

Joe-Barth C. Abba

Special Pastoral Formation for Youths in Africa in the 21st Century



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FOREWORD I

Today's society needs youth who could imbibe the moral and social values to help both the Church and the State in great solidarity to build a beautiful and worthwhile society for her citizenry. It is important to bring youth to the lime-lights and to the right directions of existence, helping to form their consciences and to strengthen their faith in God. The pastoral exigency programmes should reach out to help and occupy all reasonable young adults in different countries not only in African-Nigerian aspects but other parts for the different countries of the world. The objective aim is to orientate them and to guide them in their moves for their personal ideal in life. However the task remains an all important function of the Church and the government of today who have to create regularly active working programs and pastoral plans for the youths and to execute such processes well to yield bountiful fruits.

The Africans since the 17th century and in particular and in particular those of southern part of Nigeria since 1885 have consistently manifested zeal in their worship of true God and practice of faith. This has attracted admirations from many parts of the world and is today a wonderful phenomenon for the Mother Church. This lasting permeation of faith for her believers should equally have strong influence for her youths for a properly formed conscience and their self actualisation.

The *Catch them young for God and humanity* - are the key words which ought to spur all and sundry on in all that concerns the nation's youth situational problems and conditions in life. The complex nature of the nations youth problems could be brought to a bare infinitesimal but the Church and State could work co-operatively and in harmony for the expected solutions.

The concentration of the author Joe-Barth Abba in this volume is all about the orientation and reformation of youths in the society. His efforts is to unravel the problems of today's youths and to look into the possible proposed solution by giving it a priority and an attention it deserves. The life-style of our today's youths and youthful exuberance should concern all. Leaving the youth to dwell in ignorance would not help the matter rather that might even worsen their condition in life and that could directly or indirectly effect everybody in the country. Young people in their prime age need ongoing formation and rich enthusiasm. The Post Vatican II document helped a lot in this meaning and created provisions for the youth welfares. Its harped more on the need for youth encouragements from the Church and society alike taking a sincere and sympathetic look on their plight.

It also examined the change of attitude of the present day youths towards religion and their praactice of the true faith. They should draw inspirations and Wisdom from God with the knowledge that God is the source of all we possess in on earth. The Council equally d maintains strongly that young people exert a very important influence in modern society and that of their social importance from them from a corresponding apostolic a activity. To bring the youths to the focus of what the Church and society demand or need expects from them could not only be challenging but attracting situation for a better enlightenment for their training. For a pastoral formation of youths in Africa-

Nigerian context, the situation needs a better approach, good administrative acumen and such a competent motivation needed from the youth counsellors and formators.

The issue of special active direction or attention on the part of the Church and government authorities remains a *sine-qua-non* in order to let the nation youths embrace good equality education, self discipline as this will brighten their futures and their personal maturity. The problem of Catechesis and religious instructions and its neglects in some of the school curriculum should be brought to a good stand and made constantly and intensively functionable. The youths should be abreast with the reality of what religion and culture; and what the flashy-fashions of modern development should mean to them. Only then, could they know the better ways that all that glitters is not Gold.

On the topic "Special Youth Organisation in Africa in the 21st Century" as it concerns the Nigerian Youths in West Africa is a timely, validly and cherished book for the today's society and her youngsters. The processes of growth and training of youngsters with their different temperaments and life-styles coupled with varied ambitions and vane hopes in life are what makes them yearns for a quicker self-fulfilment indication that they should and ought to be always special programm and the priority of the Church and State for great interest and urgent consideration.

The work is all embracing, it touches not only youths of Africa-Nigeria youths but also explicated as in many areas are to direct general aspects of youths directions for today's society. I whole-heartedly recommend this arduous work of a known Social Worker, Pastoral Theologian and a Philosopher Joe-Barth - the Author: to all Sociologists, Psychologists, Human Activists and to all Youth Formators, and organisers and to all people who have anything at all to do with youth welfares in any country both national and international levels.

More so, the Church and State responsibilities on youths should read this book and keep it as rare treasure for the present and future generation.

