

What Africa Must Learn from *Gaudium et Spes*

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MY OBJECTIVE in this short essay is to attempt an African reading of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. It is my hope that such a reading will contribute to the African quest to receive the Council.

On January 25, 1959, when Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council, my country, Nigeria, was still under British rule. Like many other emerging African states, she was preparing for her independence from colonial rule. Twenty-two months later, precisely on October 1, 1960, she would hoist her Green-White-Green flag in place of the Union Jack. In 1963, she would witness the trial, conviction, and imprisonment for treasonable felony of one of her founding fathers, Leader of Opposition in the federal parliament, Obafemi Awolowo, and some of his companions. From then on, Nigeria stepped on a slippery slope that led to recurrent instability, from the disputed elections of 1964, to the Civil War (the Nigeria-Biafra War) of 1967–1970, through the first military coup of January 15, 1966, and the counter-coup of July 29, 1966. That was an era of fratricide.

These dates are important for understanding where Nigeria was before, during, and immediately after the Second Vatican Council. Looking at those dates, it is easy to observe that when the Council began on October 10, 1962, it was two years after Nigeria's independence; and when the Council ended on December 8, 1965, it was barely one month before the first military coup in the history of Nigeria. The beginning of the Council more or less coincided with the "independence era" on the African continent. A trace of that euphoria for independence can be found in *Gaudium et Spes*. At that time, Nigeria was young, having been

put together by the British on January 1, 1900. The Church in Nigeria too was young, barely a century after the third era of evangelization of the African continent.¹

At the Council itself, the young Churches in sub-Saharan Africa were marginally represented. Not only were there few bishops from Africa, but only a few of this few were indigenous to the continent, and even these were mostly auxiliary bishops. And at the end of the Council, Nigeria and indeed many of the “newly independent” African states were undergoing a period of political instability marked by ethnic strife and civil wars.

These factors—the relatively young age of the new African states artificially created by colonialists, the relatively young age of the Churches in sub-Saharan Africa, the largely marginal participation of missionary prelates from Africa at the Council, and the crisis these new states were undergoing—account for what I consider to be Africa’s slow reception of the Second Vatican Council.²

Was Africa Included in the Picture of Modernity at Vatican II?

At the beginning of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Second Vatican Council set out its objective and described the audience it wished to address. Regarding its objectives, it is to

resolutely address not only the sons of the Church and all who call upon the name of Christ, but the whole of humanity as well, and it longs to set forth the way it understands the presence and function of the Church in the world of today. (GS §2)

¹ Cf. A. O. Makozi and G. J. Afolabi Ojo, eds., *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria* (Lagos: Macmillan, 1982). Historians recognize three phases in the evangelization of Africa. The first phase saw the evangelization of Egypt and North Africa during the first centuries of Christianity. This was the era of Mark the Evangelist, Anthony of Egypt, Origen, Athanasius, Cyril and the Alexandrian school, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, to mention but these. The second phase saw the evangelization of parts of sub-Saharan Africa in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. This was the era of evangelization of the Benn Empire, of Mozambique, and of Angola, who celebrated 500 years of evangelization in March 2009. The third phase began in the nineteenth century, and my generation is a beneficiary of that phase. Read the beautiful account of the history of these three phases in John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa: The Church in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), 30–38.

² Cf. Anthony Akinwale, *The Congress and the Council: Towards a Nigerian Reception of Vatican II* (Ibadan: The Michael Dempsey Centre for Religious and Social Research, 2003), 1–8.

As to a description of the audience of the Church, *Gaudium et Spes* spells this out in these words:

[T]he world which the Council has in mind is the whole human family seen in the context of everything which envelopes it: it is the world as the theatre of human history, bearing the marks of its travail, its triumphs and failures, the world, which in the Christian vision has been created and is sustained by the love of its maker, which has been freed from the slavery of sin by Christ, who was crucified and rose again in order to break the stranglehold of the evil one, so that it might be fashioned anew according to God's design and brought to its fulfillment. (GS §2)

I have already alluded to the slow reception of the Council in Africa. George Weigel, for his part, has pointed out that the modern world which Vatican II chose as partner in dialogue turns out to be a modern world on the path of self-annihilation because it had "internal tensions and contradictions" which the Council did not address. Despite Vatican II's recognition and acknowledgement of what it calls the "triumphs and failures" of the modern world, Weigel is still of the opinion that the achievements of modernity raised more questions than those Vatican II addressed. Taking his inspiration from Norman Cousins's August 7, 1945 editorial for *Saturday Review*, titled "Modern Man is Obsolete," Weigel would suggest that the anthropology of *Gaudium et Spes* was itself obsolete. Vatican II, in other words, was dialoging with a "modern man" who would soon cease to exist.

