimes, the nuclear family members invite the community to come in to help. The nuclear family provides the community with food and drinks after work. In Africa, women do a lot of garden work, especially weeding and

²⁰⁰ Cf. A.N. Modupe, *Law and Social Values: Polygamy and Extra-Marital Affairs* in: <https://www.unilorin.edu.ng>, [06.12.2024].

harvesting crops.²⁰¹ Poli notes that about 53% of agricultural work in Africa south of the Sahara is done by women, 26% is equally divided between men and women, and 18% is done by only men, with elaborate explanations of the situations.²⁰²

In this sense, traditionally, the Karimojong see the need to increase the number of members to do work, especially herding cattle, which is one of their most treasured economic activities. Children who are ten years old go for cattle herding with mature youth of 18 years and above. When they leave their homesteads, they may only return after six months for a rest. To relieve others, one needs to have many children who look after the animals in turn; hence, polygamy is considered one of the normal ways to produce many children.

In African societies, the increase in bride price has become a significant factor in polygamy. Traditionally, girls were viewed as sources of wealth in terms of cattle, goats, sheep, and other items. This desire for wealth led some men to marry multiple wives, as they would produce many children, including daughters. In some instances, the uncontrolled demand for bride price has resulted in forced marriages, where parents secretly arrange for their daughters to marry wealthy men without the daughters' consent, which goes against the constitution of the Republic of Uganda.²⁰³

Polygamists with many daughters could use the bride price received from their daughters to pay for their sons' marriages. The payment of bride price is an essential element of Karimojong Customary Marriage. An elder interviewed by researchers from a cross-cultural foundation in Uganda stated that no form of marriage is recognized without payment of a bride price, regardless of legal stipulations.²⁰⁴ Among the Karimojong, several cattle are required for the payment of bride price, ranging from ten to fifteen cattle, along with other animals, especially goats, which typically number around two hundred.²⁰⁵

²⁰¹ Cf. Ibid., p.105.

²⁰² Cf. Ibid., p.106; Poli referred to the work by Jack Goody and Joan Buckley, "Inheritance and women's labor in Africa," Cambridge Core Journals Africa,43(1973), p.108-121.

²⁰³ Cf. Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, Kampala 1995, Article 30 § 3.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Cross-Cultural Foundation, Karamoja Case Study 2020, Promoting Women's and Girls' Rights: Is Culture the Missing Link? in: <https://crossculturalfoundation.or.ug.wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Karamoja-Case-Study-Promoting-Womens-andGirls-Rights.Pdf>, [18.12.2024].

²⁰⁵ Cf. E. Stites, D. Akabwai, D. Muzarana, and P. Ateyo, Angering Akuju: Survival and Suffering in Karamoja: A report on Livelihoods and Human Security in Karamoja region of Uganda, Published by Feinstein International Centre in <https://Karamojaresilience.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/AngeringAkuju-Survivalandsufferinginkaramoja.pdf>, [10.12.2024].

Monetary payments also emerge as a component of the bride's price, particularly if the couple has connections to towns through relatives, salaried jobs, or education. It remains common practice to use the bride price from a daughter to pay for her brother's bride price. The inclusion of cash in bride price payments is less common in rural areas, where bride prices vary based on the size of the woman's clan, with larger clans requiring more cattle. These cattle are distributed among the woman's family and clan members. The average bride price in Karamoja is between forty and fifty heads of cattle.²⁰⁶

The man's clan is expected to contribute the cattle required for the bride price of his first wife, while the man is responsible for the bride price of subsequent wives. Men often ask their fathers, male relatives, and friends for contributions of cattle, promising to repay these debts from their future herds. Young men may also use the bride price received from their sisters' marriages as a source of cattle for their marriages. There is a common saying, *ngapesur ikes eyauniyete ebarilokal*²⁰⁷ (It is girls who bring wealth to the family), implying that when a girl gets married, she brings wealth to her family through cattle, which her brothers can use to marry their wives.

Bride price, therefore, aligns with the communal nature of Karimojong society. Both men and women accept bride price as necessary for desired femininity, respect, and dignity in marriage for women.²⁰⁸ Men view it as a necessary condition for male identity in society. Failure to pay the bride price would undermine their identity and dominance in marriage and the community.

In some situations, the father may refuse to give the bride price to their sons as they also need to marry additional younger wives. This consequently breeds tension in the family, such as failure to support multiple wives and children, and sons growing resentful due to a lack of cattle for their marriages. Similarly, monogamous marriage became increasingly inaccessible for poorer families, as they struggled to afford the standard Karamojong bride price, which typically included at least forty to fifty cows, two hundred goats, and numerous other items

²⁰⁶ Cf. Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Cross-Cultural Foundation Uganda, Karamoja Case Study, p.17.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Ibid.

2.1.3 Socio-cultural factors

This section will examine widow inheritance and prestige as the driving factors for polygamy. These culturally strong practices constitute the traditional socio-cultural practices among the Karimojong and many other African ethnic groups.

Widow inheritance among the Karimojong is a normal cultural practice. It is a common reality in most of the sub-Saharan African societies.²⁰⁹

In the Karimojong Society, a widow chooses among the deceased husband's brothers the one she loves to marry. She can do it regardless of whether the man is already married. But usually, she chooses from among already married men since most of the unmarried men are still quite young and may desire to start their first marriage with unmarried young girls. Sometimes a young unmarried man may inherit her. With time, such a young man may also marry a second wife of his choice and the same age group. In any case, widows are usually inherited by already married men of the clan of the deceased husband. The marriage is not considered a new marriage, but rather a continuation of the marriage she was already in, unless she marries from another clan.

Amone Charles, in his article on polygamy, stated that among the Luo and other African societies, having many wives simultaneously was an external sign of social prestige.²¹⁰ The prestigious perception of polygamy developed with the cost associated with the bride price of each wife. It therefore partly explains why the Karimojong and other African Chiefs were polygamists, including other respected elders of lineages and clans.

They were respected and considered real men of society, with the wealth to marry many wives. Women and their children generated part of the wealth from the arduous work and improved agricultural productivity, cattle rearing, and bride-price from the marriage of daughters. This wealth led many men to polygamy, and the polygamy and bride price both led to prestige. In addition, the wives competed among themselves for their husbands' favor by taking diligent care of their husbands and their visitors. Other people admired their hospitality and earned respect for their husbands. The Karimojong

²⁰⁹ Cf. E.Y. Tenkorang, "Widowhood, Divorce and HIV risks among women in Sub-Saharan Africa," International Health 6 (2014), p.47; see also P. Poli, Chiesa e Poligamia in Africa, p.112.

²¹⁰ Cf. C. Amone, " Intercultural Dialogue during the European civilizing mission in Africa: The Acholi Encounter with the British Colonialists in Northern Uganda, 1898-1962," p.305.

and many other Africans consider a man great because of his wealth and generosity, while a poor man is hardly regarded as great.

When a woman fails to give birth, her husband marries another wife. Male children are valued because they will eventually marry and expand the clan lineage.²¹¹ Their children provide a support system in the family, especially for grandparents in old age. Among the Karimojong, marriage without a son is to be pitied; thus, the derogatory term given to such a family is *ekalkirion* (a dark home). If a subsequent wife gives birth to male children, one of them is designated to support the first wife. When the designated son is ready for marriage, the first wife supports his marriage, including providing him with cows. As reflected in the *ekalkirion* label, such a practice reflects a woman's great fear, the inability to bear children, especially boys, which may be accompanied by emotional violence and feelings of inadequacy.

Similar perceptions are common among some African ethnic groups who believe that it is better to train their blood sons to take over whatever they own. Although Phiri recounts that among the Chewa people in Malawi, songs are sung to the effect that she who has given birth to a baby girl is rich, while she who has given birth to a baby boy is poor.²¹² In many African families, a male heir has always been the objective, hence Kimathi's statement that a marriage into which only girls were born is to be pitied.²¹³ The mother of girls is often blamed by her husband and his parents for not producing sons. In the past, a sonless marriage always stood on shaky grounds. This was the cause of polygamy.

Many other researchers have contrasted the celebration attendant on the birth of boys with the less enthusiastic reception given to girls in African families. One is reminded of the Traditional Tsonga saying: *Vanhwana I tihuku to Khomela vayeni*, meaning "girls are chicken for visitors." In other words, since daughters eventually leave the family through marriage, it is culturally important to ensure that elderly parents have a male heir to care for them in their old age.

²¹¹ Cf. Cross-Cultural Foundation Uganda, *Karamoja Case Study 2020, Promoting Women's and Girls' Rights: Is Culture the Missing Link?* in: <https://crossculturalfoundation.or.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/karamoja-case-study-promoting-womens-and-Girls'-Rights.pdf>, [18.12.2024]; see also W. G. Blum, *Forms of Marriage: Monogamy Reconsidered*, Nairobi 1989, p. 101, 104.

²¹² Cf. I A. Phiri, *Why does God allow husbands to hurt us? Overcoming Violence Against Women*, Journal of Theology for Southern Africa, Vol. 114 (2002), p.10-30.

²¹³ Cf. G. Kimathi, *Your Marriage and Family*. Wetenskaplike bydraes. Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, Series F2 no.58 (1994), p.12.

2.2 Facing the challenge of Polygamy in the Kotido Diocese

Polygamy presents a significant challenge to the local Church in Kotido, particularly when it comes to the full participation of the laity in the mission of the Church. A 2020 study conducted by the Cross-Cultural Foundation Uganda revealed that, within the Karamojong culture, all marriages are potentially polygamous.²¹⁴ In such marriages, the first wife holds a position of primacy, especially in cultural rituals such as distributing meat during ceremonial cattle slaughters. This cultural norm creates tension with the Christian understanding of marriage and family life, and it significantly hinders the active participation of polygamous families in the sacramental life of the Church.

The Diocese of Kotido, in its 2015 Policy Booklet, reflects on the issue of polygamy as highlighted by the first synod of Moroto Diocese, noting that polygamy impedes the spiritual development of Christian families. The Pastoral Plan of Moroto Diocese (MPP 1982) acknowledged polygamy as an obstacle to the formation of true Christian families. It emphasized that the widespread practice of polygamy, alongside non-sacramental unions, undermines the ability of Christians to fully participate in the sacramental life and contribute to the development of vibrant Christian communities. The Bishops of Uganda, in their pastoral letter, "Fifty Years of Independence: Celebrating Our Heritage" (COH no.70.4), noted that some of the challenges for the growth of the faith in Uganda included the heritage of our own traditional cultures, such as polygamy, cohabitation, elopement, excessive bride wealth, and witchcraft. These trends and tendencies, according to the Bishops, undermine the dignity and purpose of the family. Despite these challenges, the Diocese emphasized that formation of Christian families

²¹⁴ Cf. Cross-Cultural Foundation Uganda, Karamoja Case Study 2020, Promoting Women's and Girls' Rights: Is Culture the Missing Link? in: <https://crossculturalfoundation.or.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/karamoja-case-study-promoting-women's-and-Girl's-Rights.pdf>, [18.12.2024]. The above assertion was based on research conducted by the Cross-Cultural Foundation Uganda in the districts of Moroto and Napak in 2019. The research's objectives were to link the culture and well-being of women and Girls in Karamoja through the protection of their rights, elimination of violence against women and Girls, promotion of sexual and reproductive health rights, and access to justice. In short, the aim was to achieve the sustainable development goals and objectives outlined in the third National Development Plan.

should not be abandoned, as the family is considered a "domestic church" (LG 11; CCC 2204), central to the life and mission of the Church.

To address this issue, the Diocese of Kotido adopted several recommendations made by the Moroto Diocese's first synod. These steps provide a better understanding and support for Christian marriage and family life in Karamoja. Key actions include:

1. Strengthening and Supporting Christian Families: The Diocese has focused on providing pastoral care and guidance to Christian families, particularly those in remote parishes.
2. Intensifying Catechesis: Catechetical programs on Christian marriage and family life have been expanded to target adults, children, and catechumens.
3. Research and Understanding of Local Traditions: The pastoral coordinator is tasked with studying the local mindset and traditions surrounding marriage in Karamoja, ensuring that solutions are culturally sensitive and viable.
4. Guidelines for Evangelizers: Clear guidelines have been drawn up regarding how evangelizers should engage with non-Christian polygamists, Christian polygamists, and those in traditional marriages.
5. Focus on Youth Catechesis: Special emphasis is placed on educating the youth about Christian marriage, so they are better equipped to form strong, sacramental unions.

The Second Synod of Moroto Diocese (1990) reinforced the importance of addressing polygamy, stating that authentic education in the faith and the active participation of parents and guardians in the Christian community are necessary conditions for the proper preparation and instruction of children for baptism. It also called for a reduction in the extravagant costs associated with Christian marriages, including the bride price, which often ranges from 10 to 150 cattle, making it a financial barrier for many potential couples.²¹⁵

Despite these efforts, the Pastoral Plan of Moroto Diocese (1990) admitted that many of the propositions on polygamy were vague and lacked clarity, which hindered their practical implementation. The synod called for concrete action to tackle these issues,

²¹⁵ Cf. E. Stites, A. Akabwai, D. Muzarana, and P. Ateyo, Angering Akuju: Survival and Suffering in Karamoja: A report on Livelihoods and Human Security in Karamoja region of Uganda, published by Feinstein International Centre in: <https://Karamojaresilience.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/AngeringAkuju-Survanalandsufferinginkaramoja.pdf>, [12.12.2024].

emphasizing that the Church must continue to reflect on and address the challenges posed by polygamy and related cultural practices, such as bride wealth, non-sacramental unions, and traditional marriage ceremonies.

A survey conducted by the synod committee in 1990 among the Karimojong people revealed several significant challenges to Christian marriage and family life in the region, including polygamy, non-sacramental unions, bridewealth, and traditional marriage rituals. These challenges require urgent action and careful reflection to promote the growth of authentic Christian families in Karamoja. The synod emphasized that while progress had been made, the Church needed to adopt more concrete, culturally sensitive measures to address the root causes of polygamy and promote a deeper understanding of Christian marriage.

In line with the chosen priority, the Small Christian Communities, as a means to new evangelization in the Moroto and Kotido dioceses, must aim to create an environment that guarantees the stability of those in marriage stages by following them with instructions, courses, and visits organized specifically for them. It is in the Small Christian Community that attention and concern must be given to those living in polygamous marriages and non-sacramental unions by contacting them with charitable attitudes and examples of Christian witness (MPP1990, S-44). This decree resonated with the AMECEA resolutions to build a community of the people of God founded on the Word of God. Neighbors gather in some homes to read, listen, meditate, and act on the Word of God every week. The challenges, such as family life, child-rearing, sickness, domestic violence, etc., can be shared, and they become a source of encouragement to one another.

During the AMECEA study conference in 1973 in Nairobi, Kenya, a key statement was made: "We must insist on building the church life and work on Basic Christian Communities in rural and urban areas. Church life must be based on the communities in which everyday life and work are involved; those basic and socially manageable social groups whose members can experience real interpersonal relationships and feel a sense of communal belonging, both in living and working."²¹⁶ Bishop Patrick Kalilombwe (Malawi) said during this AMECEA meeting that every Bishop, priest,

²¹⁶ AMECEA Pastoral Department, *Small Christian Communities*, in: <https://pastoral.amecea.org//index.php/small-christian-communities/>, [10.12.2024].

Seminarian, Brother, and Sister should participate in a particular Small Christian Community, not as a leader but as a regular/ordinary member.

2.2.1 Associations

The associations encourage and strengthen the few Christian families already present in the parishes within the diocese. Kotido Diocese has an Association of Married Couples as reflected in the diocesan policy (Policy of Kotido Diocese, 2015, n. 37). The association exists at the chapel, Parish, and Diocesan levels. In the diocese of Kotido, six couples were formed as trainers of trainees in the family ministry. The training took three phases. First, all married couples were invited to a seminar at the diocesan level, from which a well-versed couple in family ministry facilitated the inputs. The second phase involved parish priests selecting couples deemed to possess leadership potential, with the intention of training them to serve as coordinators and role models for other couples within their respective parishes. Finally, the six couples selected by the facilitators and the pastoral coordinator were chosen and trained as trainees. They are responsible for the faith formation of couples from the chapel and parish levels; occasionally, they can be called to facilitate seminars for couples at the diocesan level. Retreats and special days are organized for married couples and families open to embracing Christian marriage.

The gifts and talents of all members should be mobilized for the service of Small Christian communities, and all members should be encouraged to become involved in activities. In this way, married couples become engaged in the church's mission in their area of competence and live in the family ambiance.

2.2.2 Marriage courses

One key proposal for addressing marriage and family-related issues in Kotido Diocese was the establishment of a Marriage/Family Team, tasked with formulating comprehensive diocesan guidelines for a marriage course. This course would be essential for promoting a deeper understanding of Christian marriage and family life, incorporating Christian values and relevant cultural considerations.

The proposed marriage course would cover several critical areas, including:

1. The Core Value of Love in Christian Marriage: Central to the course would be the teaching of the foundational Christian understanding of marriage, emphasizing the importance of love as the primary basis for marital commitment.

2. Positive Aspects of Traditional Marriage: The course would also highlight the positive elements of traditional Karimojong marriage, such as the belief in the extended family structure and the communitarian spirit, where life is shared and celebrated collectively. Additionally, it would address the stabilizing role of bridewealth, suggesting that it be moderated to a reasonable level through dialogue with the community, supported by the small Christian community. Furthermore, the course would acknowledge the enduring nature of traditional marriage, which takes place in stages, thus fostering long-term stability.

3. Negative Aspects of Traditional Marriage: However, the course would not ignore the challenges of certain elements of traditional marriage. It would address issues such as the excessive bride price, the diminished role of elders in the marriage process, and the potential sacrifice of individual needs for communal expectations. These negative aspects would be critically examined to find solutions that align with Christian values.

4. Consideration of Various Participants: The course would consider the different categories of participants, ensuring that the content is relevant and accessible to all involved in the marriage process, engaged couples, married couples, or those preparing for marriage.

5. Responsible Parenthood: An important aspect of the course would be the question of responsible parenthood, focusing on the number of children a couple should have and the responsibility of raising them according to Christian principles.

6. Women's Dignity: The dignity of women would be another key topic, ensuring that the course promotes equality and respect within marriage and family life, in line with Christian teachings.

The course would be led by pastoral agents working alongside competent laypeople from various small Christian communities. These lay people would be actively involved in teaching and facilitating the course, ensuring that it is culturally sensitive and effective. The goal would be to create a balanced, contextually relevant program that

fosters understanding, dialogue, and transformation in marriage and family life within the Diocese of Kotido.

2.2.3 Extended family

The extended family and the Christian community should be involved in marriage matters (MPP1990, S-47). This is because customary marriage in Karamoja is a community affair. The two families of the bride and bridegroom make decisions and arrangements for the marriage process. Besides getting married to the bridegroom, it is also believed that the bridegroom is getting married to the husband's family and takes full responsibility for the dowry. The Christian community, especially the association of Married couples, should come out to explain the essence and meaning of church marriage to the extended family members. The goodwill of the Church will also honor the obligation of the traditional customary marriage even after the Church wedding. There is no need to withhold the wedding because the dowry has not been paid. Marriage is all aimed at the good of the family and the extended family.

2.2.4 Facing the Bride wealth

Traditional elders, church authorities, and government officials are to dialogue to identify what can be done about reducing bride wealth (MPP 1990, S-48). On their own, the two families of the bride and bridegroom will find it difficult to agree on the bride's wealth to facilitate a church marriage. The exorbitant bride price of 10 cows, 15 cows, 20 cows, or even 100 cows is difficult for most families. Mediation between the Church authorities and government officials who may institute bylaws for a minimum standard requirement for marriage is necessary. A case in point on the Government of Uganda's side is the Marriage and Divorce Bill 2009.²¹⁷ The bill aims to bring several landmark reforms to marriage laws in Uganda, including the prohibition of cohabitation and punishment with a fine of ten million or imprisonment for three years.

²¹⁷ Cf. The Marriage and Divorce bill 2009, in: <https://bills.parliament.ug/uploads/1157marriage-&Divorce-bill-2009.pdf>, [23.12.2024].

Polygamy as a pastoral challenge is to be further explored in the diocese (MPP 1990, S-49). The phenomenon of Polygamy is widely practiced throughout Karamoja. Research conducted in 2013 by a nongovernmental organization showed that a majority of women felt that polygamy was harmful because men often take more wives and have more children than they can support financially.²¹⁸ In polygamous households, men with multiple wives show a preference toward the wife who can provide them with food, thereby neglecting the needs of the other wives and children, who may be left without adequate nourishment. In the past, a man with many wives was thought to be richer in cattle and would not have had a problem supporting his family. Insecurity and cattle raids led to impoverishment and difficulties in maintaining large families, even for those previously wealthy. The above data attests that the phenomenon of polygamy is real in Karamoja. It poses a problem not only for the Church but also for ordinary family life lived by the people. Polygamous marriages often deprive certain family members, particularly women and children, of the necessities of life, leaving them vulnerable and marginalized within the familial structure.

2.3 Polygamy and the Biblical Perspectives

In this section, we shall examine what the Old Testament and the New Testament teach about the vice of polygamy. The mystery of revelation in Jesus Christ sheds illuminating light on the institution of marriage in the context of God's plan as outlined in the New Testament.

Polygamy is first cited in the Old Testament with Lamech having two wives (Gn 4:19). Abraham is one of the earliest polygamous men mentioned, driven by impatience and Sarah's encouragement to marry Hagar.²¹⁹ Sarah, initially the matchmaker, later became jealous and requested that Hagar be driven away, referring to her as a concubine.

²¹⁸ Cf. E. Stites, D. Akabawai, D. Mazurana and P. Ateyo, Angering Akuju: Survival and Suffering in Karamoja: A report on Livelihoods and Human Security in the Karamoja region of Uganda published by Feinstein International Centre in: <https://karamojaresilience.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/AngeringAkuju-Survivalandsufferinginkaramoja.pdf>, [10.12.2024].

²¹⁹ Cf. A. Shorter (ed.), *Church and Marriage in Eastern Africa*, Eldoret 1975, p. 89-90.

Despite their original love match, Sarah's influence led Abraham into polygamy, causing him pain and tribulation (Gn 21:11).

Other notable polygamous figures in the Old Testament include Jacob, David, and Solomon. Jacob's polygamy resulted from Laban's trickery, which led to complicated family dynamics (Gn 35:22-26). David, a righteous man, was also polygamous, reflecting the acceptance of polygamy in Israelite society. Adrian Hastings notes that polygamy was accepted without condemnation in the Old Testament.²²⁰

During the post-exilic period, attitudes shifted, and there is no reference to polygamy in the books from this time. The ideal of marriage became monogamous. Walter Trobisch highlights the consequences of polygamous marriages, noting that polygamy was legally recognized but led to various problems, including jealousy, quarreling, and estrangement (Gn 26:35; 29:30-31). In the story of Abimelech, polygamy led to murder (Jgs 9:5), and David's kingdom suffered because his wives turned his heart to other gods.²²¹

Although Mosaic law permitted polygamy, writings on the subject were rare during the post-exilic period, and monogamy became the ideal in Jewish tradition. The Jewish ideal of marriage evolved into a true covenant relationship, and polygamy was eventually forbidden among Western Jews by the twelfth century. Polygamy was accepted by society, but there is no indication it was encouraged, except in Abraham's case, where Sarah encouraged him to marry Hagar. Over time, polygamy ceased to be practiced by the Jewish people, and monogamy became customary. There is no mention of polygamous marriages after the Babylonian exile.

The analysis of polygamy in Christian teachings reveals a gradual evolution from polygamy to monogamy. While the Old Testament permitted polygamy, a careful reading shows a shift towards monogamy as the ideal form of marriage.²²² The New Testament does not explicitly condemn polygamy, but it implies disapproval and emphasizes monogamy. The teachings of Jesus presuppose monogamous marriage, and he strongly condemned divorce (Mk 10:11). Paul also implies monogamy in his epistles (1 Tm 3:2; Ti 1:6).

²²⁰ Cf. A. Hastings, *Christian Marriage in Africa*, London 1973, p.19-22

²²¹ Cf. W. Trobisch, *my wife made me a polygamist*, Illinois 1971, p.18-20.

²²² Cf. E. Hilman, *Polygamy Reconsidered*, Maryknoll, New York 1975, p.140.

Historians note that monogamy became characteristic of Christian marriage from Apostolic times, with early church figures like Ignatius of Antioch supporting monogamous unions.²²³ The New Testament writers were aware of polygamy but did not directly address it. Instead, they emphasized the ideal of monogamous marriage, as seen in Christ's teachings (Mt 19:5; Mk 10:7).

The qualifications for church leaders to be faithful to one wife (1 Tm 3:2; Ti 1:6) suggest a moderate condemnation of polygamy. While polygamy is not flatly condemned in the Bible, monogamy became the accepted norm over time. Early Christian writers like Athenagoras and Tertullian even viewed second marriages after a spouse's death as adultery.²²⁴ Christ's condemnation of divorce (Mk 10:11-12) further supports the monogamous ideal.

2.4. Second Vatican Council on the dignity of marriage and family

The Council Fathers drew attention to the consideration of some urgent problems deeply affecting the human race at the present day in the light of the Gospel and human experience (GS 46). One of the six problems mentioned was Marriage and the Family. The council, therefore, resolved to seek light for each of the problems from the principles which Christ has given.

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (GS 47) affirms that the well-being of the person, as well as the flourishing of both human and Christian society, is intrinsically linked to the integrity and vitality of conjugal and family life. While Christians are overjoyed and all who esteem conjugal and family life, this happy picture of the dignity of partnerships is not reflected everywhere but is overshadowed by polygamy, the “plague of divorce,” and so-called “free love” and other “disfigurement of marriage,” as well as excessive pleasure and illicit practices against human generation. The council, therefore, undertook some measures to mitigate the challenges.

According to the council, the intimate partnership of married life and love has been established by the Creator, qualified by His laws, and is rooted in the conjugal

²²³ Cf. A. Hastings, *Christian Marriage in Africa*, London 1973, p.7

²²⁴ Cf. Ibid.

covenant of irrevocable personal consent (GS 48). It is an institution confirmed by the divine law, receiving stability in the eyes of society, from the human act by which the partners mutually surrender themselves to each other for their good, children, and society. God is the author of marriage and has endowed it with various ends. Marriage institution and love are ordered to the procreation and education of offspring, and it is in them that it finds its crowning glory. The gospel of Mathew 19:6 explains the unity that exists between the two partners.

Christ our Lord has abundantly blessed this love, which is rich in its various feature, coming from the divine love and modeled on Christ's union with the Church (Hos 2; Jer 3:6-13; Ez 16; Is 54, Mt 9: 15; Mk 2: 19-20; Lk 5: 34-35; Jn 3:29; 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:27; Rv 19: 7-8; 21:2 and 9).

The word of God invites the betrothed to nourish and foster their betrothal with chaste love and likewise spouses in their marriage (Gn 2: 22-24; Prov 5: 18-20; 31:10-31; Tob 8: 4-8; Cant 11:1-3; 2:16; 7: 8-11; Eph 5: 25-33). The Lord wishes to bestow special gifts of grace and divine love, restore, perfect, and elevate them. It is a love that brings together the human and divine, leading partners to a free and mutual giving of themselves, experienced in tenderness and action, and permeating their whole lives. This kind of love is a far cry from mere erotic attraction, which is pursued in selfishness and soon fades away in wretchedness (GS 49).

Married love is expressed and perfected by the exercise and acts proper to marriage. Here, the intimate chaste union of spouses takes place and is fostered through acts of self-giving, signifying and enriching the spouses in joy and gratitude.

Marriage and conjugal love are by nature ordered to the procreation and education of children. Children are the supreme gifts of marriage and contribute to the well-being of their parents. Without the intention to undermine other ends of marriage, married love and the whole structure of family life are directed to disposing of the spouses to cooperate valiantly with the love of the Creator and Savior, who through them will increase and enrich the family from day to day (GS 50).

Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and educate their children. They cooperate in the love of God the creator, and in a certain sense, they are his interpreters. This involves fulfilling their role with a sense of human and Christian responsibility, formation of correct judgments through docile respect for

God, and common effort. In the context of polygamous families, it will prove arduous to achieve this objective as one husband may not give necessary attention to the many women he has married.

The Council, several years after *Humanae Vitae*, notes that the morality of procedures to regulate conception does not depend solely on sincere intentions or the evaluation of motives. It must be determined by objective standards that reserve the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love. Couples may not undertake methods of birth control which are found blameworthy by the teaching authority of the Church (GS 51).

The Council notes that a family is a school of human enrichment. The married couple must practice an affectionate sharing of thoughts, common deliberation, and eager cooperation as parents in the child's upbringing (GS 52). The active presence of both parents is important for their training. Education should help children discover and foster their vocation, including the religious vocation, to choose their state of life with full consciousness. The role of teachers in children's upbringing is crucial, for they assist them in choosing their careers in life. Everyone who exercises influence in the community and social groups should devote themselves to the welfare of marriage and family. They include bodies like civic authorities, Christians, experts in other sciences, particularly biology, medicine, social science, and psychology, priests trained to deal with family matters, and family associations (GS 52).

2.5 Polygamy vis-av-vis *Christifideles Laici*

In the analysis of the theology of the laity in *Christifideles Laici* by Peter N.V Hai, reflecting on John Paul II's Theology of the Laity, four main motifs are raised.²²⁵ The contents of the entire exhortation are summed up in four areas, namely, 1) Baptismal Dignity as a leitmotif, 2) Ecclesiology of Communion as a context for Lay mission, 3) Holiness as a fundamental vocation of Lay people, and 4) A positive description of Laity.

²²⁵ P.N. Hai recently completed his doctoral thesis at the Australian Catholic University. He wrote on the Theology of the laity in the documents of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences with special reference to the teachings of Pope John Paul II and the Vietnamese Episcopal Conference.

Christifideles Laici employs the concept of baptismal dignity as the framework to define the status of lay people in the church who are called to participate fully in the Church's life as communion and in its mission in the world. The entire apostolic exhortation revolves around the theme of baptismal dignity.

2.5.1 Baptismal Dignity as a *Leitmotif*

In the theology of the laity, according to John Paul II, the dignity, identity, equality, vocation, communion, mission, spirituality, and secularity of the Laity Spring from baptism (CL 10). Baptism is a sacrament that regenerates us in the life of the Son of God; unites us to Christ and his Body, the Church, and anoints us in the Holy Spirit, making us spiritual temples. Polygamy, on the other hand, draws the man and woman back as it dehumanizes, most especially the woman. The divine life received at baptism by man and woman is reduced and made sterile, as they cannot participate in the life of sacraments. This fact was observed in the joint pastoral Letter for Kotido and Moroto Dioceses by the two top religious leaders during the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Christian Faith in Karamoja(IF6). Rev. Fr. Bernard Phelan, MHM, the Diocesan Administrator of Kotido Diocese, together with Most Rev. Henry Apoloryamam Ssentongo, then Bishop of Moroto, observed with concern that many individuals in Karamoja tend to abandon the Christian way of life after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation, particularly at the point of marriage. A similar concern was raised during the Second Synod of Moroto Diocese in 1990, which reported findings from a survey identifying critical pastoral challenges that the Church in Karamoja must urgently address. These included the widespread practice of polygamy, the prevalence of non-sacramental unions, the cultural requirement of bride wealth, the multi-staged nature of traditional marriage rites, and issues surrounding the Christian upbringing of children (*Proceedings of the Pastoral Plan of the Diocese of Moroto*, II, S-42).

Of particular concern is polygamy, which not only undermines the sacramental nature of Christian marriage but also fractures the communion between man and the Church. As highlighted in Scripture, Christian marriage is founded on the unity of one man and one woman (Mt 19:3-5; Mk 10:7), and thus polygamous unions directly contradict the normative understanding of marriage as upheld by the Church.

The Church, however, views the institution of Marriage and Family life as a primary vocation of the laity. This vocation is rooted in the sacrament of Marriage, a sign of Christ's love for the Church. The relationship between husband and wife is profoundly rooted in the symbolic and theological relationship between Christ, the Head, and the Church, His Bride, as articulated in Ephesians 5:25. In this context, married couples are called to mirror and embody this divine communion in their marital and family life, reflecting the sacrificial love and unity that characterizes Christ's relationship with the Church. The married couple and the family, therefore, are the first and basic expression of the social dimension of the person (GS 24). From the one dignity flowing from Baptism, each member of the lay faithful, together with the ordained ministers and men and women religious, shares a responsibility with the Church's mission (CL15).

The dignity of the Christian is the source of equality for all members of the Church. It guarantees and fosters a sense of communion and fellowship and equally becomes the hidden dynamic force in the lay faithful's apostolate and mission (CL17).

Echoing the thought of Vatican II and the Synod Fathers, John Paul II maintains that among the lay faithful, this one baptismal dignity takes on a proper and particular manner of life, destined as the secular character (CL15). This secularity or presence in the world must be understood in the theological and ecclesiological sense, in the light of God's plan of Salvation and the context of the mystery of the Church. It must not be understood as merely an anthropological and sociological reality. The lay faithful are called to fulfill their vocation in the world.

Baptismal dignity brings demands on the life of the lay faithful. They are Laborers the Lord calls to work in his vineyard (CL17).

From the noble obligation, the Pope expounds a crucial point of the motif of baptismal dignity by emphasizing its Trinitarian and ecclesiological dimension, a predominant approach of the post-synodal exhortation.

He encourages all Christians, including the lay faithful, to be conscious that through baptism they have received the extraordinary dignity or newness of life, of being called children of the Father, members incorporated in Christ, and his Church, living and holy Temples of the Holy Spirit (CL64).

John Paul II is convinced that baptismal dignity is the basis of their participation in Christ's Priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission and their vocation to holiness in love.

Their mission is fulfilled through their presence in the world because of their secular character. As members of the church and sharers in the triple office of Christ, lay people participate in the church's mission, which is concentrated and manifested in Evangelization (CL33).

The supreme duty of evangelization, therefore, consists of two dimensions *ad extra*, as proclaiming the Gospel to the world, and *ad intra*, as playing an active part in the life and activity of the Church (CL33).

In his thinking, to grasp the full sense of dignity of the lay faithful, one has to consider that the vocation to holiness, which is the perfection of charity, is the prime and fundamental vocation that the Father assigns to each of them in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit (CL16). Holiness, therefore, according to John Paul II, is the greatest testimony of dignity conferred on a disciple of Christ (CL16).

Secondly, he highlights the communitarian and ecclesial dimensions of baptismal dignity by insisting that only from inside the Church's mystery of communion is the identity of the lay faithful made known and their fundamental dignity revealed. Only within the context of this dignity can their vocation and mission in the Church and the World be defined (CL 8). The thought on the preceding subject here seems to be based on the Thomistic principle of *agere sequitur esse*, or "Action follows being," that is, identity and dignity.

The statements on the baptismal dignity of the lay faithful and implications for the Christian life show that John Paul II's thought strongly reflects the views of Vatican II and the synod participants. Indeed according to the teachings of *Lumen Gentium* and the conciliar decree on the Apostolate of Lay People *Apostolicam Actuositatem* on the foundations of the lay apostolate, every person is the witness and living instrument of the mission of the Church (LG 33)...their right and duty to be apostles flows from their union with Christ the head, and being inserted in the mystical Body of Christ by Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself (AA3; LG33).

The Laity live this apostolate in Faith, Hope, and Charity poured by the Holy Spirit into the hearts of all members of the Church (AA 3). This charity urges all Christians to work for the glory of God through the coming of his kingdom and the communication of eternal life to all men (AA3). Vatican II changed the way lay people are understood to

share in the ministry and mission of the Church. Before the Second Vatican Council, Catholic Action constituted the predominant form of lay involvement in the Church. Initiated by Pope Pius XI, it was defined as “participation” in the apostolate of the hierarchy, a concept later developed by Pope Pius XII, who described it as “collaboration” with the hierarchical mission of the Church.

With Vatican II, Sacramental invitation becomes the theological and ecclesiological basis of the Vocation and mission of the Laity, and John Paul II continues and deepens this fundamental shift. In a similar vein, in the message of the entire church issued after the synod, the synod Fathers declared that all the lay faithful have dignity, which they hold in common with clerics and religious, since there is only one people brought into unity by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They insist that dignity comes from baptism, through which a person is incorporated into Christ and the Community of the Church, and called to a life of holiness. They continue to affirm that whoever receives baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist commits himself or herself to follow Christ and to witness to him with his or her whole life.

Like John Paul II, the Synod Fathers highlight both the Trinitarian and ecclesial dimension of the baptismal Dignity, which demands a holy life of witness from all the baptized Christians. Through Baptism, the lay faithful are made disciples of Christ, called to the holiness of life, sharing in the Eucharist, and being marked by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and in their way make the life and mission of Christ present in this world to the honor of God and the Salvation of human beings.

2.5.2 Ecclesiology of Communion as a context for Lay mission

The notion of the mystery of communion constitutes a central theme in the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, serving as a foundational framework for understanding and articulating the vocation and mission of the lay faithful within the Church and in the world. The Roman Curia, barely two months after the conclusion of the synod, stated that the positive results of the synod were not entirely based on the affirmation of Vatican II, but on the emphasis on the ecclesiology of communion as a

necessary context for situating the role of the laity in the Church for the salvation of the World.²²⁶

The fundamental meaning of the complex biblical “word” communion refers to the union with God brought about by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit (CL19). Such communion is present in the Word of God and the Sacraments, and baptism is the door and foundation of communion in the Church (CL19). The body of Christ in the Eucharist sacramentalizes this communion, and the Eucharist is the source and summit of the whole Christian life. The words of Pope Paul VI spoken at the general audience on the day after the closer of Vatican II, refer to the Church as *Sanctorum Communio*, “the communion of saints,” which refers to a double life-giving participation: the incorporation of Christians into the life of Christ and the communication of that life of Charity to the entire body of the faithful in this world and the next, union with Christ and Christ, and unity among Christians, vertical and horizontal, the communion of each Christian with Christ and the communion of all Christians with one another (CL19). The communion the Pope affirms is the very mystery of the Church (LG 1).

As an active participant in Vatican II, which was largely a council about the Church, John Paul II followed *Lumen Gentium*’s vision of the Church as “a communion of life, love, and Truth,” the instrument for the Salvation of all, (LG 9) or as a community of faith, hope, and charity, a visible organization through which Christ communicates truth and grace to humankind (LG 8).

According to Avery Dulles, while John Paul II’s ecclesiology can be characterized in terms of five ecclesiological models: the Church as Mystical Communion, Institution, Sacrament, Herald, and Servant, his preferred use of the phrase “Mystery of Communion.”²²⁷ His treatment of the concepts of mystery and communion shows that for him, they are discussed in chapters 1 and 2, respectively, and are often referred to by prominent theologians such as Dulles, Komonchak, and Pottmeyer as two distinct ecclesiological motifs.²²⁸

²²⁶ Cf. John Paul II, “Annual address to the Roman Curia,” *Origins* 17 (28.01.1988), p. 575.

²²⁷ Cf. A. Dulles, “The ecclesiology of John Paul II,” *Origins* 28:44(22.04.1999),p.759.

²²⁸ Cf. A. Dulles, “Catholic Ecclesiology since Vatican II,” *Concilium* 188 (1986),p.4; J. Komonchak, “The Theological Debate,” *Concilium* 188(1986), p.55 and “The Church: God’s Gift and Our Task,” *Origins* 16:42(1987), p.735; H. Pottmeyer, The Church as Mysterium and as Institution,” *Concilium* 188(1986), p. 99.

The reality of the Church as communion is the integrating aspect, the central content of the mystery, the divine plan for the salvation of humanity (CL 19).

From this perspective, the Pope affirms that the Church, understood as a mystery of communion, constitutes the living context in which the identity, mission, and responsibility of the lay faithful can be fully understood (CL 18). Elaborating on this point, Cardinal Edwardo Piriono, the then head of the Pontifical Council for the laity, stated that “the principle of *Christifideles Laici* is the presentation of the lay faithful’s vocation and mission within the ecclesiology of communion, which was at the heart of the council and proposed by the 1985 extraordinary synod.”