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FOREWORD II

Youth formation is one of the few expressions deriving from the Christian theological tradition to remain in vogue even in the secularised world of modern politics of the twenty-first century. In the civil and ecclesiastical circles, there is the saying that the youth are leaders of tomorrow. This is to show that the future of humanity lies on how serious the present generation takes its youth and forms them in the terrain of creative and responsibility leadership role in various segments of the society. The Church has always shown a prime role in youth formation. The Church does this, primarily, through its teaching and role in forming the conscience of parents and families evident through its participation in school education and in particular, in its elaborate pastoral program for the youth in parishes and in promoting ecclesiastical movements or association for the youth at various levels of the Church's life.

Written in the context of a dissertation for a doctoral degree in theology, in this work, Father Joe-Barth Abba brings to bear his long years of pastoral involvement with youths, which could be traced back to his personal missionary experiences and from his home diocese of Onitsha, Nigeria in West Africa. The book combines theology with praxis in discussing the need for special basic pastoral formation of the youth. It makes the appeal and presents trajectories for promoting pastoral attention to the youth in Africa, with particular focus to Nigeria, the home country of the author. The present scenario of the contemporary world, and especially of Africa, makes congenial this appeal for the special pastoral formation of the youth. The growing culture of religious violence, militant wars and ethnic cleansing in some parts of Africa, have the youth as the most vulnerable victims.

The systematic impoverishment of African nations by new economic order and corrupt leaders, the manipulation of the youth by the politicians for selfish motives and the precarious conditions in which the youth found themselves today in their countries, help to bring home the argument of the author in this book. In a more visible way and on the pastoral side, the age of adolescence is not only the most important but also the most challenging for the young person. It is a period of decision that may determine the entire life of an individual. This is a period in which the young is faced with challenging options or choices for life. It is a period during which the young makes a choice for profession or career and also is faced with the reality of choosing a life-long partner for marriage. It is from this background that the book searches for a way the Church and the state could collaborate in formation and in offering the youth a new hope in our increasingly changing advanced technological society.

The author, Joe-Barth, makes the case that adaptation to the society is incomplete without the mental, moral, spiritual and human formation of the youth. And this is the area where the Church is at its best in society. A generation begets a happy and peaceful society to the future ones through a well conceived cultural and social formation of the youth that is rooted in the moral and spiritual endowment of humanity.

I recommend this book not only to all the youths themselves but also to those forming the youths in Africa and in other countries. This is a rediscovered role of the Church in

the society and the one that calls for a greater recognition and collaboration of the civil society. When the youth is well formed, it is the whole society that benefits.

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FOREWORD III

Africa needs a rehabilitation, a cure, a healing. Despite its vast natural resources, the people remain in the deadly grip of poverty, squalor and destitution while buffeted by environmental degradation and brutal tyranny. Pope John Paul II observes that in a world controlled by rich and powerful nations, Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected. (*Ecclesia in Africa*, N. 40). Thus we are all aware that many African countries had their Independence in the late fifties and early sixties. Yet today at the beginning of the third millennium, a good number have no definite direction. Hence hardly can one name an African country without a prolonged history of social, religious, political, economic problems. AIDS for instance is spreading at an alarming rate in many African countries. Also, it is clear to all that there is no continent and no country in the world without corrupt practices in one form or another. What is, however, peculiarly African in this phenomenon is that it is practiced in such a crude, unpretentious and gallant manner that a critical mind cannot but ask: is this a vice or virtue in Africa? With regard to Nigeria, Chinua Achebe observes that it has passed the alarming and entered the fatal stage and Nigeria will die if we keep pretending that she is only slightly indisposed. It is not possible or do we say even of no value to attempt a comprehensive picture of the type and scope of Nigerian corruption. Nevertheless, it has "grown enormously in variety, magnitude and brazenness since the beginning of the second Republic because it has been extravagantly fueled by budgetary abuse and political patronage on an unprecedented scale." (Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria*, Heinemann, London, 1983, 38-42). Nevertheless, there is still hope. In our opinion, the solution can only come from responsible leadership. It is from this perspective that we appreciate the relevance of Joe-Barth Abba's work. It is basically a research on the essence for the real workable, formidable and systematic orientations for the youth problems, human dignity and prospects in order to get well with their youthful exuberance as future leaders of tomorrow. We agree with him that "youths' glories and joys, fate and woes, prospects and dignity depend solely and greatly on how they were prepared or brought up in life." (p. 16).