Since my essay is an attempt to read *Gaudium et Spes* as an African, I do not intend to give a detailed response to Weigel's perception of the Council's understanding of the "modern man." Suffice it to say, however, that Weigel's critique cannot be sustained by using Cousins's editorial essay as illustration or inspiration. I am of the opinion that a careful reading of *Gaudium et Spes* points to a Council that celebrated the achievements of modern man without turning a blind eye to his shortcomings and often self-inflicted anguish. Vatican II, in a way that was even more detailed than Cousins, raised sharper, because theological, questions provoked by the achievements of modernity. It would therefore seem Weigel confused the obsolete anthropology of modernity, so eloquently described by Cousins, with the anthropology of Vatican II. But they do not exactly coincide.³

³ Weigel's critique seems to have paid little attention to the situation of the human being in the modern world painted in §§4–10 and 33–37 of the Constitution. According to *Gaudium et Spes*, "In the face of modern developments there is a growing body of men who are asking the most fundamental of all questions or

Given my stated objective and what I had earlier referred to as the marginal participation of sub-Saharan Africa at Vatican II, there are at least some grounds for asking whether the African was included in the picture of modernity at Vatican II. It would be revealing to find out the extent of participation of African prelates and *periti* in discussions around the redaction of *Gaudium et Spes*. But there are other grounds. First, with very few exceptions, the African was and remains different from the atheist and secularist modern man given so much attention in *Gaudium et Spes*. Secondly, the political turmoil of post-independent Africa, the era in which the redaction of *Gaudium et Spes* took place, cannot be said to be similar to the increasing democratization of the Western world. Thirdly, the achievements of science and technology, so much felt in the Western world, had not made their presence felt in Africa on such a large scale. Fourthly, developmental needs of the emerging states of Africa received little or no attention. But thanks to Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, in response to this fourth point, Africa benefitted from a worthy post scriptum to *Gaudium et Spes*.

Yet, neither *Gaudium et Spes* nor Vatican II can be blamed for Africa's woes. Africa had her own anthropologies in need of Christianization. Whereas so much has been said and written about African respect for human life, for community life, and for family life, there was something missing from this narrow African humanism, namely, the recognition of

are glimpsing them with a keener insight: what is man? What is the meaning of suffering, evil, death, which have not been eliminated by all this progress? What is the purpose of these achievements, purchased at so high a price? What can man contribute to society? What can he expect from it? What happens after this earthly life?" (GS §10).

Also showing that the Council was far from the canonization of modernity are these words: "Sacred Scripture teaches mankind what has also been confirmed by man's own experience, namely, that the great advantages of human progress are fraught with great temptations: the hierarchy of values have been disordered, good and evil intermingle, and every man and every group is interested only in its own affairs, not in those of others. . . . The whole of man's history has been a story of our combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield man has to struggle to do what is right, and it is at great cost to himself, and aided by God's grace, that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity. Hence the Church of Christ, trusting in the design of the Creator and admitting that progress can contribute to man's true happiness, still feels called upon to echo the words of the apostle: 'Do not be conformed to this world' (Rom 12:2). 'World' here means a spirit of vanity and malice whereby human activity from being ordered to the service of God and man is disordered to an instrument of sin" (GS §37).