Polygamy therefore fractures this mystery of communion, contrary to conjugal love, which is individual and exclusive (GS 49§2; CCC 1645). It is devoid of the covenantal relationship realized in monogamy, which is God's original plan for marriage (Can. 1055 §1; CCC 1601; GS 48 §1). Furthermore, polygamy contradicts the moral law and directly negates the plan of God, which was revealed from the beginning because it is contrary to the equal personal dignity of men and women who, in matrimony, give themselves with love that is total, unique, and exclusive (CCC 2387).

In the post-synodal exhortation, John Paul II explains that lay Christians share in the threefold mission of Christ, derived from their communion with the Church. Their participation must be lived and realized in communion and for the increase of communion itself (CL14). This communion in view is the first great sign of Christ's presence in the world, and it promotes and stimulates the Church's proper apostolic and missionary action (CL 64,31). Polygamy, however, is in contrast with the supreme duty of evangelization, which consists of two dimensions, *ad extra* as proclaiming the gospel to the world, and *ad intra*, as playing the active part in the life and activity of the Church (CL 33)

The lay faithful, as members of the church, have the vocation and mission of proclaiming the Gospel. They are prepared to work by the sacraments of Christian initiation and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the subsequent stages of their faith journey, they embrace the service of the church through the sacrament of matrimony. This stems from being sharers in the threefold mission of Christ, namely, priestly, prophetic, and Kingly mission. They participate in the liturgical life of the Christian community, apostolic works, bring to the church people who are far removed from it, cooperate in proclaiming the word of God through catechetical instruction, and offer special skills to

make the care of souls and the administration of the temporal goods of the church more efficient (CL 33).

The lay faithful, clergy, and religious are all laborers in the vineyard. They are the goal, the subject of church communion, and participate in the mission of salvation (CL 55). In the paradigm of Church communion, their life has a profound meaning, living out the commonly shared Christian dignity and the universal call to holiness in the perfection of love (CL 55). In this pericope, the Pope recalls St. Paul's image of the Mystical Body of Christ and describes ecclesial communion as an "organic" communion, analogous to a living and functioning body (CL 20). It is characterized by diversity and complementarity of vocations and states of life, ministries, charisms, and responsibilities in and on behalf of communion (1 Cor 12:1-11;12-31).

In the co-responsibility of the lay faithful in the church as mission, the Pope highlights the intimate link between communion and mission. Communion and mission are profoundly connected; they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other to the point that communion represents both the source and fruit of mission. Communion gives rise to mission and mission accompanies communion (CL 32). The biblical image of the vine and the branches brings the consideration of fullness and life. Those engrafted to the vine and brought to life are expected to bear fruit (Jn 15:5). This is an essential demand for life in Christ and the Church. The person who does not remain in communion cannot bear fruit. Those in polygamous marriages are not in communion, and it requires them to be pruned if they are to bear fruit. This is what this biblical image implies. In comparison, communion with other people forms the most magnificent fruit the branches can give. This arises from the gift of Christ and His Holy Spirit.

As a vocation, communion, and mission are the main concepts of the apostolic exhortation, it is worthwhile to recall a helpful distinction made by Vatican II Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and the *instrumentum laboris*. According to this decree, the apostolate of the laity is derived from the very vocation of a Christian (AA 1). However, vocation is broader than mission because it comprises both a call to communion and a call to mission. *Communio* is the fundamental aspect destined to endure forever. Mission, on the other hand, is a consequence of this call and is limited to earthly existence.

John Paul II's presentation of the identity, vocation, and mission of the laity in *Christifideles Laici*, grounded in the ecclesiological framework of the Church as

communion, raises an important theological question: would the role and ministry of the laity have been understood differently had the Pope approached the subject from the conciliar framework of the Church as the People of God? This question, which appears not to have been explicitly raised before, invites reflection within the broader context of post-conciliar ecclesiological debates concerning the nature and self-understanding of the Church.

Following the Second Vatican Council, particularly due to the emphasis placed on the theme of the People of God in Chapter Two of *Lumen Gentium*, many theologians argued that this image had become the dominant ecclesiological model. José Comblin underscores this shift, contending that Vatican II deliberately foregrounds the concept of the People of God as more inclusive and fundamental than the image of the Church as the Body of Christ.²²⁹

However, the final report of the 1985 Synod of Bishops changed this paradigm by declaring that the ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the council documents.

Since the release of this report, several prominent theologians have pointed out this ecclesiological shift from the expression of the church as the people of God to the Church as communion.

About the synod of 1985, Jean Marie Tillard speaks of the displacement of accent on the church as 'People of God'²³⁰ Aloisio Lorscheider mentions a fear in some quarters that the image of the 'People of God' might degenerate into a merely democratic view of the Church.²³¹

Joseph Komonchak observes that the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops entirely neglects the concept of the "People of God," instead emphasizing the theme of "communion."²³² As the dominant ecclesiological framework. He further notes that the sole reference to the term *People of God* in the Synod's final report concerns its alleged misuse, an omission he describes as "astounding," particularly given that the same

²²⁹ Cf. H.J. Pottmeyer, *Papacy in Communion: Perspectives from Vatican II*, trans. Mathew J. O'Connell, New York 1998, p.111.

²³⁰ Cf. J M. Tillard, *Final Report of the Last Synod*, "Concilium" 188 (1986),p.67.

²³¹ Cf. A. Lorscheider, *The Extraordinary Synod in Light of Vatican II Twenty Years Later*, "Concilium" 188 (1986), p. 81.

²³² Cf. J. Komonchak, *Concepts of Communion, Past and Present*, "Cristianesimo nella storia," 16 (1995), p. 335.

document explicitly warns against a partial and selective reading of the Second Vatican Council's texts.²³³

Avery Dulles, in his analysis of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, characterizes the event as a deliberate attempt to displace the concept of the "People of God" from its position of prominence within post-conciliar ecclesiology. He argues that the Synod's preference for the term "communion" stemmed from the belief that it is less susceptible to sociological reduction and more conducive to promoting internal unity and ecclesial peace.²³⁴ However, Dulles finds this development troubling, noting that the term "communion" has no precedent as a primary designation for the Church in Scripture or in the documents of any ecumenical council, including those of the Second Vatican Council. He thus considers this shift a "shaking reality" with significant theological implications.

Hermann Pottmeyer notes that the charges against the phrase 'People of God' were also made against *Communio* ecclesiology, and some Theologians expressed reserve concerning *communio* ecclesiology and demanded a return to "People of God" as the ecclesiological catchword.²³⁵

Reviewing the debate, Komonchak observes that some interpreters have misunderstood the connection between Chapter 1 of *Lumen Gentium* and Chapter 2 on the People of God, and have consequently commented on them as if one had to choose between the Body of Christ and the People of God, or between the People of God and communion.²³⁶ For him the first chapter considers the church from the creation of the plan of God until its fulfillment in heaven and the second chapter discusses the same mystery in the time between ascension and the *Parousia*, or the mystery of the Church as lived out in history, a communion of life, charity, and truth that is "the messianic people" which God uses as instruments of salvation, the visible sacrament of saving unity.²³⁷

Walter Kasper contends that a detailed analysis reveals that images and concepts used to describe the nature of the Church in Vatican II documents, such as the Church as "People of God," "the Body of Christ," "Temple of the Holy Spirit," and "Sacrament" i.e. sign and instrument of unity are ultimately based on and interpreted through the

²³³ Cf. J. Komonchak, *The Theological Debate*, "Concilium" 188 (1986), p. 55-56; See also Gaillardetz, *Teaching with Authority*, 1997, p. 71).

²³⁴ A. Dulles, "The Church as a communion" in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorf*, edited by Bradley, Michigan, 1996, p.126.

²³⁵ H. Pottemeyer, "The Actualization of Vatican II," *Theology Digest* 49:2 (2002),p.148-149.

²³⁶ Cf. J. Komonchak, Ecclesiology of Vatican II, *Origins* 28:44(1999),p.764.

²³⁷ Ibid.

understanding of the Church as *Communio*.²³⁸ The unity of the Church is “a communion-unity.” This means she is the concrete, sacramental sign and representation of the Trinitarian Mystery as an icon of the Trinity.²³⁹

The congregation for the doctrine of Faith also insists that the concept of communion, a key for the renewal of Catholic Theology, must be integrated with the concepts of the people of God and the Body of Christ, and the relationship between the Church as a communion and the Church as Sacrament has to be given due importance.²⁴⁰ In the light of the intrinsic connection between communion and people of God, impressively argued by Joseph Komonchak, Hermann Pottmeyer, and the Congregation of Doctrine of Faith and the need for John Paul II to refer to the teachings of Vatican II, we believe if the Pope had developed his Theology of the laity from the image of the Church as People of God, he would have arrived at similar conclusions.²⁴¹

In the final appeal after the apostolic exhortation, the Pope links the two concepts: baptismal dignity and the mystery of communion. First, he asks all Christians to be aware of a commonly shared Christian dignity (CL 64).

Second, he encourages them to be mindful of what it means to belong to the Church of Jesus Christ, participate in her mystery of communion, and her dynamism in mission and apostolate (CL 64). For him, this ecclesial conscientiousness is a sense of belonging to the mystery of communion and solicits a generous response from all Christians (CL 64). In our context, in the realm of marriage in line with Church teaching, all are called to embrace without fear or leaning to cultural beliefs the sacrament of matrimony as opposed to polygamy, which fractures the communion and mission of the church.

One of the guiding principles of John Paul II's reflection on baptismal dignity and the mystery of communion, and his use of these themes as the basis for understanding

²³⁸ Cf. W. Kasper, *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity*, London 2004, p.58.

²³⁹ Cf. W. Kasper, *The Church as Sacrament of Unity*, “*Communio*,” 10 (1987), p.8-9.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion*, *Origins* 22:7 (22.06.1992), p.108.

²⁴¹ It is instructive to recall that the Bull of Promulgation of the 1983 Codex, John Paul II declares that “foremost among the elements which express the true and authentic image of the Church are: the teaching whereby the Church is presented as the People of God...; the further teaching which portrays the Church as a communion...; likewise the teaching by which all members of the People of God share, each in their own measure, in the threefold priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ.” See “*Apostolic Constitution*,” in the *Code of Canon Law: New Revised English Translation*, prepared by the Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland in association with the Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand and the Canadian Canon Law Society, London, 1997, xv.

and explaining the vocation and mission of the lay faithful, is the conviction that ecclesial communion is both a gift and a task. He explicitly refers to this idea by affirming that the Church communion is a great gift, to be gratefully accepted by the lay faithful, and at the same time to be lived with a deep sense of responsibility (CL 20). John Paul II's emphasis on the twin notions of baptismal dignity and the mystery of communion in the post-synodal documentation represents a deepening of and a progression from the teachings of Vatican II. These concepts are intimately connected to the point of providing the defining basis of and operating context for lay Christians' life, Vocation, and Mission. They also lead us to contend that the very center of his Theology of the laity is the belief that lay people's identity, vocation, and mission are simply dimensions or aspects of the same reality. One should not speak of several theologies of the laity in the Pope's vast and varied corpus. In his exhortation and other writings, there is only one essential theological treatment of the dignity, identity, and role of the lay faithful in the Church, which is at the same time communion, missionary, and holy by nature (CL 32). Lay people are called to discover and live their vocation and mission.

Like *Lumen Gentium*, the universal call to holiness lies at the heart of *Christifideles Laici*. As the fullest expression of communion, the universal call to holiness is bound intrinsically to the identity, mission, spirituality, and secular character of lay people.

2.5.3 Holiness as a fundamental vocation of Lay People

The third motif of the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* discusses the call to holiness in numbers 16 and 17. However, to fully appreciate the riches of its teachings on the call to holiness, the entire apostolic exhortation on the mission of the laity must be considered. *Christifideles Laici* has a strong spiritual and pastoral orientation. It provides spirituality for lay People, aiming to link doctrine to life. This emphasis on the unity of life has a baptismal identity as the basis and missionary communion as its content.

Number 16 examines the theological foundation of the call to holiness, while 17 insists that lay people must live this vocation in the world, i.e., there should be no dichotomy or conflict between their Christian life and their presence in the world. Polygamy is opposed to holiness as taught by the document and witness of life in the

church and the world. Though many polygamous families come to church for regular prayers and support the church in various ways, their life signals a conflicting message between what they portray and what they live. A survey of the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage in Kotido Diocese over the past five years may provide valuable insight into the issues under discussion.

A five-year report of Church marriages in Kotido Diocese from 2019 -2023

	Parishes	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Sub-totals
1	Abim	0	0	2	2	13	17
2	Kaabong	2	0	3	0	0	05
3	Kanawat	1	0	0	0	3	04
4	Kapedo	0	0	0	0	0	00
5	Karenga	0	0	0	0	0	00
6	Losilang	0	0	0	0	2	02
7	Loyoro	0	0	2	0	6	08
8	Morulem	12	0	0	0	29	41
9	Panyangara	4	3	1	0	5	13
10	Cathedral P.	0	1	0	0	0	01
11	Kokoria	0	0	0	0	0	00
12	Kalapata	0	0	0	0	0	00
	Grand Total	19	4	8	2	58	91

NB. The above report is extracted from the diocesan archives, giving a summary of spiritual returns on the church marriages conducted in the diocese of Kotido(Cf. Fr. Gabriel Omenya +256789565271, Bishop's Secretary)

The overall report of those who received the sacrament of marriage in the Church from 2010 to 2023 in the twelve parishes of Kotido diocese was ninety-one couples. Though the survey is situated in the era of COVID-19 and the two newly

created parishes of Kalapata and Kokoria, the figures show a low number of couples getting married in the Church in the respective parishes.

Philippe Delhaye identifies four major themes in the two sections of *Christifideles Laici*, 16 and 17.

- i. Holiness as a fundamental and undeniable demand from the mystery of the Church
- ii. Charity, Love of God, and love of neighbor, as the essence of Christian holiness.
- iii. Holiness is an essential element of baptismal and sacramental life and a constitutive element of Christians' dignity and mission.
- iv. Holiness is the obligation for all Christians, based on the idea of following and imitating Christ.²⁴²

In number 16, John Paul II defines the call to holiness, stresses its importance in the Christian life, and explains its Trinitarian, Christological, and Pneumatological foundation as well as its universal character. The vocation to holiness, understood as the perfection of charity, is the prime and fundamental vocation of the lay faithful that the Father assigns to each of them in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit (CL16). It is a universal and common call rooted in Baptism and addressed to all members of the Church. Finally, it is a requirement to follow and imitate Jesus Christ and as a vocation to a holy life according to the Spirit. Here, the Pope implicitly links the concept of holiness with the Baptismal dignity by affirming that holiness is the greatest dignity conferred on a disciple of Jesus Christ.

In number 17, following the proposition of the Synod Fathers, the Pope reflects on the theme of holiness with emphasis on the unity of life and the need to live out this holiness in the world.²⁴³

The unity of the lay Christians is of the greatest importance, and it implies a life lived according to the spirit which expresses itself in a particular way in their involvement in temporal affairs and their participation in earthly activities (CL 17).

²⁴² Cf. P. Delhaye, “*Les Grandes Lecons du Synode de 1987: Guide de lecture de l’Exhortation Apostolique Post-Synodale Christifideles Laici*,” *Espirit et Vie* [Part 1] 22 (1 June 1989), p.329.

²⁴³ Cf. Synod of Bishops, The Propositions of the 1987 World Synod of Bishops, *Origins* 17:29 (31.12.1987), p.501.

The vocation to holiness is an essential and inseparable element of the new life of Baptism and therefore an element which determines their dignity (CL17).

Lay people are to recognize and live their vocation as an undeniable and demanding obligation (CL17). Their holiness is derived from their participation in the Church's holiness, and it represents their first and fundamental contribution to the building of the Church herself, which is a communion of saints (CL17). It is intimately connected to the mission and the responsibility entrusted to the lay faithful in the Church and the world. Therefore, it must be considered a fundamental presupposition and an indispensable condition for everyone to fulfill the mission of salvation within the Church (CL 17). The Church's holiness, the Pope concludes, is the hidden source and the infallible measure of the works of the apostolate and the missionary effort(CL 17). The idea of this section is that there should be no conflict or dualism between a life of holiness and full participation in the world.²⁴⁴

In the last part of the apostolic exhortation, where he discusses the variety of vocations and the formation of the lay faithful, the Pope returns to the theme, but from a distinct perspective, calling for an integrated formation for living an integrated life (CL 59-60).

For him, the fundamental objective of forming lay people is an ever-clearer discovery of one's vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live it to fulfill one's mission (CL 57).

The vocation is to live out the commonly shared Christian dignity and the universal call to holiness in the perfection of love (CL 58). It requires lay people to remain attached to the vine, Jesus Christ, and in spiritual maturation (CL 58). Therefore, those who deviate from monogamous marriage to polygamous marriage have detached themselves from the vine, Jesus Christ.

In a Christian spirituality that bears fruit, there is a unity of life, and every activity, every situation, and every responsibility of the lay faithful becomes an occasion ordained by providence for a continuous exercise of faith, hope, and charity (CL 59).

²⁴⁴ To underscore the possibility of holiness in lay life, the Pope beatified two laymen, Lorenzo Ruiz (18.10.1987 and Giuseppe Moscati (25.10.1987), while the synod on the Laity was in session. See Annual Address to the Roman Curia, Origins 17 (28.01.1988),p.575.In Uganda, the lay people who became the first saints were the Uganda Martyrs (18.10.1964), and two more catechists, Daudi Okelo and Jildo Irwa declared blessed (20.10.2002).

John Paul II also frequently reflects on holiness in other addresses and writings. In 1979, a year into his pontificate, he declared that every lay Christian is an extraordinary work of God's grace and is called to the heights of holiness.²⁴⁵ Lay people, according to the Pope, share in the church's holiness, and this ontological sharing is translated into an individual ethical commitment to sanctification.²⁴⁶ In his homily at the World Youth Day in Paris in 1997, he expounds on the linkage between baptism and holiness, describing baptism as the most beautiful of God's gifts and the sign that God has joined us in our journey, that he makes our existence more attractive, and that he transforms our history of holiness.²⁴⁷ In the inspiring Apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, his message for the church at the beginning of the new millennium, he explains that holiness is "the dimension which expresses best the mystery of the church."²⁴⁸ For him, the rediscovery of the Church as a mystery and as people of God goes hand in hand with the rediscovery of holiness.²⁴⁹

He deepens his earlier Trinitarian explanation of holiness by affirming that through baptism, Christians enter the holiness of God himself, being incorporated into Christ and made a dwelling place of his Spirit.²⁵⁰ He returns the gift /task dynamics and states that holiness is not only a gift to all believers but also a task, intrinsic and essential to Christian discipleship.²⁵¹ For every member of the Church, this task is personal sanctification, and this radicalism of holiness by the spirit of evangelical councils is incumbent on all Christians and immediately linked to the credibility of the Church's proclamation of the Gospel.²⁵²

Here we find a strong linkage between *Christifideles Laici* and the teachings of Vatican II, in particular *Lumen Gentium*, which offers the clearest statements of a change

²⁴⁵ Cf. John Paul II, "Homily in Limerick: The Task of the Modern Generation," 01.10.1979, Origins 9 (1979),p.324-326.

²⁴⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *Agenda for the Third Millennium*, translated by Alan Neame, London, 1996, p.46.

²⁴⁷ Cf. John Paul II, "Do you know What Baptism Does to You?" Origin 27: 12 (4.12.1997),p.187-188.

²⁴⁸ John Paul II, "Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* for the Closing of the Jubilee of the Year 2000," no.30, Origins 30:31 (18.01.2001).

²⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 499.

²⁵⁰ Cf. John Paul II, "Holiness and Credibility of the Church's Proclamation: *Ad Limina* Address To Bishops from California, Nevada, and Hawai," Origins 34:3 (3.06.2004),p.41; see also John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* for the closing of the Jubilee of the Year 2000, no.31, Origins 30:31 (18.01.2001),p.499-500.

²⁵¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p.41.

²⁵² Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal- Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Gregis*, no.18, Origins 33:22 (6.11.2003),p.364; "Holiness and Credibility of the Church's Proclamation: *Ad limina* Address to Bishops from California, Nevada, and Hawai," Origins 34:3 (03.06.2004),p.41.

in basic assumptions in the understanding of holiness. Holiness, i.e., perfection of charity, is now mandatory and accessible for all members of the Church, of any status of life and occupation, and not just the elite, who live their secular world in pursuit of the sacred. The universal call to holiness occupies a principal place in both *Christifideles Laici* and *Lumen Gentium*.

In Chapter 5 of the Constitution of the Church, holiness is articulated as a living reality, an essential element of ecclesial life, and the fullest expression of the Church's mystery and communion. All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of the Christian life and the perfection of love (LG 39).

All are invited and obliged to holiness and the perfection of their state of life (LG 42). *Lumen Gentium* 42 recognizes the holiness of the Church in marriage and celibacy through choices made at home, workplace, and in the entire range of relationships. Holiness and charity are gifts, and this Trinitarian gift must be cultivated by acting under God's Spirit, "obeying the Father's voice," and following Christ, poor, humble, and cross-bearing (LG 41).

It is to be sought after in meditation on the word of God, the cooperation with the divine, the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Eucharist, prayer, self-denial, service, and the practice of all virtues (LG 41-42).

Primarily, Christian holiness (LG 1-2) entails living in faith, hope, and charity, a witness of life radically exemplified to an ordinary degree in the lives of saints and martyrs (LG 41).

Our third observation can now be reformulated as follows: holiness is a participation in the Trinitarian life which connotes who we are, how we live, and what we must do in the Church and the world. This reformulation touches on one of the thorniest issues concerning lay people: the definition or description of Christian laity.²⁵³

²⁵³ Yves Congar considers that a positive definition of the laity is difficult, even impossible. See "The Laity" in Vatican II: An interfaith Appraisal, ed. John H. Miller, (Notre Dame, Ind.: 1966), p. 241. A. Glorieux, Secretary of the Commission for the Apostolate of the Laity at the time of the Second Vatican Council, recalls that the commission had used the word "faithful" to mean any baptized person, and "layperson" to refer to one who is not a religious or a cleric; Cf. footnote 93 in Jan Grootaers, "The Drama continues between the Acts: The 'Second Preparation' and its opponents," in History of Vatican I, vol.2: The formation of the councils identity: First period and intercession October 1962- September 1963, edited by Giuseppe Aberigo, English version edited by Joseph Komonchak, Maryknoll, New York, 1997, p. 407.

Our fourth observation is that John Paul II has at times described the lay faithful in a more positive manner than that proposed by Vatican II and has indeed opened the avenue for identification between the lay faithful and the Christian, while maintaining the functional differentiation between laity and clergy by stressing the concept of secular character.

2.5.4 Positive description of Laity

Section nine of *Christifideles Laici* summarizes the pontiff's view on the identity of the lay faithful (CL 9). First, he notes that the Synod Fathers have identified a need for better clarification of the positive description of the Christian laity through a deeper exploration of Vatican II teachings and other magisterial documents, and particular attention to the life and practice of the church.²⁵⁴

Second, it recalls Number 31 of *Lumen Gentium*'s description of the lay faithful: negatively "all the faithful except those in holy orders or those who belong to religious state sanctioned by the church," and positively as the lay faithful, who are through baptism made one body with Christ, established among the people of God and become sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ and also the mission of the whole church. This section also highlights the unique character of the laity's vocation, which involves seeking the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to God's plan.

Finally, it quotes approvingly Pope Pius XII's groundbreaking assertion that lay people do not belong to but are the Church.²⁵⁵ After reiterating the teachings of the Synod Fathers, Vatican II, and Pius XII, John Paul II articulates his description of the laity, which is based on three pillars: baptism, Participation in the triple mission of Christ, and secular nature (CL9). For him, "Faith and baptism are a source of being a Christian in the mystery of the Church" (CL 9). He develops the idea further in his exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, affirming that every Christian identity has its source in the blessed Trinity (P DV

²⁵⁴ See Proposition 3 of "The Propositions of the 1987 World Synod of Bishops," *Origins* 17:29 (31.12.1987), p.500.

²⁵⁵ Cf. Pius XII, "Acta PII PP. XII: *Allocutiones I*," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 38 (1946), p.149.

26). Lay people are made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ through baptism. (CL 9,23).

Their participation in the triple mission of Christ has a secular feature, which is unique to their vocation and lies at the core of his description of the lay faithful. This secularity must be understood not only in its anthropological and social teachings but also in a theological sense, i.e., in the light of God's plan of salvation and the context of the mystery of the Church (CL 15). The Church lives in the world and has a secular dimension; lay people share in this dimension but in diverse ways (CL15). The world becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation because the world itself is destined to glorify God the Father in Christ (CL 15). This secular quality or presence of activity in the world thus provides the most distinctive character for the identity and ministries of lay people. The lay ministries based on the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and matrimony must be distinguished from those founded on the sacraments of orders (CL 22- 23).

He stresses that ministries, services, and charisms performed by lay people “exist in communion and on behalf of communion” (CL 20). Therefore, the discernment of charisms by Church pastors is always necessary (CL 24). In the same dimension, he sets forth several “criteria of ecclesiality” for discerning and recognizing the lay associations, which lay people are free to form. Lay groups must give primacy to the vocation of Christians to holiness, profess the catholic faith, maintain a strong and authentic communion in a filial relationship with the pope and the local bishop, conform with and participate in, the church's apostolic goals, and commit themselves to a presence in society, “at the service of the total dignity of person,” in the light of the social doctrine (CL 30). With this description of the laity, which is anchored in three pillars: baptism, secularity, and participation in the triple ministry of Jesus, the pope has not added anything new but merely provided a classification, in line with the teaching of Vatican II.

However, earlier in 1980, he defined the lay faithful as more dynamic and positive than the description proposed in *Lumen Gentium*. The laity, he said, “by definition, are disciples, and followers of Christ, men [sic] of the church who are present and active in the world's heart, to administer temporal realities and order them towards God's reign.”²⁵⁶ After Section 9 of *Christifideles Laici*, John Paul II affirms, “Only through accepting the

²⁵⁶ John Paul II , “ Communion, Participation, Evangelization,” Origins 10:9 (31.07.1980),p.135.

richness in mystery that God gives to the Christian in baptism is it possible to come to a basic description of the lay faithful" (CL 9). Here we find him trying to overcome the age-old contest between the two views, ontological and functional, of the laity. By focusing on baptism, common to all the faithful and clergy alike, the pope seems to opt for an ontological identification of the 'laity' and 'Christians.' However, by stressing secular quality as the distinctive character of the lay faithful, he is intent on maintaining the functional differentiation between lay people and the ordained (Ecclesia in America 44).

In summary, John Paul II's endeavors to harmonize the ontological and functional views of the laity, his insistence on the baptismal dignity of Christians, and his accent on the Church as a mystery of communion, employed as the framework for understanding the vocation and mission of the lay faithful, and his emphasis on their call to holiness is entirely consistent with his insistence on the sacramental dignity of Christians. This dignity includes "the imitation and following of Christ, communion with one another, and the missionary mandate" (E A 44). This position emanates from his recurrent focus on human dignity, a leitmotif of his entire pontificate. In "Sources of Renewal," a book written in 1972 as a guide for implementing Vatican II teachings in his archdiocese of Krakow, he insists that the dignity of all the faithful is at once and at the same time human dignity, which belongs to each man as an individual, and Christian dignity in the order of grace. The dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God, and redeemed by the death and resurrection of the Son of God, is a biblical idea that unifies his theology, especially his social teachings. The human being, he declares, must always be an end and not a means, a subject and not an object.²⁵⁷ In the Pope's numerous writings and speeches, including his first encyclical *Redemptoris Homini* (1979), and his longest encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, which reiterates the Gospel's emphasis on the dignity of every human life and emphasizes the Church's obligation to proclaim its image of justice and denounce any individual, program and system that neglects or exploits human rights which are integral to human dignity. In John Paul II's view, preaching social doctrine is the same as preaching the Gospel. In the last paragraph of *Christifideles Laici*, just before the final prayer, he affirms that lay people are called to proclaim and live the Gospel in

²⁵⁷ Cf. John Paul II, *Towards a common Ethical Code of Humankind: Address to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences 2001*, "Concilium" 4 (2001), p.13.

service to the person and society while respecting the totality of the values and needs (CL 64).

2.6 A polygamous individual in the leadership position

The Catholic Church teaches that marriage is a sacred covenant rooted in God's divine plan, designed as a union of one man and one woman characterized by exclusivity, unity, and indissolubility. This teaching is based on scripture, Tradition, and Magisterial documents. The Catechism of the Catholic Church emphasizes the dignity and sanctity of marriage as a reflection of God's covenantal love. Polygamy contradicts these principles and undermines the unity inherent in marital relationships.

Marriage, according to the Catholic Church, is a sacred partnership by God's design (CCC 1605), embodying total fidelity, mutual self-giving, and unbreakable unity between one man and one woman (CCC 1646). Polygamy disrupts this divine plan by introducing division and undermining the dignity of marriage. In polygamous relationships, trust, love, and respect are often compromised due to competitive and unequal dynamics. Monogamous marriages, by contrast, foster an environment where love and trust can thrive, ensuring stability and unity within the family.

Fidelity is a cornerstone of marriage, mirroring God's unwavering faithfulness to His people. Couples are called to give themselves fully to one another, cultivating a bond of trust and mutual respect (CCC 1647). Polygamy, which divides this exclusive bond among multiple partners, fosters jealousy, insecurity, and competition, eroding the family's emotional stability and negatively affecting spouses and children. The exclusivity of monogamous marriage strengthens the spousal bond and provides a nurturing foundation for children, reflecting God's love for humanity.

God's original design for marriage, as revealed in the creation narrative, emphasizes a "one flesh" union between one man and one woman (Gn 2:24), symbolizing the intimate and unbreakable bond intended by God (CCC 1605). Polygamy deviates from this divine blueprint, introducing multiple partners and creating a hierarchical and competitive dynamic that undermines the equality and dignity of spouses.

Marriage, according to God's plan, is also the foundation of a stable and nurturing family life. In monogamous unions, children benefit from the love and unity of their parents, who serve as their primary role models. Polygamy often leads to fractured family dynamics, with children experiencing divided loyalties and unequal treatment, hindering their emotional and spiritual development.

Jesus Christ affirmed the original design for marriage by emphasizing its unity and exclusivity (Mk 10:6-8). The catechism underscores that the unity of marriage is grounded in the equal personal dignity of man and woman, realized through mutual and unreserved affection (CCC 1645). In polygamous unions, this unity is compromised, as love and attention are divided among multiple spouses.

Furthermore, marriage is a sign of Christ's sacrificial love for His Church, a relationship that is exclusive, faithful, and unbreakable (Eph 5:25-32). Polygamy, by introducing divided affections and loyalties, fails to embody this divine reality. The singular commitment of Christ to the Church is expressed in the sacrament of matrimony, which is a sacrament of service like holy orders for priests.

Polygamy negatively impacts spouses, families, and broader society. A family is a domestic church where faith is transmitted to children by parents (CCC 1656). In polygamous households, resources are often stretched thin, leading to neglect and rivalry among children. The Catechism warns that polygamy is contrary to the dignity of women and usually results in inequality and oppression (CCC 2387).

The new covenant elevates marriage to the dignity of the sacrament, symbolizing the intimate and unbreakable bond between Christ and His Church (CCC 1616). This sacramental understanding of marriage emphasizes its exclusivity and unity, calling spouses to mirror Christ's faithful and undivided love. Polygamy undermines this sacramental ideal by dividing love and attention among multiple partners. The Catechism states that the Sacrament is the source of grace, helping couples grow in holiness and love (CCC 1641). Polygamous relationships, marked by rivalry and division, hinder this process, diminishing the spiritual and emotional well-being of the family.

2.6.1 Ways to accompany individuals in polygamous relationships

The family's well-being depends on the healthy state of mutual understanding between husband and wife; they are no longer two but "they shall be one flesh" (Gn 2:24). The church's teaching on marriage puts strong emphasis on the oneness of the two and leaves no room for other partners. This oneness expresses God's plan "in the beginning." Even responsible parenthood depends very much on the mutual love, trust, and partnership between the two. It is in their selfless giving of self to each other that the two are cemented into "the one living body" (Gn 2:24).

However, this picture of dignity and exclusiveness of marriage brought about by the two becoming one is overshadowed by the tradition of Polygamy. Although this certainly breaks the ideal of the two becoming one flesh through mutual love, oneness, and partnership, it does not mean that people living in polygamous marriages are cut off from the very family values. Family values can be deep and warm in polygamous relationships. Polygamy is still widely practiced in Eastern Africa.²⁵⁸ It is often claimed that it is lessening and even gradually disappearing. While this may be true, it remains a great and very pastoral problem for the Church in Africa, and something has to be done to help people who are living in polygamous marriages now.

Two trends of polygamous marriages exist in the context of Africa.²⁵⁹ One trend follows polygamy as a result of a purely cultural way of life. This is common in Karamoja as it is widely practiced. It exists among non-baptized persons, especially among nomadic peoples, including the Karimojong. Deep family ties among the family members cement polygamous unions as a consequence of cultural beliefs. They are not to be confused with the modern forms of polygamy, which are often due to selfishness and greed.

The latter is the second trend of polygamy practiced today, alongside the former. It is important to make a big distinction in such cases. Respect for the human person and culture demands that we be clear about these distinctions and not lump all polygamists together under one label. So far, the Church's pastoral practice has been just that

²⁵⁸ Cf. O. Ogunu. (ed.), *The African Enchiridion, Documents, and Texts of the Catholic Church in the African World, Bologna 2006*. P. Mahenge., Tanzania, Polygamy, and the Local Church 1978-1987, in *The African Enchiridion, Documents, and Texts of the Catholic Church in African World, Bologna 2006*, p. 1256.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Ibid.

approach. Even the pastoral Constitution of the Church in the modern world puts polygamy together with the plague of divorce, so-called free love...selfishness, hedonism, and unlawful contraceptive practices (GS 47). It is good to see that the *Instrumentum Laboris* and Cardinal Ratzinger's *Relatio* avoid such an oversimplified approach. The evangelization of people and their culture today requires dialogue between the Gospel and Culture.

Polygamy is one clear instance where this respect and dialogue are necessary if valid pastoral solutions are to be found. At the moment, the church's official practice is to exclude people in polygamous marriages from the sacramental life of the community to which they belong. This affects children because their parents should be setting a good example of regular sacramental practice. Parents become desperate, frustrated, and overpowered by fear and helplessness because of what they see as a church's cold and formalistic attitude.

In many other areas of family life, the difficulty lies in speaking the theological truth on one side and fully accounting for the actual reality on the other.²⁶⁰ Pastoral concerns must seek solutions that bring the light and hope of the Gospel to those in need. We must ask if the indiscriminate exclusion of all polygamists from the sacramental life of the Church is the only valid approach? A more nuanced approach can be worked out, taking the people's actual situations and culture more seriously. This is not to say that everything in culture has to be accepted; it only affirms the need to seek the positive aspects of culture, even in matters that seem to go against Christian teachings like polygamy. At the very least, we can say that pastoral care of polygamists should always be in the context of the community, which is better able to discern appropriate and evangelical solutions.

2.6.2 Incarnation of the evangelical message in the polygamous culture

To address polygamy, the evangelical message must be incarnated within polygamous cultures. This approach respects the profound cultural ties of polygamous families and integrates positive cultural elements into the Christian message. Polygamists

²⁶⁰ Cf. Ibid.

have the right to hear and live the word of God in a way that aligns with their cultural identity, allowing them to reach and love Christ authentically.

Karimojong polygamous families should be carefully instructed to understand that the Gospel's incarnation in their culture does not aim to destroy their cultural identity. Accepting the Christian message does not mean renouncing their personalities or culture. The Christian faith values all that is authentically human, which is inherently part of the Christian experience. This approach has been supported by popes and theologians, such as Pope John Paul II, who emphasized the Church's respect for each culture and its intention to purify and incorporate cultural values into Christian worship.²⁶¹

The Church aims to elevate and penetrate cultures with the power of the Gospel, explaining Christ's message in diverse cultural contexts (GS 44 & 58). This allows people to express their faith in liturgical celebrations and community life. The Church seeks to preserve, purify, and elevate the good in people's minds, hearts, rites, customs, and cultures, enhancing them for God's glory.

The Church emphasizes the catholicity of God's people while uniting humanity in Christ. The Gospel of Christ enriches and perfects cultures, making them fruitful and restoring them to Christ (LG 13 & 17). This approach ensures that the Gospel does not destroy or impoverish cultures but rather strengthens and complements them.

Naturally, in a polygamous culture, there are negative and positive elements. On this basis, there is a need for the renewal and perfection of religious and cultural traditions. Inculturation facilitates not only the integration of cultural values but also the purification of those elements that are not in keeping with the exigencies of the gospel (EA 42-43). The Gospel always provokes because of its very nature, an explosion of profound renewal in the life of the people and, necessarily, also in their cultures.

The evangelical message serves to renew and perfect the religious and cultural traditions of a people, while also purifying them of elements that are incompatible with the Gospel. It discerns the positive aspects of Culture from the negative ones. This means that those elements that do not contradict the Christian religion and, in consequence, can be assumed as an expression of it, are taken positively. On the other hand, those that are incompatible with the evangelical message, like polygamy, cannot be assumed by it. It is these latter elements that are to be purified. The purification of the cultural traditions is

²⁶¹ Cf. John Paul II, *Allocution*, 18.06.1982, in *L'osservatore romano*, 15(28.06.1982), p.4.

no other than their participation in the redemptive virtue of Christ. They are thus rendered participants of that newness introduced by Christ into the world by his death and resurrection.

Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, outlines two principles for inculcation of the Gospel: compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the whole Church (RM 54). In the process of inculcation, bishops are called to exercise both fidelity to the Gospel and prudent discernment, ensuring that cultural integration neither leads to alienation from the faith nor to an uncritical exaltation of culture. Since culture is marked by sin, it must be healed and perfected (LG 17). This gradual process should reflect the community's Christian experience, as Pope Paul VI emphasized in Kampala: "It will require an incubation of the Christian 'Mystery' in the genius of your people so that its native voice, more clearly and more frankly, may then be raised harmoniously in the chorus of other voices in the universal Church" (RM 54§2).

While inculcation must consider the positive elements present within polygamous cultures and seek ways to integrate them appropriately with the Christian message (CL 64), it must also recognize that polygamy, by its very nature, contradicts the essential unity of Christian marriage. Consequently, negative cultural practices, such as the discrimination and oppression of women, disunity, infidelity, jealousy, and underage marriage, cannot be assimilated into Christian life, as they stand in direct opposition to both the theological vision of marriage and canonical norms. Thus, a careful process of discernment and purification is required to evaluate the relevance and compatibility of such customs with the Gospel.

The process of inculcation must constantly consider the positive elements of African Traditional Religion. The many precious gifts in the Karimojong culture include traditional songs, vessels, vestments (*abwo*), stories, proverbs, sayings, riddles, dialogue meetings (*ngikokwa*), vocabulary, ritual symbols, musical instruments, hand cups, traditional dancing (*edonga*), and body language. The precious cultural gifts should be used in faith instruction after being studied by the diocesan pastoral councils and approved by the local ordinary (RM 54§ 2).

The first step in this approach is to appreciate the goodness of what is there, build on it, and use whatever will help them understand what the Gospel means to them. This is important because these things have meaning for them, and it is therefore harmful to

discriminate against them abruptly. A means of avoiding this danger is to pragmatically use what is beneficial in the culture, especially if it will also make Christianity more meaningful, and then show that, although different from what they had, it is now integrated into a richer form.

In the context of evangelization, the Diocese of Kotido should place particular emphasis on the proper formation of pastoral agents, ensuring that they are equipped to critically examine, respectfully engage with, and genuinely appreciate the most profound and valuable aspects of polygamous cultures. Through a process of critical analysis and theological discernment, those cultural elements that are found to be compatible with the Gospel may be carefully integrated into the life of the Church, without compromising its essential doctrines and moral teachings. Such an approach offers a more contextually appropriate model and constitutes a sound missiological methodology for the effective evangelization of polygamous communities.

