

Abstract of Dissertation (English Version)

This dissertation examines the New Evangelization as articulated by John Paul II and evaluates its relevance as a theological and pastoral framework for the growth and renewal of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. Rooted in Christ's mandate to "make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19), the study begins from the conviction that the Church is missionary by her very nature and that evangelization constitutes her essential identity. While the Gospel message remains unchanging, the context in which it is proclaimed has undergone profound transformation. Rapid scientific and technological developments, shifting cultural patterns, and the rise of ideologies that challenge Christian anthropology have created a complex environment for evangelization. The New Evangelization emerges in this context as a renewed call to mission—one that is faithful to tradition yet responsive to contemporary realities.

John Paul II's vision of the New Evangelization does not replace traditional missionary activity; rather, it revitalizes it. He calls for an evangelization "new in ardour, methods, and expression," aimed especially at those who, though baptized, have become distant from the faith or disoriented by secular cultural currents. The dissertation argues that this vision is particularly relevant for Nigeria, a nation marked by vibrant religious expression yet confronted by significant socio-cultural challenges. Nigeria's rapidly changing society—shaped by globalization, digital communication, urbanization, and competing value systems—has contributed to moral instability, weakened communal bonds, and a growing indifference to religious truth. These realities demand a renewed missionary strategy capable of engaging culture critically and creatively.

The study situates the New Evangelization within the broader history of the Church's evangelizing mission. It traces its biblical foundations, its development in the early Church, and its articulation in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The dissertation highlights how the Council's emphasis on the universal call to holiness, the dignity of the human person, and the Church's engagement with the modern world laid the groundwork for John Paul II's later teaching. His pontificate deepened and expanded this vision, presenting evangelization as a task that involves the whole Church—clergy,

religious, and laity—and requires a renewed encounter with Christ, a robust Christian anthropology, and a missionary engagement with culture.

A significant portion of the dissertation is devoted to analysing the Nigerian ecclesial context. It explores the historical development of the Church in Nigeria, its demographic growth, pastoral structures, and the evolving roles of clergy and laity. The study notes that while the Church in Nigeria is expanding numerically, it faces serious challenges: the influence of relativism, secularism, and materialism; the rise of Pentecostal movements; socio-economic instability; political corruption; and the erosion of traditional values. These factors threaten the depth of Christian commitment and hinder effective evangelization. The dissertation argues that the New Evangelization provides a coherent and compelling response to these challenges by calling the Church to renew its missionary zeal, strengthen catechesis, deepen faith formation, and engage culture with discernment.

The methodological approach of the dissertation is descriptive and analytical, employing a deductive framework that moves from universal theological principles to their application in the Nigerian context. It draws extensively from Scripture, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Code of Canon Law, papal encyclicals, apostolic exhortations, conciliar documents, scholarly books, journal articles, and credible digital sources. This ensures that the study is grounded in authoritative teaching and contemporary scholarship.

The structure of the dissertation reflects this methodological clarity. The first chapter provides a conceptual foundation by defining the New Evangelization and tracing its historical and theological development. The second chapter examines the theology of John Paul II, identifying key themes such as the centrality of Christ, the dignity of the human person, the role of culture, and the indispensable contribution of the laity. The third chapter analyses the Church in Nigeria, highlighting its strengths, pastoral structures, and the opportunities for evangelization. The fourth chapter examines the specific challenges confronting the Church in Nigeria, including ideological, cultural, socio-economic, and political factors. The final chapter synthesizes the findings and

offers practical recommendations for strengthening the Church's evangelizing mission, including renewed catechesis, deeper formation, pastoral creativity, and greater lay participation.

In conclusion, the dissertation argues that the New Evangelization, as articulated by John Paul II, offers a robust and timely framework for addressing the contemporary challenges facing the Church in Nigeria. By embracing renewed ardour, adopting creative methods, and expressing the Gospel in culturally meaningful ways, the Church can deepen the faith of its members and remain a credible witness to Christ in a rapidly changing world. The success of this mission depends on the shared commitment of clergy, religious, and laity to live and proclaim the Gospel with conviction, courage, and joy. In doing so, the Church in Nigeria can continue to grow and serve as a beacon of hope, faith, and transformation in the midst of the complexities of modern life.