every African, by every African, as a human being and as a citizen. This was, and is still often, sacrificed on the grounds of ethnocentrism. Human and civic rights get abbreviated once the African steps out of his place of ancestral origin, even while he is still within the geographical territory of the country whose passport he bears. Underlying ethnocentrism is an incomplete anthropology that makes it impossible to recognize the common humanity in one another. Africa's many wars, the plague of corrupt and incompetent government, violation of human dignity by dictatorial regimes, these largely stem from ethnocentrism. For at the root of every violation of human dignity is a defective anthropology. When the real nature of the human person is misunderstood, it becomes quite easy to reduce him or her to an object to be manipulated instead of a person to be related to. But while *Gaudium et Spes* may not be blamed for Africa's woes, what Weigel sees as the obsolete anthropology of modernity has something in common with every other inadequate anthropology, including the defective anthropologies of African traditional philosophy. What they have in common is lack of an adequate theological vision of what it means to be human. The stepping stone towards a corrective can be found in the theology of creation in the book of Genesis. Its completion is to be found in the theology of redemption by Christ.

An Attempt at a Theological Corrective

From the creation narrative in Genesis 1, it is obvious that to speak of creation is to speak of God's goodness and love putting order in formlessness and bringing something out of nothing. The divinely inspired writer of the Priestly narrative thought it necessary to portray God as an artist, admiring, affirming, and confirming the beauty of his own work, of the universe he has made: "God saw that it was good." We are familiar with this formulaic refrain in the creation narrative found in the first chapter of the book of Genesis: "God said let there be . . . and there was . . . and God saw that it was very good." Wisely unveiling the underlying meaning of these words, Augustine of Hippo offers a profound reflection:

When the works thus begun had been formed and perfected, God saw that it was good. For He found His works pleasing, in keeping with the benevolence by which He was pleased to create them. There are, it should be noted, two purposes in God's love of His creation: first, that it may exist, and secondly, that it may abide. Hence, that there might exist an object to abide, the Spirit of God was stirring above the waters. That it might abide, God saw that it was good. And what is said of the light is said of all the works. For some abide in the most exalted holiness next to God, transcending all the changes of time; but others abide

according to the determinations of their time, while the beauty of the ages is unfolded by the coming and passing of things.⁴

The creature is good because the Creator is good. Not to discover the root of created goodness in the Uncreated Goodness in the Creator is to misunderstand the nature of the creature. To misunderstand the nature of the creature is to fail to accord the creature its divinely conferred dignity. That is why a correct theological anthropology is crucial towards the elaboration and profession of any humanism worth the name.

The narrative tells of a God who did not create one but many different things. And, explaining the multitude and distinction in creation, Thomas Aquinas has this to say:

[T]he distinction and multitude of things come from the intention of the first agent, who is God. For he brought things into being in order that his goodness might be communicated to creatures, and be represented by them; and because his goodness could not be adequately represented by one creature alone, he produced many and diverse creatures, that what was wanting to one in the representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another. For goodness, which in God is simple and uniform, in creatures is manifold and divided; and hence the whole universe together participates in the divine goodness more perfectly, and represents it better than any single creature whatever.⁵

God communicates his goodness in the diversity of his creatures. His work of creation was the communication of his goodness and love to each creature he has made. Since none of God's creatures is a perfect recipient of divine goodness, one creature would not suffice in representing God's goodness. Variety in creation was necessary for representing divine goodness. The beauty of creation was in its variety and order. There was beauty in each thing God created, and there was beauty in the whole of creation itself. There was beauty in particularity, in diversity, and in the entirety of creation. "God saw all he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen 1:31). God saw that each thing was good, and God saw that all things were good. There was harmony in the diversity that God willed in creation.

Within this diversity, there was also inequality, and even this inequality, said Aquinas, comes from divine wisdom for the sake of perfection of the universe.

⁴ Augustine of Hippo, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, vol. 1, trans. John Hammond Taylor (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), bk. 1, ch. 8.

⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 47, a. 1.

It must be said that as the wisdom of God is the cause of the distinction of things, so the same wisdom is the cause of their inequality. . . . [A]s the divine wisdom is the cause of the distinction of things for the sake of the perfection of the universe so it is the cause of inequality. For the universe would not be perfect if only one grade of goodness were found in things.⁶

Each individual represents a grade of goodness within its species, and this gradation of goodness adds beauty to the world. Does this inequality not compromise the dignity of each creature, especially of the human creature?