2.6.3 Ongoing Christian formation

The ongoing formation of married couples is necessary for strengthening and deepening their faith and assisting them in leading a good Christian life that bears much fruit (Ps 80:15-16; Jn 15:1-2, 5). Some who were formerly polygamists may themselves play an effective role in the evangelization of polygamous families. This becomes another reason for the continued formation as one of the priorities of the diocese. It ought to be within the plan of pastoral action that the efforts of the whole community converge on this goal (CL 57). This ongoing formation should consist of two mutually complementary dimensions: the family level and the community level. It should include religious instruction and programs on family life, youth, and marriage. Also desirable are seminars on inner healing and reconciliation, as well as opportunities for counseling and support.

To promote better Christian marriages, married couples need to be followed up with. This can be done through clubs and associations, marriage encounters and other associations, family movements, basic ecclesial communities, seminars, retreats, marriage renewal courses, jubilee celebrations, and natural family planning. Where feasible, a permanent mobile team composed of a priest, a sister, a catechist, and other committed and outstanding catholic Christians, chosen by the diocesan pastoral council,

can be formed to coordinate ministry to and the ongoing formation of the newly converted Christian faithful.

People in polygamous societies frequently live in circumstances of stress and even crisis due to the negative effects of polygamy. They may also live in great hope, especially those who want to embrace Christianity. Pastoral ministers must work so that these people may enter through church doors with a desire to encounter the Good News, already carrying the seeds of the reign of God.²⁶² In situations where polygamous persons are not baptized even before formal admission to the Catechesis, they are offered appropriate pastoral care.²⁶³ Pastoral ministers should reach out to people in polygamous situations and aid them in searching for and encountering meaning in life. They need to be offered different pathways and respond to the deepest longings of human hearts to love, be loved, share, and blossom. The Pastoral agents must learn, know, and develop an understanding of these people, their culture, and their religious aspirations. Pastoral ministers can help polygamists express and satisfy their deepest longings by encountering God and other people through love. As faith deepens and takes on not only a personal but also a world dimension, polygamous societies will change. These developing people will be empowered to change their polygamous way of life through a new paradigm informed by Christianity.²⁶⁴ The affirmation of the dignity of the human person as a precious possession is highlighted here. This is because the value of a person transcends all the material world (CL 37)

The concept of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) was emphasized at the 1974 Synod of Bishops and further endorsed by Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN 58), which devoted considerable attention to the role of basic Christian communities in the process of evangelization. These communities, which typically consist of Christian families living within the same neighborhood, are intended to serve as catalysts for the

²⁶² Cf. J.J Walsh, *integral Justice: Changing people changing Structures*, Maryknoll, New York 1990, p.108.

²⁶³ "Pastoral Care is a communal concept. It exists whenever persons minister to one another in the name of God. It is not a new concept but has its theological roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Any ministry of the Church that has as its end the tender, solicitous care of persons in crisis is pastoral care. In this light pastoral care exists when the hungry are fed, when the naked are clothed when the sick are healed when the prisoners are visited [when polygamous societies are evangelized]. Therefore, pastoral care has always existed in the church because the needs of persons are ministered to by others all the time. Roles and functions as worship, church administration, preaching, and teaching are not considered pastoral care, they become resources for pastoral care when their dominant concern is for the care of individual persons and their families in crisis situation." E.P. Wimberly, *Pastoral care in the Black Church*, Nashville, Abingdon, 1979, p.18.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Ibid., p.109.

growth of faith and evangelization in local contexts.²⁶⁵ Several episcopal conferences, including those of East and Central Africa, have formed small Christian communities as a core component of their pastoral plans, recognizing their potential to communicate the message of salvation more effectively.²⁶⁶

A small Christian community is a gathering of Christian families in a specific locality, where they come together to form a cell of committed Christians. The primary mission of these communities is to transmit the values of the Gospel and transform the local culture, addressing both the challenges and opportunities within a given life context. The members of a small Christian community focus on how to live out their Christian faith in their daily lives and their interactions with the surrounding culture. In this way, the community acts as a dialogue partner with the world, making the Gospel relevant to contemporary issues while staying true to its core teachings.

The flexibility and structural freedom of SCCs allow them to be highly adaptable and effective agents of pastoral care. In contrast to other levels of the Church, SCCs facilitate collaborative ministry in a manner that allows for more personal and direct involvement in the lives of community members. This structure enables more effective evangelization and fosters an environment where communal support is a central focus. SCCs can also play an important role in empowering women by promoting greater inclusion in Church leadership roles, which has the potential to shift cultural attitudes toward gender within the community.²⁶⁷

In the context of polygamous societies, particularly in areas like Karamoja, SCCs provide a critical platform for addressing the complex issues associated with polygamy. Since polygamy is a deeply ingrained part of local culture, SCCs offer an ideal setting for engaging with polygamous families at the grassroots level. By forming and strengthening small Christian communities, the Church can help to transform societal attitudes toward polygamy, while providing a welcoming and supportive environment for individuals and families to deepen their faith.

²⁶⁵ Cf. A. Shorter, *Evangelization and Culture*, p.59.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Synod of Bishops: *Special Assembly for Africa and Her Evangelizing Mission towards the year 2000*, "You Shall be Witnesses," Vatican City, 1993, p.39; see also Shorter, *Evangelization and Culture*, p.59.

²⁶⁷ Cf. A. Shorter, "Inculturation: Win or Lose for the Future" in: J. A. Scherer and S.B. Bevans (eds.), *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization 3: Faith and Culture*, Maryknoll, New York, 1999, p.64.

According to A. Mringi, SCCs typically consist of eight to twelve families, depending on local conditions and the natural community structure.²⁶⁸ The small size of these communities ensures that members can truly know and support each other. The gatherings, while primarily focused on prayer, sharing, and mutual support, also provide an opportunity for evangelization and the practical outworking of faith. Within the SCC, members can live out their faith in daily life, participate in Church ministries, and address local needs such as healthcare, education, and economic support.

SCCs can be instrumental in evangelizing polygamous societies by offering both spiritual and practical support. These communities can engage with polygamous families in a pastoral and non-judgmental way, offering regular visits during times of joy and sorrow, and fostering genuine relationships. By sharing the Word of God and reflecting on their shared experiences, SCC members can nurture each other's faith and provide a sense of belonging, which is especially important for those in polygamous marriages who may feel marginalized or disconnected from the Church.

Through their model of interpersonal relationships, SCCs become a powerful tool for evangelization. They offer a safe and supportive space for polygamous families to join, feel accepted, and gradually embrace the teachings of the Church. Within these small, close-knit communities, members witness Christ's love through both their words and actions, which can influence others and encourage them to explore faith more deeply.²⁶⁹

Therefore, strengthening and establishing SCCs should be a primary pastoral priority in regions like Kotido Diocese, where polygamy is prevalent. SCCs are well-positioned to carry out the critical task of evangelizing polygamous societies, acting as agents of compassion and inclusion. These communities should actively welcome and care for polygamists, respecting their cultural background while gently guiding them toward a deeper understanding of Christian marriage and family life. By doing so, SCCs can become true disciples of Christ, offering service to both the Church and the world while transforming lives through the Gospel message.

²⁶⁸ Cf. A. Mringi, *Small Christian Communities in East Africa with Particular Reference to Tanzania: Canonical implications*, *Canon Law Studies*, 514, Washington D.C, Catholic University of America, 1985, Ann Arbor, Michigan, UMI, 1988, p.110-111.

²⁶⁹ These communities also help to eliminate individualism and egoism, contrary to Christian faith and praxis. See also *ibid.*, p.109; See also Moroto Diocese, *Small Christian communities: With adaptations*, Moroto 2001, p. 2-16 (unpublished works).

The Second Vatican Council's decree, *Inter Mirifica*, emphasizes the Church's mission to bring salvation to all people and its responsibility to use social communication to preach the gospel and teach proper media use (IM 3). The Church asserts its right to utilize any media necessary for forming Christians and conducting pastoral activities, with pastors guiding the faithful in the use of media for their salvation and perfection.

Effective communication is crucial for evangelizing polygamists, who often live in isolated areas with limited access to mass communication. This isolation can hinder their ability to change traditional thinking that conflicts with Church teachings. The Church must establish good communication with these communities to raise awareness and help them discern the culture's positive and negative aspects. The media can educate women and girls about their rights and encourage men to respect women's dignity. The use of the Kotido Diocesan radio, *etoil a Karamoja*, is a good opportunity to create programs for Christians to value monogamy as opposed to polygamy based on the Christian dimension.

Traditional communication methods, such as storytelling, drama, proverbs, debates, dance, mime, theatre, and feasting, are important for evangelizing polygamous families. These methods, understood by the entire community, can be effective in making the Church's message more relatable and impactful. The Church often incorporates these traditional means into preaching and liturgical celebrations to engage and evangelize polygamous societies (IL 106).

Dialogue, understood as a bilateral or multilateral communication, is highly valued in Sub-Saharan African societies for building consensus. The Church must engage directly with polygamous families, community elders, and members of other faiths in its evangelization efforts (Can.787§1). True evangelization respects and listens to cultural values, fostering mutual understanding (Can.748 § 2). This approach is crucial for polygamous families, who need to express their cultural values to accept the Gospel.

Listening with genuine interest builds trust and helps identify problems, preventing conflict. Dialogue is essential when polygamists seek baptism, requiring agreements to avoid causing suffering to their families. Elders, as traditional leaders, play a significant role in these societies. Their decisions are final, even if contrary to Church teaching. For example, some elders regard polygamy as divinely inspired, viewing it as essential for ensuring family lineage and ancestral continuity. Bruno Apalotom Novelli

highlights polygamous marriages as a key area of dialogue among the Karimojong, who value alliances formed through bride price.²⁷⁰

The Karimojong elders, or *ngikasikou*, are principal authority figures. Church ministers must respect their influence, immersing themselves in the culture and engaging in social activities to observe and participate in dialogue. Traditional prayers, respect, charity, patience, and collaboration are vital in approaching elders. Gaining the acceptance of elders is essential for the effective transmission of Christian values, as their influence often shapes the beliefs and practices of the wider community.

Dialogue in religious circles often involves discussions between different Christian denominations or faiths.²⁷¹ Bernard Haring notes that polygamy is a common issue for African Churches, necessitating collaboration in pastoral outreach.²⁷² (see also UR 12; Jn 17:21). Ecumenical cooperation can lead to common strategies for evangelizing polygamous families (Can. 383§3; 755§2). Unified dialogue with traditional rulers and cultural elites increases the likelihood of acceptance, leading to heart conversion before changing customs (UR 7).

The Local Church in Kotido must dialogue with African traditional religion, which shares cultural, religious, and spiritual roots. Such dialogue requires attentive listening, a respectful understanding of cultural values, and the gradual sowing of the seeds of the Christian faith, as illustrated in the parable of the Sower (Mk 4:1-9; Mt 13:1-9; Lk 8:4-8). This approach respects the lack of formal structure in African traditional religion, focusing on cultural immersion and mutual respect.

The Local Church in Kotido must dialogue with African traditional religion, which shares cultural, religious, and spiritual roots. Such dialogue requires attentive listening, a respectful understanding of cultural values, and the gradual sowing of the

²⁷⁰ Cf. B. Novelli, *The Karimojong, a resistant people? Possibilities for a positive change*, Kampala, 1994,p.17-22.

²⁷¹ Cf. The Second Vatican Council exhorted all the catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism. The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men [people] as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but they differ in mind and go to their different ways, as if Christ himself were divided (1 Cor 1:13). Certainly, such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages that most holy cause, the preaching of the Gospel to every creature" (UR 1).

²⁷² Cf. B. Haring, *Evangelization Today*, p.146.

seeds of Christian faith, as illustrated in the parable of the Sower (Mk 4:1-9; Mt 13:1-9; Lk 8:4-8). This approach respects the lack of formal structure in African traditional religion, focusing on cultural immersion and mutual respect.

2.6.4 Diocesan Pastoral Plan

A diocesan pastoral plan can be a helpful means of coordinating the evangelization and catechesis of families with multiple spouses.²⁷³ Polygamous families cannot change if there is no evangelization; evangelization cannot flourish if there is no basic foundation established by catechesis; and Catechesis cannot be carried out throughout the diocese if there is no good pastoral program. In particular, the pastoral plan should develop strategies and structures to foster the apostolate of evangelization and catechetical instruction (CL 57).

The Church's missionary nature (can. 781) and the duty of evangelization (AG 2 & 35) involve all baptized individuals participating in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions (C L 14). Evangelization requires well-trained personnel, including catechists, lay apostolate members, pastoral ministers, marriage counselors, clergy, and religious. In areas like Kotido Diocese, catechists often lead evangelization efforts due to clergy shortages, conducting liturgies and catechesis, and preparing children for the sacraments. Catechists need further training to address the social context of polygamous families. The Synod Fathers prioritize forming the lay faithful (CL 57), necessitating a diocesan pastoral program to train sufficient catechists.

The diocesan pastoral plan should involve all the faithful in evangelization and organizing families, parents, children, and youth. The laity should evangelize within their families and the larger community, including polygamous families. The Christian family, seen as a domestic church, plays a crucial role in faith formation (CL 62). Vocations must be fostered through basic and ongoing formation at parish and diocesan levels, organizing

²⁷³ "Pastoral planning, under the guiding leadership of the Holy Spirit, is nothing new in the Church. From the beginning of our history, as God's people redeemed in Jesus our Lord, planning has been a common part of our lives. In the Acts of the Apostles, for example, we see the need to care for the Greek widows (Acts 6:1-6), the need to catechize the great numbers in Antioch (Acts 11: 19-26), the need to relate Mosaic Law to Gentile Converts (Acts 15: 1-35), and so forth. In each of these instances, and countless similar ones throughout history, church leaders discovered particular pastoral needs, discerned ways to address them, and then selected one of the possible options. This is 'Pastoral planning'"

vocations groups, youth activities, and educational events. Parents should set good examples and help children recognize their vocation. Schools and colleges should incorporate vocational awareness.

Spiritual cooperation between polygamous and Christian families can aid evangelization, with committed Christian couples supporting polygamous families. Youth and children are vital for evangelization, as emphasized by Pope John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation (CL 47). They should be active in the Church and the renewal. In Uganda, children and youth comprise a significant portion of the population but face various injustices.²⁷⁴ Their formation requires social assistance and communal responsibility, as reflected in the African proverb, "One knee does not bring up a child." Christian youth can effectively evangelize their peers through shared activities and interactions.²⁷⁵

Catechetical instruction is crucial for evangelizing polygamous families and guiding children and adolescents to understand the truths of faith (CCC 773- 780; EN 70). The Church views catechesis as a sacred duty and an inalienable right, essential to its pastoral and missionary activities (CT 18). It aims to develop and nourish the faith of the faithful, young and old, through systematic religious instruction. Catechesis should be organized for polygamous families at any stage of pre-catechumenate or catechumenate proper, emphasizing the sacraments, the concept of God, and parental obligations (GCD 1997, nos. 60-68; can.778 §1; 852 §1).

Family life education, seminars, workshops, and congresses are effective means of evangelizing polygamous families and should be part of the pastoral program. Sacramental life is foundational to the Christian family, and the diocesan pastoral plan should include preparations for all sacraments, including Penance and First Holy Communion (Can. 889 §2; 913-914; 987-989). Proper Catechesis on marriage, stressing unity and indissolubility, is needed for youth and couples, including those in irregular marriages due to polygamy (FC 66).

²⁷⁴ Cf. Education News, *17% of Uganda's Youth Aged 18-30 Years Have Never attended School – Census Report* in: [https://businessfocus.co.ug/17-of-ugandas-youth-aged-18-30-years-have-never-attended-school-census-report/#:~:text=The%20census%20report%20indicates%20that,2002%20and%202022%25%20in%202014,\[31.12.2024\]](https://businessfocus.co.ug/17-of-ugandas-youth-aged-18-30-years-have-never-attended-school-census-report/#:~:text=The%20census%20report%20indicates%20that,2002%20and%202022%25%20in%202014,[31.12.2024])

²⁷⁵ Cf. J.P. Mbyemeire, *A theological Analysis of the Problem of Justice and Peace: The contribution of the special synod for Africa and the Church in Uganda*, Rome, 1997, p.10.

Efforts should be made to educate couples about the true meaning of Christian marriage and the benefits of a simple marriage ceremony, thereby minimizing unnecessary expenses (can. 1108). Catechesis should have access to marital or pastoral counselors to help those in polygamous marriages regularize their situation. Polygamists should be made to feel valued and loved by the Church, encouraged to participate in Church activities, and provided with ongoing catechesis to help them live as good Christians. The exhortation reaffirms the need for a systematic approach to catechesis geared to the age and diverse situations of life, as an absolute necessity for Christian promotion of culture in response to the perennial yet always new questions that concern individuals and society in the world (CL 60)

Polygamy presents a significant challenge to the Church's evangelizing mission. In many African societies, it is a socially accepted and respected system with deep cultural roots, which contrasts with the Church's teachings and canonical norms. Many people in these societies wish to maintain their polygamous culture as part of their heritage and tradition. Polygamy is a challenging pastoral problem and an obstacle to the Church's mission, growth, and vitality in Africa. This study examined polygamy from various perspectives, including its definition, local context in Kotido diocese, factors for its practice, Church teaching on marriage and family life, polygamy in the Bible, its negative effects on the community, and ways to accompany individuals in polygamous relationships while encouraging gradual alignment with Church teaching on marriage.

3. THE CHALLENGE OF WITCHCRAFT

The COVID-19 outbreak resulted in the lockdown of activities worldwide to prevent the pandemic from spreading. Following the lockdown, many negative consequences occurred. Like other institutions, the Catholic Church in Uganda was unable to carry out its routine activities normally, as churches were closed. This period spanned two years, March 2020 to January 2022!²⁷⁶ This meant no Eucharistic celebrations in the main churches, no confessions, no baptisms, no confirmations, the anointing of the sick done with care, no catechesis for the sacraments of initiation, and no ongoing formation for all people. This made the catholic church Christians' relapse into pagan practices.

One of my Christians approached me complaining of the blood droppings at the crossroads near his home, a sacrifice done by the neighbor. In a state of worry, he proposed the need for deeper catechesis for the Christians in the parish to reawaken their faith after two years of inactivity in church programs. This gives the clear impression that witchcraft is a reality among the Karimojong, amidst other already existing examples that shall be detailed in the subsequent sections of this topic. Buckland Raymond, in his book, published in 1986, in the second edition, "Complete Book of Witchcraft," attests that witchcraft is not merely a legend: it was, and is, real.²⁷⁷ It is not extinct, it is alive and prospering. Religion is understood as a social and cultural practice found and practiced variably in all societal groups. These universals and differences in how societies and people experience religion effectively explain the subject of belief. Historically, every community, culture, or religion has a set of principles and rules that its members respect. These rules are designed to encourage good behavior and unity in society, though people often deviate from such regulations. Like any society or religion, the Christian faith has its rules that have been altered and misinterpreted so that goodness has not always been

²⁷⁶ Cf. H. Athumani, *Uganda Ends COVID Curfew, and Nightlife Reopens* in: <https://www.voanews.com/a/uganda-ends-covid-curfew-and-nightlife-reopens/6412187.html>, [03.02.2025].

²⁷⁷ Cf. R. Buckland, *Complete Book of Witchcraft*, Minnesota, 1986, p. xiii.

the outcome. The way many people behave today is contrary to Christian religious beliefs and African cultural morals, values, and beliefs.²⁷⁸ Surprisingly, such People continue to be part of our churches, publicly confessed as Christians. These conflicting loyalties render their faith commitment a challenge to Christian practice and a scandal to the rest of the Christians.

In Africa, Majawa argues that Africans believe that there are people who possess powers to manipulate the universe. Sometimes they do it for the good of the community, but some people practice it to hurt, harm, or destroy others, and are known to be witches, and they practice witchcraft, which is against the community's practices in Africa. If a person is known to be a witch, he or she is excommunicated, punished severely, or even killed.²⁷⁹ Similarly, Manala states that witchcraft is connected with many other forms of ungodly beliefs like sorcery, voodoo practice, use of hexes and spells, freemasonry, Illuminati, secret societies, satanic rituals, witchdoctors, and divination.²⁸⁰ Moreover, Igwe states that traditionally, many Africans attribute various things to occurrences that are not clear to them, such as madness. The perception of witchcraft is dominant and continues to inform popular thought, understanding, and perception of reality in Africa amidst Christian evangelization. However, the Church often ignores witchcraft and its impacts on the Christian life and advises them not to practice it without teaching them how to overcome it in case they face it.

According to Waswa and Miirima, before Christianity surfaced, the traditional religious styles of many tribes in Uganda, especially the Baganda and Banyoro, involved belief and veneration of their ancestral spirits, popularly known as "bajjaaja," who acted as intermediaries between God and the living community. They also believed in a supreme god accessed through ancestral Spirits during their veneration, locally known as "okusamira."²⁸¹ The Baganda and Banyoro are among the first ethnic groups in Uganda

²⁷⁸ Cf. Nzita and M. Niwampa, *Peoples and Cultures of Uganda*, Kampala, 1993, cited in the Journal of Humanities and Social Studies cited by Nalule M., in: <https://www.internationaljournal-corner.com/index.php/theijss>, p. 193.

²⁷⁹ Cf. Majawa. C, *A handbook on the borderline between Christianity and Witchcraft*, Nairobi 2018, cited by Nalule M., in:<https://www.internationaljournal-corner.com/index.php/theijss>, p. 193.

²⁸⁰ Cf. M.J.Manala, *Witchcraft and its impact on Black African Christians: South Africa, A lacuna in the ministry of the Hervormde Kerk in Suidelike Africa*, cited by Nalule M. in:<https://www.internationaljournal-corner.com/index.php/theijss>, p. 193.

²⁸¹ Cf. A. Waswa and H.F. Mirima, *Unveiling Witchcraft*, Kampala, 20017, cited by Nalule M. in: <https://www.internationaljournal-corner.com/index.php/theijss>, p. 193.

to have come into contact with Christianity and modern civilization. The rest of the regions in Uganda received Christian missionaries and Western civilization later.

3.1. Cultural role of Witchcraft

According to a scholar, Clement Majawa, witchcraft involves the use of diabolical power and:

Witchcraft is knowledge, belief, uncontrolled mystic-psychosomatic (hidden) destructive evil power emanating from a person directly or indirectly due to the absence of truth. It operates skillfully and secretly using various magical objects, rituals, or medicines to manipulate vital forces of nature to deceive and mislead one while inflicting fear, superstition, unfaithfulness, hatred, suffering, illness, immorality, and even destruction of the life of a person, property, or community, preventing the realization of the common and highest good.²⁸²

This leads us to the conviction that witchcraft is not merely legendary. It is a practice that was and is real. It is alive and prospering in the community. It is not something extinct.²⁸³ Nonetheless, further research is needed to understand the dynamics, praxis, intricacies, and theory of witchcraft.

According to the interviews conducted by the researcher among the local Karimojong, the following responses were vividly given.

The local Karimojong word for witchcraft is ‘*akapilanut*’; hence, *akapilaniar* means to become a malefactor; *akapilikin* means to become bad, to bewitch, to bring bad luck, to cause death.²⁸⁴ The verb *akapilikin* means to hurt someone. The whole action of witchcraft in the Karimojong tradition is centered on the performers, and it takes the form of divination.²⁸⁵ The performers of the rites connected with the aspect of magic are called

²⁸² Cf. C. Majawa, “*Witchcraft and Healing in Africa: A Theological Analysis for Deeper Evangelization and Integral Development: A paper for the Symposium on Spirituality and Healing: The Christian Response to Witchcraft*,” Nairobi 2007, p. 5. See also C. Majawa, *A Handbook on Borderline between Christianity and Witchcraft*, Nairobi 2017.

²⁸³ Cf. B. Raymond, p.xiii.

²⁸⁴ Cf. B. Novello, *Karimojong Traditional Religion: A contribution*, Kampala 1999, p.114.

²⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p.107

‘emuron/ngimurok’ for male practitioners, and ‘amuron/ngamurok’ for female practitioners. The noun comes from ‘amuro/ngamuroi,’ the thighs of the animal killed, which, after they have been severed from the rest of the body, are brought to the elders who preside over the ceremony to be separated with a spear. This action is so important that not only is the whole ceremony called after it (*ngamuroi-amuronot*, ritual killing), but even the person who designates the animal takes his name from it (*ngamuroi-emuron*). Properly speaking, therefore, the ‘emuron’ refers primarily to this person (always a man) who, through revelation from god, normally in a dream, states which animal must be killed in the ‘*akiriket*.’²⁸⁶ Normally, the animal is an ox, identified by the color, age, shape of the horns, and other details that the *emuron* deems important for the celebration, ‘to please the elders.’ The word can be translated as diviner because it is through the act of divination that the animal is chosen.

But the term also applies to practitioners of each one of the activities derived from divination, even though also proper names are used in these cases: the haruspex of the interpreter of intestines of the animals killed (*ekesyemon ngamoliteny*, the interpreter of intestines), the interpreter of dreams (*ekerujan*, the dreamer), the interpreter of the position assumed by sandals tossed to the ground (*ekelamilaman a ngaamuka*, interpreter of sandals), and so on.²⁸⁷ While every normal person, even children, can perform, for their benefit, some of these actions, like the tossing of sandals, or the interpretation of normal dreams, the *ngimurok* perform them, mainly for the benefit of others, particularly when the matter at stake is relevant for the life of the group, for their survival. The term also designates a local medical practitioner, a field in which women also have an important role.²⁸⁸ Herbalists with a profound knowledge of the various possibilities of treating humans and animals from local plants and herbs are common in Karamoja. These medical practitioners not only treat the physical aspects of ailments through the prescription of local medicines but also address psychological dimensions through ritualistic or magical ceremonies. They are counted among those who practice magic. It is interesting to note that performers of black magic are not called *ngimurok* but *ngikapilak* (evildoers). The desire for the reasons, agents, and remedies for the many problems that can put people's survival at risk is the source of this world of divination and magic. Again, pragmatism

²⁸⁶ Cf. Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Ibid., p. 108.

has the upper hand in explaining this important sector of Karimojong life, both from the religious point of view and from the practical needs of their everyday life.

The role of witchcraft among the Karimojong is embedded in the day-to-day life of the people. It is important to keep in mind that, being a pastoralist people, the animals play a crucial role in this subject of witchcraft for sacrifices, besides other perceivable performances of witchcraft activities. Witchcraft plays a dual role in life: a positive pursuit among the people, and also a negative one, as a weapon to destroy or eliminate perceived enemies or obstacles to something good. They are normally directed at the evildoer. Practices such as seeking healing during illness, protection from harm, rainmaking, assistance in securing a marriage partner, the pursuit of wealth, good fortune, and fertility are often intertwined with traditional beliefs and rituals commonly associated with witchcraft. Witchcraft can also be practiced against an evildoer as revenge, cast a spell on an adulterer, or for jealousy, etc.

3.1.1. Protection of warriors

Before going on a raid, the raiders must visit a witch doctor, *emuron*, to perform a ritual for protection. The witch doctor must assess whether the raid will be successful or a failure. Success is measured by the number of animals brought home after the raid. The higher the number of animals, the more successful the raid is, and the fewer the animals, the more unsuccessful the raid. The ritual begins with the witch doctor, *Emuron*, pouring milk on the ground and mooing like the cows...buuuuuuuuuuuu! All the raiders enter the hut while he stands at the door of the hut with wide open legs. All the raiders pass through the open legs of the witch doctor one by one, but are already armed for the raid. When they move, they don't look behind but walk while looking downwards, with their heads down, until they reach their destination for the raid. If a warrior looks behind, he might be killed in the raid! This is to assure them of success during the raid (interview of Clementina Nangiro, Teacher, Kaabong- Uganda, telephone conversation +256772253244).

3.1.2. Healing

The need to seek healing is a constant demand for the Karimojong, just as it is for other people. Before the advent of civilization, the Karimojong had a means to cure the sick, especially for serious and debilitating diseases, which required extraordinary measures to ward off sickness. These have remained even to this day, as they believe they still work. In this ritual, a black goat is sacrificed. It is thought that the black goat removes all bad omens, sickness, or any disease from the person. The goat is slaughtered and skinned to remove the intestines, which are tied to the hands of the patient. The tying of hands is equivalent to the binding of the disease and casting as a way to free the sick person. (Clementina Nangiro, telephone conversation +256772253244)

This type of healing is part of black magic but used in social forms, to protect property, prevent disapproved types of behavior, like adultery, theft, the evil eye..., through spells, charms, and amulets, or to protect something, or somebody against evil, as is the case of the cure of the sickness. During the baptism of infants and old women in Losilang, Cathedral Kotido, and Kaabong Parishes where the researcher worked as a parish priest, it was common to find children and old women wearing amulets on their waists and necks after having undergone catechetical preparation of ten (10) weeks for parents and godparents of infants and old women for some reasonable time deemed fit for the reception of baptism. The attitude of syncretism practiced by some parents, godparents, and old women, for that matter, reveals the lack of firm faith in the true God. This also goes against the first commandment of the decalogue, 'You shall worship the Lord Your God and Him only shall you serve' (CCC 2083). This obligation was summed up by Jesus as man's duty towards God in the saying "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:37; Lk 10:27).

3.1.3. Rainmaking

The Karimojong people need rain for the grass to sprout, which supports the animals, and water for cultivation and farming practices. In the past, the Karimojong didn't cultivate as much as they do today, which has evolved with modern farming

practices. A rainmaker in *Ngakarimojong* is called *Ekeworon* when male and *Akeworon* when female. When the rain disappears, the women mobilize other women to visit the rainmaker. Once they get her, the women cut a cactus tree and force the rainmaker to sit on it while they sing and jubilate. The singing is composed of songs that also evoke their spirits, which govern the clans like the *Ngimeris* clan, which loves eating meat, evokes the *Lomacharworet* spirit, saying, *Lomacharworet*, help us, our crops are drying!' The clouds will eventually start forming, and it is believed rain will come.

According to Bruno Novelli, human sacrifices must also be made by *emuron* to obtain some benefits for the community.²⁸⁹ The *emuron* in a dream may indicate how to get certain benefits, such as rain and protection against impending dangers. He gives details to identify the person (s) to be killed, and the warriors will take care that the orders of *emuron* will be executed. The victim(s) will be brought to a solitary place, where they will be killed. Even the actual modalities of the killing will have to follow the indications of the diviner. A common way of dispatching them is to cut their bodies into two parts at the waist, putting the upper part of the body on one side of the path through which the enemies, the sickness, or any other problem is supposed to come, and the lower part on the other.²⁹⁰ This aim is to prevent the feared disaster from reaching the Karimojong or to obtain the necessary rain. Bruno Novelli gives testimony of witchcraft from Mr. J.G. Wilson, an Agricultural officer in Karamoja at the time of the British Administration, and later came across ample evidence of the fact itself from one of his confreres who took photographs of the victims of such sacrifices with their bodies cut in half on a small hill near Moroto on the road leading to Nadiket.²⁹¹ He points to the death of Fr. William Nyadru MCCJ at Lokichar, on the road between Morulem and Lopei, on October 25, 1991. The death has been attributed to the directives of a local *emuron* for reasons that have never been fully understood. He goes on further to narrate a personal experience of seeing warriors on the road from Lorengecora to Nadunget approaching the nearby villages looking for a woman of a brown color, *abеру ngina arengan*, and another with a protruding navel, *abеру ngina ka akapul*, for them to be sacrificed to obtain rain. Technically speaking, such practices fall into the category of interpretative divination. But the fact that human beings are sacrificed transforms such divination into an outright crime. However, with the current developed legal system, such practices are difficult to

²⁸⁹ Cf. B. Novelli, p.112-113.

²⁹⁰ Cf. Ibid.

²⁹¹ Cf. Ibid.

come by as the constitution of the Republic of Uganda prohibits such criminal acts (Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, Art. 22§ 1).

3.1.4 Engagement and marriage

In the sphere of love and engagement for friendship between a boy (man) and a girl (woman), for either friendship, in some instances leading to marriage, witchcraft is also applicable. If the boy engages a girl and she refuses to accept the proposal for friendship, and eventually marriage, the boy may decide to consult a witch doctor. The reason is that courtship between a boy and a girl has not yielded successful results. The boy or man is given a certain herb to chew. If he sees a specific girl or woman, he should spit in front of her. The lady's heart shall become unsettled and beat excessively in the quest for the love of the boy or man.

The same herb and procedure are applied in polygamous marriages as well. In a situation where several women are competing for the love of a husband, one may opt for witchcraft to cause the man to love her more than others. Once she has succeeded, this achievement affords her numerous advantages, including access to quality healthcare, nutritious food, stable shelter, education, financial security, and even the ability to care for animals. This is one of the evils of polygamy; culturally, it provides a fertile ground for competition amongst women and creates conflict in the family, hence disrupting harmonious, peaceful, and stable family life (John Bosco Lomoji, telephone conversation +256765232016).

3.1.5 Preventive Measure

The proper terminology for this act is *esubanot*. During farming time, when the gardens of maize, sorghum, sunflower, groundnuts, or any other agricultural crop are about to mature, some gardens will be noticeable with some planted features of witchcraft to protect the crops from thieves. The owners shall plant a black pot in one part of the garden with herbs put inside the pot. They shall tie the pot with creeping grass called *emuria*, and place Alovera or *ecuka* in it. Another type of grass that can be added to this

pot is *esirut* or *nakitu-etutunae*. Anybody who steals the crops in that garden shall fall sick from the stomach swelling and bleeding profusely through the nose, ears, and mouth till the victim dies (John Bosco Lomoji, telephone conversation +2560765232016).

Bruno Novelli observes that sorcery, which is part of black magic, is used in socially approved forms to protect property or prevent disapproved forms of behavior like adultery, theft, the evil eye... through spells, charms, and amulets, or to protect something or somebody against evil, as in the case of curing sickness.²⁹²

The activity of *Emuron* as an herbalist or local doctor is a combination, as we already mentioned, of medical practice with divination, partly 'white' and partly 'black' magic, but, of course, in this case, it is a protective type of black magic which is used to cure and not to harm the client. It is believed that *Emuron* possesses extraordinary powers, which he uses for the benefit of others. The common belief among the Karimojong is that sometimes, if he has personal enemies, he will use these powers against them.²⁹³ This change signifies the passage from 'white' to 'black' magic, and the diviner becomes, in this way, in the eyes of the people an *ekapilan* (evildoer).

3.2 Witchcraft - Traditional Beliefs and Christian Faith

Living in a world believed to be full of witchcraft is a fearful experience. There is also a possibility of being wrongly accused and alienated from society. Furthermore, there is a possibility of committing heinous acts without intending to do so. There is the trauma of determining who caused each unnatural death or illness, resulting in an atmosphere of suspicion. Any extraordinary event is charged with supernatural significance. Since in many African cultures, a witch can operate only among his or her kin group, families are traumatized, and some members are isolated from their primary source of identity.

Witchcraft worldviews tend to be reductionistic, explaining everything in terms of cause and effect. This prevents people from considering other aspects of the situation,

²⁹² Cf. B. Novelli, *Karimojong Traditional Religion: A contribution*, p.113.

²⁹³ Cf. Ibid., p. 114.

such as personal responsibility, safety, skills, or appropriate medical intervention. This mentality blocks development, both in society and the Church.

Evans-Pritchard observes that despite the many negative aspects of this way of life, witchcraft does have some positive effects on society. One important function is to explain misfortune.²⁹⁴ He states that witchcraft is involved in all forms of misfortune, and it is the idiom in which the Azande people speak about them and explain them. While the Azande acknowledge various causes of misfortune, they interpret witchcraft as the explanation for the coincidence of two events that simultaneously occur in the same place, or for why a particular individual falls ill or dies from a specific disease. The Karimojong people also share similar beliefs and attribute witchcraft to phenomena they cannot explain.²⁹⁵ An occurrence, though scientifically proven, may be inconceivable due to cultural beliefs.

Western philosophy cannot provide this missing link. For example, there are a lot of drunk drivers on the roads in Africa who arrive at their destinations without any trouble, a situation where a driver dies while driving drunk, witchcraft is cited as the underlying cause because that cause is socially relevant. In this perspective, attributing misfortune to witchcraft does not exclude its real causes but is superimposed to give social events their moral value.²⁹⁶ The root of the problem needs to be ascertained to avoid its continuation. It is common in Africa, for example, when a person is ill, not to seek medical care but a spiritual cure for the sickness. This is believed to remedy the recurrence of the problem with increased force. In explaining misfortune in this manner, some scapegoating is involved. Having a scapegoat is therapeutic for society, but deadly for one accused.

If one is impotent, or one's crops fail, or one becomes ill, it helps to blame a witch, not only because it relieves one of guilt but also because the belief that a witch has caused one's problems gives one the illusion of being able to solve them. If God or fate has caused your illness, you may have no remedy; if a witch caused it, you may recover once the witch has been found and punished.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ Cf. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Africa, Journal of the International Institute of African Languages and Cultures, Vol. viii, no.4 (1935) in:<https://Cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/ED6F0B223048963DBDEB79B620922E59/S000197200001603Xa.pdf/witchcraft.pdf>, [04.02.2025].

²⁹⁵ Cf. B. Novelli., *The Karimojong Traditional Religion: A contribution*, p. 112.

²⁹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p.70.

²⁹⁷ Cf. J. B. Russell, "Witchcraft: Concepts of Witchcraft," In Encyclopedia of Religion. Vol.15, Mircea Eliade, ed., New York, 1987, p. 415-423.

Witchcraft accusations disrupt social relations as they perpetuate disharmony. In light of the belief that witchcraft causes harm, distrust amongst people in communities where the belief exists can be expected. Golooba-Mutebi points out that community members are afraid to trust friends and neighbors who may turn against each other if accusations of witchcraft are drawn into those interpersonal spaces.²⁹⁸ In this way, social cohesion begins to break down as the trust between people is compromised. The result of these damaged networks is fear, which manifests in interpersonal conflict, suspicion, and violence. Therefore, as suggested by Beauvais and Jenson, social cohesion can operate as an independent and dependent variable. In this case, witchcraft breaks down social cohesion, and in turn, this breakdown of social cohesion leads to greater levels of tension and mistrust, which creates the conditions in which accusations of witchcraft increase.²⁹⁹ In light of this, it is argued that in communities where belief in witchcraft permeates and influences the thinking of people, social cohesion is negatively affected by the fear emanating from the belief in witchcraft's malevolence. It is this fear that has a direct impact on social relations within the community. Putnam refers to bonding social capital that reinforces exclusive identities and homogenous groups.³⁰⁰ Bonding social capital may provide an in-group consciousness for group members, while excluded individuals may be negatively targeted. Attempts, therefore, to understand and prevent witchcraft violence, like any form of violence, may thus be compromised if an understanding of the importance of social cohesion is not considered.

Any investigation of witchcraft must consider its origins. Many religions and various cultures incorporate supernatural beliefs like spirit possession, the devil, angels, and, of course, witchcraft. Many African cultures and religions also believe in supernatural forces, including spells, invisible forces, ancestral spirits, and ditlhare, moraine, or Umuti, which refers to medicine with magical powers. These beliefs in supernatural forces became an integral part of the everyday worldviews of individuals or communities. Swartz Leslie suggests that the belief in supernatural entities, stemming from religious or cultural texts and unwritten stories, is transposed to the relationships

²⁹⁸ Cf. F. Golooba-Mutebi, *Witchcraft, Social Cohesion and Participation in a South African Village, Development, and Change*, 35(5), p.937-958, in: <https://www.researchgate.net>, [15.01.2025].

²⁹⁹ Cf. C. Beauvais & J. Jenson, *Social Cohesion: Updating the State of the Research*, "Canada Policy Research Networks," (2002) Discussion Paper no. F22, in: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228997029-social-cohesion-updating-the-state-of-the-research>, [03.03.2025].