The work will help to attain optimum objective of education as *educatio*: to lead out. The leading out of the potentialities latent in African youth; a continent where at the moment, this rule or hardly realized in most of the educational institutions. In this sense, his work advocates the notion of the leaders as an educated man. He even went further to add that the educated man ought to have a balanced personality. That is, the educated man should inevitably go a step further. He must be a well-informed citizen. This has advantage both to the leader and his subjects. Both will enjoy happiness. We understand happiness in the Aristotelian sense as *totum bonum*. It declares what a man ought to seek and how he ought to seek it. Habit plays a role. Happiness can rightly be pursued only by a person who has the habit of desiring and choosing aright. The morally virtuous man is one who has a good character. This consists in a habit or disposition with regard to the end that he seeks and the means that he chooses.

To be of good character, one needs phronesis, practical wisdom. A good moral character consists in a habit of right desire, that is, a habit of desiring as one ought, a disposition to will the right end and to choose the right means in the order or proportion.

For his work to be authentically relevant to Africa, we insist that the program of such an educational system must include the principles of education as found in traditional Africa. In ancient African society, functionalism was the guiding principle of education. Education was regarded as a means to an end and not an end in itself. Social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual and moral values were important aspects of African education. Its achievements are gradual and progressive and in conformity with the successive stages of physical, emotional and mental development of the child. The aim of traditional African education is thus multilateral and the objective is to produce an individual who is honest, responsible, skilled, co-operative and conforms to the social order of the day.

Finally, a distinctive achievement of Father Joe-Barth is his methodology. That is, his ability to combine the theological, socio-anthropological, psychological approach. Outstanding here is that we realize that we are created in the image and likeness of God. This is thus a valuable work for youth education especially in Africa. We recommend it to educational institutions at all levels, and to every African and world youths.

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PREFACE

In deed, to train, control and bring-up our youths successfully in life is, no doubt, a difficult task. The nation youths are cherished and admired by many and are also feared by some, this may be because of their posture, or strength or their way of living. The primary objective of this work is to substantially lay bare the situation of our youths and how to help train and bring them to a better standard of life for the progressing nation and for the better future of the Church and humanity. This is because youths are the greatest assets of the Church and of any nation. How then do we conscientiously strive early enough to launch our youths on the path of success and perfection.

In order to explore the meaning of youths, make a general survey of them; the situation in Nigeria will help towards self-discovery and the introduction of discipline in their lives, thus enabling them to realise their goals and ambitions which is the objective of this research. In this enterprise we shall actually examine youths general problems: unrestrained quest for freedom, indiscipline in the modern society, and their implications in Africa-Nigerian nation. A more active and special basic pastoral formation could make youths to be more conscious of their person, worth and functions or duties not only to their different families but to our society in general. What positive roles could be played by them in the society on national development? It will be considered whether Africa especially Nigeria, set-plans or such steady-concrete methods of new programmes from both the Church and State are enough for their young people in the modern society. When the dawn of success is seen, we could educate the youths well and timely, tap and enjoy their talents with them after giving them the needed assistance. How can we know what the youths always seem to like or need, in the hope to realize their objectives? We need to gradually harness these potentialities that exist in many of the youths who are full of wisdom, youthful exuberance, zeal, energy and enterprising spirit.

In effect this work is an effort to delve into looking at such present problems that attract our attention and then look for a solution in those places where there are important and urgent loopholes and the causes of those lacunae. To cultivate timely or earlier formation is very worth-while. A nation where the youths are marginalized or treated with reckless-abandon or ignominy is a moribund nation - one that can only retrogress. This study is therefore based on describing and analysing the problem of African-Nigerian youths regarding their ideology, *modus vivendi*, and the general mentality. An effort is to be made at finding the root-causes of these problems at certain space and time. It is therefore, hoped that as all these propositions and postulations come actually into effect; by which such proper guidance and directions could go a long way to enhance harmony unity and progress.

The work is both general and in the African dimensions, in trying to understand the youths situation and as regards the youths organisations and movements, and their works in Africa and other nations. The author applied the right ways corresponding to the peoples culture and the intellectual ways of viewing the youths education today. The main points treated concerns the handlings of the issues of life, formation and authentic existence as it touches the youths up-bringing.

The method of arguments used are not only general but also the background of the African's ways of thoughts coupled with the several changes in the nuances with her surroundings and situations through many variable and certain similarities of quotations. The meanings are also being firmly put and being supported with the message it portrays. This inquiry has equally theoretical and practical, descriptive and expository as well as evaluation aspects. This is because the young is more of social pedagogical attitude and needs a special competence in a wider spectrum in order to bring the youths to the right order. The theoretical aspects is based on a systematic investigation process to help us find out the major issues that is relevant in the whole inquiry and then to identify their needs regarding their various logical and functional connections.