Since it is within the perfection of the universe that the dignity of each creature can be safeguarded, it can be said that the inequality in diversity, which is for the sake of the perfection of the universe, is not the violation but the protection of the dignity of every creature. All this may not sound good in our thoroughly, or pretentiously, egalitarian world. However, one may be able to get a confirmation from art that variety, distinction, and inequality contribute to the good of order in which the beauty of the work of art consists. The example of a soccer team might also be found useful. On a soccer team, the fact that the goalkeeper does not have the skills of a striker, while the striker does not have the skills of a goalkeeper, does point to variety and inequality. But added up, they contribute to the beauty and strength of the team.

The Genesis happy story of a well-ordered world of variety was tragically punctuated by the Fall. The “obsolete” anthropology of modernity failed to take this Fall seriously, seeing it as a dispensable myth. The magnificent progress in science and technology was the “apple” that modern man ate. Ironically, having eaten this apple, the apple of progress in science and technology, his eyes were opened in a multiform illusion of omniscience, of omnipotence, and of perfect benevolence. Possibility, pleasurability, and profitability became his moral norms. The story of the Fall is indeed a commentary on modernity.

Failing to appreciate the divinely-willed beauty in cosmic diversity and distinction, seduced by the proposition of the Tempter that they could create a better world ordered according to their own laws—in fact, ordered according to themselves, for they thought they could become law—human beings disrupted the order of and thus dissented from divine wisdom. In the same way, the noble achievements of science and technology gave modern man the conviction that he could create a better world, better than what the Author of all things has done.

In the harmonious arrangement of original justice, rightness of relation was to take the form of the subjection of other creatures to human

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 47, a. 2.

beings, and of human beings to God. God had placed human beings above other creatures by creating them in his image and likeness. Their mandate to dominate the earth was a mandate of stewardship. It was mandatory to be subject and accountable to God in the use of the things of this world. Freedom to use them was extensive, yet it ended at the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In the modern re-enactment of the original quest for freedom-without-God, science and technology became the “God” to whom modern man must subject himself. Modern man became a slave to the work of his own hands.

Thus came violation of a divinely-willed order, which was a violation of God’s right to will the universe to be according to his wisdom. In a way that re-echoes Anselm of Canterbury’s *Cur Deus homo*, one could say that the sin of origin was a failed but tragic attempt on the part of human beings to violate God’s honour, just as the honour of the artist is violated by distorting the beauty of his work. The disobedience of Adam and Eve treated God with contempt in an attempt to create or recreate the universe according to man’s design of self-love. Augustine would thus describe sin as “self-love to the point of treating God with contempt” (*amor sui iusque ad contemptum Dei*), requiring “love of God to the point of treating the self with contempt” (*amor Dei iusque ad contemptum sui*). From the moment God’s rights were violated in disobedience, human beings lost sight of God. Becoming ignorant of who God is, they resorted to the false religion of idolatry. The human self and his achievements in fact became the idol, so that this idolatry took the form of *autolatry* (self-worship). The tendency to maximize power, profit, and pleasure in pursuit of the illusion of self-fulfillment outside the common good would lead to all the conflicts of race, of classes, of gender, of culture, of religion, etc. That modern science and technology facilitated this maximization is not, in my opinion, something to be debated by any observant bystander. Disconnection from God by autolatry was disconnection from the source of life and love. Hatred and death began their reign. Man’s attempt to steal God’s honour by force led to false religion manifested in ignorance of God. Ignorance of God and ignorance of man and his neighbor go hand in hand.

The Son of God’s obedience unto death in his incarnation broke the cycle of human attempts to steal God’s honour by force and thus redeemed the world. Participation in the effects of this redemption requires being human, like Christ, not forcing oneself to be God, like the first Adam. For to force oneself to be God—and science and technology always present this as a beautiful and realizable prospect—would result in the violation of God’s own rights. It takes the form of abbreviation of the same rights

and results in alienation from God. Where God's rights are violated human rights are violated. Man does damage to his dignity when he challenges the sovereignty of God. But where does Nigeria stand in all this? Where does Africa stand? Where can Africa be found in the paragraphs and pages of *Gaudium et Spes*?