³⁰⁰ Cf. R.D. Putnam, *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American Community*, New York, (2000) in: <https://psycnet.apa.org>, [15.01.2025].

people forge with others and provides a model for understanding health, illness, and misfortune.³⁰¹ An understanding of how social and cultural factors relate to mental health and physical illness has led to the development of theories grounded in relativism and universalism, as well as hermeneutical and critical approaches, all of which remain subject to ongoing debate. Fortes Meyer contended that witchcraft is an ideology for daily living.³⁰² They believe that witchcraft thus derives its existence from religious and cultural systems that allow for the larger belief in the influence of supernatural entities.

To simplify the dense understanding of witchcraft, we segment it into three types. The first type refers to the capacity of some individuals to manipulate objects in nature and harm others through incantations, charms, and spells. Larner informs us that this form of witchcraft is released through power activated by hatred.³⁰³ Interpersonal quarrels, jealousy over the success of others, and even envy of beauty may thus be motivating factors in harming another person. This is the common type of witchcraft practiced by the people.

The second type of witchcraft is steeped in a religious tradition where a pact is taken with the devil or Satan, a Christian fallen angel associated with evil. Here, witches, the users of witchcraft, are believed to engage in sexual relations with the devil in exchange for supernatural powers, which they use to harm their enemies.

The third type of witchcraft, similar to the first, is reflective of a community of evil. In this community, witches share common goals, assist each other in harming enemies, and even combine forces to harm others.³⁰⁴ Brian Lavack notes that between 1450 and 1750, thousands of people, most of them women, were accused and executed for the crime of witchcraft. The witch hunt was not a single event but a series of events. It included thousands of individual accusations, each shaped by the religious and social dimensions of the particular area, as well as political and legal factors. The author synthesizes a proliferation of theories to provide a coherent introduction to the subject of witchcraft, thereby contributing to scholarly debate. Implicit to the third type of witchcraft

³⁰¹ Cf. L. Swartz, *Culture, and mental health: A southern African view*, Cape Town, 1998, in: <https://hsag.co.za/index.php/hsag/article/view/7>, [03.03.2025].

³⁰² Cf. M. Forbes, *The Structure of unilineal descent groups*, 'American Anthropologist,' 55(1), 17-41, in: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1954-04193-001>, [15.01.2025]

³⁰³ Cf. C. Larner, *Is all Witchcraft really Witchcraft?* London, 1974,

³⁰⁴ Cf. B.P. Levack, *The witch hunt in early modern Europe*, London, 1995, in: https://books.google.pl/books/about/The-Witch-Hunt-in-Early-Modern-Europe.html?id=cFIVAgAAQBAJ&source=kp-book-description&redir_esc=y, [16.01.2025].

is that witches who form a cult can teach their children the art of magic.³⁰⁵ Based on these definitions, the belief in witchcraft is more often characterized by fantasy and the supernatural, and even though these definitions were defined separately, they are intertwined in reality. They look at witchcraft as a complex and changing reality as a society in which it formed a vital part.

Under the three categories outlined above, witches are believed to be able to fly at night and transform themselves into animals of their choice.³⁰⁶ They are believed to behave strangely with their fierce stares, which can bring bad luck, pain, and other undesirable consequences to others.³⁰⁷ Bodin, a French dermatologist of the late 16th century, famous for his witch-hunting guide, said that witches promised Satan babies still in the womb, drank human blood, and ate human flesh. Witches are also fantastically associated with flying, attending witches' meetings in the nude, shapeshifting, and terrifying their enemies.³⁰⁸ Physiologically, for example, witches can cause loss of hearing, speech, and sight; loss of memory; terrifying hallucinations and even actual markings, sores, and bruises on the skin; sickness and even death.³⁰⁹

Based on the above, witchcraft represents a theory of misfortune. This theory of misfortune guides the interactions between people and provides them with explanations, steeped in the supernatural, for every misfortune. Evans-Pritchard argues in this vein that witchcraft may be drawn upon as an explanatory frame in light of what may be considered by the person as undeserved misfortunes.³¹⁰ Regardless, though, of the role witchcraft may play in deflecting responsibility for misfortunes, the capacity witchcraft is believed to possess manifests a sense of fear. As supported by Webster, we understand that in communities where witchcraft beliefs abound, “a man is likely to die if he believes

³⁰⁵ Cf. Briggs, *Witches, and Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*, 2002 in: https://books.google.pl/books/about/Witches-Neighbours.html?id=GgV-AAAAJ&source=kp-book-description&redir_esc=y, [16.01.2025].

³⁰⁶ Cf. Joshi, *Random Thoughts on the Joshi Dark Ages* (2000), in: <https://www.reddit.com/r/stardomjoshi/comments/95nsna/random-thoughts-on-the-joshi-dark-ages/>, [04.03.2025].

³⁰⁷ Cf. L. Igwe, Belief in Witchcraft in Africa, “butterflies and wheels” (2011), in: <https://www.butterfliesandwheels.org/2011/belief-in-witchcraft-in-africa/>, [03.04.2025].

³⁰⁸ Cf. W.S. Simmons, Powerlessness, exploitation and soul-eating witch: an analysis of Badyaranke witchcraft, “American Anthropological Association,” (1980), in: <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1980.7.3.02a00040>, [04.03.2025].

³⁰⁹ Cf. R. Briggs, *Witches and Neighbors: The social and cultural context of European witchcraft*, Oxford 2002, p. 229-250

³¹⁰ Cf. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, Oxford, 1937, in: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1937-04225-000>, [04.03.2025].

himself bewitched ...the man may be strong and healthy; nevertheless, he falls into a decline and soon expires ..." ³¹¹

In light of this, it follows that fear is embedded in the belief in witchcraft, as it contains supernatural power to influence any aspect of someone's life negatively. This is an important consideration, given that the fear of witchcraft may be a strong motivating factor that contributes to the violent consequences associated with such accusations. In this instance, social cohesion is directly impacted by increased fear of being bewitched.

In the following section, we shall examine how fear, superstition, and traditional beliefs conflict with the Christian faith. The three tenets all subjugate their victims, eroding the freedom to trust in God as the answer to the human quest.

Christianity teaches that believers should have faith and trust in God's plan rather than being governed by fear. The Bible often admonishes believers to fear not and to trust in God's protection and provision (1 Jn 4:18). It states that there is no need to fear Love. Perfect Love drives out fear because fear is associated with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. This suggests that a mature Christian faith characterized by love will dispel fear. Witchcraft creates fear in its clients by making them not trust in God's promises, love, and protection but in the empty, vain powers of evil forces. The faith those Christians profess in God is reduced to a mere formal pronouncement that is not lived.

In the Old Testament, after the death of Moses, the Lord appoints Joshua as the people's new leader. He charges him with a mission to bring to completion the work begun by Moses. He will lead the crossing of the Jordan and the conquest of the land that the Lord promised to the people's ancestors. The Lord assures Joshua of His assistance in this venture (Jos 1:9). The Christian life can be compared to a difficult journey that one undertakes in their effort. While traveling, we get weary, tired, thirsty, hungry, fear enemies, etc., but the Lord remains with us. The reason a Christian should learn to trust in God, not witch doctors.

The book of Psalms 56:3-4 presents a prayer of trust in deliverance from enemies. It emphasizes the importance of placing trust in God and overcoming fear. This is because God is more powerful than creatures. The need to rely on God's providence rather than

³¹¹ Webster's New International Dictionary of English Language, 1932, in: <https://www.ebay.com/itm/22608149880>, [04.03.2025].

fear becomes paramount. In a situation where a Christian is haunted by fear, they should not resort to witchcraft but trust in God's power.

Like Joshua in the Old Testament (Jos 1:9), God assures Timothy through Paul that he has been given the Spirit of power, love, and self-control (2Tm 1:7). In Timothy's exercise of the Christian faith, he should not be timid but courageous. This, too, is an invitation to all believers living in environments where witchcraft is prevalent.

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1501), illness and suffering have long been among the most pressing problems faced in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, limitations, and finitude. Every illness can make us glimpse death. Among the Karimojong people, as pointed out above, illness and the fear of death are some of the causal factors for the practice of witchcraft in an attempt to seek healing. Furthermore, in the battle of prayer, we must confront our fears and weaknesses (CCC 2730). Prayer becomes an instrument to confront our fears by seeking God's intervention in our experiences.

God, who created all the creatures in the world, does not abandon them. Besides bringing them into being and existence, he upholds them every moment and sustains them in their existence (CCC 301)

Witchcraft is a more general sin of "superstition." As the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains, superstition is a departure from the worship we give to the true God. It is manifested in idolatry, forms of divination, and magic (CCC 2138). Indeed, witchcraft leads people to the divinization of natural objects, agents, and events. Thus, it breaks the first commandment, "You shall have no gods but me" (Ex 20:3; Dt 5:7).

Witchcraft, as well as other forms of superstition, is a sin against the virtue of religion, which encourages us to give God due worship. Witchcraft opposes all Religions.³¹²

The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains the sinfulness of witchcraft as follows: "All practices of magic or sorcery, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, to place them at one's service and have a supernatural power over others, even if it were for the sake of restoring their health, are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion. These practices are even more to be condemned when accompanied by the intention of harming

³¹² Cf. J.M. Shaw, *About Overcoming our Fears of Witchcraft*, Nairobi 2005, p.18.

someone, or when they resort to the intervention of demons. Wearing charms is also responsible...recourse to so-called traditional cures does not justify either the invocation of evil powers, or exploitation of another's credulity"(CCC 2117). One should never go to a witch doctor, not even "be freed" from a "bewitchment" from another witch doctor.

The Church has always rejected witchcraft, divination, and other related practices. Already in the Old Testament, it is forbidden: "Let there not be found among you anyone who immolates his son or daughter in the fire, nor a foreteller, soothsayer, charmer, diviner, or caster of spells, nor one who consults ghosts and spirits or seeks oracles from the dead. Anyone who does such things is an abomination to the Lord" (Dt18:10.12).

St. Paul includes sorcery in the list of grave sins that prevent the sinner from inheriting the kingdom of God (Gal 5:19). He confronted witchcraft on some occasions (Acts 8:9,13:10, 16:16, 19:13). It may be appropriate to mention that experiencing some bad feeling is not sinful, but only to consent to it. Thus, if someone feels fear of witchcraft, there should be no reason to worry, as long as one fights against that fear.³¹³

The entire life of the Karimojong is governed by traditional rules, *etal*, from birth to death.³¹⁴ *Etal*, for the Karimojong, is the satisfactory explanation for all the queries about their way of life, what they do, and the particular way they do it. The normal answer to this topic is: it is our custom!³¹⁵ The one who upholds tradition is praised, while the one who does not is shunned and despised. Their experience tells them that by adhering to tradition, they have survived a long century of existence in this precarious habitat. Disregarding it would certainly mean jeopardizing their chances of survival.³¹⁶

In this society, the role of tradition is to reassure oneself of the goodness of one's actions. A person who upholds traditional customs acts rightly, is good, and nobody can accuse them of anything, even if things go wrong. The one who contravenes them, regardless of their good intentions, acts wrongly and can be accused of putting himself, his own family, and the entire group to which he belongs, even if he succeeds in what he does.³¹⁷ The reason for this is based on Karimojong pragmatism. Their experience tells them that adhering to tradition helped them survive the long centuries of existence in their precarious habitat. Disregarding it would certainly jeopardize the Karimojong's chances

³¹³ Cf. Ibid., 19.

³¹⁴ Cf. B. Novelli, *Karimojong Traditional Religion: A contribution*, 1999, p.303.

³¹⁵ Karimojong text: "Erai etal kosi!"

³¹⁶ Cf. B. Novelli, *Karimojong Traditional Religion: A contribution*, 1999, p.303.

³¹⁷ Cf. Ibid.

of survival. Another important element of Karimojong is ethical life, which is marked by taboos, the negative expression of customs.³¹⁸ When something is forbidden, contrary to custom, they say: 'Italeo!' (It is forbidden!). Traditional customs and taboos have the same verbal root. *Akital* means "to be accustomed" and *Akitale* "to forbid, to abstain from" *Akitale/ngataleoi*, for instance, are restricted grazing areas. To break traditional customs, infringing taboos is considered a highly unacceptable action. Those who infringe traditional customs are considered in various degrees, according to the gravity of their transgressions, *ngikapilak*.

The proposal of a way of life based on the Christian message is a challenge to the concept that traditional customs are the only rule of life. There have been and still are negative reactions to it on the part of those who felt Christianity was a menace to their traditional way of life.³¹⁹ The Karimojong perceived Christian missionaries as outsiders who lived and interacted in unfamiliar ways, seeking to instruct them on what to do, how to think, and how to relate with God. The Karimojong learn what they are supposed to know through the experiences of their everyday life, rather than through formal instruction. Their parents, grandparents, and older siblings took care of it since they were young, guiding them in what to do and how to do it.

The teachings of missionaries, on the other hand, were conducted formally, disincarnated from life. And traditional customs teach them, among other things, to pray, honour, and obey their parents, old persons, and particularly the elders.

More than a dialogue, the Karimojong were subjected to a sort of monologue on the part of persons of a different culture, in a different cultural language, proposing things incomprehensible and, for this reason, irrelevant to their interests. The proposal of a Christian vision of the world and its fundamental values, to be first understood and then possibly accepted, has and still has only one way to go: sincere and exhaustive dialogue to understand, and to be understood by it.

The encounter between missionaries and Karimojong resulted in a cultural clash. While missionaries were preaching the God of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Gospel, the Karimojong had different ideas of God and other moral values. A certain number of Karimojong still hold these beliefs. They believe God is the one who brings

³¹⁸ Cf. Ibid., p.304.

³¹⁹ Cf. Ibid., 305.

good things, but also causes bad things like sickness, misfortune, death, etc. When a person dies, they believe God has called them to *ere apolon*, the big home.

3.3 Biblical and patristic teaching on Witchcraft

Witchcraft is not a new phenomenon, but the Bible records little information on this subject. Etymologically, the word witch in the Old Testament comes from the Hebrew *kashaph*, which means “to whisper (a magical spell), to use songs of magic, to mutter magical words or incantations, to enchant, to practice magic, to be a sorcerer, to use witchcraft.”³²⁰ The ten commandments do not clearly mention witchcraft, but they condemn murder, lies, vengeance, and theft (Ex 20).

Witchcraft is explicitly condemned in several passages of the Bible. The biblical narrative strongly emphasizes trusting and relying on God rather than turning to magical practices or seeking supernatural power outside God. It encourages faith, prayer, and obedience to God's commandments as the proper means of seeking guidance and help in a situation of difficulty or need.

In the Old Testament, the beliefs of the Israelites acknowledge the existence and practice of magic, superstition, and witchcraft, without attributing these practices to a specific gender (Ex 22:18; Lev 20:27; Dt 18:10-12).³²¹ In the book of Exodus 22:18, there was the first mention of witches according to Moses. He said that witches should not be suffered or allowed to live. In ancient Israel, individuals who practiced spiritism or sorcery were explicitly prohibited from living among the community, reflecting the theological and legal strictures of the time. This was because it was a contrast to the forces of God and light.³²² God said that we should not deal with them, as they are the agents of darkness and rebellion. 1 Samuel 15:23 recounts the narrative of Saul's rebellion against

³²⁰ F. Kakwata, *Witchcraft and Poverty in Africa*, in: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14769948.1411749> Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, Black Theology, 2018, vol.16, no.1, p.22-37, [30.802025]. See also New American Standard Bible, 1737.

³²¹ Cf. Keil, C. Friedrich, and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, trans. James Martin Volume on Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, Eerdmans 1866-1877.

³²² Cf. U. Egodi, E.O. Onogwu and A. Chukwuemeka (eds.), *A Christian Leader's Perspective on Witchcraft*, “Witchcraft in Africa: Meanings, Factors and Practices” (2023) no.1, p. 203.

divine command, illustrating the theological consequences of disobedience within the Deuteronomistic history. He was commanded to kill and burn everything of the Amalekites. He brought back some loot with the intention of using it for sacrifices. Samuel told him that “rebellion is as a sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you from being King.” To obey is better than sacrifice.

When you dabble in witchcraft, whatever you get, you must bear it. In 2 Kings 9:22, the Bible tells the story of Jezebel and her dealings with Israel and Ahab. Jehu was asked to complete the cleansing of Israel. Jezebel was involved in witchcraft. She was therefore executed. In 2 Chronicles 33:6, Manasseh's reign in Israel was marked by diabolical practices. It was recorded that “he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, with wizards: he brought men evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger.”³²³ Any practice of reading times and occurrences, such as *akilamilam ngaamuka*, interpreting the signs after tossing sandals among the Karamojong, is delving into the occult. When you traffic in these things, you are provoking God. Nahum 3:4-5 shows that God is against witchcraft.

Dt 18:10-12 states that there shall not be found among them those who make their son or daughter pass through the fire, or practice divination, soothsaying, augury, or sorcery, cast spells, consult ghosts, spirits, or seek oracles from the dead. Leviticus 20:27 is even more stringent by stating that a man who acts as a medium or clairvoyant shall be put to death …their blood is upon them. All these laws are prohibitions built on the social laws of Israel during the formation of identity after liberation from Egypt. Here, we notice that witchcraft was explicitly condemned to the point of death. They were to adhere to the obedience of a monolithic God who liberated them from Egypt. They were also not to copy the ways of other gods of the Canaanites as they encountered them.

In the New Testament, the scriptures relate that there is a spirit of error (1Jn 4:4). Jesus was tempted by the devil (Mt 4:1). Jesus called Satan the prince of this world (Jn 12:31). Jesus exorcised demons from the possessed victims in his lifetime (Mt 8:28-33). Nevertheless, the devil continues to tempt human beings and lure people by various

³²³ Ibid.

technicalities to bring wrath disasters on the world, leading people to idolatry wherein worshippers follow his works and do his commands.

In the letter of Paul to Galatians 5:19-21, witchcraft, translated as sorcery, is listed among the acts of the flesh that are contrary to living by the Spirit. It states that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.³²⁴

Acts 8:9-24 recounts the story of Simon the Sorcerer, who practiced magic in Samaria and later sought to buy the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter rebukes him, emphasizing that such practices are not in line with God's ways.³²⁵

The Bible acknowledges the presence of spiritual forces and the reality of spiritual warfare. St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians 6:12 reminds believers that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. The believers are invited to put on the full armor of God to stand firm against such forces.

To wrap up, the Bible strongly condemns witchcraft and related practices, urging believers to seek God's guidance and remain faithful to His teachings.

The Church Fathers, who were Christian Theologians and writers, upheld the biblical stance against witchcraft and related practices. The following are key teachings from notable Church Fathers during the early Christian period.

Venerable Ephraim the Syrian (c.306-373) warned the believers against the practice of witchcraft, especially to avoid making potions, casting spells, telling fortunes, and wearing talismans.³²⁶ He emphasized that these practices were not protective but rather bonds that ensnared them. He cautioned the believers that even if demons appeared to heal, they would harm the soul more than help the body.³²⁷

John Chrysostom (c.347-407) advised the believers that even if sick, it is better to remain sick than to fall into witchcraft to free oneself from illness.³²⁸ In addition to that, the demon, even if it heals, will do more harm than good. He believed that any healing

³²⁴ Cf. 55 Scriptures on Witchcraft in: [https://www.freebiblestudyhub.com/archieves/20496?utm_\[02.09.2025\]](https://www.freebiblestudyhub.com/archieves/20496?utm_[02.09.2025]).

³²⁵ Cf. Ibid.

³²⁶ Cf. J. A. Pecky., *The Holy Fathers on Witchcraft* in: <https://preachersinstitute.com/2023/12/19/the-holy-fathers-on-witchcraft/?from=MG0AV3>, [06.02.2025].

³²⁷ Cf. Ibid.

³²⁸ Cf. Ibid.

from demons was a test of faith and not a genuine act of benevolence.³²⁹ Furthermore, he pointed out that demons often pretend to be the souls of the dead to deceive people. It is equally important to observe that the situations of illnesses are some of the main causes of the practice of witchcraft in Africa and in Kotido as well. This poses a great danger to the faith of Christians to seek healing by consulting witch doctors, especially in desperate situations. Firmness indicates the strength of belief of the genuine Christian who trusts God.

Basil the Great (330AD-379 AD) encouraged believers to focus on righteous lives in the present rather than trying to anticipate or control the future through witchcraft.³³⁰ According to him, following the gospel law would bring blessings, and worrying about the future was unnecessary. This is the reason he strongly influenced many to support the Nicene Creed, as opposed to the heresies of the early Christian Church, such as Arianism and the followers of *Apollinaris* of Laodicea. What drives some believers into witchcraft is the curiosity about the future. There is no need to worry about it because if the future is to bring something good, it will come without one's knowledge in advance. If sorrowful, it is not necessary to languish in sorrow until the end.

Gregory of Nyssa (c.335-c.395) criticized the practices of fortune telling, interpreting signs, calling the dead, frenzy, influxes of deities, inspiration, and divination, viewing them as deceptive and leading people away from God.³³¹ He believed that demonic forces invented such practices to divert people's attention from God. In a situation where any foresight as a result of deception is recognized as true, the demon presents it to the deceived as a justification for the proposal. And the demonic trick points out every false sign to those who are being deceived, so that people, having departed from God, turn to serving the demons.

³²⁹ Cf. Ibid.

³³⁰ Cf. Ibid.

³³¹ Cf. Ibid.

3.4 Challenge of Witchcraft in Kotido Diocese

In certain regions of Africa, including Uganda, Indigenous practices such as witchcraft have historically intertwined with Christian beliefs.³³² This phenomenon, known as syncretism, presents significant challenges to the full participation of the laity in the Catholic Church. In Kotido Diocese, the persistence of witchcraft practices undermines the faith of Christians and weakens their trust in God's providence. As a result, the faithful often turn to traditional forms of spiritual power and intervention, which distorts the purity of the Christian message and inhibits spiritual growth. This section seeks to examine how witchcraft practices lead to syncretism in Kotido Diocese and the challenges it poses to the full participation of the laity in the Church, with a particular focus on diminishing trust in God's providence.

Witchcraft, as practiced in many African communities, is a complex system of beliefs that includes magical rites, divination, and the invocation of supernatural forces to influence human affairs.³³³ In Uganda in general, including Kotido, witchcraft is deeply embedded in the local culture, particularly among the Karamojong people, who have a long history of engaging in traditional spiritual practices.³³⁴ Despite the spread of Christianity since 1933,³³⁵ Many community members still rely on witchcraft to address various life challenges, blending traditional beliefs with Christian practices in the form of religious dualism.

One of the primary reasons for the persistence of witchcraft in Kotido Diocese is the belief in spiritual causality, where misfortunes such as illness, barrenness, or economic hardship are attributed to supernatural forces rather than natural causes.³³⁶ This belief system compels individuals to seek solutions from traditional healers, diviners, and

³³²Cf. S. D. Lumwe., *The Cosmology of Witchcraft in the African Context: Implications for Mission and Theology*, "Journal of Adventist Mission Studies" 13, no. 1 (2017), p. in: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jams/vol13/iss1/10/>, [22.02.2025].

³³³Cf. S. D. Lumwe, *The Cosmology of Witchcraft in the African Context: Implications for Mission and Theology*, "Journal of Adventist Mission Studies" 13, no. 1 (2017), p.83-97 in: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jams/vol13/iss1/10/>, [22.02.2025]

³³⁴Cf. K. A. Arinaitwe, *The Dilemma of Syncretism in the Church of Uganda Christian Faith Development from 1877 to 2019*. "Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education," 7(3), (2023), p.50-60 in: <https://jriiejournal.com/the-dilemma-of-syncretism-in-the-church-of-uganda-christian-faith-development-from-1877-to-2019/>, [22.02.2025].

³³⁵ Cf. M. M. Lubega and B. Barollo, *The Dawn of Christianity in Karamoja: Selected Memoirs of the First Missionaries in Karamoja-Uganda*, Moroto, p.15.

³³⁶ Cf. B. Novelli., *The Karimojong Traditional Religion: A contribution*, Kampala 1999, p.109.

witches, who claim to have special powers to manipulate spiritual forces for protection, healing, or revenge. The community members often consult traditional healers to perform rituals that offer protection against perceived curses or malevolent spirits, a practice that contradicts the Christian doctrine of divine providence (CCC 302-324). The practice of witchcraft escalates due to social structures and communal expectations. Indications show how people in Kotido fear accusations of witchcraft themselves or being victims of spiritual attacks from jealous neighbors or family members (PLK-M2). This fear often drives individuals, including Catholics, to seek protection through traditional rituals, charms, and sacrifices, sometimes even before seeking help through prayer and the sacraments. Consequently, lay Catholics find themselves torn between their faith in God and their deep-seated cultural fears, leading to syncretic practices that dilute the Christian message.³³⁷

The Catholic Church, while opposing witchcraft, acknowledges the deep cultural roots of these beliefs and seeks to provide pastoral guidance to help the faithful transition from fear-based spirituality to trust in God's providence. The special Synod of bishops for Africa, under the theme "Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation," advocates for permanent dialogue between African Traditional religions and Christianity.³³⁸ Benedict XVI further reinforces this idea by encouraging scientific research to unravel a vital distinction between culture and cult, thereby discarding those marginal elements that cause division, which can consequently ruin families and society.³³⁹ Witchcraft and other evils are implied here. However, the competition between the traditional African worldview and Christian doctrine remains a major challenge. If the laity continue to view witchcraft as a practical solution to life's problems, they will struggle to fully embrace the Church's teachings on divine providence in vain. This will lead to confusion, weak faith, and inconsistent religious practices.³⁴⁰.

The influence of witchcraft on the Christian faith in Kotido Diocese results in the blending of incompatible religious systems. A section of Catholics continues to

³³⁷Cf. J. B. Sourou, *African Traditional Religion and the Catholic Church in Light of the Synod for Africa*. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 14(1), (2014), p. 123-140, in: <https://www.researchgate.net/publications/317450970-African-traditioanal-religion-and-the-catholic-church-in-light-of-the-synods-of-Africa-1994-and-2009>, [22.02.2025].

³³⁸Cf. J.B. Sourou, p.123-140.

³³⁹Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰Cf. S. D. Lumwe, *The Cosmology of Witchcraft in the African Context: Implications for Mission and Theology*, "Journal of Adventist Mission Studies" 13, no. 1 (2017), p.83-97 in: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jams/vol13/iss1/10/>, [22.02.2025].

participate in Mass and receive the sacraments while secretly engaging in traditional rituals, believing that both systems can work together to ensure spiritual security. This syncretism not only weakens the faith of the individual believer but also undermines the Church's efforts to promote a Christ-centered spirituality that is free from fear, manipulation, and superstition. The challenge, therefore, is for the Church to intensify its catechesis and pastoral outreach to help the laity develop a firm faith in God's providence, even in times of crisis.

3.4.1 Syncretism: A Fusion of Beliefs

Syncretism refers to the blending of different religious traditions and beliefs, often resulting in the distortion of the original teachings of both faiths. It manifests as a mixture of professed Christian and Indigenous spiritual practices, particularly witchcraft and traditional healing rituals.³⁴¹ This phenomenon arises due to deep-rooted cultural beliefs in spiritual causality, where the occurrence of misfortunes is attributed to supernatural forces, leading the laity to seek solutions from Christian and traditional spiritual sources. The community of Corinth practiced idolatry, and when Paul preached the Gospel to them, he warned them of the duality of belief as it could even pose a threat to members of the community with weak faith.³⁴²

Despite the Church's teachings against witchcraft, Catholics in Kotido Diocese continue to engage in traditional practices alongside Christian worship. The faithful often attend Mass, participate in the sacraments, and engage in communal prayers while consulting traditional healers or performing rituals believed to offer protection from evil spirits or bring blessings (P L K-M Ds 2). This dual allegiance suggests a crisis of faith, where Catholics struggle to trust in God's providence while relying on occult practices for immediate relief from life's challenges.

One of the causal factors for syncretism is the lack of a firm catechetical foundation. Catholics in rural areas receive limited religious instruction, making them

³⁴¹Cf. K. A. Arinaitwe, *The Dilemma of Syncretism in the Church of Uganda Christian Faith Development from 1877 to 2019*, "Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education," 7(3), (2023), p. 50-60, in: <https://jriiejournal.com/the-dilemma-of-syncretism-in-the-church-of-uganda-christian-faith-development-from-1877-to-2019/>, [22.02.2025].

³⁴² Cf. B. Ssettuma, (ed.), *Eating meat sacrificed to idols in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13: its relevance today*, "The Waliggo: A Philosophical and Theological Journal" 5 (2014) no.2, p.57-64.

susceptible to blending Christian beliefs with Indigenous traditions. This is particularly evident in cases where priests incorporate Catholic prayers with rituals involving ancestral spirits, charms, or protective amulets.³⁴³ Some believers even perceive traditional healers as intermediaries between them and God, like the role of Catholic priests, further complicating their understanding of Christian doctrine.

Additionally, economic and social hardships in Kotido Diocese significantly contribute to the persistence of syncretic practices. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), the proportion of the population in Karamoja living in poverty increased from 60.8 percent in 2016/2017 to 65.7 percent in 2019/2020, compared to the national average of 20.3 percent (UBOS).³⁴⁴ Furthermore, an estimated 84 percent of young people in Karamoja are experiencing multi-dimensional poverty. When faced with crises such as prolonged drought, livestock theft, or disease, families often seek out traditional healers in desperation, believing that these practices provide quicker and more tangible results than prayer or sacramental life. In some cases, community elders and local leaders, who wield significant influence, encourage the use of witchcraft-based rituals as a means of safeguarding the well-being of families or villages.³⁴⁵ As a result, individuals may outwardly practice Christianity but inwardly rely on Indigenous rituals as an additional safeguard against perceived spiritual threats.

In theological terms, syncretism presents a significant challenge to the integrity of Christian faith and practice. This underscores the need for heralds of the Gospel to engage more attentively with traditional religions and cultural expressions that coexist with Christian belief. However, when Catholics simultaneously turn to witchcraft or magical practices, they compromise core Christian teachings and weaken their relationship with God. Christian discipleship must aim to influence the entirety of human life and foster integrated persons, rather than allowing believers to live fragmented or parallel lives. The encounter between the Gospel and culture, particularly its religious dimensions, requires careful discernment and a process of critical evaluation, which is

³⁴³ In some parts of the diocese, it is sometimes common to see during Christian burials some un-Christian rituals smuggled by the people during the rite of commendation. The cutting of the dead body with a razor blade and sprinkling with ashes, the throwing of soil while facing the opposite direction of the grave, and the washing of hands afterward. All these are perceived as ways of appeasing the dead person's spirit and not disturbing those who are alive. And yet with the Christian burial, the believer has died with Christ and is hoped to be resurrected into eternal life with Christ if he was a righteous person.

³⁴⁴ Cf. J. Akena, *UNDP and Partners tackling Food insecurity in Karamoja*, in:

<https://www.undp.org/blog/undp-and-partners-tackling-food-insecurity-karamoja>, [22.02.2025].

³⁴⁵ Cf. B. Novelli, *The Karimojong: A Resistant People, Possibilities for Positive Change*, Kampala 1994, p. 25-26.

often complex and demanding. Furthermore, syncretism affects the communal aspect of the Church, creating divisions within Christian communities. While some Catholics remain committed to pure Christian worship, others justify their engagement with traditional spiritual practices, leading to disagreements and inconsistencies in faith expression.³⁴⁶ This weakens the Church's evangelization efforts, as non-believers may perceive Christianity as ineffective if its adherents continue to rely on non-Christian spiritual solutions.

To address the challenge of syncretism in the Kotido Diocese, the Catholic Church must intensify its efforts in catechesis and pastoral formation (CL 63). Priests, catechists, and other pastoral agents must work to educate the faithful on the incompatibility of Christianity with witchcraft, emphasizing the sufficiency of God's providence in all aspects of life. Pastoral strategies should address the socio-economic challenges that drive people toward traditional practices, offering faith-based alternatives that strengthen their trust in God alone (C L 61).

3.4.2 Weakening Trust in God's Providence

At the heart of Christian commitment is unwavering trust in God's providence that God, as an all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving Father, provides for the material and spiritual needs of His people. This belief is fundamental to the Catholic faith, as seen in Christ's teaching in Mt 6:25-34, where He exhorts His followers not to worry about their needs but to trust that the Heavenly Father will provide. However, in Kotido Diocese, the persistence of witchcraft practices presents a significant challenge to this trust. Catholics struggle to place their full confidence in God's providence, opting instead for alternative spiritual solutions that offer immediate but deceptive relief from life's hardships.

Those who believe in the practice of witchcraft see it as a quick and tangible means of addressing personal and communal crises. Unlike prayer and faith, which require patience and surrender to God's timing, witchcraft offers instant results. This appeal of immediacy is strong among those facing illness, financial struggles, or disputes

³⁴⁶Cf. S D. Lumwe., *The Cosmology of Witchcraft in the African Context: Implications for Mission and Theology*, "Journal of Adventist Mission Studies" 13, no. 1 (2017), p. in: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jams/vol13/iss1/10/>, [22.02.2025].

within their families or communities.³⁴⁷ When prayers seem unanswered or life's difficulties persist, some Catholics turn to traditional spiritualists and diviners, believing that these alternative practices provide immediate solutions to their perceived problems. Consequently, the dependence on witchcraft diminishes their reliance on the sacraments, the power of prayer, and the assurance that God's will is actively at work in their lives.

This diminished trust in divine providence has profound implications for the laity's participation in the life of the Church. When Catholics engage in both Christian and traditional religious practices, their faith becomes diluted, and their spiritual formation becomes compromised. A considerable number may still attend Mass, but their devotion becomes superficial, driven more by social expectations than genuine faith. Instead of seeing the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, as sources of grace and transformation, they may view them as mere rituals, reducing their significance to routine obligations (LG 11). Such an attitude weakens the Church's ability to foster a community of deeply committed believers, as the laity's engagement becomes more formalistic rather than spiritually enriching.

Furthermore, when Catholics fail to trust in God's providence, they risk falling into fear-based spirituality. Instead of approaching their faith with confidence and joy, they may become preoccupied with protecting themselves from perceived curses, misfortunes, and supernatural forces. This fear-driven mentality against sorcery often leads them to seek amulets, charms, or protective rituals as additional safeguards against evil.³⁴⁸ Such practices not only contradict Catholic teaching but also erode the foundation of the Christian faith, which calls for trust in Christ's victory over sin and evil through His death and resurrection (CCC 989; 991).

Another significant consequence of diminished trust in God's providence is the weakening of the Church's mission of evangelization. The Catholic Church calls on its members to bear witness to their faith by living according to Gospel values and sharing the Good News with others, as Paul VI elaborates in his apostolic exhortation that the field of the evangelizing activity of the laity is the vast and complicated world of politics, as well as the world of culture (EN 70). However, when Catholics turn to witchcraft or syncretic practices, their witness becomes inconsistent, and their ability to inspire others

³⁴⁷Cf. B Novelli., *The Karimojong Traditional Religion: A Contribution*, Kampala 1999, p. 112-146.

³⁴⁸Cf. B P. Knighton, *Christian Enculturation in Karamoja, Uganda*, in: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk>, [26.02.2025].

weakens. Non-believers or new converts may question the authenticity of Catholic teachings if even long-standing members of the Church continue to seek help from traditional spiritualists. This inconsistency undermines the credibility of the Church and hampers efforts to bring more people into a life-giving relationship with Christ.

To address this challenge, the Church in Kotido Diocese must intensify its catechesis on divine providence, emphasizing the sufficiency of God's care in all circumstances. Priests, catechists, and other pastoral agents should educate the faithful on scriptural and theological foundations of trusting God, illustrating how biblical figures like Abraham, Job, and the Blessed Virgin Mary exemplified unwavering faith in God's plans (Gn 12:1-20; Job 42:10a-17; Lk 1:26-38). In addition, the Church must provide pastoral support that directly addresses the socio-economic struggles that push people toward witchcraft. When the faithful see tangible expressions of God's providence through charitable programs, economic empowerment initiatives, and community support structures, their reliance on un-Christian practices is more likely to decrease. The church obtains the desire by initiating activities for the benefit of all people, especially those in need (GS 42).

The crisis of trust in God's providence in Kotido Diocese, fueled by the perceived immediacy of witchcraft's effects, significantly weakens the full participation of the laity in the Catholic Church. When Catholics turn to alternative spiritual solutions, their faith becomes shallow, their participation in the sacraments becomes a mere routine, and the evangelization mission of the Church fails. To counteract this, the Church must strengthen catechesis on divine providence and address the socio-economic realities that drive people to seek non-Christian solutions. Only by restoring a deep, unwavering trust in God can the faithful fully engage in the life of the Church and experience true spiritual transformation.

3.4.3 Impact on participation of the Laity in the life of the Church

In Kotido Diocese, the challenges of syncretism and diminished trust in God's providence have led to a noticeable decline in the laity's full participation in the Church's life. One of the most visible consequences is the inconsistency in sacramental life and commitment to Church activities. While some Catholics are ready to listen to what the priests say, continue to attend Mass, and receive baptism, their simultaneous engagement in traditional practices such as performing rituals, making offerings to spirits, and seeking guidance from diviners reflects a divided spiritual allegiance.³⁴⁹ This dual practice prevents the faithful from experiencing the full depth of Christian grace and weakens their integration into the Body of Christ.

Full participation in the Catholic Church requires a firm commitment to living out the teachings of the Gospel, trusting in God's grace, and seeking continuous spiritual growth through the sacraments. However, syncretism fosters divided loyalties, leading to a weakened devotion to Christ. For example, a catholic who consults a traditional healer for healing, instead of placing faith in the power of prayer and the sacrament of anointing the sick, risks undermining the transformative grace of Christ (CCC 1116). This divided spiritual approach suggests a lack of confidence in the sufficiency of God's providence, thereby diluting the essence of Christian faith and practice.

The persistence of syncretism and witchcraft in Kotido Diocese negatively affects the Church's mission of fostering community life and social justice. Catholic social teaching emphasizes solidarity, charity, and mutual support within the faith community (CCC *Compendium* 414, 518). However, when individuals turn to occult practices for personal gain, protection, or power, they often neglect the communal dimensions of Christian life. The Church as a community of believers thrives on the collective responsibility for the welfare of others. Witchcraft practices, on the other hand, encourage an individualistic and self-serving approach to problem-solving (1Cor 12:1-11). This individualistic mindset weakens the Church's role as a center for communal transformation and social cohesion.

³⁴⁹ Cf. B. Novelli, *The Karimojong: a Resistant People: Possibilities for a Positive Change*, Kampala 1994, p.14.

Another significant impact of syncretism is the distortion of Christian morality and ethics. The Catechism of the Catholic Church explicitly condemns divination, magic, and seeking supernatural powers apart from God (CCC 2116). However, in Kotido Diocese, a considerable number of Catholics attempt to reconcile their faith with witchcraft practices, believing that they can serve both God and traditional spiritual forces (PLK-M D 2). This moral compromise creates confusion, especially among younger generations, who struggle to distinguish authentic Christian teachings from conventional beliefs. As a result, faith formation becomes more challenging, and the church's evangelization efforts face obstacles due to the blending of incompatible worldviews.

Furthermore, the diminished trust in God's providence caused by syncretism weakens the effectiveness of the sacraments as a means of grace. Jesus Christ instituted the Sacraments as encounters with Christ that strengthen believers in their faith, yet their significance diminishes when individuals turn to alternative spiritual solutions. The Eucharist, for example, is the source and summit of the Christian life. Still, if believers continue to seek additional protection through amulets, charms, or rituals, their faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist becomes weak (SC10). Similarly, the sacrament of reconciliation loses its transformative power if penitents confess their sins but still rely on non-Christian practices for guidance and protection (LG 11).

Witchcraft practices in the Kotido Diocese present a significant challenge to the full participation of the laity in the Catholic Church. The syncretic blending of traditional African spiritual beliefs with Christian teachings weakens the faith of the laity, leading to a diminished trust in God's providence. As a result, a proportion of Catholics turn to occult practices to address their challenges rather than fully embracing the Gospel's call to trust in divine care. This lack of trust hinders spiritual growth and undermines the foundational virtues of the catholic faith, including faith, hope, and love (CCC 1813).