The study equally touches on some socio-anthropological, ethical, theological, psychological youths existential perennial problems like joblessness and cultural aspects of the subject does some crucial specific work more especially in the Nigerian forum chapters. Mostly, this critical inquiry also presents the youths of the present day not as mere spectators of the existential phenomenon or mere participants but rather as actual great contributors in the Church and society. It explains that the youths are also the extra-ordinary productive agents as the future of the Church. The ultimate goal of this inquiry is also to find out the important suggestions and recommendations which could help in solving the variant serious problems of the youths. The Church is to make sure that her youths are not marginalized but to encourage them and to give them the rights and privileges wherever they are. The youths as the future of the Church should be well trained in the areas of its various apostolate. The youths presence in the Church matters a lot to make them realise their ingenuity, worth, protection and importance. It should ipso facto be concerned about why many youths fail in life especially in the pluralistic society like Nigeria. On how could the youths make use of any good opportunities in life for their happiness and greater development needs more explications which is a focus in this work. The practical part of this work involves too, a thorough examination of the actual application of a special and active pastoral formation in motivating the youths. It shows well that this would be a collaborative rather than a collision course in order to share one's views, wisdom and insights for a maximum concretisation process. This would allow the youths discuss their problems and through coming together for workshops, convocations, rallies and conferences, and thus looking for solutions to the issues which could be a problem to their faith and success in life. Structurally, it is to create grounds regarding the integral behavioural patterns and approaches to the youths of African nations especially Nigeria. Other areas of praxis could be through dialogues, catechesis, friendly conversations and reconciliation, tolerance and understanding to improve the true human relations.

Above all, the Church and Youth Formation in this Millenium regarding the entire work is aimed at helping further theoretical studies in paying attention to youth situations. This is as regards their practice of religion, interest in education, and the general orientations for their growth and maturity in life. However, it seeks deeply and majorly to find ways in the present-African countries like in Nigerian society in which

More substantial formation of ethical, catechetical and moral instructions can be inculcated into them and how it could in the African cultural milieu, practically and realistically to take constant positive effects and to yield lots of fruits. This academic work is on the process of their training character, formation and self-mastery to bring them into the focus of better life, coupled with their adaptation to traditional customs, taboos and cultural norms, mapping out acceptable programmes to strongly build trust, faith and confidence. This work generally, examines how actually the Church and State (government) should play their role well and build up the youths for a successful orientation. Then finally, we shall conclude with the aim of finding out suggestions on how best to get the heart of the youths in the face of Christianity to be practising their faith well, through moral guidance spiritual retreats, sports and other social and pious organisation, and in these ways the youths could adhere to reason and have a good start in life.

Insight into the need for a continued active orientation and organisation of youths national and with international coordinations world wide through conferences, symposiums, rallies and convocations, counsellings etc, could increase youths happiness and motivate them to have an ideal personality.

- Author

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this work is to show that today's youths of Africa-Nigeria youths of today are in dire need of a special and active pastoral formation not only for their own good but also for the common good of all. This formation will enable them to appreciate the human dignity and also lead to their growth in faith. Although many of the youths have already some initial formation and orientation from their families, guardians, schools and the Church, they very much need to be practically activated and strengthened. A substantial additional guidance is necessary to spur them on towards a successful happy living on earth. In order to make this worth while and really workable we need a formidable and a systematic organisation.

A sound training of youths in any nation ought to make room for pastoral formation. The progress of any nation, society is actually dependent upon the quality of her youths. In the same way, the youths are the hope and the future of the Church. If the youths are treated with ignominy and reckless abandon, then our society will be in jeopardy. Today's society is complex; it is only the body of sound youths that can help keep it on steady course to progress and stability. Of great importance is how the Church and the States in Nigeria especially can systematically channel their youths well in today's influential technological advancement and unabridged freedom. Adaptation to the society is one thing but that of rational, mental, moral or spiritual aspects are another thing and this is the most important for the Church and humanity. How would the youths conform happily and peacefully to the present cultural, social dos and don'ts (taboos), of today's world?