African Religiosity

Weigel puts his finger on the atheism of modern anthropology. But Africa can hardly be described as atheist. There is an explosion of religiosity across the length and breadth of Africa. Yet Africa is known for her many wars and ethnic conflicts. It is in fact the case that religion in Africa is itself a ready tool in the hands of those who would sow seeds of discord. One only needs to consider the recurrence of "religious" conflicts in some of the cities of northern Nigeria to see that religion is used as a tool for conflicts. The fact is: Nigeria has become a battlefield between militant Islam and aggressive Evangelicals. But it cannot be validly asserted that killing others in the name of God is a sign of respect for the rights of God. Religion is corrupt when it degenerates into abbreviation of God's own rights. And when God's rights are violated by corrupt religion, human rights are also affected. As the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria pointed out:

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria guarantees freedom of religion of every Nigerian citizen. But some Nigerians misunderstand their right to religion as right to persecute other Nigerians of different religious persuasion. The right to propagate one's religion must not be exercised in ways that violate the right of people of other religions. We deplore the use and abuse of religion to trample on the rights of others. We condemn violence on whatever excuse or disguise, and from whatever direction. We condemn it, above all, when its perpetrators blasphemously and fraudulently claim religious justifications. We wish to note that those who claim that they love God while hating their fellow human beings, even to the extent of killing them, are liars. God has not given anyone the right to kill in his name. Neither has he authorized anyone to violate the dignity of other human beings.⁷

True religion glorifies the Almighty. And, according to the famous statement of St Irenaeus, "the glory of God is man fully alive." The true measure of authenticity of religion is whether or not it recognizes the

⁷ Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, "Conversion for Justice and Reconciliation," Communiqué at the end of the Second Plenary Meeting of the Conference, Kafanchan, Kaduna State, Nigeria, September 12, 2009.

sovereignty of God and the dignity of the human person. Where there is violation of human dignity there will be conflicts. The sovereignty of the Almighty is not respected and it manifests itself in massive violations of human dignity. Where fundamental human rights are violated with impunity there can be no peace. There can only be a balance of terror. The moment the balance of terror tilts in favour of one person or one group, that person or group is going to fight back. That will happen even if it takes years and centuries, even if it is the great great grandchildren of any person or group who end up with a balance of terror to their advantage. Africa, despite her religiosity, cannot address the many conflicts she faces without a robust tradition of respect and promotion of fundamental human rights in the recognition of the *imago Dei* in each human person irrespective of religious, ethnic, or gender differences.

The fact that Africa has known many wars but is yet to know peace calls for modification of the dictum “If you want peace prepare for war.” Now it has to be said that “if you want peace recognize and respect the dignity of the human person.” But whether *Gaudium et Spes* had Africa in mind when it intended to “initiate a pastoral dialogue with modernity—with modern man, full of confidence in his new scientific and technological powers” is a matter to be debated. Weigel, for his part, set out to “focus for a moment on the things that *Gaudium et Spes* did not see or did not anticipate, with an eye to rescuing the pastoral constitution from undeserved obsolescence.” It would seem that the unfolding drama in post-colonial Africa was among the things *Gaudium et Spes* did not see. That was why, as Weigel points out, the Pastoral Constitution did not foresee “the fantastic corruption and incompetence of post-colonial governments in the Third World.” Yet Africa must learn from *Gaudium et Spes*, for *Gaudium et Spes* has fundamental and indispensable lessons to teach Africa.

What Africa Must Learn from *Gaudium et Spes*

Technology without a vibrant public moral culture, science without conscience: these we must avoid so as not to use technology to dehumanize. Modern man is threatened, not so much by technology but by a crisis of morality, by an inability to work out moral issues on the grounds of objective norms. The tripartite modern society envisioned by *Gaudium et Spes*, comprising politics, culture, and economics, to which corresponds the tripartite free and virtuous society of John Paul II in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, comprising democracy, a vibrant public, and moral culture, and a free economy: this is something Africa must learn as a matter of urgency. This tripartite structure of modern society of *Gaudium et Spes* or the corresponding free virtuous society of *Centesimus Annus* is

dislocated by the futile attempt of a Machiavellian agenda to run common life without virtue, and the corresponding futility of friendship without virtue, which Benedict XVI so eloquently corrected in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*.