To effectively address this challenge, the Church in Kotido Diocese must intensify its catechesis on the dangers of syncretism and reinforce the theological understanding of divine providence. Priests, catechists, and lay leaders should emphasize the efficacy of Christ and sacraments in overcoming life's trials. Pastoral initiatives should focus on practical solutions to the socio-economic struggles that often drive people toward traditional spiritualism. By integrating Christian teachings with holistic pastoral care, the church can empower the faithful to participate fully in its life, deeply rooted in trust in God's providence.

Through sustained education, pastoral accompaniment, and social support, the Church in Kotido Diocese can help believers transition from a fear-based spirituality to a faith-based relationship with God. Only when Catholics fully surrender to God's care and reject all alternative spiritualities can they experience the true joy and freedom of Christian commitment. In doing so, the laity will not deepen their faith and become credible witnesses of Christ's transformative power in their communities. In the teaching of John Paul II (CL 15), the laity shall contribute to the sanctification of the world from within, like a leaven, by fulfilling their duties. Through faith, hope, and charity, they will manifest Christ to others (LG 31).

3.5 Witchcraft vis-à-vis *Christifideles Laici*

In this subsection, we shall discuss four areas in which witchcraft practices contravene the faith of the laity in the Catholic Church according to the teaching of John Paul II. These include baptismal dignity, ecclesiology of communion, the holiness of life, and the positive view of the laity.

3.5.1 Baptismal dignity

Witchcraft fundamentally contradicts the dignity conferred by baptism, which is central to the identity and mission of the laity. John Paul II emphasizes that baptismal dignity forms the foundation of the lay faithful's identity, equality, vocation, communion, mission, spirituality, and secularity within the Church. Baptism regenerates individuals in the life of the Son of God, unites them to Christ and His Church, and anoints them with the Holy Spirit, making them spiritual temples (CL 10). Engaging in witchcraft undermines this sacred identity and the unity with Christ and the Church, as it debases the baptized person.

Furthermore, witchcraft, understood as practices that evoke supernatural powers outside the Christian faith, can severely undermine the baptismal dignity of the lay faithful. These practices, like consulting witch doctors when a person is ill, going for a

cattle raid, petitioning for rain, and preventing the occurrence of misfortunes in one's life, contradict the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity and the sanctifying grace received through baptism. Witchcraft can lead to spiritual and moral disorientation, distancing individuals from the Church teachings and their baptismal identity.

John Paul II emphasizes that the lay faithful, as members of the Church, share in the Church's vocation and mission through their baptismal dignity, which calls them to evangelize and participate actively in the proclamation of the Gospel (CL33). They are prepared for this work by the sacraments of Christian initiation and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. By diverting individuals from their Christian vocation and mission, witchcraft impedes their ability to fulfill their apostolic duties and witness to the Gospel.

John Paul II reaffirms the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which underscores that the lay faithful are full participants in the salvific mission of Christ. They participate in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Christ and play an active part in the life of the Church. The lay faithful play an active role in the liturgical life of their communities, participate in apostolic works, contribute to the proclamation of the Word of God through catechetical instruction, and offer their professional skills to enhance the pastoral care of souls and the efficient administration of the Church's temporal goods.

The entire mission of the Church is concentrated and manifested in evangelization. It fulfills the apostolic mandate given by the Lord Jesus to the Apostles, "Go into the world and preach the Gospel to all creation" (Mk 1:15). And this is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her most profound identity (EN14). Witchcraft, by promoting beliefs and practices contrary to the Gospel, hinders the laity's ability to evangelize and bear witness to Christ in the world.

The lay faithful are called to fulfill their vocation in the world, living out their baptismal dignity in their secular lives (CL15). Witchcraft, often associated with superstitions and practices that are incompatible with Christian teachings, conflicts with this secular character and the laity's mission to transform the world according to God's plan. John Paul II teaches that secularity or presence in the world must be understood in a theological and ecclesiological sense, that is, in the light of God's plan of salvation and in the context of the mystery of the Church, and not merely as an anthropological and sociological reality (CL15). The world, therefore, is the place and means for the lay

faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation. The baptized persons are called to labor in the vineyard of the Lord (CL17) and not in other satanic powers.

The Church lives in the world even though she is not of the world (Jn 17:16). She is sent to continue the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, which concerns the salvation of humanity and the renewal of the whole temporal order (AA 5). All members of the Church are sharers in this secular dimension in different ways. The sharing of the lay faithful has its own manner of realization and function, which is proper and particular to them. The lay faithful are called by God into the world and sent into the very world. They live in the world, in every one of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life from which every fabric of their existence is woven. The Lay faithful, according to the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*, are called by the Gospel to contribute to the sanctification of the world from within, like a leaven, by fulfilling their particular duties (LG 31). They are invited to manifest Christ to others in faith, hope, and charity. God manifests his plan and communicates to them their particular vocation of seeking the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to God's plan. The images from the gospel of salt and light and leaven, although indiscriminately applicable to all disciples, are specifically applied to the lay faithful (Mt 5:13-16)

The lay faithful are children loved by God the Father, members incorporated into Christ and his church, living and holy temples of the Holy Spirit (CL 64). This newness of life is the basis of their participation in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Christ and their vocation to holiness in love, which is fulfilled in the world. As members of the Church and sharers in the triple office of Christ, lay people participate in the mission of the Church, concentrated and manifested in evangelization (CL 33). The duty of evangelization has two dimensions: *ad extra*, as proclaiming the Gospel to the world, and *ad intra*, as actively participating in the life and activities of the Church (CL 33). Christians who practice witchcraft find themselves completely in contradiction to their dual dimension of mission. These Christians instead become a scandal or obstacle within the Church and outside the Church. This eventually stifles the mission of evangelization in the Christian community.

3.5.2 Undermining the Ecclesiology of Communion

In the Kotido Diocese, witchcraft practices pose significant challenges to the mystery of communion, as articulated by John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*. The mystery of Communion ecclesiology is the necessary context for understanding and explaining the laity's vocation and mission.³⁵⁰ The complex biblical Word *Communion*³⁵¹ refers to the union with God brought about by Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit (CL19). The communion of Christians with Jesus has a communion of God as a Trinity, namely, the unity of the Son with the Father in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, being the model and source of communion, enables Christians to remain united with God. Witchcraft practices, however, often involve secretive and divisive rituals that create fear and mistrust within the community. This undermines the unity and mutual trust essential for true communion between them and God. When Christians begin to consult witchdoctors for healing, rain, revenge, or any other pressing need, they detach themselves from God, who is the source and origin of everything that exists.

John Paul II recalls the words of Pope Paul VI spoken at the general audience on the day after the close of the Second Vatican Council, where he envisioned the Church as

³⁵⁰ Cf. A. Dulles, *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological vision of John Paul II*, Crossroad, New York, 1999, p.52; see also *Implementation of Vatican II*, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1980; His talks given in general audiences between 10.07. 1991 and 30.08.1995; See *the Church: Mystery, Sacrament, Community catechesis on the Creed*, Pauline Media & Media, Boston, 1998.

³⁵¹ Patrick Granfield notes that the word *Communio* or *koinonia* occurs 19 times in the New Testament and 13 of these are in the Pauline writings (Origins 28:44[22.04.1999]757). Michael McDermott observes that, in a strict sense, no doctrine of Koivóviá is to be found in the Old Testament, and its full theological import is revealed in the Pauline letters "as that most intimate union of man with God and his fellowmen accomplished through Christ that constitutes final salvation" (The Biblical doctrine of KOINΩNIA, Biblischer Zeitschrift 19 [1975] 65). For him Community, participation, contribution, collection, and communion are some ways of translating Koivóviá, and in Paul's writings, "there is a full significance in almost every occurrence of this word," and it is almost impossible to limit it to a single clear cut meaning" (ibid., 232). Schuyler Brown contends that while *koinonia* is attributed to Christians in the New Testament, it is "used abstractly ('participation' or 'fellowship'), not concretely ('community'), and consequently a direct identification between *koinonia* and *ekklesia* is impossible" See "Koinonia as the basis of the New Testament Ecclesiology," One in Christ 12 (1976) 159. Brown also warns that today we tend to use the word *communion* in the concrete sense of the Body of Christians having one common faith and discipline, e.g., the Anglican *Communion*, and we must be careful not to read this meaning of *communion* back to *koinonia*. Ibid., See also Walter Kasper, "Church as *Communio*," New Blackfriars 74:871(May 1993) 236. For Hans Urs Von Balthasar, "Com-munio", a combination of two Latin words: *munire*, to surround with rampart and *moenia*, city walls, means " community in the concrete, expressive sense of being brought together into a common fortification" and into a common achievement, task, administration, which at the same time can mean mutual satisfaction, gift, grace" (Communio, Communio 10:2 [summer 1983] 198; excerpted from "Communio- a program," International Catholic Review, 1:1 [1972]3-12).

santorum communio, the communion of saints referring to the double life-giving participation: the incorporation of a Christian into the life of Christ and the communication of charity to the entire body of the faithful in this world and the next, union with Christ and unity among Christians in the church (CL19). The ecclesial communion has two dimensions, vertical and horizontal, the communion of each Christian with Christ and all Christians with one another. The Pope affirms this communion is the very mystery of the Church (CL18, 64). This communion is to be expressed in life, love, and truth in the Church as the instrument of salvation (LG 9). Witchcraft as a practice fractures this communion expressed in life, love, and truth by diverting the convictions of the people on the reality of faith, hope, and Charity.

Christifideles Laici highlights the importance of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, as the source and summit of Christian life (LG 11; SC 10; CL 19). The body of Christ in the Holy Eucharist sacramentalizes communion as it is a sign that brings about the intimate bonds of all communion among all the faithful in the Body of Christ, which is the Church (1 Cor 10:6). Another opportunity for communion is present in the Word of God and other Sacraments, which are bestowed upon a Christian. Witchcraft practices, which may involve rituals and beliefs contrary to Christian teachings, directly contradict the sacramental life and the grace it imparts. This creates a parallel belief system that can lead to sacramental neglect, laxity, or misunderstanding. It becomes a danger to the unity of the Church amongst the believers and with God.

Baptismal dignity entails participation in the Trinitarian and ecclesiological aspects, encouraging Christians to recognize their extraordinary dignity as children of the Father, members of Christ and the Church, and temples of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, belonging to the Church and practicing witchcraft contradicts this dignity and poses a danger to the mission of the Church.

The Church's mission of salvation in the world is realized not only by the ministers through the sacraments of orders but equally by all the ministries of the lay faithful. By their baptismal state, specific vocation, and the measure proper to each person, the lay faithful participate in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission (CL15; 23). This means they are ambassadors of Christ, fulfilling the common priesthood of Christ through their offerings united with Christ at the altar. They participate in the prophetic mission by the mouthpiece of Christ through the proclamation of his word. They witness to Christ as Kings through their services to the Church and the world.

Furthermore, when necessity and expediency demand in the Church, pastors, according to the established norms of universal law, can entrust pastoral ministry, such as the exercise of the ministry of the word, presiding over liturgical prayers, conferring baptism where necessary, and distribution of Holy Communion (CL 23) to the lay faithful. This exception is particularly relevant for the Kotido diocese, with only thirty-four priests. Christians practicing witchcraft become a scandal if they happen to be engaged in a ministry of the Church, like the latter. Witchcraft disrupts this participation by introducing elements incompatible with the Christian faith. It can create a dual allegiance, where individuals are torn between their Christian commitments and the practices of witchcraft.

John Paul II further explains that lay Christians' participation in the three-fold mission of Christ is derived from the Church communion, and their participation is to be lived and realized in communion and for the increase of communion itself (CL14). Communion, according to the Pope, is the first great sign in the world of the presence of Christ and promotes and stimulates the proper apostolic and missionary action of the Church (CL64, 31).

The lay faithful, with the Clergy and religious, are all laborers in the vineyard and are the goal and salvation (CL 55). In the Church Communion, their life has a profound meaning in living out the commonly shared Christian dignity and the universal call to holiness in the perfection of love (CL 55). Pope John Paul II, in this paradigm, recalls Saint Paul's image of the mystical body of Christ, where he describes ecclesial communion as an organic communion analogous to that of the living and functioning body (CL 20). It is characterized by a diversity and complementarity of vocations and states of life, ministries, charisms, and responsibilities that stem from communion and on behalf of communion (CL 20).

Reflecting on the co-responsibility of the lay faithful in the Church as a mission, the Pope highlights the intimate link between communion and mission: Communion and mission are profoundly connected, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other; to the point that communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission. Communion gives rise to mission while mission is accomplished in communion (CL 32). As vocation, communion, and mission are the main concepts of the apostolic exhortation, it is worthwhile to recall a helpful distinction made by Vatican II Decree *Apostolicam*

Actuositatem and the *Instrumentum Laboris*. According to this decree, the apostolate of the Laity is derived from their very vocation as Christians (AA 1).

The working paper expands the idea further by positing that vocation is broader than mission because it is composed of both a call to *communio* and a call to mission. *Communio* is the fundamental aspect destined to endure forever. Mission, on the other hand, is a consequence of this call and is limited to an earthly existence.³⁵²

Given the guiding principles of John Paul II's reflections on baptismal dignity and the mystery of communion, and his use of these themes as the basis for understanding the vocation and mission of lay people, his conviction is that ecclesial communion is both a gift and a task. He explicitly refers to this idea by affirming that the Church is a great gift to be gratefully accepted by the lay faithful, and at the same time to be lived with a deep sense of responsibility (CL 20). His emphasis on the twin notions of baptismal dignity and the mystery of communion in the post-synodal documentation represents a deepening of and a progression from the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. These two concepts are intimately connected, providing both the defining basis of and the opening context for the life, vocation, and mission of Lay Christians. They also lead us to contend that the very center of his theology of the laity is the belief that lay people's identity, vocation, and mission are simply different dimensions or aspects of the same reality. One should not speak of several theologies of the laity in the Pope's vast and varied *corpus*. In his exhortation and his other writings, there is only one essential theological treatment of the dignity, identity, and role of the Lay faithful. In the Church, which is at the same time communion, missionary, and holy nature, lay people are called to discover and live their vocation and mission. Our third observation is that, Like *Lumen Gentium*, the Universal call to holiness lies at the heart of *Christifideles Laici*. As the fullest expression of communion, it is bound extrinsically to the identity, mission, spirituality, and secularity of the Lay people.

³⁵² Cf. General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, "The *Instrumentum Laboris*' or Working Paper for the 1987 World Synod of Bishops," no.14, *Origins* 17:1 (21.05.1987), p.7.

3.5.3 Holiness as a fundamental vocation of Lay People

Christifideles Laici has a strong spiritual and pastoral orientation. It provides spirituality for the laity, aiming to link doctrine to life. This emphasis on the unity of life has a baptismal identity as the basis and missionary communion as its content.

Number 16 examines the theological foundation of the call to holiness, while number 17 insists that lay people must live this vocation in the world, i.e., there should be no dichotomy or conflict between their Christian life and their presence in the world.

Philippe Delhaye identifies four major themes in these two sections.³⁵³

- i. Holiness as a fundamental and undeniable demand from the mystery of the Church
- ii. Charity, Love of God, and love of neighbor, as the essence of Christian holiness.
- iii. Holiness is an essential element of baptismal and sacramental life and a constitutive element of Christians' dignity and mission.
- iv. Holiness is the obligation for all Christians, based on following and imitating Christ.

John Paul II, concerning this topic, defines the call to holiness, stresses its importance in the Christian life, and explains its Trinitarian, Christological, and Pneumatological foundation as well as its universal character (CL 16). The vocation to holiness, understood as the perfection of charity, is the prime and fundamental vocation of the lay faithful that the Father assigns to each of them in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit (CL16). It is a universal and common call rooted in Baptism and addressed to all members of the Church. Finally, it is a requirement to follow and imitate Jesus Christ and as a vocation to a holy life according to the Spirit. Here, the Pope implicitly links the concept of holiness with the Baptismal dignity by affirming that holiness is the greatest dignity conferred on a disciple of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, witchcraft, which often involves practices that are antithetical to Christian sacraments and teachings, can be seen as a rejection of this baptismal identity and the dignity it bestows. The Pastoral letter of bishop Henry Ssentogo of Moroto Diocese, “Life to the Full,” underscores the call to

³⁵³ Cf. P. Delhaye, “*Les Grandes Lecons du Synode de 1987: Guide de Lecture de l’Exhortation Apostolique Post-Synode Christifideles Laici*,” *Esprit et Vie* [Part 1] 22 (01.06.1989), p.329.

holiness among the laity and asks the laity to pay attention to the incompatibility of the Christian faith with some cultural and religious practices like witchcraft, revenge, and polygamy (LF 14). The preceding evils eventually become obstacles to the reception of the sacrament of matrimony and the problem of cattle raids.

Following the proposition of the Synod Fathers, Pope John Paul II reflects on the theme of holiness, emphasizing the unity of life and the need to live out this holiness in the world (CL 17).

The unity of the lay Christians is of the greatest importance, and it implies a life lived according to the spirit, which expresses itself in a particular way in their involvement in temporal affairs and their participation in earthly activities. It demands that the laity live Christian lives where there is no dichotomy between faith and daily activities. Witchcraft practices, which may include rituals such as rainmaking, healing the sick, conducting successful raids, and acts of revenge, along with beliefs that contradict Christian teachings, create a conflict between one's professed faith and lived actions. This duality undermines the integrity and witness of a Christian life.

Lay people are to recognize and live their vocation as an undeniable and demanding obligation. Their holiness is derived from their participation in the Church's holiness, and it represents their first and fundamental contribution to the building of the Church herself, which is a communion of saints. Christian holiness is fundamentally about the love of God and neighbor. Witchcraft practices, especially those that involve harm or manipulation, are contrary to the essence of Christian love and Charity. Such practices can lead to division, mistrust, and harm within communities, which is the opposite of the unity and love that holiness seeks to promote.

Holiness is intimately connected to the mission and the responsibility entrusted to the lay faithful in the Church and the world. Therefore, it must be considered a fundamental presupposition and an irreplaceable condition for everyone fulfilling the mission of salvation within the Church. The Church's holiness, the Pope concludes, is the hidden source and the infallible measure of the works of the apostolate and the missionary effort. The idea of this section is that there should be no conflict or dualism between a life of holiness and full participation in the world. Witchcraft practices, which often involve beliefs and actions incompatible with the Christian doctrine, can hinder the mission and credibility of the Church's witness.

To underscore the possibility of holiness in the lay life, the Pope beatified two laypeople, Lorenzo Ruiz (18.10.1987) and Giuseppe Moscati (25.10.1987), while the synod on the laity was in session.³⁵⁴

In the last part of the exhortation, where he discusses the variety of vocations and the formation of the lay faithful, the Pope returns to the theme, but from a distinct perspective, calling for an integrated formation for living an integrated life (CL 59-60).

For him, the fundamental objective of forming lay people is an ever-clearer discovery of one's vocation and the willingness to live it to fulfill one's mission (CL 57).

The vocation is to live out the commonly shared Christian dignity and the universal call to holiness in the perfection of love (CL 58). It requires lay people to remain attached to the vine, Jesus Christ, and in spiritual maturation (CL 58).

In a Christian spirituality that bears fruit, there is a unity of life, and every activity, every situation, and every responsibility of the lay faithful becomes an occasion ordained by providence for a continuous exercise of faith, hope, and charity (CL 59). Engaging in witchcraft can stunt this spiritual growth by diverting attention and devotion away from God and towards practices that do not align with Christian spirituality. It leads to spiritual confusion and weakening of one's relationship with God.

John Paul II also frequently reflects on holiness in other addresses and writings. In 1979, a year into his pontificate, he declared that every lay Christian is an extraordinary work of God's grace and is called to the heights of holiness.³⁵⁵ Lay People, according to the Pope, share in the church's holiness, and this ontological sharing is translated into an individual ethical commitment to sanctification.³⁵⁶ In his homily at the World Youth Day in Paris in 1997, he expounds on the linkage between baptism and holiness, describing baptism as the most beautiful of God's gifts and the sign that God has joined us in our journey, that he makes our existence more attractive, and that he transforms our history of holiness.³⁵⁷ In the inspiring apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, his message for the Church at the beginning of the third millennium, he explains that holiness is the

³⁵⁴ Cf. John Paul II, Annual Address to the Roman Curia, *Origins* 17 (28.01.1988), p.575.

³⁵⁵ Cf. John Paul II, "Homily in Limerick: The Task of the Modern Generation," 01.10.1979, *Origins* 9 (1979), p.324-326.

³⁵⁶ Cf. John Paul II, *Agenda for the Third Millennium*, translated by Alan Neame, Fountain, London, 1996, p.46.

³⁵⁷ Cf. John Paul II, "Do you know what Baptism does to you?" *Origins* 27:12 (04.12.1997)187-188.

dimension that best expresses the mystery of the Church.³⁵⁸ For him, the recovery of the Church as a mystery and as people of God goes hand in hand with the rediscovery of holiness.³⁵⁹

He deepens his earlier Trinitarian explanation of holiness by affirming that through baptism, Christians enter the holiness of God, being incorporated into Christ and made a dwelling place of His Spirit. He returns the gift dynamics and states that holiness is not only a gift to all believers but also a task, intrinsic and essential to Christian discipleship.³⁶⁰ For every member of the Church, the task of personal sanctification and the radical call to holiness through the spirit of the evangelical counsels is incumbent upon all Christians and directly linked to the credibility of the Church's proclamation of the Gospel.³⁶¹

Here, a strong continuity is evident between *Christifideles Laici* and the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, particularly *Lumen Gentium*, which provides one of the clearest articulations of a shift in foundational assumptions regarding the understanding of holiness. Holiness, that is, perfection of charity, is now mandatory and accessible for all members of the Church, of any status of life and occupation, and not just the elite, who live their secular world in pursuit of the sacred. The universal call to holiness occupies a principal place in both *Christifideles Laici* and *Lumen Gentium*.

In Chapter 5 of the Constitution of the Church, holiness is articulated as a living reality, an essential element of ecclesial life, and the fullest expression of the Church's mystery and communion. All Christians in any state or lifestyle are called to the fullness of the Christian life and the perfection of love (CL 39).

All are invited and obliged to holiness and the perfection of their state of life (CL 42). The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 42, recognizes the holiness of the Church in marriage through the choices made at home, in the workplace, and in the entire range of relationships. Holiness and charity are a gift, and this Trinitarian

³⁵⁸ Cf. John Paul II, "Apostolic Letter 'Novo Millennio Ineunte' for the Closing of the Jubilee of the Year 2000," no.70 Origins 30:31 (18.01.2001), p.492.

³⁵⁹ John Paul II, "Apostolic Letter, 'Novo Millennio Ineunte,' for the closing of the Jubilee of the Year 2000," no.30, Origins 30:31 (18.01.2001), p.499.

³⁶⁰ Cf. John Paul II, " Holiness and Credibility of the Church's Proclamation: 'Ad Limina' Address to the Bishops from California, Nevada, and Hawaii," Origins 34:3 (03.06.2004), p.41.

³⁶¹ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation 'Pastores Gregis', " no.18, Origins 33:22 (06.11.2003), p.364; Holiness and Credibility of the Church's proclamation: Ad Limina Address of Bishops from California, Nevada, and Hawaii Origins 34:3 (03.06.2004), p.41.

gift must be cultivated by acting under God's Spirit, "obeying the Father's voice," and following Christ, poor, humble, and cross-bearing (CL 41).

It is to be sought after in meditation on the word of God, the cooperation with the divine, the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Eucharist, prayer, self-denial, service, and the practice of all virtues.

Primarily, Christian holiness (LG 1&2) entails living in faith, hope, and charity, a witness of life radically exemplified to an ordinary degree in the lives of saints and martyrs.

Our third observation can now be reformulated as follows: holiness is a participation in the Trinitarian life, which connotes who we are, how we live, and what we must do in the Church and the world. This reformulation touches on one of the laity.

Our fourth last observation is that John Paul II has at times described the lay faithful in a more positive way than that proposed by Vatican II and has indeed opened the avenue for identification between the lay faithful and the Christian while maintaining the functional differentiation between the laity and clergy by stressing the concept of secular character.

3.5.4 Positive description of Laity

In *Christifideles Laici*, Pope John Paul II notes that the Synod Fathers have identified a need for better clarification of the positive description of the Christian laity through a deeper exploration of Vatican II teachings and other magisterial documents, and particular attention to the life and practice of the church guided by the Holy Spirit (CL 9; see also synod proposition 3).

Secondly, it recalls the notion of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church (L G 31) description of the lay faithful: negatively "all the faithful except those in holy orders or those who belong to religious state sanctioned by the church," and positively as the lay faithful, who are through baptism made one body with Christ, established among the people of God and become sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ and also the mission of the whole church. This section also

highlights the unique character of the laity's vocation as seeking the kingdom of God "by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering them according to the plan of God."

Finally, it quotes approvingly Pope Pius XII's groundbreaking assertion that lay people do not belong to but are the Church.³⁶² After reiterating the teachings of the Synod Fathers, Vatican II, and Pius XII, John Paul II articulates his description of the laity, which is based on three pillars: baptism, Participation in the triple mission of Christ, and secularity (CL 9). For him, Faith and baptism are a source of being a Christian in the mystery of the Church (CL 9 & 23). He develops the idea further in his exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, affirming that every Christian identity has its source in the blessed Trinity (PDV 12). Lay people are made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ by baptism. (CL 9 & 23).

Their participation in the triple mission of Christ has a secular feature, which is unique to their vocation and lies at the core of his description of the lay faithful. This secularity must be understood not only in its anthropological and social teachings but also in a theological sense, i.e., in the light of God's plan of salvation and the context of the mystery of the Church (CL 15). The Church lives in the world and has a secular dimension; lay people share in this dimension but in diverse ways (CL 15). The world becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation because the world itself is destined to glorify God the Father in Christ (CL 15). Witchcraft, therefore, with its focus on manipulating supernatural forces for personal gain or harm, directly opposes the Christian mission of transforming the world through love, justice, and service. This secular quality or presence of activity in the world thus provides the most distinctive character for the identity and ministries of lay people. The lay ministries based on the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and matrimony must be distinguished from those founded on the sacraments of orders (CL 22 & 23).

He stresses that ministries, services, and charisms performed by lay people exist in communion and on behalf of communion (CL 20). Therefore, the discernment of charisms by Church pastors is always necessary (CL 24). In the same fashion, he sets forth several criteria of ecclesiality for discerning and recognizing the lay associations, which lay people are free to form. Lay groups must give primacy to the vocation of Christians to holiness, profess the catholic faith, maintain a strong and authentic communion in a

³⁶² Cf. Pius XII, "Acta PII PP.XII: Allocutiones I," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 38 (1946), p.149.

filial relationship with the Pope and the local bishop, conform with and participate in, the church's apostolic goals, and commit themselves to a presence in society, at the service of the total dignity of person in the light of the social doctrine of the Church (CL 30). With this description of the laity, anchored in the three pillars of baptism, secularity, and participation in the triple ministry of Jesus, the Pope has not added anything new but provided clarification of the teaching of Vatican II. Witchcraft often operates outside the bounds of ecclesial authority and communion, leading to division and confusion among the faithful. In fact, by practicing witchcraft, a person already fractures or opposes this communion because the act itself is evil and contrary to the teaching of the Church. When one attempts to maintain double standards, they become a source of scandal to other Christians.

However, earlier in 1980, he defined the lay faithful as more dynamic and positive than the description proposed in *Lumen Gentium*. The laity, he said, by definition, are disciples and followers of Christ, men [*sic*] of the church who are present and active in the world's heart, to administer temporal realities and order them towards God's reign.³⁶³ After Section 9 of *Christifideles Laici*, he affirms, "Only through accepting the richness in mystery that God gives to the Christian in baptism is it possible to come to a basic description of the lay faithful." Here we find John Paul II overcoming the age-old contest between the two views, the ontological and functional dimensions of the laity. By focusing on baptism, common to all the faithful and clergy alike, the Pope seems to opt for an ontological identification of the 'laity' and 'Christians.' However, by stressing secular quality as the distinctive character of the lay faithful, he is intent on maintaining the functional differentiation between lay people and the ordained (EAM 44).

In summary, John Paul II's endeavors to harmonize the ontological and functional views of the laity, his insistence on the baptismal dignity of Christians, and his accent on the Church as a mystery of communion, employed as the framework for understanding the vocation and mission of the lay faithful, and his emphasis on their call to holiness is entirely consistent with his insistence on the sacramental dignity of Christians. This dignity includes "the imitation and following of Christ, communion with one another, and the missionary mandate (EAM 44). This position emanates from his recurrent focus on human dignity, a *leitmotif* of his entire pontificate. In *Sources of Renewal*, a book written in 1972 as a guide for implementing Vatican II teachings in his archdiocese of Krakow,

³⁶³ Cf. John Paul II, "Communion, Participation, Evangelisation," *Origins* 10:9 (31.07.1980), p.135.

he insists that the dignity of all the faithful is at once and at the same time human dignity, which belongs to each man as an individual, and Christian dignity in the order of grace. The dignity of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God, and redeemed by the death and resurrection of the Son of God, is a biblical idea that unifies his theology, especially his social teachings. The human being, he declares, must always be an end and not a means, a subject and not an object. In the Pope's numerous writings and speeches, including his first encyclical *Redemptoris Homini* (1979), and his longest encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, which reiterates the Gospel's emphasis on the dignity of every human life and emphasizes the Church's obligation to proclaim its image of justice and denounce any individual, program and system that neglects or exploits human rights which are integral to human dignity.³⁶⁴ In John Paul II's view, preaching social doctrine is equivalent to preaching the Gospel. In the final paragraph of *Christifideles Laici*, just before the final prayer, he affirms that lay people are called to proclaim and live the Gospel in service to the person and society while respecting the totality of the values and needs (CL 64).

3.6 Answering the challenge of Witchcraft

To strengthen faith in God's power and counteract the influence of witchcraft in the Kotido Diocese, spiritual formation programs and deliverance prayers should be developed in accordance with the teachings of John Paul II expressed in the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, and other relevant Church documents.³⁶⁵ The following proposals outline practical approaches for guiding the laity in confronting the challenge of witchcraft while remaining faithful to the practice of their Christian faith.

³⁶⁴ Avery Dulles notes that *Redemptoris Hominis*, a Christological Encyclical, "sounds a number of these themes that will be pursued in other documents and shows how these are connected with the central idea of human dignity founded upon the gifts of creation and redemption. It presents human dignity and liberation as the central focus of the Church's proclamation" (*The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II*, Crossroads, New York, 1999, p.10). David Hollenbach argues that human rights are based on human dignity, which is the source of all moral principles, not a moral principle itself (*Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition*, Paulist Press, New York, 1979, p.90).

³⁶⁵ See also the Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops of Uganda; *The Truth will Set You Free*, 25.03.2025, nos. 16 and 22 (unpublished works).

The challenges to our faith partly result from shallow catechesis. When a person responds to the invitation to become a Christian as an adult, the Church prepares a comprehensive formation program, the Catechumenate (RCIA), to introduce, teach, and form candidates on what it means to be a Christian and live a Christian life. Those who prepare for the First Holy Communion are also instructed accordingly. John Paul II, recalling Vatican Council II, notes that the split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age (CL 59; see also GS 43; AG 21; EN 20). The Pope further maintained that a faith that does not affect a person's culture is a faith not fully embraced, not entirely thought out, and not faithfully lived (see also AA 4). In the case of the Karimojong Culture and other African Cultures practicing witchcraft, polygamy, and other associated cultural evils, there is a need for evaluation and rejection of such evil practices that contradict the Christian faith.

A systematic and age-appropriate approach to catechesis, responsive to diverse life situations, is essential for effective faith formation. It is a more decided Christian promotion of culture in response to the perennial yet always new questions that concern individuals and society today (CL 60). Many categories of Christians face different challenges ranging from youth struggling to come to terms with themselves and the future, married people living as husband and wife, divorced couples, the old, the sick, the unemployed looking for jobs, etc. These groups must be helped through catechesis to deepen their understanding of their calling and mission in the church, society, and the importance of baptismal dignity.

There is also a need for catechesis of sacraments, especially Baptism and the Eucharist. The efficacy and significance of these sacraments should be emphasized to the person who receives them. A Christian is not meant to conform to any age; instead, they are transformed to become more like Him who is ever ancient and new.³⁶⁶ When a candidate is baptized, he becomes another Christ, *alter Christus* (Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 6:19; 2 Cor 5:15; Gal 2:20; CCC 1269). This means he must act like Christ, who was Priest, prophet, and King (CL 14)

The Church teaches that all the baptized are in their vocation called to full participation in the life and mission of the Church (CL 2). However, in the Diocese of Kotido, traditional practices, including witchcraft, present significant challenges to the

³⁶⁶ Cf. St. Augustine, *Confessions*, book x, chapter 27.

Christian faith. A considerable number of believers struggle with fear and uncertainty, leading to syncretistic practices that weaken their spiritual commitment. To address these concerns, there is an urgent need for structured spiritual formation programs and deliverance prayers. These initiatives aim to strengthen the laity's faith in God's power, equip them with knowledge to discern, and reject unchristian practices, and encourage full participation in the Church's sacramental life. Proposed Spiritual formation programs include biblical catechesis on Christian identity, faith, and sacramental life workshops, deliverance and intercessory prayer groups, family and community life formation, and youth evangelization training. These initiatives emphasize the importance of baptismal identity, the grace received through the sacraments, and the power of communal prayer in resisting superstition. Furthermore, an exorcism and pastoral deliverance ministry will provide direct pastoral care for individuals struggling with spiritual afflictions, ensuring proper theological and pastoral guidance. A media apostolate will further support faith education through radio programs, social media catechesis, and printed materials, helping to counter misinformation and reinforce Christian teachings.

By implementing these programs, Kotido Diocese will build a spiritually resilient Christian community, rooted in authentic Catholic faith. Through catechesis, sacramental participation, and intercessory prayer, believers will overcome fear, reject superstition, and live as true witnesses of the Gospel, in line with the Church's missionary mandate.

The challenge posed by witchcraft can be effectively addressed through the establishment of spiritual formation programs for the laity. These programs support believers on their faith journey, guiding them toward mature Christian discipleship. They involve the strengthening of catechesis on what it implies to be a Christian, living sacramental life as a practicing Christian, deliverance and intercession, family life, youth formation and evangelisation, exorcism and pastoral deliverance ministry, media apostolate for faith formation, formation of Christians on catholic social teaching and justice, and finally, deliverance prayers.

Understanding the Christian identity is fundamental to deepening faith and resisting practices that contradict the Gospel teachings. The Church teaches that every Christian must embrace the vocation to holiness and mission (CL 9), which begins with a strong awareness of baptismal identity. Since baptism is the foundational sacrament that marks believers as members of Christ's body and empowers them to live holy lives (CCC 1213), it is essential to catechize the laity regarding its significance and efficacy.

Moreover, renunciation of evil is a critical part of Christian commitment, as indicated in the baptismal promises. Therefore, this program will focus on catechetical teachings that reinforce the understanding of being God's children while also equipping believers with the knowledge to discern and reject practices that contradict Christian faith, including witchcraft and syncretistic rituals. To ensure the message reaches a broad audience, pastoral agents should conduct weekly catechetical classes in parishes. Home visitations by trained catechists will provide personalized instruction, particularly for those unable to attend regular classes due to reasons such as sickness or old age, thereby promoting broader participation.

For Christians to overcome fear and lure into practices like witchcraft, they must develop a deep reliance on the sacraments as sources of grace and divine protection. The Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Christian life (SC 10; CCC 1324), provides nourishment and strength against evil. Likewise, the sacrament of reconciliation grants grace for overcoming sin and restores believers to full communion with God in the context of the parish (CL 26), which is crucial in addressing fear-driven participation in occult practices. Furthermore, the anointing of the sick is a sacrament of healing and comfort, offering spiritual strength to those afflicted by spiritual attacks. Given the importance of these sacraments in the spiritual battle against superstition, this initiative will offer monthly workshops in parishes and mission stations. These workshops will include talks from clergy and lay leaders, guided prayer sessions, and sacramental participation to deepen understanding and encourage frequent reception of the sacraments.

In communities where belief in witchcraft is prevalent, structured prayer groups can provide essential spiritual support for individuals experiencing fear or oppression. The Bible teaches that Christ has authority over all evil spirits, empowering believers to overcome them (Mk 16:17, Lk 10:19). Therefore, this program will focus on helping parishioners understand the power of Christ's authority over evil through scriptural teachings and testimonies of deliverance. Practical prayer exercises, including prayers of renunciation, intercession, and spiritual protection, equip believers with effective ways to confront spiritual battles. The worshipping assembly shall recite traditional Church-approved prayers, such as the St. Michael archangel prayer and Psalms of protection (e.g., Ps 91) to strengthen faith and trust in God's power. To implement this program effectively, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal parish-based prayer groups will champion

these activities, together with the ongoing formation ministry of catechists. These groups will meet weekly for communal prayer and scriptural reflection, while diocesan leaders will periodically organize training sessions to ensure proper theological grounding and pastoral sensitivity. This is because the work against witchcraft is a spiritual battle that demands faith and preparedness.

Strong Christian families play a crucial role in resisting syncretism and superstitions. The Church emphasizes that the laity must bring Gospel values into their family and community life (CL 40). In African societies, including the Karimojong, fear of witchcraft often leads to divisions within families, fostering accusations and mistrust. Consequently, this program will educate families on Christian parenting, conflict resolution, and the discernment of cultural practices contrary to Christian teachings. The goal is to correct misconceptions that lead to the fear of witchcraft accusations while promoting unity and peace within families. This formation will be rooted in Catholic social teaching on human dignity and solidarity (CSDC, 209-214), reinforcing the Church's position on human relationships built on love rather than fear. The implementation of this initiative includes family enrichment programs at the parish level, where married couples and parents will receive mentorship through lay associations and movements such as the Married Couples Association and Marriage Encounter. Additionally, clergy and trained lay ministers will conduct outreach sessions, particularly in rural areas where traditional beliefs are still among the people.

According to Pope John Paul II in his apostolic letter, *Dilecti Amici*, to the Youth of the world on the International Youth Year, the future belongs to young people just as it once belonged to the generations of those who are now adults (DA 1). To the youth belongs the responsibility for what will one day become reality together with themselves, but which still lies in the future. God calls them to be prepared to make a defence to anyone who calls them to account for the hope that is in them (1 Pet 3:15). In the Kotido diocese, Young Catholics from rural areas get engaged in traditional practices that contradict the Christian faith due to peer pressure. To counter this, youth formation and evangelization training will focus on apologetics, testimonies of conversion, and skills of evangelization. Apologetics will equip young believers with rational defenses of their faith, enabling them to respond confidently to misconceptions. The youth should always be prepared to make a defence to anyone who calls them to account for the hope that is in them (1 Pt 3:15). Testimonies of conversion from individuals who have turned away

from superstition will inspire the youth to trust in God's power. Evangelization training will empower them to share their faith with their peers. The youth office shall implement this initiative at the annual youth camps at the diocesan and parish levels. Animation programs where experienced catechists and youth leaders will guide participants in deepening their faith and becoming ambassadors of Christian truth in their communities.

Recognizing the spiritual struggles faced by individuals affected by witchcraft, the Local Church in the Kotido diocese must provide direct pastoral care. This ministry will focus on training and formation of pastoral agents in deliverance ministry, equipping them with theological and pastoral skills to address spiritual afflictions (CL23). In addition, guided exorcism by exorcists ensures that deliverance practices remain within doctrinal guidelines. Pope Leo XIV, in his message to three hundred Exorcist priests gathered in Rome, called Exorcism a ministry of liberation and consolation.³⁶⁷ He exhorted the pastors to provide spiritual support to the faithful who are suffering. Furthermore, he emphasized the need to support the faithful truly possessed by the evil one with prayer and the invocation of Christ's effective presence, so that through the sacramental of exorcism, the lord may grant victory over Satan. Psychological support by trained personnel shall address the emotional and mental effects associated with witchcraft fears. To implement this program, the diocese will designate exorcists who will conduct quarterly deliverance sessions while ensuring pastoral accompaniment for affected individuals.