The youths lifestyle generally cannot but abide by the Christian influence in order to peacefully and rightly enjoy their livelihood on earth. The nation's youths, though so full of powerful ambitions and dynamisms coupled with lots of different temperaments and behavioural factors, need among other things a disciplined life and group orientations. The special Pastoral formation of youths plays an important role in the Church and society. The youths glories and joys, fate and woes, prospects and dignity depend solely and greatly on how they were prepared or brought up in life. That is from childhood, family influence and upbringing, and other educational school-teachers, (good teachings cum exemplary life), and-catechetical instructions influence on them. The characteristic of modern youths coupled with their moral problems attract attention for corrections and directions so that the youths could grow up well in the society. All youths are the future leaders of tomorrow of the Church, State and nation. How can the Church, Government of a State inculcate discipline in their young people and equip them to face responsibilities and to manage their time and freedom well?

Nigeria is one of the pluralistic nations in West Africa. She harbours Christianity, Islam and African traditional religions.

Within Christianity itself, apart from Catholicism and Protestantism, there are more than 850 autocephalous Christian denominations in the country. Her Youths need basic pastoral formation in order to grow well, mature and prosper in the society. This clarion call for the youths will no doubt yield a hundred folds of good fruits for the Church and humanity. The Catholic Church strengthens and renews the face of the Church and state

in Africa-Nigeria nations and beyond by working round the clock to see if they should in the third millennium, pastorally give more attention to her youths. The youths on their part should in the spirit of loyalty and training remain open, adaptable to the Church's plan for them, by patiently assimilating catechetical, ethico-moral principles, instructions and discipline for a happier living. As they look-up hopefully to the future with good visions and the longing for ideal personality for good education and development, they advance to great progress. The parents' duty to their youths and up-bringing should be of the greatest priority and consideration.

The youth's orientation, goals and plans in life concern all. Our youths are in the direct hands of their various families, or guardians and through the Church and the government of today they could live a life worthy of emulation. To adhere always to the good examples, instructions and guide lines from these leaders are not only 'de facto' but on the other hand what they ought to know. For the proper guidance of our youths, both Christians and other religious bodies could help the Church and the nation a long way, instead of allowing the youths to consistently dwell in ignorance, and waste away their talents. Though many of the youths are well educated, many are unemployed and some are being at cross-roads, indecisiveness, and planless life thus drifting like a rudderless ship. This leaves a question mark on a responsible and cherished society and this is a bigger task for the Church to channel and direct them purposefully. In various dioceses of the world, there are many busy bishops, hard-working parish priests, religious men and women dedicated theologians and psychologists who have been working very hard in various places, and in particular for the better formation and functions and position of the youth in the Church. Also in Nigeria, examples are already seen in some dioceses by putting them as members of pastoral and parish counsellors and the good mature-adults youths could lead well some pious and social organisations in the Church if they are well directed.

Many youths in the world are mostly in a creative exploration and discovery stage in their life-cycle. The reality of the new generation determines their future, so that the youths should not dwell in ignorance or pursue shadows leaving the image and neither should they go for the chaff, leaving the substance in a nation like Nigeria. If the youths have the good practical and a special basic pastoral formation, they can stand firm in the society acknowledging the fact that our world and the society they find themselves are full of enormity of problems, uncertainties and surprises. The roads they ought to walk through are also tortuous and fraught with complexities, reverses and dangers. But these are organic development of any living entity. The youths ought not to be or have split personality which is a crisis personality.

Such stages could be described as when they are not sure of themselves. That means that they are not at home with the self: not being sure of whom they are, they are broken, shattered, hollowed and disorganised from within. They could remain at a permanent dilemma on whether to love or hate themselves and 'being thus, so poor, from within themselves, they contribute nothing to growth of humanity.

Like a slave of two competing masters they are not free, they become Mr. Nobody and a non-performer when this happens they are patients for counselling therapy.

They are not a solution to our problem but as an additional problem to the nation. The youths are the now and future of the Church and of every nation. The Church and society like in Nigeria should endeavour to give young people a reasonable chance in life. Since it takes time to bring excellence to maturity, it becomes obvious and urgent matter for expected pastoral formation and so, the Church and State should strive early enough to launch their youths on the path of perfection. This scientific work unfolds and proffers solution to youths perennial problems which is ipso facto, beneficial to both the Church and society in general. To address this problem well and to elucidate the issue at stake is to find the necessary solution for the most fundamental problems facing the youths vis-à-vis adults.