Post-independent Africa was deprived of this kind of society when some of her founding fathers opted for one form of socialism or the other, from the well-intentioned but ineffective *Ujamaa* of Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, to the democratic socialism of Nigeria's Obafemi Awolowo, the Conscientism of Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, and the pseudo-Marxism of Benin's Mathieu Kerekou or Congo Brazzaville's Denis Sassou Nguessou. Apart from these, prolonged military dictatorship supplanted early efforts at democracy, and stifled freedom of expression and moral discourse. It was dangerous to think aloud. There was an attempt to form human beings who were not allowed to form their convictions. Free economy was criminalized and forbidden in an uncritical emulation of the countries of the erstwhile communist bloc.

Africa had no time to read Vatican II. But the denial of original sin that characterized its reading in the western world magnified itself in fearful proportion in Africa, in systems of government that would have been effective only if there were no effects of original sin. But one cannot promote human dignity while pretending that there was no original sin. Such pretention would lead to the destruction, not promotion, of human dignity. In Africa, the results of this pretension were devastating. Instead of states run by their people, Africa became a collection of states which run the life of the people—government took over schools run by the Church and voluntary agencies in gross violation of the principle of subsidiarity; there was political repression; control of the media and the academia became fashionable; civil wars, corruption, and incompetence on the part of government, complacency on the part of the people. Government, rather than serving the people, became more powerful than the people and oppressed the people. The state, whose primary responsibility is to secure life and property, became a primary threat to life and property. Today, we have a tragically mismanaged Nigeria, an immensely rich land inhabited by impoverished people, a land of social dislocation, of trauma and superstition-driven religiosity engendering poverty, of commercialized religiosity in the south, and of politicized religiosity in the north, to the point of violence.

Weigel was considering the manifestation of the misreading of *Gaudium et Spes* in a prevailing culture of denial of original sin. I see a manifestation of the denial of original sin in Nigeria in successive governments that pretended to be omniscient and impeccable in directing the affairs of state.

The denial of original sin is ignorance of what the human being is. But man cannot be known where God is not known, and God is not known because man is not known. Ignorance of man leads to corruption of politics, and ignorance of God leads to corruption of religion. God created us to be free to actualize our personal and collective potential: spiritual, intellectual, moral, technical. The corruption and incompetence of government stifles our aspirations and hinders freedom to actualize potentials.

Since Africa's problem is neither atheism nor religious indifferentism but the corruption of religion in the instrumentalization of divinity, her search for an adequate anthropology cannot be apart from theology. It must be included in the quest for good theology. Theology in Africa has focused so much on freeing the African from cultural alienation and political oppression. This has often led many an African theologian to theologize out of the 2000-year conversation that the Christian tradition is.

I have argued that while Western misreading of *Gaudium et Spes* cannot be blamed for the woes of Africa, the defective anthropologies of post-colonial Africa have something in common with the defective anthropology in the reading of *Gaudium et Spes*. It is the failure to admit the fallibility of the human person.

The implication of the anthropocentric character and supernatural finality of the notion of authentic development in Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* is clear. Since authentic development must have the fulfillment of the human person as its central focus, every violation of human dignity is an act against the attainment of authentic development. Violation of human dignity takes the form of abbreviation of our common humanity and results in the alienation of the human person. Since the fulfillment of the human person is in the attainment of his or her spiritual destiny, every act that disorientates the human person from God is to the detriment of authentic development because it is inimical to the fulfillment of the human person.

Rescuing *Gaudium et Spes* requires the correction of defective anthropologies that constitute the fore-structure of understanding within which the Constitution and indeed the entire Council are read. On the part of Africa, there is need for an anthropology that is, at the same time, a Christianized African humanism and an African Christian humanism, in which elements of African humanism are elevated to recognize the dignity of every human person without discrimination, not just the dignity of the son or daughter of this clan. In union with the wisdom of the Judeo-Christian tradition, this Christianized African humanism would affirm that human dignity resides in living a life of virtue, a life lived in solidarity with others and ordered to its supernatural goal in God. This, I believe, is what Africa can and must learn from reading *Gaudium et Spes*. N.V