The first Areopagus of modern age, according to John Paul II, is the world of Communications, which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a "global village" (RM 37). The means of social communication have become so influential that, for many people, they serve as the primary sources of information, education, guidance, and inspiration, shaping behavior at the individual, familial, and societal levels. The young generation is growing up in a world conditioned by mass media. Accordingly, there is a critical need to integrate the Christian message into the new cultural context shaped by contemporary modes of communication. The media, therefore, is a powerful tool for countering misinformation and promoting Christian teaching. This initiative will include radio programs, social media catechesis, and the distribution of faith-based literature to educate the faithful about authentic Christian beliefs. Catholic radio programs will feature discussions on faith, testimonies of deliverance, and teachings on sacramental

³⁶⁷ Leo XIV, Message to Exorcists gathered in Rome from September 15-20, 2025, (25.09.2025).

life. Social media platforms are a useful opportunity for outreach to younger audiences with catechetical content. The Pamphlets and books on spiritual warfare and Christian identity will be an added advantage to the youth. A diocesan media team will focus on coordinating these efforts to ensure consistent and impactful faith-based communication. Kotido Diocese has a radio station, *Etoil a Karamoja*, which shall be a necessary instrument in evangelizing the entire community against the evil of witchcraft.

According to John Paul II's teaching in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, issued on the hundredth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, Catholic social doctrine serves as an instrument of evangelization, as it places the human person and society in relationship with the light of the Gospel (CA 54). The principles of the Church's social doctrine, grounded in natural law, are affirmed and deepened within the faith of the Church through the Gospel of Christ. Accusations of witchcraft often lead to injustice, discrimination, and violence. To address these challenges, this program will educate the faithful on human dignity, justice, and the rejection of harmful traditional practices. Human dignity originates from God and is of God because God created man in his image and likeness (Gn 1:27). Human life is sacred because the human person is the most central and clearest reflection of God among us. Key topics will include the rights of individuals, the ethical implications of witchcraft accusations, and the Church's role in social transformation. The Diocesan-Parish justice and peace committees will implement this initiative by organizing workshops, advocating for victims, and promoting community dialogue grounded in Christian ethics (CSDC, 358;381;409;414).

Deliverance prayers play a crucial role in strengthening faith and protecting believers from the influence of witchcraft. First, the *Prayer of Renunciation of Evil*, rooted in baptismal promises, calls on Christians to reject all forms of witchcraft and occult practices (CCC 1237). Similarly, the *Prayer for Protection Through the Precious Blood of Jesus* seeks Christ's redemptive power for spiritual safety (1 Pt 1:18-19). Moreover, the *Prayer of Authority in Christ* reaffirms believers' power over evil, as emphasized in Lk 10:19, while the *Rosary and Marian Intercession* invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary's aid in overcoming spiritual oppression (RM, 46). The *Litanies of the Saints* and prayers invoking angelic protection call upon the intercession of saints and guardian angels for divine shielding, as affirmed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 336). Furthermore, the (Ps 91) on the Prayer of Deliverance declares promises of God on refuge and protection, reinforcing trust in His power. The Exorcism Prayer of St. Michael

the Archangel is a longstanding component of Christian spiritual warfare, intended to invoke divine protection and assistance against the influence of demonic forces. Finally, the Prayer for Healing and Restoration asks for inner healing from the consequences of past occult involvement, acknowledging the Church's teaching on reconciliation and renewal (CCC 1424). The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that through these prayers, the Holy Spirit empowers the faithful to resist evil and deepen their reliance on God's grace and protection.

The Diocese of Kotido's commitment to spiritual formation and deliverance ministry is a vital response to the challenges posed by traditional beliefs and syncretism. By equipping the laity with biblical catechesis, sacramental life workshops, structured prayer groups, and faith-based media outreach, the Church will foster a spiritually resilient community rooted in authentic Catholic faith. The establishment of an exorcism and pastoral deliverance ministry ensures proper theological and pastoral care for those struggling with spiritual afflictions. The youth evangelization and family life formation programs provide long-term solutions to counter fear and superstition. Another significant movement contributing to this spiritual exercise is the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, which has been established in Uganda. The strengthening of the activities of the catholic charismatic renewal movement will help to expose the evil of witchcraft among the laity.

Through these initiatives, the Church empowers the faithful to live out their baptismal identity, reject unchristian practices, and fully participate in the Church's sacramental and missionary life. The integration of deliverance prayers further strengthens believers, offering them spiritual protection and a renewed trust in God's power. This comprehensive pastoral approach aligns with the Church's mission of evangelization, ensuring that the Diocese of Kotido grows into a community of strong, faith-filled witnesses who boldly proclaim the Gospel and stand firm against spiritual challenges.

The purpose of the chapter was to examine how belief in witchcraft affects the full participation of the laity in the Mission of the church. The researcher in the discussion utilized the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* of John Paul II as a central text of teaching. Other church documents from the Second Vatican Council, like *Lumen Gentium*

and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, provided much-needed teachings in the development of this chapter. Furthermore, the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Paul VI (1975), the Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and online articles have been useful in enriching this topic. In our analysis, we discovered that the laity, who form the greatest part of the Christians in our churches, are a big resource, and the Church needs to evangelize them to get rid of witchcraft in the church with the help of the clergy.

4 THE CHALLENGE OF CATECHETICAL FORMATION

In this chapter, we shall discuss the challenge of catechetical formation and Christian education of the laity in the mission of the church in Kotido Diocese. We shall begin this presentation by defining catechetical formation and Christian education in the light of the teaching of the Catholic Church. The chapter stresses the importance of lay participation in Christian education and gives an overview of the challenges faced by the laity in their catechetical roles.

The second and third sections present the historical context and theological foundations of lay involvement in Christian education and catechetical formation. In the theological perspective, it outlines the tria munera, the threefold mission of Christ and the church: priest, prophet, and king.

Furthermore, the fourth and fifth parts of the chapter discuss the challenges faced in catechetical and Christian education, and strategies for strengthening lay catechetical leadership. These two sections form the core deliberations of the chapter as they touch the primary issues in catechetical and Christian education.

Last but not least, a conclusion to this chapter shall wrap up the entire discussion.

4.1 Tasks of Catechesis

Catechetical formation refers to the structured process of educating individuals in the Faith, particularly within the Catholic tradition. It involves teaching, growth, and responding to the needs of the Church, fostering spiritual growth, and preparing individuals to live out their faith in daily life. According to the Directory for Catechesis, catechesis serves as accompaniment, education, and formation in the faith and for the

faith. It is a lifelong process that integrates evangelization, liturgical participation, and moral formation (GCD 2020, 55). Catechesis has five tasks.

a) Leading to the knowledge of Faith (GDC 80)

Catechesis facilitates knowledge and the Truth of the Christian Faith, the Creed, which is a symbol of faith. It initiates and promotes learning and exploring the Christian message as stipulated in the Sacred Scriptures, the living Tradition of the Church, and the Creed. In the exploration of the Christian message, catechesis connects the doctrinal content with the lives of the people in the community. The Catechist, therefore, needs appropriate knowledge himself to be able to talk about God. In the context of the family, the children always want to imitate their parents in how they live their daily lives. In some scenarios today, parents are distant from their children for some reasons, which leaves a lacuna in the catechetical formation of the children. Parents should help their children to participate in common prayer, prayer before and after meals to become a custom, reading the scriptures, pictures of our lady, saints in the rooms, visiting sanctuaries, praying the rosary, celebration of First Holy Communion and Confirmation, and, in a non-religious way, they should spend time with children. Parents should become good companions of their children by involving them in parish life. In cases of rebellious children, parents should pray to God for them, like St. Monica, who prayed for Augustine.

b) Initiates in the celebration of the Christian mystery (GCD 81-82)

The aim of catechesis is the experience of the Christian mystery. This attributes the importance of liturgy in the life of the Church, sacramental life as expressed in the Eucharist, which is the summit of the celebration of the Christian mystery (SC10). Catechesis teaches the attitude required for participating in liturgy, namely, attentive listening to the Word of God, thanksgiving, sensitivity to signs, and an understanding of the liturgical year, which is the teacher of faith, as well as the importance of Sunday. Furthermore, catechesis appreciates the credibility of popular piety. In certain situations, the Liturgy of the Hours and the Eucharistic celebration can be adapted for use at home. During family prayers, the father may lead prayers for his family members.

c) Moral Formation (GCD 83-85)

Catechesis must give moral formation. Knowledge of Christ necessarily entails accompanying Christ along the way of the cross, the way home to God the Father. Catechesis plays a formative role in preparing the faithful to bear witness to Christ through the integrity of their daily lives. A foundational scriptural reference for moral

catechesis is the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-11), in which Christ unveils the deeper meaning of the Ten Commandments, offering a comprehensive ethical vision rooted in love and righteousness (No. 85c). Furthermore, the Epistle of James (2:14-26) emphasizes the inseparability of faith and good works, asserting that faith devoid of concrete action is effectively dead. Collectively, these scriptural passages highlight the essential relationship between doctrinal formation and moral praxis within the Christian life. If a Christian wants to be good, they have to be morally upright and righteous. St. James emphasizes the call to charity and obedience to God's will, as seen in Abraham, who was willing to sacrifice his only son, Isaac.

d) Prayer

A deeper friendship with Jesus Christ leads the disciples to assume the attitude of prayer and contemplation that the Master himself had. To learn to pray with Jesus is to pray with the same sentiments with which he turned to the Father: adoration, praise, thanksgiving, filial confidence, supplication, and awe for his glory (n. 85d). All of these sentiments are reflected in the Our Father, the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples and which is the model of all Christian prayer. The "handing on of the Our Father" (RCIA 25 and 188-191) is the summary of the entire Gospel (CCC 2761) and is therefore the true act of catechesis permeated by a climate of prayer, assimilation of the entire Christian life reaches its summit. This climate is necessary when the catechumen and those to be catechized are confronted with the more demanding aspects of the Gospel, and when they feel weak or when they discover the mysterious action of God in their lives.

e) Education for Community Life

Another fundamental task of catechesis is initiation and education for community life and mission. Catechesis prepares a Christian to live in community and participate actively in the life and mission of the church. The Second Vatican Council emphasizes the necessity of pastors to form genuine Christian communities (PO 6d) and for catechumens to learn to cooperate actively in building up the Church and its work of evangelization (AG 14d). This is a challenge to the task of the community today in catechesis to create a catholic culture. There is a need for the Church to form people to recapture the sense of the community.

In education for community life, one has to realize that Christian community life is not realized spontaneously. It is necessary to educate it carefully. In this apprenticeship, the teaching of Christ on community life, recounted in the Gospel of St. Mathew, calls

for attitudes which is for catechesis is to inculcate: the spirit of simplicity and humility (Mt 18:3), solitude for the least among the brethren (Mt 18:6), particular care of those who are alienated (Mt 18:12), fraternal correction (Mt 18:15), common prayer (Mt 18:19), mutual forgiveness (Mt 18:22), Fraternal love embraces all these attitudes (Jn 13: 34).

In developing this community sense of catechesis, it takes special note of the ecumenical dimension and encourages fraternal attitudes towards members of other Christian churches and ecclesial communities. Thus, catechesis in pursuing this objective should give a clear exposition of all the church's doctrine and avoid formulations or expressions that might give rise to error. It implies "a suitable knowledge of other confessions" (GCD 1971, n.27) with which there are shared elements of faith: "the written word of God, the life of grace, faith, hope, and charity, and the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit." (UR 3b) Catechesis will possess an ecumenical dimension to the extent to which it arouses and nourishes "a true desire for unity" (CT 32, 34; CCC 821), not easy irenicism but perfect unity, when the Lord himself wants it and by those means by which he wishes that it should be brought about. In the local Church of Kotido, catechesis is not focused on realizing the ecumenical unity discussed above. It only possesses a desire for the exposition of the catholic doctrine.

f) Initiation into the mission

Catechesis is also open to the missionary dimension. It seeks to equip the disciples of Jesus to be present as Christians in society through their professional, cultural, and social lives. It also prepares them to lend their cooperation to the different ecclesial services according to their proper vocation. This task of evangelization originates, for the lay faithful, in the sacraments of initiation and the secular character of their vocation. It is also important to realize that every means should be used to encourage vocations to the priesthood and various forms of consecration to God in religious and apostolic life, and to awaken special missionary vocations (GCD 86a). This will help to build the Body of Christ. The evangelical attitude that Jesus taught his disciples when he sent them on mission is precisely that which catechesis must nourish: to seek out the lost sheep, proclaim and heal at the same time, to be poor, without money or knapsack; to know how to accept rejection and persecution; to place ones trust in the Father and the support of the Holy Spirit; to expect no other reward than the joy of working for the kingdom.

In education linked to the missionary sense, catechesis is also necessary for interreligious dialogue, if it renders the faithful capable of meaningful communication with men and women of other religions. Catechesis shows that the link between the church and non-Christian religions is, in the first place, the common origin and end of the human race, as well as the "many seeds of the word which God has sown in these religions." Catechesis also plays a critical role in both reconciling and distinguishing between the proclamation of Christ and interreligious dialogue. While these two elements are interrelated, they must not be conflated or treated as interchangeable. As articulated in the General Catechetical Directory (GCD 86b), interreligious dialogue does not eliminate the responsibility of evangelization but rather coexists with it in a complementary manner. This distinction is essential for maintaining the integrity of the Christian mission while engaging respectfully with religious pluralism.

Although catechesis of the baptized is fundamentally different from pre-baptismal catechesis, the General Directory of Catechesis shows how the stages of the catechumenate are an inspiration of the gradual nature of catechesis: the parallel importance of catechesis; the centrality of the mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ in all catechesis; the relationship of faith to the actual situation of the Catechized or inculturation; and catechesis as the true school of the faith which is carried out systematically and gradually (no.88-89).

Education is a word that comes from the Latin *e-ducare*, meaning "to bring out" or "to develop what is inside a person." Education is the primary work of the Church and, therefore, of every faithful person.³⁶⁸ Education refers first to the person who, through a continuous process, grows in the discovery of their true self and the fulfillment of their destiny.

Education depends both on the work done by the educator and the response on the part of the educated. "Responsibility" means to respond or answer. The great teacher is God, who acts through Jesus Christ the educator with the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁶⁹ Jesus Christ uses the Church as mother and teacher. Education is a risk: a risk on the part of God. He proposes his presence and greatness as good for man, something fitting for him, but he proposes to man's freedom, entrusting himself to that freedom of man to say

³⁶⁸ Cf. P. Tiboni, *A guide for the reading of the apostolic exhortation of Pope John Paul II, Christifideles Laici: Vocation and mission of the Lay Faithful*, Kampala 2000, p. 58-59,(Promanuscripto)

³⁶⁹ Cf. Ibid.

yes or no. The gift from God may be turned against God by man's freedom. Any educator runs the same risk, including Jesus Christ, who was killed because of man's rebellion against his proposal of life.

It is also a risk for the educated. He has to be responsible. He is answerable for his own life or perdition.³⁷⁰ By refusing what is fit and good for his own life, he ruins it. This is brought out clearly in the symbol of the vine. My father is the vinedresser. "Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he cuts away. Anyone who does not remain in me is like a branch that has been thrown away; it withers. These branches are collected and thrown on the fire, and they are burnt" (Jn 15:5-6).

Education works like this: you encounter a community, a person who calls you to do something great and meaningful for your life, which fascinates and convinces you.³⁷¹ Then, by following these persons, you grow more and more in what is proposed to you and verify through your work and responsibility that it is good for your life. This makes you mature, and you bear fruit in abundance. We can summarize this by three adjectives: you have discovered something persuasive, educative, and operative.

The term "religious education" has a twofold meaning. It can be understood as a practice that primarily engages young people in various contexts (such as family, church, school, etc.). Yet it also refers to an academic discipline, most often as part of theology or educational studies.³⁷² Both meanings have roots in the Bible or the early church, which indicates that religious education is an integral part of the Christian tradition (as well as, in different ways, of the Jewish tradition and other religions), even if the term 'religious education' itself was not commonly used before the modern era.

Christian education is a broader concept that encompasses the teaching of Christian values, theology, and biblical principles in various settings, including schools, churches, and seminaries. Christian education is not limited to catechesis but includes theological studies, pastoral training, and ethical instruction.

Both catechetical formation and Christian education emphasize spiritual growth, community engagement, and lifelong learning. They are foundational to developing a well-formed Christian identity and fostering a deeper relationship with God.

³⁷⁰ Cf. Ibid.

³⁷¹ Cf. Ibid.

³⁷² Cf. F. Schweitzer, 2023. "Religious Education," St. Andrews Encyclopedia of Theology. Ed., Brendan N. Wolf et al in: <https://www.saet.ac.uk/christianity/Religious Education>, [29.05.2025].

4.2 Importance of Lay's involvement in religious education

Lay Participation in religious education is essential within the Roman Catholic tradition, as it reflects the Church's understanding of the laity's role in evangelization and faith formation. The Second Vatican Council emphasized that lay Catholics are called to be active witnesses of faith, not only in their personal lives but also in educational settings.

Lay Catholics, both men and women, who dedicate their lives to teaching in primary and secondary schools, have become increasingly vital to the Catholic Church.³⁷³ Whether we look at schools in general or Catholic schools in particular, the importance is deserved. It is the lay teachers, and indeed all lay persons, believers or not, who will substantially determine whether or not a school realizes its aims and accomplishes its objectives.³⁷⁴ In the Second Vatican Council, and specifically in the Declaration on Christian Education, the Church recognized the role and responsibility that this situation confers on all lay Catholics who work in any elementary and secondary school, whether as teachers, directors, administrators, or auxiliary staff. The Declaration invites us to expand on its contents and deepen them; in doing so, it is not our intention to ignore or minimize the significant accomplishments of Christians who belong to other Churches, or of non-Christians, in the field of education (GE 8). The most basic reason for this new role for Catholic laity, a role which the Church regards as positive and enriching, is theological.³⁷⁵ In the last century, the authentic image of the laity within the People of God has become increasingly clear. It has now been set down in two documents of the Second Vatican Council, which give profound expression to the richness and uniqueness of the lay vocation: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.

³⁷³ Cf. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* in: <https://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/congregations/ccathedduc/documents/rc-con-ccathedduc-doc-19821015-lay-catholics-en.html>, [30.05.2025].

³⁷⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ Cf. Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: witnesses to the Faith*, n.2 in: <https://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/congregations/ccathedduc/documents/rc-con-ccathedduc-doc-19821015-lay-catholics-en.html>, [30.05.2025].

Lay educators bring their personal experiences and faith journeys into the classroom, making religious education more relatable and engaging. The Catholic Church considers the preservation of Catholic school identity to be crucial, and the extent to which this occurs depends primarily upon the educators or teachers in Catholic schools.³⁷⁶ Lay educators in Catholic schools assume an essential role in establishing the authentic Catholic ethos of the catholic school community. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education elaborates on this, noting that Catholic school educators take on a vocation that bears a direct connection to the universal mission of the Catholic Church. For educators to fully live out this vocation, they require appropriate professional and spiritual formation. This applies specifically to the lay educators of the Kotido diocese, where there is no special formation program for teachers. Borrowing a leaf from the experience of the United States, Catholic school leaders bear a great responsibility for the formation of educators.³⁷⁷ According to the National Standards and Benchmarks of Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools, effective Catholic school leaders provide retreats and other spiritual experiences and access to service programs. They are generally intentional about supporting the faith life of the school community.³⁷⁸ It is stated within the NSBECs that “an excellent Catholic school adhering to mission provides opportunities for adult faith formation and action in service of social justice.”³⁷⁹ The Catholic school leader is responsible for ensuring that “education is a shared and living mission” among the educators in the school community.³⁸⁰ When applied to the context of Kotido diocese with 4 kindergartens, 89 primary schools, and three secondary schools, the burden of the work on the priest will be reduced, while possible evangelization is accomplished.

³⁷⁶ Cf. Sacred Congregation of Catholic Education, *The Catholic School* in: <https://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc-con-ccatheduc.doc-19770319-catholic-school-en.html>, [31.05.2025].

³⁷⁷ Cf. Y.K. Cho, *The Relationship between the Catholic Teacher’s faith and commitment in the Catholic School, Catholic Education: Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 15 (2), 117-139 in: <https://doi.org/10.15365/joce.1502022013>, [31.05.2025]; P. Earl, Spiritual Formation of Catholic Educators: Understanding the need, *Journal of Catholic Education*, 8 (4) 513-530 in: <https://doi.org/10.15365/joce.1403042013>, [31.05.2025]; D.D. Spezia, Nurturing a heart for New Evangelisation: A national study of catholic Elementary School Principals in the US *Journal of Catholic Education*, 20 (1), 266-290 in: <https://doi.org/10.15365/Joce.2001122016>, [31.05.2025].

³⁷⁸ Cf. L. Ozar, and P. Weitzel-O Neill, *National Standards and benchmarks for effective Catholic elementary and Secondary Schools*, Loyola University Chicago, Centre for Catholic School Effectiveness in: <https://www.catholicschoolstandards.org/images/docs/standards/catholic-school-standards-English.pdf>, [31.05.2025].

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p.6.

³⁸⁰ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educating today and Tomorrow: A renewing passion* in: <https://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/congregations/ccathedc/documents/rc-catholic>, [31.05.2025]

The Laity are called to participate in the Church's mission by teaching, mentoring, and guiding students in their spiritual and moral development. The mission to teach is spelled out in catholic schools and non-Catholic schools as well. This will be carried out by the living example of those who teach and have charge of the children, and by the apostolic action of fellow students (GE 7). The efforts of laymen who teach them Christian doctrine in a manner suited to their age and background, in a way adapted to time and circumstances, are key.

Parents have an irreplaceable obligation in the education of their children in the family. Parents must provide a conducive family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow human beings, which will promote an integrated, personal, and social education of their children (GE 3). The family is therefore a principal school of social virtues, which are necessary for every society. It is in the Christian family, inspired by grace and the responsibility of matrimony, that Children should be taught to know and worship God and to love their neighbor, following the faith they received in their earliest infancy in the sacrament of Baptism. In the family, they will have their first well-balanced human society and of the Church. Furthermore, they are gradually initiated into association with their fellow men in civil life and as members of the people of God. Much as the task of Christian education belongs primarily to the family, it requires the help of society as a whole.

Education in a very special way is the concern of the Church, not only because the church should be recognized as a human society capable of imparting education, but especially because it has the duty of proclaiming the way of salvation to all men, revealing the life of Christ to those who believe and assisting them with unremitting care so that they may be able to attain the fullness of life (GE 3). The Church, as a mother, must provide her children with an education that inspires their lives by the Spirit of Christ. It will also help all people to promote a well-balanced perfection of the human personality, for the good of society in this world, and for the development of a world more worthy of man.

Lay educators come from various backgrounds, enabling them to enrich Catholic education with different viewpoints and expertise while maintaining the core values of the faith. Lay Catholics, both men and women, who dedicate their lives to teaching in primary and secondary schools, have become increasingly vital in recent years. It is the lay teachers and indeed lay persons, believers or not, who will determine whether or not

a school realizes its aims and accomplishes its objectives. In the Second Vatican Council, and specifically in the Declaration on Christian Education, the Church recognized the role and responsibility that this situation confers on all lay Catholics who work in elementary and secondary schools, whether as teachers, directors, administrators, or auxiliary staff (GE 8). The Declaration invites us to expand on its contents and deepen them. In doing this, it is not our intention to ignore or minimize the significant accomplishments of Christians who belong to other Churches or non-Christians in the field of education.

The most basic reason for this new role for Catholic laity, a role which the church regards as positive and enriching, is theological.³⁸¹ In the last century, the authentic image of the laity as people of God has become increasingly clear with a profound expression of the richness and uniqueness of the lay vocation. Theological development has been reinforced by the social, economic, and political developments of recent years. The cultural level has progressively risen because it is closely tied to the advances in science and technology, as every profession requires a more extensive preparation. The church also believes that for an integral education of children and young people, both religious and lay Catholics are needed in schools.

The formation of Catholic school identity is crucial, and the extent to which this occurs primarily depends on the educators in Catholic schools. Their presence in schools and catechetical programs reinforces the Church's mission to nurture faith in young people and adults. In Catholic-founded schools, children and young people may be at various stages of the spectrum of faith development. While most young people will be of the Catholic tradition, some may belong to other denominations and faiths or have life experiences that may be independent of their religious beliefs. Religious education aims to support all children and young people in their search for truth and meaning in life, making it central to their educational development. The effort to build Christian identity is recognized in Church documents, which offer guidance on Catholic education. The Christian vision of existence must be presented in such a way that it addresses all levels, ranging from the most elementary evangelization to communion in the same faith.

The presence of Lay Catholics in schools, according to the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, teaches that learning through religious education enables children

³⁸¹ Cf. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith in <https://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc-con-ccatheduc-doc-19821015-lay-catholics-en.html>, [09.06.2025].

and young people to develop their knowledge and deepen their understanding of the Catholic faith.³⁸² It conducts investigations and understands the relevance of the Catholic faith to questions about truth and the meaning of life. Similarly, it highlights, develops, and fosters the values, attitudes, and practices that are compatible with a positive response to the invitation to faith.

Religious education enhances the development of skills for reflection, discernment, critical thinking, and decision-making by acting on an informed conscience when making moral decisions, nurturing the prayer life of the individual and the school community. This is critical at their earlier stage of life to learn and be formed in the future demands of life, such as career, vocation, talents development, and spirituality.

It helps to understand and appreciate significant aspects of other Christian traditions and major world religions, hence making a positive difference in the world by putting their beliefs and values into action. Teachers will remain faithful to the mission of promoting an understanding of the Catholic faith, and they will also teach respect for persons of different religious convictions. Religious education in Catholic schools considers the significance of faith from the perspective of a person's life and the faith community. It does not study religion as a phenomenon from an external perspective. In addition to developing their understanding of the Catholic faith, children and young people will also learn to respect other Christian traditions. They will also come to appreciate significant aspects of major world religions, recognizing and respecting the sincere search for truth that takes place in different faiths. Where appropriate, they will learn similarly about stances for living that are independent of religious belief.

4.3 Challenges faced by the Laity in catechetical roles

The laity genuinely shares the challenges in participating unreservedly in the church's mission. Indeed, some adequately understand the nature of their expected contribution to the mission; they strongly desire to participate in it, but are hindered in many ways. Others do not understand their expected roles in the church. Some individuals

³⁸² Cf. Ibid.

mistakenly assume that their role within the Church is fulfilled merely by participating in liturgical activities, without recognizing the broader call to active discipleship and mission. The subsection shall provide an overview of the challenges faced by the Laity in their catechetical roles.

Laypeople face practical challenges in living out their role. Balancing family, work, and Church commitments can be difficult. Secular culture often opposes Catholic values, creating tension for those trying to witness to their faith. Some may feel unprepared or lack Formation in Church teachings. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 906) acknowledges that the laity needs support from clergy to meet these demands. Parishes sometimes fail to provide adequate resources or encouragement. Despite this, the Church calls laypeople to persevere in their mission. Personal prayer and study can help them overcome these obstacles. The laity's role requires resilience and trust in God's grace. These challenges do not diminish their responsibility but highlight its importance.

Common to their innumerable setbacks is a confirmation of Paul's insight. He states that the married man is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please his wife ... the married woman is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please her husband. (1 Cor 7: 33-34). Family affairs are their outstanding obstacle. Some cannot go beyond their nuclear family. They believe they have a mission within their family only, and it is limited solely to this. Missionary activities in distant places are rare and considered part of the vocation of priests. A call to their duties at home disrupts some of their contributions as Christians. Their primary needs subject them to situations where they may not easily witness their faith.³⁸³

The oldest institution of divine origin (Gn 2:18-24), marriage that forms a family, is besieged by challenges. Its origin, character, and form, as ordained by the Creator, one man and one woman, are questioned and altered into polygamous marriages. Indeed, the social question, as Benedict XVI elaborates, has become a radically anthropological question (CV 1). Indissolubility of marriage, carefully taught with an etiology in Genesis 2:18-24 and corroborated in Jesus' teaching (Mt 19:1-9; Mk 10:1-12), is infringed upon, resulting in frequent divorce with its devastating consequences (AL 246). Lack of a sense

³⁸³ Cf. L. Iwuamadi, *The Challenges of African Christians in the light of Mark 10:29*, "African Journal of Contextual Theology" 1 (2009), p.75-82.

of the sacredness of marriage affects the society in which Christians live. Families are gradually losing their status as the domestic church and cradle of missionary zeal.

It is essential to acknowledge that financial resources are necessary for an organized work of evangelization, and a lack of these resources significantly impacts the mission. Many people in Africa barely have enough to live on. Therefore, the contribution of adequate resources for the mission remains a challenge. It is a common practice in Karamoja for individuals and institutions to rely on external aid for their survival. Poverty, financial constraint, is the issue even when some nurture an ardent desire to participate in the church's mission. Moreover, considering the trend in society where mostly the rich or the influential have a voice, if Christians are poverty-stricken, they may not be able to speak out in situations of injustice, corruption, bribery, theft, sexual harassment, intimidation, etc., that require outright intervention.

Materialism is akin to avidity towards material things and acquisition at all costs, and appropriately describes a phenomenon faced by the laity as a setback to their full participation in the Church's mission. No one wants to engage in a non-lucrative venture from which they will gain nothing. A desire for material things has nothing in common with the propagation of the Christian faith, whose aim is highly altruistic, and therefore it is not of this world. Materialism tends to obstruct the mission and is contrary to the evangelical poverty in imitation of Jesus, who became poor so that we might be rich (2 Cor 8:9). Materialism further affects the pastoral agents who are recruited to serve in the Church as catechists. Most of the candidates who come for formation are those who may not find lucrative opportunities elsewhere outside the church. Some resort to Church services because it is the only way to earn a living. Though they are people of faith, this affects the quality of their work in the church. Kangole Catechetical Training Centre recruits candidates as low as primary seven for a two-year course in catechetical formation!

A lack of formal education, that is, the inability to read and write, prevents many Lay persons who are willing and available for the mission of the Church from accomplishing their desires. There is a limit to what illiteracy can do, despite goodwill, piety, and generosity. Interaction with some classes of individuals in society becomes impossible. The situation results in a lack of faith-sharing and good witnesses to the community.

Like some places in Africa, many Christians in the Kotido diocese are not adequately instructed in the faith, and its repercussions are almost palpable, particularly in the 'neo-pagan trend' manifested in various forms of syncretism.³⁸⁴ The vacuum generated by inadequate instructions in the faith, or lack of knowledge of Catholic teaching, is unrestrainedly filled with practices of Traditional Religion, which are inconsonant with Christian belief. Pope Francis teaches that one who is not conversant with the Christian faith and praxis cannot be its herald, for 'we need knowledge and truth, because without these we cannot stand firm, we cannot move forward' (LF 24). For the laity to participate in their mission of enlivening the world, they need adequate catechesis. Without this, they cannot courageously face the challenges they encounter from others, answer their questions, and be a light to them.

Closely related to the facts discussed above is the inadequate formation of the laity towards mission as taught by Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG 102). Many of them want to be involved in various aspects of the church's mission, particularly *Missio ad Gentes*, but there is no programme for this where they can live and work. They attribute this to the lack of interest by the clergy and consecrated persons. Some of them live their faith in their daily lives and make contributions to the mission. They believe that if they are instructed and co-opted, they can move beyond their immediate environment by proclaiming the faith.

Some practices of African culture are incongruous with Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Some of these practices by necromancers and the revival of forgotten superstitions have untold influence on the laity, who, due to inadequate formation in the faith, have not yet extricated themselves from them. Living a Christian life with an identity crisis breeds syncretism, a form of infidelity, and the adherents of this mixture cannot propagate either of the two religions.

For varied reasons that often defy classification, some priests and consecrated persons, who ought to understand and recognize the dignity and contributions of the laity, are indifferent to their position in the church. They are not involved in making decisions in the church (EG 102), especially where it concerns them, the common good of the parish or diocese. If the primary ministers of the church are insensitive to the real situation of the laity, there is a block in spreading the gospel. The expected encouragement from them

³⁸⁴ Cf. V. Ifeanyi, *Practical Atheism: A problem of faith in Nigeria*, "Ministerium" 3 (2017), no. 1, p. 88-109.

seems not forthcoming, and consequently, the efforts of the laity around them are dampened if they are not involved in evangelization. The mission suffers because, whatever the number of priests and consecrated persons in a given place, they cannot fill the part of the laity.

Like Paul, who experienced both internal and external opposition in his mission (2 Cor 11:26), and in fulfillment of Jesus' words that internal division is inevitable in authentic discipleship (Mt 10:36), some lay faithful are hindered by fellow Catholics and non-Catholics, or non-Christians. Catholics who lack zeal obstruct others; non-Catholics and non-Christians perceive the efforts of zealous laity as overstepping the boundaries. It entails courage and fortitude to live and proclaim one's faith in a subtly hostile environment. It is more challenging to be a Catholic in a non-Christian place where religious freedom is not officially forbidden, but there is silent persecution in practice. This is the case of the laity living amongst fanatical Muslims, Pentecostals in some parts of Africa. When there is oppression or a determined plan by other religions to suppress and malign the Christians, Catholics find it difficult to participate fully in the mission of the Church.

The increasing use of information and communication technology (ICT) facilitates communication, particularly in evangelization, rendering the world a global village where many obtain the same information synchronously. Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate*, Charity in Truth, teaches that some contents can be beneficial when they are geared towards a vision of the person and the common good that reflects truly universal values and tenets (CV 73). Others, conversely, erode individual cultural values, leading to self-alienation. According to John Paul II, in his post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*, Christianity has fertile ground in many parts of Africa (EA 42). However, it is diluted by the influence of other world cultures conveyed through information and communication technology. This harms orthodoxy and orthopraxy of the faith in a culture that could have naturally enhanced this faith. Affected lay persons have little to offer for the mission because they have no natural basis in cultural values.

A portion of the lay faithful may persevere in their faith when faced with scandals from church leaders; unfortunately, others may get discouraged, lukewarm, and lose their faith. Participating in the church's mission in clerical scandals poses a tremendous challenge to the laity. The bishop of Bruges, Roger Vangheluwe, resigned in April 2010

after admitting that he had sexually abused a boy for years when he was a priest and after being made a bishop.³⁸⁵ Bernard Preynat (75 years old) received a 5-year sentence after admitting that he had assaulted boys over 20 years, a scandal that embroiled a top cardinal.³⁸⁶ Many victims of such abuses have left the church and discouraged others with their stories and attitude towards its mission. Similarly, Uganda, with a younger faith, spanning 146 years since the inception of Christianity, is not immune to the scandals of the priests. These may not be the cases that happen in Europe, but may range from infidelity to celibacy, dishonesty with the church's resources, disobedience, etc.

This subsection shall discuss three dimensions of the historical context of Christian education and catechetical leadership in the history of the church. The role of laity in Christian education throughout history will be discussed concurrently with the evolution of catechetical leadership among the laity, since they blend harmoniously.

The role of the laity in Christian education within the Roman Catholic Church has developed significantly over time. Historically, education was primarily the domain of the clergy and religious orders, but laypeople have increasingly played a vital role in teaching, evangelization, and faith formation. This is a result of the spread of civilization brought by the Western world, which has enabled many people to acquire formal education.

The role of the laity in Christian education during the early church and the Middle Ages evolved significantly, reflecting broader shifts in religious authority and societal structures. Lay involvement in education was limited, as monasteries and cathedral schools were the primary centers of learning. However, lay scholars and patrons contributed to the development of Christian thought.

In the earliest days of Christianity, from the first to the fifth centuries, education was primarily informal and centered on family and community instruction. The Laity played a crucial role in passing down Christian teachings in households where parents instructed their children in faith. The Didache, an early Christian text, highlights the importance of lay catechesis in moral and doctrinal formation. The full name of the text

³⁸⁵ Cf. J. M. Obiorah, *The challenges of full participation in the mission of the Church*, "Theological Studies" 76 (2020) no.4, p. 8.

³⁸⁶ Cf. A. Breenden, Ex-Priest in France is convicted for abusing dozens of scouts in: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/16/world/europe/bernard-prynat-france-abuse.html>, [10.06.2025].

is “The Teaching of the Lord through the Apostles to the Nations.”³⁸⁷ While there were gentiles admitted to the Didache community, there would be no need to mention them if the community itself were solely comprised of gentiles.

The Didache is a kind of manual for a community of Jewish Christians in the first and second centuries. Many themes in this document are parallel to the writing of the Hebrew Bible and other early Jewish sources.³⁸⁸ For example, the first part of the text, the two ways discourse, writes, “There are two ways: one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between the two ways.” This two-way idea is found in Deuteronomy, but it’s also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, written around the 1st century CE by Jewish separatists, the Essenes, in the Palestinian desert. This idea is part of a broader Jewish thought around the time of Christianity’s founding.

The ethical teachings of the Didache also have parallels in other Jewish sources. For example, the Didache says “speak well of the ones speaking badly of you, and pray for your enemies, (and) fast for the ones persecuting you” (Did. 1:3) . Similarly, in Proverbs 24:17 we read “do not rejoice when your enemies fall, and do not let your heart be glad when they stumble.”

Finally, the Didache lists the ten commandments from Exodus 20. There can be little doubt that this is a Jewish text, and yet, Jesus is important for this community. Jesus is referred to three times explicitly in the Didache. These references manifest the Didache’s community Christology, their view of the nature, role, and person of Jesus. Remarkably, in two of these references, Jesus is called God’s servant rather than God’s son. Scholars would refer to this as a low Christology. A high Christology, on the other hand, would mean that Jesus is equal to or the same as God, as we find in the Gospel of John. The double reference to Jesus as God’s servant depicts his status as that of the ancient Hebrew prophets without calling him divine. Jesus is God’s chosen one, and yet fully human, as expressed in the Didache.

However, the Didache does not mention Jesus’ death or resurrection, even in the prayers for the Eucharist (or Communion). This serves to underscore even further the low

³⁸⁷ J . Schachlerle, The Didache: The Author, Dates and Why it is not in the Bible in: <https://www.bartehrmann.com/the-didache/>, [12.06.2025].

³⁸⁸ Cf. Ibid.

Christology within this community: what matters about Jesus is his teachings and example.³⁸⁹

The Didache shares a lot of material with the Gospel of Mathew, written between 80-85 CE, especially sayings from the Sermon on the Mount. There are sometimes subtle linguistic differences, though. The saying “Do not give what is holy to dogs” (Did. 9:5 and Mt 7:6) is the same in both texts. However, look at this parallel:

Mathew 5:39	Didache 1:4
But if one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him also the other cheek.	If one should give you a strike on the right cheek, turn to him also the other, and you will be perfect.

The idea is undoubtedly the same, although the wording is slightly different. Clayton Jefford states that the most reasonable assumption to make is that both Matthew and the Didache got their material from the same source, rather than one depending on the other.

The Didache is an early Jewish Christian text that provides an opening into a community where Christianity and Judaism were not as incompatible entities. It portrays views about Jesus and the Eucharist quite different from what is depicted in the canonical Gospels. Much of the text is practical. It teaches community members how to live, worship, and baptize, etc. The author or authors of the Didache wrote for their Jewish Christian community, although some Gentiles were included. Unlike the Nicene Creed, however, it is not a list of beliefs but rather a list of practices for the community to follow.

While bishops and clergy were responsible for formal theological instruction, lay scribes, scholars, and patrons contributed to the preservation and dissemination of Christian texts. Some laypeople, particularly those with wealth and influence, supported the establishment of Christian schools and libraries. During the medieval period, between the fifth and the fifteenth centuries, education became more structured, with monastic and

³⁸⁹ Cf. Ibid.

cathedral schools serving as primary centers of learning. The clergy dominated formal education, but lay involvement persisted in various ways:

During the Renaissance and Reformation eras, the role of the laity in Christian education underwent a significant transformation, reflecting broader shifts in religious thought, social structures, and access to learning. The Reformation, particularly through Martin Luther's teachings, witnessed the rise of Lay participation in religious life by emphasizing the "priesthood of all believers", the idea that every Christian, not just clergy, had a direct relationship with God and a responsibility to engage with Scripture.³⁹⁰ This democratized religious knowledge, encouraging laypeople to read and interpret the Bible. Until John Guttenberg's (1394-1468) discovery of the printing press, the bible remained, for ordinary Christians, a closed book, except for the occasional sermons and through artworks.³⁹¹ Earlier, trailblazing minds such as those of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus attempted to popularize the Bible by translating it into local languages, but they were met with stiff opposition. However, it is Luther's merit that he made scripture an integral part of Christian life. Luther, along with colleagues from the University of Wittenberg, translated the New Testament into German and, with the help of the recently introduced printing press, made it easily accessible to ordinary Christians. Luther was a biblical scholar and was convinced of the power of the Word of God in his own life.³⁹² Luther recommended the study of Scripture as a method of three steps: prayer, meditation, and affliction. One should read the Scripture in the presence of God, in prayer, and while meditating on the words of Scripture, one must be attentive to the situations in life that often contradict what is found in Scripture. Through this process, scripture proves its authority by overcoming those afflictions. "Note that the struggle of the Scripture is this, that it is not changed into the one who studies it, but that it transforms one who loves it into itself and its strength."³⁹³ A person not only interprets the Scripture but is also interpreted by it, which is the power and authority of Scripture.

Luther's central teaching that the Bible is the core source of religion and authority opened a rising wave of interest and study of Scripture. This has continued to the present.

³⁹⁰ Cf. J. Kavunkal, *The Reformation and the Laity's Role in Church's Mission Today* in: <https://www.academia.edu/81607382/The-Reformation-and-the-Laity's-Role-in-Church's-Mission-Today>, [12.06.2025].

³⁹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁹² Cf. R.D. Witterup, *Rediscovering Vatican II: Scripture*, New York, 2006, p.5.

³⁹³ Luther, *First Lecture on the Psalms*, in Herbert J.A. Bouman, *Luther's Writings*, W A 3, 397,9-11, quoted in *Conflict and Communion*, no.197.

An associated idea of Luther, and following from the centrality of Scripture, is the dignity and responsibility of every baptized person. In contrast to the prevailing medieval division of Christians into spiritual (hierarchy) and temporal (the laity), Luther insisted that all Christians are priests in the eyes of God and that they have direct access to God. In his letter to the German nobility, he put forward the doctrine that all baptized Christians were priests and spiritual, dismissing the existence of two classes of believers, the spiritual and the secular.³⁹⁴ Luther understood the relationship of believers to Christ as a “joyful exchange, in which the believer takes part in the properties of Christ, and thus also in his priesthood.”³⁹⁵ Commenting on 1 Peter 2:9, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s people,” Luther insisted, “We are all consecrated priests through baptism.”³⁹⁶ Similarly, in his writing, *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520), he wrote: “In this way we are all priests, as many of us are Christians. There are indeed priests whom we call ministers.”³⁹⁷ Luther held that all Christians are truly of the spiritual estate, and there are no differences among them, except that of office.³⁹⁸ “There is no true basic difference between layman and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of authority.”³⁹⁹ Commenting on 1 Corinthians 12:12, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ,”⁴⁰⁰ he explained, “This applies to all of us because we have one baptism, one gospel, one faith, and are all equally Christians. For baptism, gospel and faith alone make men (*sic*) religious, and create a Christian people.”⁴⁰¹ However, Luther’s teaching on the Common Priesthood of the baptized was not at the expense of the ministerial priesthood. Thus, in Article 14 of his Augsburg Confession, he wrote: “No one should publicly teach or administer sacraments in the church unless properly called.”⁴⁰² It is also noted that throughout his career at the University of Wittenberg, there existed ordinations for ministerial priests. Even if Luther made a distinction between the priesthood and ministers who have an office in the Church as a preacher, the fact of sharing

³⁹⁴ See *An Appeal to the Ruling Class*, in *Reformation Writings of Martin Luther*, Bertran Lees Woolf (ed), Library of Ecclesiastical History, 1952, p.114.

³⁹⁵ Cf. *Conflict to Communion*, p.162.

³⁹⁶ Letter to the Christian Nobility in Weinmar, Gusgabe 6, p.407; see also *Conflict and Communion* footnote no.3.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁸ Cf. Helmut L Lehman (ed), *Luther’s Works*, Philadelphia, PA, 1970, p. 5.

³⁹⁹ Lehman, p.14.

⁴⁰⁰ T. J. Wengert, *Priesthood, Pastors, Bishops: Public Ministry for the Reformation and Today*, Minneapolis, 2008, v.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. W. Kasper, *Theology and Church*, London, 1989, p.9.

⁴⁰² D.R. Lecky, *The Laity and Christian Education*, New York, 2006,p.1.

in Christ's priesthood is an invitation to share in Christ's ministry, to witness to the Gospel that Christ did all through his ministry. This is significant for the mission of the Church today, which the paper will develop in the following pages.

Protestant reformers and Catholic humanists alike recognized the importance of educating the laity, though their approaches differed. In Protestant regions, schools were established to teach reading, often with the primary goal of enabling Bible literacy.⁴⁰³ Luther and others advocated universal education, including for girls, to ensure that all believers could access Scripture. This stemmed from the argument of the priesthood of all believers, arguing that every Christian should be able to read and interpret the Bible independently. This led to a push for literacy and widespread education. Luther and Philip Melanchthon advocated state-supported schools, ensuring that education was accessible to all. Protestant education focused on Bible reading, catechisms, and moral instruction, reinforcing religious principles among laypeople.

For the Reformers, compulsory education depended foremost on the family.⁴⁰⁴ Luther, Melanchthon, Zwingli, Calvin, and Farel stressed the paramount aspect of family education for the future of the Church and society in general. It was the parents' responsibility to bring up their children to become well-read Christians. Domestic education was completed by schooling. In his sermons, Luther reminded parents that they should send their children to school.

As Cathedral and monastic schools declined during the Renaissance period, it became necessary to find other suitable environments for the protection and education of young people. At the same time, the nature and purpose of man's function on earth. The Renaissance Catholic humanists, influenced by classical learning, sought to educate the laity in both religious and secular subjects.⁴⁰⁵ In places like Florence, lay confraternities acted as educational spaces, teaching Christian values alongside humanist ideals. The Catholic Church responded to the Reformation by strengthening its Educational institutions, such as Jesuit schools, which trained both clergy and lay educators. Education was not simply a preparation for the next life, but also this one, and it was

⁴⁰³ Cf. Musee Protestant, The Protestant education in the 16th Century in:
<https://museeprotestantjt.org/en/notice/the-protestant-education-in-the-XVith-century/>, [12.06.2025].

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. K. Walsh, *The Reformation and Education: Humanist Theory and Sectarian Practice* in:
<https://wwwjstor.org/stable/30089922>, [12.06.2025].

becoming vocational-oriented in its emphasis.⁴⁰⁶ Florence seemed to have solved its problem of religious education through adolescent confraternities, such as boys' clubs under religious supervision, with a strong bias on preserving the innocence of a younger generation. A similar objective lay behind most of the educational thinking of the protestant reformers.

Numerically, the laity comprises the largest group (98%) within the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁰⁷ Yet up until the Second Vatican Council, the laity had no official status within the Church proper (ordained, male hierarchy) and remained on the periphery, at best. After some 400 years of exclusion, the Second Vatican Council opened the doors to the laity, welcoming them, including them, and calling for their active participation. This, in turn, marked the beginning of the laity's involvement in Church ministry.

The Second Vatican Council, held from 1962 to 1965, reshaped the Church's understanding of the laity's role. Before the Council, laypeople were often seen as secondary to the clergy in Church life. The Council's document, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, corrected this by affirming their equal dignity as members of Christ's body. It emphasized that the laity are called to animate the world with Christian values (LG 33). This shift was not a departure from tradition but a clarification of existing theology. The Council also produced the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, a decree specifically on the laity's apostolate. This document instructs laypeople to take initiative in evangelizing their environment (AA 9). The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 904-906) reflects these teachings, emphasizing the prophetic responsibility of Lay people to transform society. The Council's vision remains a cornerstone of modern Catholic thought. It continues to guide the Church on how to engage with the laity today.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. C.A. Bilguin, *Laity, religious education and catechetical leadership: A documentary analysis* (2002) ETD collections for Fordham University, AAI 3040392 in: <https://research.library.fordham.edu/dissertation/AA13040392/>, [12.06.2025].

4.4 Contemporary development of the theology of the Catechetical role of Laity

In this subsection, we will discuss three Theological areas: the biblical basis of lay involvement in Christian education, the church's teaching on the laity's role in evangelization, and the threefold mission of Christ: Priestly, Prophetic, and Kingly roles. These three dimensions are approaches in support of the participation of the laity in the church. They are an opening for the laity to take their proper place in the Church.

The Bible offers a strong foundation for lay participation in Christianity. The responsibility to teach and nurture faith is not limited to clergy or religious but is a calling for the entire community of believers.

In the Old Testament, God prescribes the communal responsibility of teaching in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. He commands all His people, not just priests, to teach His words diligently to their children, talk about them at home and on the road, and write them on the doorposts of your houses and gates. This underscores that faith formation is a shared duty. However, Jesus later makes it clear that what is required is an attitude of the heart rather than just material compliance with the literal interpretation of the text (Mt 23:5)

Psalm 78:1-7 calls the whole community to recount God's deeds to the next generation so they might set their hope in Him. The psalmist addresses "my people," not just leaders, highlighting a collective educational mission. The mission of teaching is continuous for children who have yet to be born. They were to recount to their children that they, too, might put their confidence in God and not forget his deeds but keep commandments.

During Jesus' earthly ministry, the enormous crowd that followed Jesus could not be compared with the limited number of his inner circle, the 12 disciples. Many provided for his needs and those of his disciples (Lk 8:1-3). They worked for the same intention of propagating the Kingdom. Worthy of mention were Mary Magdalene (Lk 8:2; Jn 20:11-18), Cornelius (Acts 10:1-8), Dionysius and Damaris (Acts 17:34). Paul mentioned some whom he called 'fellow workers in the Gospel': Apollos, Aquila, Priscilla, Euodia, Syntache, Clement, Aristarchus, Luke, Demas, Epaphras and Nympha (Phlm 2:25; 4:2-3; Col 4:10-16; Rom:16:9; Phlm 24). The number of the laity has always outnumbered those in the ministerial priesthood and the consecrated life (Annuario 2016). By the

common priesthood of all who are baptized (1 Pt 2:9), the lay faithful share in the mission of the church, according to their various states in life, and they receive their mission from Jesus Christ. This implies that every believer has a role in proclaiming God's truth, including Education. They have a mission to announce the Goodnews to all people.

Paul instructs on the Spiritual gifts for building up the Body of Christ in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12. He speaks of diverse gifts given to believers, including teaching, prophecy, ministry, generosity, mercy, and exhortation. These gifts are not confined to ordained ministers but are distributed throughout the church for mutual edification.

In the example of early church teaching in Acts, we see believers like Priscilla and Aquila, laypeople who were companions of St. Paul, teaching others, including Apollos (Acts 18:26). This implies that lay instruction was active and valued in the early church. The Church spread to the Gentile territories due to the strong commitment of lay people who accompanied the disciples, such as Paul, Timothy, Titus, and Barnabas, to transmit the Good News.

In our times, the Church has affirmed this role equally. For instance, the Vatican's document *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*⁴⁰⁸ elucidates that lay educators are not just placeholders for clergy but are vital witnesses and participants in the Church's mission. Whether one is a parent, a volunteer, or a professional educator, Scripture affirms that everybody has a meaningful role in shaping hearts and minds for Christ.

The Church teaches that the laity plays a vital and irreplaceable role in the mission of evangelization. This isn't a secondary or optional task. It is a core part of what it means to be a baptized Christian.

The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, emphasizes that laypeople are called to evangelize in their daily lives. The introduction of the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity stems from the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* is like a natural development and continuation of *Lumen Gentium* (Chapters II and IV)

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* in: <https://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc-con-ccatheduc-doc-19821015-lay-catholics-en.html>, [13.06.2025].

Chapter II, “On the People of God,” considers the apostolic activity of the Laity in an ecclesial perspective. Congar looks at it as the most innovative ecclesiological acquisition of the Council⁴⁰⁹ With its affirmation of the radical equality of all the faithful, the laity, sacred ministers, and religious in terms of dignity, responsibility in their Christian, missionary, and ecclesial life, and participation in the three offices of Christ: prophetic, priestly, and kingly.

Chapter IV, “The Laity,” frames and significantly shapes the doctrine of the Decree we are studying. The strong influence of *Lumen Gentium* 31 is unmistakable, as one reads about “secular character” as “proper and peculiar to the laity.” This concept is especially crucial because, although the apostolic zeal, which drives the faithful to share with others the love of God present in their hearts, and which they share with other Christians, stems from their condition derived from baptism and confirmation. It is from this secularity that one understands the characteristic aspect of their particular way of participating in the Church's mission.

Having affirmed the strong link between the Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People and the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, this section will focus on the key elements of the Decree, reserving the next section for a discussion of its other distinctive features, whose importance demands a separate treatment.

The Decree refers to apostolate as a key term and concept. The Church was founded to spread the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth for the glory of God the Father, to enable men to share His saving redemption, and that through them the whole world might enter into a relationship with Christ. All activity of the mystical Body directed towards the attainment of this goal is called apostolate, which the Church carries out in various ways through her members (AA 2). The “apostolate,” therefore, is not an exclusive activity of the hierarchy, and even if today this may be obvious to many, it should be noted that for a long time the apostolic function of the Twelve was considered by most as continued only by their successors in the episcopate, assisted by priests and deacons. It is enough to recall the words that Pius XI addressed to a group of young Catholic women in the first half of the last century to drive home this point: the task of Catholic Action was “to cooperate in the apostolate of the authentic apostles, that is,

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. A mis hermanos, Sigueme 1969, p.191.

priests and bishops.”⁴¹⁰ Thus, before the renewal of ecclesiology, the distinction was often made between apostolate in the strict sense and that in the broad sense, sometimes also using the terms “direct” or “indirect” apostolate. In this perspective, it is easier to understand how the eventual apostolate of the laity was seen as a participation in the hierarchical apostolate, because, if the mentioned terms were to be taken seriously in their strict sense, the latter (i.e., hierarchical) was the only proper apostolate. The apostolicity of the Universal Church, even if established in the early centuries of Christianity, specifically in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, had long been forgotten, partly in reaction to the Lutheran position, opposed to the Catholic doctrine on apostolic succession. Therefore, the achievement accomplished by the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, very closely tied to the doctrine explicitly proclaimed in the Decree *Ad gentes divinitus* (AG 5/1: “the Apostles were both the seeds of the New Israel, and the beginning of the sacred hierarchy”), is to conceive of the legacy of the apostolic mission as the heritage of the Church, even if it is exercised in different ways by different agents. Thus, the apostolate of all the faithful, including lay people, is seen as an extension and a continuation of the apostolate of the Twelve, which does not necessarily require the mediation of the hierarchy.

This development is not only a matter of lexicon, but also of concept, linked directly to the affirmation made by the Decree: “the Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate.” All Christians, as a result of their Baptism and later strengthened by Confirmation, have been called to and destined for the apostolate, without a necessity for a mandate from the hierarchy or their inclusion in an ecclesiastical structure. After all, in the context of an ecclesiology of communion, things could not be otherwise, because the Christian condition arising from one’s Baptism is at the same time an ecclesial condition. This means that the new Christian is then inserted into the ecclesial communion, a communion in charity that is in itself diffusive, i.e., the Christian and ecclesial communion being intrinsically dynamic and expansive, because it is communion in love.

The considerations discussed so far are based on what is common to the whole *communio fidelium*. Following the footsteps of the first part of the Decree, we now move on to another point. The document states that the Church was born “to enable all men to

⁴¹⁰ Discorso alla Gioventù Cattolica Femminile, 19.3.1927, in D. Bertetto (ed), *Discorsi di Pio XI*, SEI, Torin, 1960, p.684.

share in His saving redemption,” and “that through them the whole world might enter into a relationship with Christ.” This is to say that the Church's mission is not just about the *salus animarum*, but also the salvation of their bodies, of human relations, and even of the cosmos.

A few pages onwards, the Decree mentions that “the mission of the Church is not only to bring the message and grace of Christ to men and women, but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel” (AA 5 / 1). The expression “temporal order” is derived from *Lumen Gentium* and has a multifaceted meaning that encompasses ideas such as the transformation of the cosmos through work, the evangelization of human relationships, the sanctification of the different situations and activities in which Christians find themselves, respect for creation, care for their bodies, and so on.

Through this affirmation, the Church reveals an aspect of the mission that should be accomplished in places that are “in great part accessible only to them” (the laity), as stated in no. 1 of the Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. The conclusion is immediate and comes very soon after a few lines: “Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate.” This brings us to the core of the matter: seeing the position and ecclesial function of the laity in the world not as the *longa manus* of the hierarchy, or as their secondary or subordinate role. As explicitly mentioned later in the Decree, “the laity must take up the renewal of the temporal order as their special obligation” (AA 7).

The establishment of the temporal order, of which human work is like the backbone, has been described by one commentator of the Decree as “the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God over all creation. According to the plan and the will of God, nature is to reflect the image of God and pull upwards to the Creator. The sin of man has violently subjected it to the state of vanity and corruption. This has forced nature to become an occasion of sin and estrangement of human beings from God. Now it is eagerly looking forward to being freed from this state of impairment and falsehood and is awaiting the revealing of the children of God (Rom 8:19). The lay person must be a docile instrument in the hands of Christ to free Creation from this bondage and return it to the purpose for which it had been made.”⁴¹¹ This task should be understood within the Theology of

⁴¹¹ S. Lentini, *La vocazione all'apostolato*, in Bogliolo (ed.), o.c., 139.

creation and recapitulation. This means not just “cleaning up” what sin has destroyed, but also fulfilling the original task entrusted to Man at creation and placed in paradise *ut operaretur et custodiret illum* (Gn 2:15).

The first chapter of the decree concludes with a section devoted to the spirituality of the laity. It is an important element for two reasons that may seem obvious now. First, the fact of placing spirituality at the beginning of the document underscores the idea that apostolic activity cannot be conceived as just “an activity” or, even worse, as activism or mere religious sociology. It should be seen, rather, as a superabundance of life in the spirit. Said negatively, if the laity do not pray, they will not do apostolate, or at least will not do it well, and may even lose their Christian spirit.

During an interview with Card. Marty, about the need for lay people to commit themselves to Christianize temporal reality, Saint Josemaría Escrivá said: “Christians will be able to infuse a Christian spirit into structures of the temporal order if they have a contemplative soul; otherwise, instead of Christianizing the world, Christians will become worldly.”⁴¹²

The second element, necessarily brief, is the presentation of a genuinely lay spirituality, articulated for the first time in a document of solemn magisterium. It is not an adaptation of the clerical or monastic spirituality, but a way of developing life in the spirit, by the spiritual aids which are common to all faithful (AA 4).

This spirituality is lived in the world, so that “neither family concerns nor other secular affairs should be irrelevant to their spiritual life,” and so, free from enslavement to wealth their spiritual life,” and so, “free from enslavement to wealth, they aspire to those riches which remain forever and generously dedicate themselves to the advancement of the kingdom of God and to the reform and improvement of the temporal order in a Christian spirit” (AA 4).

In describing the purposes and aspects of the lay apostolate in chapter II, the Decree does not follow so closely *Lumen Gentium*’s characteristic tripartite pattern of the *tria munera*, i.e., the prophetic, priestly, and royal, but rather highlights the most specific characteristic of the lay apostolate. First, it speaks of the “apostolate of evangelization

⁴¹² Words quoted in J. Herranz, *Los Laicos testigos de Dios en el mundo*, en AA. VV., *Secularidad, laicado y teología de la cruz*, Ateneo de Teología, Madrid, 1987, p.44-25.

and sanctification”, gives ample space to “inspiring the temporal order with a Christian spirit,” and ends with an entire section devoted to the works of charity.

Chapter III analyzes the various fields of apostolate, including ecclesial communities, the family, youth, society, and national and international orders, thereby bringing to a practical level what was formulated in *Lumen Gentium* and the first chapters of this Decree, which had only been presented at the level of principles. Thus, we find for the first time, in the solemn conciliar Magisterium, the dynamic description of lay apostolic activity in these different areas.

Chapter IV explores first various ways that apostolic activity of the laity can assume, and then considers the individual apostolate, followed by the organized type. The latter matter was already in the air during the period immediately preceding the Council, with relations with the hierarchy presented as a gradual reality. However, one should take note of the bold affirmation that is clear right at the beginning of this chapter: “The individual apostolate, flowing generously from its source in a truly Christian life (Jn 4:14), is the origin and condition of the whole lay apostolate, even of the organized type, and it admits of no substitute” (AA 16/1). The text of the Decree then examines the different reasons that validate this assertion in depth. What we emphasize here is how courageous a stance it was to consider as the most important aspect of the apostolate proper to the laity, something which involves the hierarchy only in a general way.

Regarding the organized apostolate, as well as providing reasons for its convenience, the Decree describes its multiple facets and various links with the hierarchy.

It moves from the associations born from the spontaneous initiative of the faithful to those promoted by the hierarchy to Catholic Action, a topic with its section that affirms that the laity “function under the higher direction of the hierarchy itself” (AA 20/4).

The relationship with the hierarchy is, in any case, the subject of the entire Chapter V, in which there is a gradual development of the submission of the organized apostolate to hierarchical authority. Of course, this submission is total in the particular case of lay people involved in tasks originally under hierarchical jurisdiction: “Finally, the hierarchy entrusts to the laity certain functions which are more connected with pastoral duties, such as the teaching of Christian doctrine, certain liturgical actions, and the care of souls. Under this mission, the laity are fully subject to higher ecclesiastical control in the performance of this work” (AA 24). (“Plenary 2020: the creeping clericalization of the

laity") The graduality of the hierarchy-laity relationship affects not just the role of priests within these associations.

Lastly, one cannot ignore the importance of the training needed for the apostolate, and the entire last chapter is dedicated to this topic. The points of connection with spirituality are numerous, but the text focuses on other aspects of formation: human, theological, and pastoral. Though it is said at the beginning that "the laity share in their way in the mission of the Church", so "their apostolic formation is specially characterized by the distinctively secular and particular quality of the lay state and by its form of the spiritual life" (AA 29), it's not possible to avoid certain parallelisms with priestly formation, especially on the practical level, and specifically in the pastoral aspect.

A. Glorieux, who was Secretary of the Preparatory, later Conciliar Commission on the Apostolate of the Laity, and the first Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, begins his comment on the Decree by comparing the preparatory outlines of Vatican II with those of Vatican I, to highlight the difference between the two. "In the First Vatican Council, less than a hundred years ago, in the outlines prepared for the doctrinal Constitutions and disciplinary Decrees, the layman was considered as a mere object of apostolate, entrusted to the zeal of the shepherds. Eighteen outlines concerned the religious and twenty-eight on ecclesiastical discipline, of which only the twenty-second explicitly took note of the laity, and under a title with a negative connotation: "the correction of public morality and, in particular, indifference, blasphemy, drunkenness, fornication, theater, dance, luxury, dissemination of books and evil images, raising children, workers, domestic servants, Sabbath observance, dueling, suicide, magnetism, spiritism, secret societies." Of course, at the time of the Second Vatican Council, a different wind was already blowing; certainly, there was much to be desired, but it was clear that in the century that followed the two councils, the evolution of ideas ran at a good pace.

The ideas that we have identified as "key elements" of the Decree are also the novelty that has developed since the beginning of the twentieth century.

Specifically, these are the following: the concept of apostolate (which now sees the whole Church as its agent and includes the temporal order as its object), the vocation to the apostolate as a consequence of one's baptism, the establishment of the temporal

order as the area in which lay people find their specific role within the mission of Church, and a genuinely lay spirituality that comes with their apostolic commitment.

On the one hand, we can and must say that “the active participation of the laity in the mission of the Church and the recognition of the necessity and the urgency of their contribution certainly constitute principal ecclesiological developments of the Council.”⁴¹³ But if we want to identify the specific novelty that *Apostolicam Actuositatem* itself gave rise to, it would have to be the establishment of the temporal order as the particular role of the lay apostolate. *Lumen Gentium* indeed speaks of the “secular character,” and the Decree draws from there. However, while the Constitution points to it as the distinguishing mark of the laity, the Decree develops its dynamic side within the mission of the Church, of which it explicitly mentions, more than once, “the establishment of the temporal order” as an internal matter.

Indeed, nothing could be more direct than *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (AA 5): “Christ’s redemptive work, while concerned with the salvation of men, also includes the renewal of the whole temporal order. Hence, the mission of the Church is not only to bring the message and grace of Christ to men but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel” (see also AA 7/1). This explicit broadening of the Church’s mission is a consequence of a last-minute harmonization with *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world.⁴¹⁴ which says that “pursuing the saving purpose, which is proper to her, the church not only communicates divine life to men, but in some way casts the reflected light of that life over the entire earth, most of all by its healing and elevating impact on the dignity of the person, by how it strengthens the seams of human society and imbues the everyday activity of men with a deeper meaning and importance” (GS 40/3). In this perspective, the focus of the cleric and the religious is the apostolic mission within the Church, while it is up to the laity to evangelize the world in the sense that the ecclesial mission of the lay person is “to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and establishing them according to God’s plan.” Thus, the authentic hermeneutics of the phrase “imported” from *Lumen Gentium* and mentioned four times in the Decree (in numbers 2, 3, 5, and 9) that the apostolate is to be exercised “in the Church and the world”, is not primarily disjunctive,

⁴¹³ Cf. A. Cattaneo, *Il decreto Apostolicam Actuositatem, La sua attualità nella prospettiva della nuova evangelizzazione* in *Annuarium Historiae Conciliarum* 43(2011), p.379.

⁴¹⁴ In this regard, Cf. René Remond, *Introduction à l’Apostolat des*, in *Concile Oecumenique Vatican II*, Centurion, Paris, 1966, p.258.

as if one were speaking of two different areas. Still, integrative: the laity “do Church” when they do apostolate in the world.⁴¹⁵

The conclusion of these reflections may seem a bit paradoxical. The main body of the decree, toward which the other chapters point, is made up of Chapters IV and V, on the various forms of the apostolate and, as regards the organized apostolate, the guidelines to be observed. However, it does not seem that it is for these chapters that the Decree can be considered to have offered something new concerning the previous situation of the lay apostolate. Rather, it is in the background contents of Chapters I and II that ideas can be considered genuine apostolate.

Rather, it is in the “background” contents of Chapters I and II that the ideas that can be regarded as genuine steps forward are present, whether seen as a heritage of the doctrinal progress of the council as a whole, or as a legacy of *Apostolicam actuositatem* itself. The apostolate is considered as patrimony of the whole Church, the vocation of the individual Christian to the apostolate stemming from ones very baptism; the specific lay and ecclesial function to imbue temporal realities with the Gospel, and an authentically lay spirituality that harmoniously connects vocation and mission: all these ideas formed a promising overview, though perhaps later developments have yet to explore the possibilities of this path fully.

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church is another document that affirms that Christ fulfills His prophetic office not only through the clergy but also through the laity, “whom He made His witnesses and to whom He gave understanding of the faith... so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life”(LG 35).

The new evangelization, urged by John Paul II and Benedict XVI, points to the very mission of the Church, which can be summed up precisely as the *Traditio Evangelii*, the transmission of the Gospel. Here the word “Gospel” is understood not only in its intellectual content, but in its broad Pauline meaning of the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith (Rom 1:16). The new evangelization of countries and environments already evangelized in the past, but now in great measure secularized, presents particular demands, necessarily connected to the Church’s permanent salvific mission. At the same time, the complex reality in which we live requires new pastoral and

⁴¹⁵ Cf. F. Ocariz, *La Participacion del laico en la mission de la Iglesia*, en R. Pellitero (ed.), *Los laicos en la eclesiologia del Concilio Vaticano II*, Rialp, Madrid 2006, p.49-50.

apostolic initiatives adequate to the challenges presented by modernity and post-modernity.

One of the dimensions of the royal priesthood of the faithful, to which St. Peter refers (1 Pt 2:4-10), is the prophetic function: that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. This “declaring” is what transmitting the Gospel means. The laity’s participation in the Church’s mission does not mean primarily or principally that they are to share in the functions of the sacred ministers. However, this is possible and, at times, useful. Furthermore, the ministers themselves do not encompass the entire mission, but they, too, participate in it. Both share the weight and honor of the Church’s entire mission: the tradition of the Gospel. But each carries it out partially, according to their proper function in the Church.

What is specific to the laity’s participation in the task of evangelization was expressed as follows by Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*, 35: “Christ, the great Prophet, who proclaimed the Kingdom of his Father both by the testimony of his life and the power of his words, continually fulfills his prophetic office until the complete manifestation of glory. He does this not only through the hierarchy that teaches in his name and with his authority, but also through the laity whom he made his witnesses and to whom he gave understanding of the faith (*sensus fidei*) and an attractiveness in speech so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life.” The evangelizing capacity and responsibility (the *munus propheticum*) of the lay faithful is not delegated by the hierarchy, but comes directly from Jesus Christ, through Baptism and Confirmation.

The understanding of the faith (*sensus fidei*), which *Lumen Gentium* points to as the immediate origin of the exercise of the lay faithful’s prophetic function, is the capacity conferred on believers through theological faith and the gifts of the Holy Spirit to assent to revealed truths, to discern with ease what conforms or not in conformity with that revelation, to grasp its deepest implications (not through theological reflection but spontaneously, by a kind of connaturality), and to apply the faith to one’s life. The grounding of the laity’s prophetic function in the *sensus fidei* also highlights the fact that this is not a participation in the magisterial mission proper to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but a direct participation in the prophetic *virtus* of Jesus Christ, at the same time as its exercise is carried out “under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority” (LG 12).

The “attractiveness in speech” to which *Lumen Gentium* also refers, is not a matter only or principally of the “attractiveness” of a pleasant or humanly convincing speech, but above all of the assistance of the Holy Spirit who, without conferring any official authority on the evangelizing word of the laity, makes it a vehicle of the Word of God and, as such, not only a transmitter of ideas, but an efficacious force in transmitting the faith that saves.

The evangelizing task’s essential dependence on faith and the help of the Holy Spirit brings us to the indispensable service that only the ministers of the Church can and should provide to the laity, through preaching the Word of God with Christ’s authority, in its various forms, and the celebration of the sacraments. The Church is a priestly people organically structured, which carries out its mission in the world with distinct and interdependent functions that are at the same time.

As we saw in the words cited above from *Lumen Gentium*, it is in the context of their daily life that the lay faithful exercise their specific evangelizing role. In the words of one who, according to John Paul II, was a precursor of Vatican II in his teaching on the laity, “The layman’s specific role in the mission of the Church is precisely that of sanctifying secular reality, the temporal order, the world, *ab intra*, immediately and directly” (St. Josemaría Escrivá, *Conversations*, no. 9).

The laity’s prophetic function, as well as that of the pastors, is a participation in the *munus propheticum Christi*, and Christ is the Revealer and the Revelation of God, not only through his words but also through all of his works. Therefore, and not only as a matter of human effectiveness, but evangelization is to be carried out with the witness of one’s life and with one’s word, and the evangelizing mission of the laity has its characteristics and special efficacy in being carried out within secular realities.

In ordinary life, with its varied family, professional, and social relationships, the lay faithful have ample scope to announce the Gospel through their life and words, contributing each in the measure of his or her possibilities to orienting social and professional institutions, the means of communication, etc., with the spirit of Christ. Important here is the transmission of the Gospel from person to person, in a dialogue of sincere friendship, like leaven in a mass of dough: acting as “a leaven in the world” (AA 2).

This method of transmitting the Gospel is particularly effective because it responds to an important anthropological reality: interpersonal dialogue, in which one seeks to transmit the good received to another person. This apostolic dialogue emerges naturally when there is sincere friendship. This is not a matter of instrumentalizing friendship, but of helping one's friends share in the great good of faith in Christ. As Benedict XVI said in his homily at the solemn beginning of his pontificate, "There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know him and to speak to others of our friendship with him" (April 24, 2005).

The transmission of the Gospel always requires, and in a special way in interpersonal dialogue, respect for the intimacy and freedom of everyone, a respect that is a demand of justice and charity. The contrary, trying to impose one's convictions by trickery or violence, is opposed to the spirit of the Gospel. That type of proselytism, one that fails to respect freedom, is completely unacceptable. Nevertheless, proselytism in its original and proper meaning is not only something good, but a necessary demand of the evangelizing mission that Jesus entrusted to his disciples. In fact, for Christians, the word "proselytism" has meant and still frequently means missionary activity. Even in civil contexts, juridical and political proselytism is viewed positively as an intrinsic component of religious freedom.

The new evangelization in countries of ancient Christian tradition faces grave, complex, and varied challenges. The most radical one is the spread of atheism in its various forms and religious indifference, which are affecting the faith of not a few of the baptized, producing in them at least a loss of the meaning that the existence of God should have in their lives. There are many ways to confront this challenge, but the essential thing is that each one understands and teaches others that the Gospel is not only or primarily a collection of truths and moral norms. It is not merely a system of thought and conduct. The Gospel is, above all, Jesus Christ himself (1 Cor 1:24).

The existence of God can be known, although with difficulty, by human reason alone, and in the new evangelization, it is useful to confront, in one way or another, the great philosophical question of God's existence. Nevertheless, the key thing is to make known Jesus Christ, who died and arose, showing, at a level that is possible and adequate in each case, the historical truth of his Resurrection, which is the most decisive "demonstration" of God's existence.

Without listing all the challenges confronted, theoretical and practical, by the new evangelization (not only by the laity, of course, but by the Church as a whole), one of the most radical ones is the relativistic mentality in its multiple expressions. In the task of evangelization, it is always good to begin with the shared aspects upon which we can establish a sincere dialogue with others. This is the case, for example, of the widespread awareness of human rights. It is not difficult to assert that if one fails to recognize absolute values (and God), not even the concept of human rights makes sense. Law itself, in all its expressions, will be nothing but, according to the description given by Karl Marx, “a decorative apparatus of power.”

To confront these and other challenges, a solid doctrinal formation is needed, but this is not enough. Evangelization and personal apostolate in general require that word and dialogue be united to the testimony of a consistent Christian life. Therefore, building on the foundation of Baptism and the strength of Confirmation, an intense sacramental life is needed (the Eucharist, Penance), and prayer, the indispensable condition for personal identification with Christ, which will awaken in the laity their apostolic responsibility. Thus, they will become aware, as Benedict XVI has recently written, that “*Caritas Christi urget nos* (2 Cor 5:14): it is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelize. Today, as in the past, he sends us through the highways of the world to proclaim his Gospel to all the peoples of the earth” (Mt 28:19), (*Porta Fidei*, no. 7).

Starting with the documents of the Vatican II council and continuing with subsequent pontifical documents on evangelization, contemporary magisterial documents have been remarkably consistent in insisting on the priority of direct proclamation with a view toward conversion for everyone involved in the Church's mission, specifically laypeople. The documents make clear that even if a layperson's primary field of mission is in the political, economic, or social sphere or works of charity, they continue to have an obligation to directly proclaim Christ by word, to lead others to conversion or deeper faith. “This apostolate...must not exclude any good, spiritual or temporal, that can be done for them. Genuine apostles are not content, however, with just this: they are earnest also about revealing Christ by word to those around them. It is a fact that many men cannot hear the Gospel and come to acknowledge Christ except through the laymen they associate with”(AA 13). Paul VI continued to make this point strongly in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Evangelization in the Modern World. “There can be no

true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom, and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed”(EN 22). “Evangelization will also always contain as the foundation, center, and at the same time, summit of its dynamism a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God’s grace and mercy”(EN 27). John Paul II, in the introduction of his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, On the Permanent Validity of the Church’s Missionary Mandate, continues this emphasis on the priority of direct proclamation in his writings. He sensed that the moment had come to commit all the Church’s energies to a new evangelization and the mission *Ad Gentes*. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples (RM 3). Preaching constitutes the Church’s first and fundamental way of serving the coming of the kingdom in individuals and human society (RM 20). It entails a call to conversion, and it begins now. Pope John Paul II takes up the theme again in his inspiring vision for Catholic life in the new millennium. Drawing out the implications of baptismal spirituality, the Pope roots his vision solidly in the universal call to holiness and the universal call to mission that each member of the Church receives by being a Christian. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves; they must proclaim him. A new apostolic outreach is needed, which will be lived as the everyday commitment of Christian communities and groups (NM I 40). It’s important to understand that direct proclamation doesn’t necessarily mean standing on a street corner and proclaiming Jesus. The proclamation of Jesus needs to adjust itself to what’s appropriate in the various circumstances in which we find ourselves and be in some relationship to the preparation that the Holy Spirit, the principal agent of Evangelisation (RM 8). Given the necessary qualifications, what implications does this priority of direct proclamation have for the life of the Church today, and in particular, lay participation in that mission?

Understanding the priority of some form of verbal proclamation of Jesus has implications for the formation of laypeople. It is not enough to get lay people “involved,” “signed up,” or “active” in various organizations or activities. They need to be led themselves to conversion, be brought into “genuine contact with Christ” so that they have the desire to share Him with others, whatever else they may be doing.

When it is understood that direct “proclamation” is the mission of everyone, it’s clear that this has implications for spirituality. There is an essential link between

evangelization and spirituality as consistently presented in the magisterial documents. John Paul II makes the startling statement: “The future of mission depends on contemplation. Unless the missionary is a contemplative, he cannot credibly proclaim Christ. He is a witness to the experience of God and must be able to say with the apostles: “that which we have looked upon...concerning the word of life...we proclaim also to you” (RM 91). This is why he has so strongly called the Church to reconnect with the mystical tradition, mentioning specifically John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, Catherine of Siena, and Therese of Lisieux as a way of getting the help we need to respond to the universal call to holiness, and its link with mission (NM I 32,27).

Clergy and laity, working together in various ways to make Christ known, and help in keeping an appropriate spiritual focus in the whole atmosphere of the parish. The Church's ability to influence the “temporal order” and be heard on the important issues facing society today has a definite relationship to the quality and fervor of our life as a Church and our success in drawing others to conversion. Numbers do matter. You have to have Catholics to have a “Catholic vote.” I conclude these preliminary reflections with a quote from Avery Dulles that I think sums up some of the points we have been making. “In my judgment, the evangelical turn in the ecclesial vision of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II is one of the most surprising and important developments in the Catholic Church since Vatican II...All of this constitutes a remarkable shift in the Catholic tradition...Today we seem to be witnessing the birth of a new Catholicism that, without losing its institutional, sacramental, and social dimensions, is authentically evangelical...Catholic spirituality at its best has always promoted a deep personal relationship with Christ. In evangelizing, we are required to raise our eyes to him and to transcend all ecclesiocentrism. The Church is of crucial importance, but not self-enclosed. It is a means of drawing the whole world into union with God through Jesus Christ...Too many Catholics of our day seem never to have encountered Christ. They have certain knowledge about him from the teachings of the Church, but they lack direct personal familiarity...The first and highest priority is for the Church to proclaim the good news concerning Jesus Christ as a joyful message to all the world. Only if the Church is faithful to its evangelical mission can it hope to make its distinctive contribution in the social, political, and cultural spheres.”⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁶ A. Dulles, *John Paul II and the New Evangelisation*, New York, 1992, p.3; See also M. Ralph and W. Peter, ed., *John Paul II and New Evangelisation*, San Francisco, 1995, p.25-39.

Pope John Paul II's *Christifideles Laici* (1988) goes further, describing the laity as "co-responsible" for the Church's mission and highlighting their role in the "new evangelization," especially in secularized societies.

In his apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, he stated that laypeople are personally called by Christ to labor in His vineyard, meaning they share responsibility for spreading the Gospel in the world (CL 45). According to the gospel parable, the "householder" calls the laborers for his vineyard at various times during the day: some at dawn, others about nine in the morning, still others about midday, and at three, the last, around five (Mt 20:1 ff.). In commenting on these words of the gospel, Saint Gregory the Great makes a comparison between the various times of the call and the different *stages in life*: "It is possible to compare the different hours", he writes, "to the various stages in a person's life. According to our analogy, the morning can certainly represent childhood. The third hour, then, can refer to adolescence; the sun has now moved to the height of the sky, that is, at this stage, a person grows in strength. The sixth hour is adulthood, the sun is in the middle of the sky; indeed, at this age, the fullness of vitality is obvious. Old age represents the ninth hour, because the sun begins its descent from the height of heaven; thus, youthful vitality begins to decline. The eleventh hour represents those who are most advanced in years... The laborers, then, are called and sent forth into the vineyard at different hours, which is to say, one is led to a holy life during childhood, another in adolescence, another in adulthood, and another in old age."⁴¹⁷

We can further apply the comments of Saint Gregory the Great to the extraordinary variety of ways the Church becomes "present" in life; one and all are called to work for the coming of the Kingdom of God according to the diversity of callings, situations, charisms, and ministries. This variety is not only linked to age, but also to differences in sex and the diversity of natural gifts, as well as to careers and conditions that affect a person's life. It is a variety that makes the riches of the Church more vital and concrete.

John Paul II highlighted the Church as a Communion of Co-responsible Members. All baptized Christians, including the laity, share in the Church's mission due to their baptismal dignity. In the context of Church mission, then, the Lord entrusts a great part of the responsibility to the lay faithful, in communion with all other members of the

⁴¹⁷ St. Gregory the Great, Hom. in Evang. I, XIX,2: PL 76, 1155, in: <https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost-exhortations/documents/hf-ii-exh-30121988-christifideles-laici.html> , [16.06.2025].

People of God (CL 32). This fact, fully understood by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, recurred with renewed clarity and increased vigor in all the works of the Synod:

Indeed pastors know how much the lay faithful contribute to the welfare of the entire Church... also know that they were not established by Christ to undertake alone the entire saving mission of the Church towards the world, but they understand that it is their exalted office to be shepherds of the lay faithful and also to recognize the latter's services and charisms that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one heart (LG 30).

John Paul II urged lay Catholics to take an active role in evangelization, particularly in secularized societies where clergy alone cannot reach every sphere of life. The lay faithful are called to offer the valuable contribution, more necessary than ever, of a systematic work in catechesis. In this context, Christian parents are the primary and irreplaceable catechists of their children, a task for which they are given the grace of the sacrament of Matrimony. Every baptized person has a right to be instructed, educated, and supported in faith and the Christian life (CL 34). Similarly, through Baptism and Confirmation, a person is made a sharer in the threefold mission of Jesus Christ, Priest, Prophet, and King. They are charged and given the ability to fulfill the fundamental apostolate of the Church, Evangelisation (CL51).

The teaching derived from the Catechism of the Catholic Church on laypeople is that they fulfil their prophetic mission by evangelization. This entails the proclamation of Christ by word and testimony of life. In the context of lay people, evangelization acquires a specific efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world. These teachings make it clear that evangelization isn't just for the clergy; it's for every believer. Whether through words, actions, or simply living a life of authentic faith, laypeople are called to be the Church's voice in the world.

The Laity form over 99% of the parish community, and their role isn't participating in liturgical activities (EG 102). The Church is aware of this and has recognized the laity's role by writing several documents to specify their activities. The documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962 -1965), specifically the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church(21.11.1964), *Lumen Gentium* 30-38; the Decree on the Apostolate of the Lay People (18.11.1965), *Apostolicam Actuositatem*; the Decree on the Church's missionary Activity, *Ad gentes divinitus* (07.12.1965); Apostolic Exhortation

of John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* (30.12.1988); the Code of Canon Law CIC (1983) particularly exhaust the role of the Laity in the life of the Church.

The laity, by their Baptism and Confirmation, share in the priesthood of Christ. However, even though they do not receive the fullness or complete participation in the priesthood of Christ, they still share in the real way the priesthood of Christ. They do not exercise their priesthood in the same way as ministerial priests but do so by participating in the liturgy and daily activities. Christ undeniably connects them to his life and mission, sharing the priestly role of offering spiritual worship for the glory of God and the salvation of humanity (LG 34). The laity and clergy share in the common priesthood of all the faithful. In addition, the laity exercise their common priesthood in their married and family lives and in those forms of secular activity in which the clergy are not engaged and in which only the laity make the salvific action of the church present. The priestly role is meant for the sanctification of the world.

The laity are called by God to live in ordinary circumstances of family and social life of the Church and society, respectively. They work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven through the exercise of their proper function and the spirit of the Gospel (LG 31).

Yves Congar elucidates that the Laity are responsible on their levels for the evangelization and witness, and exercise it no less effectively than the priests. However, the exercise of such tasks does not make them pastors of the Laity.

According to John Paul II, Bishops and priests are indispensable to the life of the Church and the baptized, but the latter in turn are called to live the common priesthood.

Furthermore, the laity exercise their priestly role in the Family, and as regards the education of Children, the laity's action is the condition of the efficacy of the priests. As Congar writes: As priests, our catechism, our instructions on the use of sacraments, and even on prayer have serious results only where they find roots, and those roots are planted not by us but by the family. Where there is no Christian family, our efforts are stillborn; where there is one, they have a future. In short, it is not we who make Christians, but the parents.

Pope John Paul II also makes a similar observation in the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*; the Christian family as the Domestic Church constitutes a natural and fundamental school for the formation in the Faith. The Father and mother receive

from the sacrament of matrimony the grace and the ministry of the Christian education of their children, before whom they bear witness and to whom they transmit both human and religious values (CL 62). Thus, the priestly role of the laity consists in evangelization at the family level, giving their children what Pope John Paul II calls the first example of the Church.

The Laity as prophets are witnesses to the Faith. They proclaim the Gospel in their everyday family and social lives through daily involvement in secular affairs. A prophet proclaims the truth about God. Since Christ is the Prophet par excellence, he is the Truth.

By their Baptism and Confirmation, the Laity are anointed by the Holy Spirit to carry out the prophetic role within the Church, in the circumstances of their lives in the Church and the world. Therefore, the basic way in which the laity carry out their prophetic role in the Church is in their daily secular activities, even though some may be called to exercise their prophetic role more specifically by apostolic activities, which are more intricately linked with the teaching role of the clergy. These include lay catechists and teachers of religion in schools, as well as those in sacred sciences, in places where there is a scarcity or lack of ordained ministers, or where these are prevented by persecution from fulfilling their role. In such circumstances, the laity fulfill their prophetic role by leading people in liturgical prayers, preaching, administering Baptism, and the sacramentals.

The *munus regendi*, or the royal role, is exercised in different ways from the way it is exercised by the ordained. According to Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 33, the laity can also be called to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy. The laity can advise the pastors in ways in which they are experts, and the pastors ought to listen to them. The faithful must obey the pastors when they teach, as they represent Christ and are experts in the faith. The laity, by their daily manual and intellectual work, scientific experiment, and technological discovery, exercise their share in Christ's kingship. Thus, by effectively and conscientiously developing the material universe for the benefit of all, the laity use material goods and human skills to promote the dignity and the freedom of all and so promote social justice and peace, conquer hunger, poverty, and disease.

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the laity to cooperate in removing injustice, dishonesty, hatred, and all forms of social immorality from human society. The laity

exercises their kingly function in the family as husband and wife. "The Christian family laudably proclaims both the present virtues of the kingdom and the hope of a blessed life to come. Thus, by its example and witness, it convicts the world of sin and enlightens those who seek the Truth" (LG 35). Therefore, when the laity are occupied with the temporal affairs, they do valuable work of evangelization of the world. When there are no sacred ministers or when these are impeded by persecution, some lay people supply sacred functions to the best of their ability, or if indeed, many of them expend all their energies in apostolic work, hence cooperating in spreading and building up the kingdom of Christ.

According to *Lumen Gentium* 36, the Lord desires to spread his kingdom also using the laity, namely, the kingdom of Truth and life, the kingdom of holiness and Grace, the kingdom of Justice and Love, and peace.⁴¹⁸ In this kingdom, creation itself will be delivered from its slavery of corruption into freedom of the glory of the sons of God (Rom 8:21).

4.5 Attempt of Kotido Diocese in the application of contemporary theology

The local Church of Kotido plays a crucial role in evangelization and the Christian education of her faithful. However, one of the significant challenges faced in catechetical and Christian education is the lack of formal theological education among lay persons. This limitation affects the effectiveness of religious instruction, the depth of faith formation, and the ability of lay leaders to engage meaningfully in pastoral activities.

Catechists in Africa and Uganda, in particular, are credited with transmitting the faith, especially in rural areas where priests may not always be available.⁴¹⁹ They are

⁴¹⁸ See also the Preface of the Feast of Christ the King.

⁴¹⁹ Cf. H.A. SSentongo, *Life to the Full: Pastoral Letter of Moroto Diocese*, Moroto, 1999, p.20(Unpublished works). Bishop Henry Ssentongo was the then Bishop of Moroto diocese bordering Kotido Diocese. The Karimojong People inhabit the dioceses of Moroto and Kotido and share similar pastoral challenges. They have the same Catechetical Formation Centre at Kangole and the minor Seminary St. Mary's Nadiket, both in Moroto Diocese. The diocese of Kotido credits the catechists for the great work of evangelization carried out in parishes since the arrival of Christianity in 1993. The role of Catechists is still of paramount importance for the local communities and for their formation. The church still needs outstanding, holy, wise, and dedicated catechists as teachers of the faith and leaders of liturgies without a priest and of the community under the guidance of the Parish and Chapel Council (Policy of Kotido Diocese n.26,2015, unpublished work)

teachers and animators of faith in communities. The Synod of Bishops for the Church in Africa recognizes the role played by catechists in the transmission and expansion of the Church in Africa. It is recommended that catechists not only receive a sound initial formation but also continue to receive doctrinal formation as well as moral and spiritual support (EA 91). Bishops and priests are to have their catechists at heart and ensure that they are provided with suitable living and working conditions. This will enable them to execute their mission properly. Among the Christian community, the catechist's responsibility is to be acknowledged and respected. In this way, they play a vital role in evangelization. In the Kotido Diocese, we have two types of catechists: trained catechists and untrained catechists (Catechists' helpers). The untrained catechists learn from the trained catechist how to catechize children for the sacraments of initiation, train Christians how to read in church, and how to instruct parents and God parents for the sacrament of Baptism (infants), how to do apostolate like visiting the sick, home visitations, small Christian communities, youth apostolate, old women and men apostolate, how to strengthen movements and associations in the parish, how to conduct para-liturgies, etc. Many catechists lack adequate formal theological training, which affects their ability to provide accurate and doctrinally sound teachings. Without a structured theological foundation, catechists may struggle to interpret Sacred Scripture correctly, leading to potential misinterpretations and doctrinal inconsistencies.

In the recruitment process for candidates to catechetical formation, the Catechetical Centre demands that candidates have completed primary seven level and be able to read, write, and understand the English language, as it is a medium of instruction. In comparison to the National requirements for a person to qualify for a course in Uganda, one is expected to have attained a senior four certificate at least.⁴²⁰ This will enable one to grasp substantial content of the course because it helps in analytical skills. Some catechists who present themselves for formation are unable to join any government institution for a course, hence resort to the ministry of catechists, but not out of genuine desire. This also affects the quality of catechists both in the Kotido and Moroto dioceses. The vacuum generated by inadequate instructions in the faith or lack of knowledge of catholic teaching is unrestrainedly filled with practices of Traditional religion, which is inconsonant with Christian belief. Pope Francis, in his encyclical letter, The Light of

⁴²⁰ Cf. The Student Hub, Key things you need to know before applying for a certificate course in Uganda, in: <https://studhub.ug/blog/289/keys-things-you-need-to-know-before-applying-for-a-certificate-course-in-uganda>, [17.06.2025].

Faith, *Lumen Fidei*, says one who is not conversant with the Christian faith and praxis cannot be a herald, for “we need knowledge and truth, because without these we cannot stand firm, we cannot move forward” (LF 24). He continues to say that faith without truth does not save and does not provide a sure footing.

Closely related to the facts above is the lack of adequate formation of the laity towards mission (EG 102). Pope Francis further observes in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* that there is a clear awareness of the responsibility of the laity grounded in their Baptism and Confirmation, which does not appear the same in all places. In some cases, it is because lay persons have not been given the formation to take important responsibilities. In some cases, it is because their particular church's room has not been created for them to speak and act, due to excessive clericalism, which keeps them away from decision-making. Even if they are now involved in lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in social, political, and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. The formation of the laity, evangelization of professional and intellectual life in the workplace, and various other settings where important decisions are made, takes place in the church and social structures.

Some practices of African culture among the Karimojong such as polygamy, women's inheritance, forced marriage, strong belief in witchcraft, pagan burial rites (to appease the spirits of the dead the Karimojong cut the dead body and smear ashes into it, throw broken calashes and throw the soil without looking at the dead body while address it to go in peace) and violation of women's and children's rights, are incongruous with Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Some of these practices from necromancers and the revival of forgotten superstitions have a negative influence on the laity, who, due to inadequate catechesis on the faith, have not yet extricated themselves from them. Living a Christian life with an identity crisis breeds syncretism, a form of infidelity, and the adherents of this mixture cannot propagate either of the two religions. In the context of young people, such practices convey conflicting messages, often leaving them uncertain about which values or behaviors to adopt.

In some instances, for varied reasons that often defy classifications, some priests and consecrated persons who ought to understand and recognize the dignity and contributions of the laity are indifferent to the position of the laity in the church. They are

not involved in making decisions in the church (EG 102), especially where it concerns them, the common good of the parish or diocese. If the primary ministers of the church are insensitive to the real situation of the laity, there is a block in spreading the gospel. The expected encouragement from them seems not forthcoming, and consequently, the efforts of the laity around them are dampened if they are not involved in evangelization. The mission suffers because, whatever the number of priests and consecrated persons in a given place, they cannot fill the part of the laity.

Like Paul, who experienced both internal and external oppositions in the mission (2 Cor 11:26), and in fulfillment of Jesus' words that internal division is inevitable in authentic discipleship (Mt 10:36), some lay faithful are hindered by fellow Catholics and non-Catholics or non-Christians. Catholics who lack zeal obstruct others; non-Catholics and non-Christians perceive the efforts of zealous laity as overstepping the boundaries. It entails courage and fortitude to live and proclaim one's faith in a subtly hostile environment. In the situation of the diocese of Kotido, having served as a pastor for seventeen years, I observed passivity among many Catholics. They neither make progress in their sacramental life nor do they encourage others to do so, yet they are content with attending Eucharistic celebrations on Sundays.

The increasing use of information and communications technology facilitates communication, particularly in evangelization.⁴²¹ This renders the world a global village where many obtain the same information simultaneously. In the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate*, Charity in Truth, a section of its content can be beneficial when geared towards a vision of the person and the common good that reflects truly universal values and tenets (CV 73). Others, conversely, erode individual cultural values, leading to self-alienation. Christianity, which has fertile ground in Africa, is diluted because of the influence of other world cultures conveyed through information and communication technology. This harms orthodoxy and orthopraxy of the faith in a culture that may offer little to the Church's mission due to inadequate cultural values.

Some Laypersons can persevere in their faith when faced with scandals involving some Church leaders; unfortunately, others are discouraged and become lukewarm, to the extent of suffering a loss of faith. Participating in the mission of the Church amid clerical

⁴²¹Cf. E.K. Inaku, *Nurturing Faith in the New Media Age*, "the Oracle" 3 (4), p.83-101.

scandals poses a tremendous challenge to the laity. In Africa generally, Uganda and Kotido inclusive, the scandals of priests range from sexual immorality, corruption, tribalism, discrimination, political engagement, and excessive alcohol consumption. One of the priests (Fr. Simon Lokodo RIP) of Kotido diocese, for example, left the priesthood in 2006 and entered active politics.⁴²² Since Politics is divisive by nature due to party politics, it breeds conflict of interest for the priest himself and the people he serves. Those who identify with him will be happy, but those who belong to a different party will disagree with him. Anyway, the Vatican later laicized him.⁴²³ Another priest, Fr. Dominic Alinga from the nearby Moroto diocese, is also alleged to have murdered a tax revenue officer, Simon Ngorok, over some disagreement.⁴²⁴ He later handed himself in to the Police and was remanded in Prison. These types of scandals remain shameful and a disgrace to the laity in their journey of faith. When one priest makes a scandal, it taints the image of the entire priesthood in the community.

4.6. Strategies for Strengthening Lay Catechetical Leadership

Strengthening lay catechetical leadership in Kotido Diocese is essential for sustaining vibrant Christian communities, given that the clergy are few and pastoral needs are vast. Below are proposed strategies I envisage as means for catechetical leadership.

Developing a diocesan catechetical training curriculum grounded in Sacred Scripture, Church doctrine, Culture, economy, communication, and pastoral skills can empower lay leaders with theological depth and pedagogical competence. These programs should be modular and accessible to accommodate the pastoral realities of rural communities. The Uganda Episcopal Conference emphasizes the importance of catechist formation, especially in dioceses with limited clergy, such as Kotido, where 189

⁴²² Cf. Uganda Radio Network, *Was Uganda's Moral Crusader, Fr. Lokodo excommunicated?* The Independent in: <https://www.independent.co.ug>, [19.06.2025].

⁴²³ Cf. List of former Catholic Priests in: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/list-of-former-catholic-priests>, [19.06.2025].

⁴²⁴ Cf. R. Oyel, *Man of God arrested over murder of Uganda Revenue Authority Staff*, "Nile Post" in: <https://nilepost.co.ug>, [19.06.2025].

catechists serve across 10 parishes.⁴²⁵ There is a need to train catechists properly in the two Catechists' Formation centres, Losilang for Kotido Diocese and Kangole Catechists' Formation Centre for both Moroto and Kotido Dioceses, for comprehensive training. The training of catechists should encompass competencies in instruction while paying attention to various categories of individuals, such as family members, children, youth, women, men, the elderly, married couples, Catholic professionals, teachers, the sick, and lapsed Christians.

The training of catechists was earlier emphasized by the Second Vatican Council's decree on the missionary activity of the Church, *Ad gentes divinitus*, and re-echoed by John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Activity. He stated that it must not be forgotten that the work of catechists is becoming more difficult and demanding due to ecclesial and cultural changes. What the Council suggested remains valid today: a more careful doctrinal and pedagogical training, continuing spiritual and apostolic renewal, and the need to provide "a decent standard of living and social security" (RM 73; AG17). It is also important to make efforts to establish and support schools for catechists, and whenever it seems opportune to confer the canonical mission on trained catechists in the course of a public celebration, so that in the eyes of the people they might serve the cause of faith with great authority (AG 17).

Every person requires recognition in a particular endeavor undertaken, so these programs must end with the awarding of certificates and diplomas to the participants. A strong catechetical commission will coordinate all catechetical programs within the Diocese, parishes, and strengthen catechetical teams at the parish and chapel levels. Pope John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, teaches that the Gospel image of the vine and the branches reveals another fundamental aspect of the lay faithful's life and mission. The call to growth and a continual process of maturation, of always bearing much fruit (CL 57; Jn 15:1-6; Ps 80:15-16). In the dialogue between God, who offers his gifts, and the person who is called to exercise responsibility, there comes a possibility of a total and ongoing formation of the lay faithful. The exhortation emphasizes that the formation of the lay faithful must be placed among the priorities of a

⁴²⁵ Cf. Uganda Catholic Secretariat, *Uganda Catholic Directory*, Kampala, 2017, p.320-328; The number of Parishes has increased, as per the beginning of this year, the diocese now has twelve parishes.

diocese. It ought to be placed within the plan of pastoral action that the efforts of the whole community (clergy, lay faithful, and religious) converge on this goal (CL 57).

In the pastoral perspective, every diocese requires the establishment of a catechetical centre for its proper functioning. This will cater to the pastoral needs of its faithful. Concerning the Kotido diocese, the Losilang formation Centre must be strengthened to cater to the needs of its faithful. The centre will become a centralized hub for catechetical materials, liturgical guides, and translation of theological texts to facilitate training and personal research. It will act as a venue for ongoing formation, retreats, and workshops open to all categories of people within and outside the diocese. The increase in the frequency of activities, both pastoral and secular, will also provide income to the formation centre as participants shall pay for lodging and feeding.

Given the challenges of distance between parishes and chapels, literacy issues, and the fact that *Etoil a Karamoja* radio station, would extend its outreach. When I worked as the parish priest of Holy Cross parish, Kaabong, in Kotido Diocese from 2015 to 2022, the furthest chapel (Usake) was 49 kilometers from the parish headquarters. This posed a challenge to this distant and mountainous chapel. Pre-recorded lessons, question-and-answer sessions, storytelling formats, and the daily experiences of the people can make theological education more engaging and accessible. The syllabus for catechesis to be imparted to all groups of people must be systematic, simple, relevant, and gradually taught in steps (MPP n.85). The syllabus adopted for the diocese is one produced by the Kangole Catechist Training Centre. *Awosit a Ngitunga ka Akuj* books I and II (Peter Tupei and Italina Serrato) for initiation into the Christian faith are officially accepted by the Diocese, without excluding many others available in Ngakarimojong (Pellerino, Bertenazzo, L. Bracca, Roncari...). Among the Labwor, the Catechisms produced by the Gulu Archdiocese continue to be used. The Justice and Peace Department of Kotido Diocese has experience using media for community education, which could be adapted for catechetical purposes.

In virtue of the sacrament of Baptism and confirmation, and for those who are married, the sacrament of matrimony, every woman shares in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly ministry of Jesus Christ as a lay faithful, with all the dignity that it carries, with her proper character and personal vocation as a woman.

While participating in the life of the church, the woman cannot receive Holy orders, to whom Jesus Christ has called only some men, as he freely chooses. This is the constant tradition of the Church, as Pope Paul VI said, "we cannot change what our Lord did, nor his call to women, but we recognize and promote the role of women in the mission of evangelization."⁴²⁶

The will of the Lord and the tradition of the Church can be understood by looking at the relationship between Christ and the Church, the spouse and his bride. The woman, whether called to a life of virginity for Christ or to marriage, is a clear symbol of the Church as the Bride of Christ and Mother. The highest person of the Church, as a lay faithful, is the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was in no way part of the apostolic college, but is Queen of Apostles, the new Eve, Faithful to Jesus Christ, and mother of the whole people of God. She is the true model for everybody, women, men, and even the apostolic Hierarchy.

What is recognized in theory about the woman's role has to be carried out more and more in practice, so that in all fields of ministry, proper to lay faithful women may be present actively in councils, in synods, in all the fields of Church activity.

The presence of women is important in all fields of civic life, in the family, work, economics, and politics. No field should lack the active presence of a woman with a particular mission that corresponds to her character. This character is to make the different environments of life more human and concrete. The woman has a mission of fostering life. As we have said, the greatest tragedy of the modern age is the exploitation of the human person, the creation of a culture of conflict and death. The first victims of this culture are women. In a world where power, money, and pleasure are the only gods, women become the victims, and sex becomes the instrument of exploitation. Christians, both men and women, are called to change this culture of death, but women have the first place because of their very nature. The woman is called to work for a culture worthy of human persons and to lead men, with the power of conviction that God has given her, to be more human and concrete. Men tend to become abstract, to be concerned more with ideologies than with life itself.

⁴²⁶ Paul VI, *Discourse to the committee for the International Women's Year* (1975): AAS 67(1976), p. 266; See also Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Declaration on the Question of Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood *Inter Insignores* (15.10.1976): AAS 69 (1977), 98-116.

The Pope and the Bishops affirm that all this insistence should not blind us to the fact that women are already much more present than men, and that a greater responsibility needs to be taken up by men together with women, overcoming the petty conflicts that often reach ridiculous proportions and waste so much energy that could be used for the work of salvation.

Early missionaries achieved much through the formal education of the laity. The church in Africa, Uganda, and the local Church in Kotido specifically must not relent in their efforts to collaborate in offering formal education to all. It is laudable when some parishes organize adult education in their parochial schools. This program was implemented eight years ago in the Kotido diocese with the support of the German organization AGIAMONDO e.V. It made significant strides in literacy, numeracy, health, hygiene, nutrition, peace, and good practices in the community for living a healthy lifestyle. The pastoral programs of the parishes also benefited, as girls and illiterate women could acquire the capacity to read in church. This initiative is highly recommended because it involves volunteers for affordable education with limited resources.

In discovering and living their proper vocation and mission, the lay faithful must be formed according to the union that exists from their being members of the Church and citizens of the human society. There cannot be two parallel lives in their existence, on the one hand, the so-called spiritual life with its values and demands; and on the other hand, the so-called secular life, which is life in the family, at work, in social relationships, in responsibilities of public life and culture. The branch engrafted to the vine, which is Christ, bears its fruit in every sphere of existence and activity. Every area of lay faithful enters the plan of God, who desires that these very areas be the places in time where the love of Christ is revealed and realized for both the glory of the Father and the service of others. Every activity, situation, and responsibility is occasion ordained by providence for a common exercise of faith, hope, and charity (AA 4).

The Church has always cared for families, recognizing them as an indispensable organ of Evangelisation. The diocese, parishes, and religious institutes should bring documents on the Church to families at the grassroots level. These documents should be translated into the *Ngakarimojong* and *Lebtur* languages for families to read and also be used as materials for ongoing formation. The family is the primary educator in the faith and plays an irreplaceable role in family-based religious formation. Documents like

"Catechesis in Our Time," *Catechesi Tradendae* by John Paul II, dated October 16, 1979 (CT 68), emphasize the family's irreplaceable role in the catechesis process. It teaches how parents, through their Christian witness and daily lives, transmit faith to their children. Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 28.10.1965 (GE 3), like other documents, continues to stress the irreplaceable role of parents in the education of their children. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 07.12.1965 (GS 52) states that a family is a school of human enrichment. Parents should cooperate in children's upbringing with support from other related entities like government, family associations, social science, psychology, biology, medicine, etc., Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 21.11.1964 (LG 11 &35) regards the family as a domestic church where parents by word and example are first heralds of the faith concerning their children. They must foster the vocation proper to each child and with special care if it be to religion., General Directory of Catechesis, 25.06.2020, G CD nos.. 179, 226, 227, 255. This document provides a framework for catechesis in the Catholic Church, including the role of the family. It emphasizes that family Catechesis is not separate from other forms of catechesis but rather precedes, accompanies, and enriches them; The role of the Family in the Modern World, *Familiaris Consortio* by John Paul II in 22.11.1981 (FC nos. 36, 38, 39, 53, 60 & 86). The apostolic exhortation teaches the importance of the Christian family and its role in evangelization and catechesis. It calls a family to be a domestic church, a place where faith is lived and nurtured. Evangelisation in the modern World, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 08.12.1975 (EN 71) and Catechism of the Catholic Church, 11.10.1992, CCC 1615, CCC 1656, CCC 2221, &CCC 2223. The Comprehensive document covers various aspects of Catholic doctrine and practice, including the role of the family in faith formation. It emphasizes that education in the faith should begin in the earliest years of a child's life.

Amoris Laetitia, The Joy of Love by Pope Francis, is an apostolic exhortation published on the 19.03. 2016, which focuses on love in the family and its connection to faith. It acknowledges the challenges faced by families in the modern world and encourages a pastoral approach that supports and strengthens families.

All the above documents emphasize the importance of parents passing on the faith to their children within the context of the family. A family remains the primary and irreplaceable setting for faith formation, where children first encounter the Christian life and where faith is nurtured and strengthened throughout life. The institution of the Family

in the Kotido diocese should be strengthened through formation and ongoing formation at the parish and diocesan levels. We argue that while the church has published good documents on the family, there should be no excuse for inadequate faith formation and Christian education. Instead, these documents must be put into practical use, even translated, so that the laity have access to read them for their spiritual growth and maturation in faith.

Parish Pastoral councils and chapel councils exist in many parts of Africa, Uganda, and Kotido Diocese as well. They must be strengthened and fully incorporated with the laity, who will then be involved in decision-making affairs for the running of their parishes and chapels in parishes where they do not exist.⁴²⁷ As participants in the function of Christ, priest, prophet, and king, the laity have an active part to play in the life and action of the church. Their activity within the church communities is so necessary that without it, the apostolate of the Pastors will frequently be unable to achieve its full effect (AA 10, 11, & 26). In this context, the parish council is precisely one of the right expressions of the laity's duty, responsibility, care, and concern of the community called the local church. Therefore, it is no longer a question of whether parish councils are good, useful, or possible in our parishes today.⁴²⁸

The purpose of the Parish Council is to foster collaboration among Priests, religious, and laity in all the affairs of the Christian community. Members of the parish council work with the clergy on any new undertakings in the community as a whole, or local/chapel communities in a particular parish, in a shared responsibility. The parish priest is to trust the members of the parish council and take the risk of this trust in the implementation of parish activities. Issues in question are clarified, and action is taken as a body without pointing fingers at personalities. Religious leaders are called to draw closer to the laity, demonstrating genuine respect and a deep concern for their spiritual and temporal well-being.

According to Pope John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, People are called to Joy (CL 53). Nevertheless, their lives are full of sickness and suffering. Young people experience this themselves. The world is harsh at times, even cruel. Each day, many experience many forms of suffering and pain. Poverty, loneliness,

⁴²⁷ Cf. M.D. McGraw, *The critical role of the Laity in the Church today*, in: <https://stjoan.org/the-critical-role-of-the-laity-in-the-church-today/>, [23.06.2025].

⁴²⁸ Cf. Moroto Diocese, *Guidelines for Chapel, Sub-parish and Parish Councils*, Moroto, 2001, p.3.

and sickness are all common, and the effects of that terrible plague are touching the lives of more young people. Physical suffering and poverty remain pronounced forms of suffering in the African continent.

The Church is called, and each one is called to take care of those suffering with compassion and charity, after the example of Jesus Christ, the Good Samaritan. This is the wonderful work that the church is expected to carry out. This is the fact that the sick and suffering are called laborers in a special way in the vineyard. They are the most active and important members of the Church. Their sufferings are not pointless, but full of meaning and value for the salvation of humanity, provided they stay with Jesus in his passion and cross, in the company of Mary, the mother of sorrows, who stood under his cross. From the cross of Jesus and of his faithful comes the salvation of the world. While the Church assists the poor, the sick, and the suffering with loving care, she has the mandate to call them, help them understand, and live their proper calling with full awareness. This special kind of call has been particularly explained in the apostolic letter of Pope John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris*, On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering (11.02.1984), (SD nos. 28, 29, & 30). It invites all to be Good Samaritans to those suffering.

In our time, a great many forms of vocation emerge among the lay faithful, forms that are new compared with the traditional ones handed down from the past generations and which have gradually been accepted and approved by the Church. Lay faithful, men and women get together and live a life of virginity, while keeping the secular character proper to the laity. Some live in their own homes, others in communities, but they are present in the world just like anyone else. These groups are known as secular institutes. There are many different ones. In Africa, particularly Uganda, this is not common. Something similar exists in the three Catholic Charismatic communities of Katikamu, Soroti, and Pallisa. Here, you find married couples and singles living as a community. There are institutes for married people who get together to live the chastity proper to the married state in a fuller way. The synod says, "The Holy Spirit stirs up forms of self-giving to which the people who remain fully in the lay state devote themselves."

Collaborations with seminaries or Catholic universities, either through visiting lecturers or distance learning, can provide lay leaders with accredited theological education. Scholarships or sponsorships could be offered to promising catechists. Seven years ago, the Diocese of Kotido initiated a program to send well-educated laypersons to

the Ggaba Pastoral Institute in Kenya for specialized studies in catechesis and evangelization. This course lasts two years, and the candidate is awarded a diploma in the field of specialization undertaken. Two personnel have been trained, a religious sister and a retired teacher. They work in the Formation centre teaching catechists, helpers, married couples, and youths.

The lay faithful are believers, and they should cultivate a spirituality of prayer for missionary zeal. This is because the call to mission is not a human action but a divine one. It is the work of God, and it requires his direction. Given the pervasive influence of materialism, individualism, and selfishness in contemporary society, attitudes fundamentally incompatible with Christian doctrine and missionary zeal, prayer has become an indispensable necessity in our time. In the conclusion of the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, the pastors and lay faithful of the entire Church, standing at the threshold of the third millennium, were urged to feel with renewed intensity the Church's mandate to 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole of creation' (Mk 16:15), and to embrace a new missionary effort with fervor and commitment. It is a great venture, challenging and wonderful, entrusted to the Church. The Lay faithful should see themselves as part of this great venture, as they are called to proclaim and live the Gospel in the service of men and women and society. As the synod was celebrated during the Marian Year, its work was entrusted in a special way to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer (CL 64).

The vocation is to live out the commonly shared Christian dignity and the universal call to holiness in the perfection of love (CL 58). It requires lay people to remain attached to the vine, Jesus Christ, and in spiritual maturation (CL 58). In a Christian spirituality that bears fruit, there is a unity of life, and every activity, every situation, and every responsibility of the lay faithful becomes an occasion ordained by providence for a continuous exercise of faith, hope, and charity (CL 59).

The approaches to counter the challenge of catechetical and Christian education among the laity, which is real in Kotido Diocese, require greater involvement from both the clergy and lay leaders; the Bishop, priests, and the laity themselves. A well-formed laity is an asset to the Church. It fosters a sense of maturity and mission in the Church. Formation of the laity then becomes a permanent solution to other challenges affecting

the local church, like polygamy, witchcraft, corruption, insecurity, dependency (economic poverty), nepotism, tribalism, and discrimination. Based on the proposed strategies for strengthening the laity in catechetical leadership and active participation in the Church, we anticipate that these efforts will bear lasting and meaningful fruit.

CONCLUSION

This research has explored the pastoral challenges faced by the laity in fulfilling the Church's mission within the Kotido Diocese, focusing on three principal areas: polygamy, witchcraft, and catechetical formation in conjunction with religious education. These challenges, though diverse in nature, share a common root in the socio-cultural and historical circumstances of the Karimojong people. Polygamy remains deeply entrenched as a culturally accepted practice, reflecting social norms and economic considerations rather than Christian principles. Witchcraft, on the other hand, continues to be perceived as a means of coping with misfortunes and existential insecurities, undermining exclusive faith in God. The lack of ongoing catechetical formation exacerbates these challenges, as insufficient doctrinal grounding leaves many Christians vulnerable to syncretism and moral confusion. The study, therefore, underscores that an authentic Christian life requires both spiritual formation and cultural transformation. Addressing these challenges holistically provides a pathway for deepening faith and strengthening the missionary identity of the laity.

Polygamy emerged as a major pastoral concern that impedes the Christian understanding of marriage and family life. Rooted in the traditional customs of the Karimojong, polygamy is perceived as a sign of wealth, prestige, and social security, especially in a society where survival depends on livestock and lineage continuity. However, the Christian doctrine of marriage, as taught by the Church, upholds monogamy as God's original design for human relationships, emphasizing fidelity, exclusivity, and sacramental unity. The clash between these two worldviews presents a dilemma for converts who struggle to reconcile cultural heritage with the demands of faith. The Church's pastoral response must therefore balance compassion and truth, guiding polygamous families toward gradual conversion through catechesis and spiritual accompaniment. This process calls for patience, understanding, and a theology of mercy that acknowledges cultural realities while upholding the sanctity of Christian marriage.

Ultimately, transforming cultural attitudes toward marriage requires sustained dialogue, pastoral creativity, and evangelization rooted in love and respect for persons.

Witchcraft, as revealed in the study, poses another profound challenge to the laity's mission in Kotido Diocese. It represents a double allegiance, one to God and another to the spirits, which fractures Christian faith and commitment. Witchcraft thrives on fear, insecurity, and ignorance, especially in contexts where poverty and illness are prevalent. Many individuals resort to it in search of protection, healing, or prosperity, unaware that such practices contradict the teachings of Christ. The Church, therefore, faces the task of illuminating these realities through faith formation that leads believers to rely on divine providence rather than superstition. The eradication of witchcraft requires a pastoral strategy centered on education, prayer, and community engagement, helping Christians to rediscover the power of the Gospel as a source of hope and liberation. Through the active participation of the laity, the Church can reclaim this cultural space and transform it into a platform for authentic evangelization.

The third challenge, the lack of satisfactory catechetical formation and religious education, lies at the heart of the other two problems. Insufficient faith formation among the laity weakens their understanding of Church teaching and their sense of Christian identity. Many lay faithful have received initial catechesis during initiation but lack ongoing formation to sustain their faith amid cultural pressures and modern challenges. The Church recognizes that faith must be continually deepened through lifelong learning, reflection, and participation in the sacraments. Therefore, catechesis should not be treated as a one-time process but as a journey that nurtures discipleship and missionary commitment. The clergy and religious must collaborate with well-trained lay catechists to ensure consistent and contextualized Christian education at all levels of parish life. Such investment in formation will empower the laity to become credible witnesses and evangelizers within their cultural environment.

Throughout this research, it became clear that the pastoral challenges of polygamy, witchcraft, and inadequate formation are not isolated issues but interconnected realities affecting the moral and spiritual life of the Church in Kotido. Each challenge reveals the tension between cultural traditions and Christian values, highlighting the need for inculturation that respects local identity while remaining faithful to Gospel truth. The Church must, therefore, approach evangelization in Kotido with a spirit of dialogue, discernment, and pastoral sensitivity. Rather than condemning cultural practices outright,

pastoral agents are called to engage them critically, identifying positive elements that can be harmonized with Christian teaching. Such engagement will not only make the Gospel more intelligible but also foster ownership of faith among the Karimojong. The laity, being deeply embedded in the culture, plays a central role in this process as mediators of faith and culture. A renewed understanding of their vocation will enhance their contribution to the mission of the Church.

The theological foundation for this reflection was based on the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* of St. John Paul II, which highlights the baptismal dignity, vocation, and mission of the lay faithful in the Church and the world. Polygamy and witchcraft, however, distort this baptismal identity, creating a contradiction between belief and practice. True communion with Christ demands that the laity renounce all forms of dual allegiance and live in conformity with the Gospel. Formation, therefore, becomes the key to bridging the gap between faith and life, enabling lay people to integrate their spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. The holiness of life is not a private pursuit but a communal and missionary reality, linking personal sanctification to the credibility of evangelization. When lived authentically, the spirituality of the laity becomes a transforming force in both Church and society.

In light of the findings of this study, several practical recommendations are proposed to strengthen the participation of the laity in the mission of the Church within the Diocese of Kotido. First, pastoral agents should prioritize catechesis on Christian marriage to promote monogamous unions as a living witness to the Gospel and to counter the persistence of polygamy. Secondly, dialogue forums between the Church and cultural leaders should be established to discuss aspects of marriage and other traditional practices that contradict Church teaching, while identifying and integrating positive elements from the Karimojong concept of marriage into Christian life. Thirdly, family associations in parishes should be strengthened as avenues for Christian formation, moral growth, and evangelization, inspiring other families by their good example. Leadership roles within the Church, such as parish councils and other sensitive positions, should be entrusted to committed Christians who live and practice the faith, thereby promoting authenticity and integrity in pastoral service. Furthermore, greater awareness should be created about the importance of family catechesis as the bedrock of evangelization, complemented by continuous faith formation through recollections, ecclesial movements, adoration, confession, and participation in weekday Masses. Additionally, the Diocese should

establish counseling centers in parishes, youth groups, and women's associations to provide professional guidance, promote biblical principles through Small Christian Communities, uphold social and moral values through consistent preaching, and inculcate a strong spirit of both private and public prayer among the faithful, ensuring a spiritually vibrant and mission-oriented lay apostolate.

Finally, this study concludes that the pastoral challenges in Kotido Diocese are not merely obstacles but opportunities for renewal and growth. They invite both clergy and laity to rediscover the essence of Christian discipleship rooted in baptismal dignity and missionary communion. The process of overcoming polygamy, witchcraft, and weak formation must begin with a renewed catechetical vision that fosters the maturity of faith. The local Church must invest in continuous education, prayer life, and pastoral accompaniment that empower believers to live as witnesses of Christ in their culture. True evangelization in Kotido will emerge when faith penetrates every dimension of life, family, work, and community, transforming the culture from within. The journey ahead demands perseverance, faith, and unity among all members of the Church. By embracing these pastoral challenges as moments of grace, the Diocese of Kotido can become a living sign of God's redeeming love among the Karimojong people.

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