The Role of Pastoral Care and Guidance in the Spiritual Development of Postmodern Youth in Nigeria

by

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Abstract

Adolescence remains a fascinating period of transition in the life cycle of humans; it provides for a period of expanded growth just after childhood. During adolescence, young people are opened to the possibility of identity formation, self-discovery, spiritual growth and emerging independence from adults. As young people mature from childhood to adulthood, they experience remarkable physical, behavioural, social and spiritual transformation. The spiritual development of adolescents usually occurs not separate from, but as part of the transformational process. Therefore, adolescence, as a critical period in the journey of life, brings forth an opportunity for timely intervention to prevent destructive life patterns, and to promote continuing healthy habits and spiritual values. Whether or not the adolescent emerges into adulthood as a healthy, self-reliant individual will depend on the opportunities available to develop positive attitudes and life skills during the formative years.

The present postmodern culture presents challenges to the upbringing of adolescents in Nigeria. Globalization exposes young people to competing world views and the uncertainty of multiple options. In this thesis, we are confronted with the question; how
should we make the pastoral care ministry more adolescent-oriented in a postmodern multicultural society? Presently, there is the need for youth ministers, parents, teachers and guides to understand the dynamics of postmodern conditions and to be open to provide support, care and leadership to a younger generation that is so torn apart. The Church, the family and society in general, on whom Nigerian adolescents depend, need to become more aware of the unique conditions of these young people in postmodern society; and be capable of implementing an effective model of pastoral care and guidance that nurtures their spiritual growth.
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Introduction

Youth is a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood, and the awareness of our interdependence as members of a community. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group per se. According to the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization (UNESCO), “Youth is often indicated as a person between the age where he/she may leave compulsory education, and the age at which he/she finds his/her first employment.”¹ This latter age limit segment has been increasing, as higher levels of unemployment and the cost of setting up an independent household, puts many young people into a prolonged period of dependency. Youth is an experience that may shape an individual's level of dependency, which can be marked in various ways according to different cultural perspectives. Personal experience is marked by an individual's cultural norms or traditions, while a youth's level of dependency means the extent to which he/she still rely on family, emotionally and economically.

The United Nations recognizes “youth” as persons between the ages of 15 and 24. Accordingly, a useful distinction can be made between teenagers (i.e. those between the ages of 13 and 19) and young adults (those between the ages of 20 and 24). Although linked to biological processes of development and aging, youth is also understood as a social position that reflects the meanings, which different cultures and societies give to individuals between childhood and adulthood. Scholars argue that age-based definitions have not been consistent across cultures or times, and that it is more accurate to focus on social processes in

the transition to adult independence for defining youth. Youth is the stage of constructing the *self-concept*. The self-concept of youth is influenced by several variables such as peers, lifestyle, gender, and culture. It is the time of a person's life in which he/she makes choices which will affect his/her future.

The focus of this thesis will be on young people; and due to the peculiar socio-economic condition of Nigeria, and the general observation of membership in youth groups in Nigeria as well, I will adjust the *boundaries* of the United Nation’s definition of *youth* to include the earlier teenage years and the later young adulthood years. Specifically, this thesis will focus on young people in the age bracket of 12 to 30 inclusive. In Nigeria, gone are the days when a boy of 18 would be seen as one who can manage his life. In the pre-1960’s all that a boy would need to become a man was just a hut, constructed by the entire village under the guidance of the father, a farmland donated by his father to enable him to *toil for his livelihood*, and of course, a bride – a companion.

Adolescence is considered in this thesis as a fascinating period of transition in the life cycle of humans, which provides for expanded growth after childhood and the possibility of identity formation, self-discovery and emerging independence from adults. Adolescence has become the stage of the life style that, in the time of postmodernity, seems to be the most worrisome time for many people in the Church and society. The key question is: *How would Church and Theology become able to address the changing situation of postmodern adolescents?* As young people mature from childhood to adulthood, they experience remarkable physical, behavioural, and social transformations. The spiritual development of

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adolescents usually occurs, not separate from, but as part of this transformational process. Adolescence remains a critical period in the journey of life, and offers the opportunity for timely intervention to prevent destructive life patterns, and to aid the promotion of continuing healthy habits. Whether or not the adolescent emerges into young adulthood as a healthy, self-reliant individual will depend on the opportunities given to develop positive attitudes, spirituality and life skills.

In Nigeria, the youthful stage was once a very interesting one. This was because the youth belonged to the community and vice versa. There was a laid-down rite of passage to initiate the youth into adulthood in a unique and wholesome way. From the period of adolescence, the mind of the young was oriented towards choosing good and abhorring evil. Teenagers in Nigeria were confined to a certain environment for intense learning and preparation towards adulthood. Within that moratorium, moral values and good life became the focus for all members of the community. These formative years were very significant, as the individual youth came out formed and polished to face the adulthood years with serenity and contribute meaningfully to the society.

However, postmodern culture does present multiple challenges to young people. Unique institutions, such as family and community in Nigeria that were meant for raising young people with spiritual and human values have collapsed without a viable replacement. A critical study of postmodernity shows how it has, in diverse ways, impacted on the human and spiritual developmental patterns of youth. In The Postmodern Lifestyle, Frederich Schweitzer explains that “the experience of pluriformity and dissolution seems to affect the

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4 This thesis will consider that an in depth understanding of the psychological changes during adolescence could provide the basis for an effective pastoral care ministry that promotes the spiritual growth of young people.

5 Dominic Umoh, “Rites of Passage: Their Forgotten Values and Significance” Koinonia, Vol. 1, June 2000, 84.
process of growing up, by exposing young people to the impact of plurality, competing worldviews, or may be more accurately, the opaqueness of uncertainty vis-à-vis all too many options. These are the challenges that young people have to face in the complex nature of postmodern life.

With the growth in the population of young people around the globe, there is also the growing concern for the lack of communication between them and the community that is meant to offer them support. Chap Clark points out that “Adolescents have been cut off for too long from the adults, who have the power and experience to escort them into the greater society; adolescents have been abandoned.” Clark further explains that the abandonment of young people by parents and adults brings at least two consequences: “First, the youth’s journey is lengthened, because no one is available to move the developmental process along. Second, the youth know that they are essentially on their own, for aloneness is the enduring result of abandonment.” In this abandonment, postmodern youth tend to engage in destructive activities that lead to loss of life and values, and with a tendency to divide and rule their own world.

Left in the dark corner of abandonment, without appropriate care and guidance, the spiritual growth of youth is delayed and their God-given passion is misdirected. The United States Institute for Peace reports that in Nigeria, the Boko Haram movement has radicalized many youth, and has led to the destruction of many lives for more than a decade. Most young people in Nigeria also abandon their family and faith community to engage in self-

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6 Friedrich Schweitzer. The Postmodern Life Style, 40.
8 Ibid., 38.
destructive, cultic practices. In addition, the effects of globalization, and the abuse of technology such as the internet and cell phones, have brought many young people into their own created world that God and adults are not able to share and guide.\textsuperscript{10}

Kenda Dean found that “while youth ministry cannot create passion in young people, when adolescents experience steadfast, ecstatic, and intimate love in communities that practice Christ’s passion as fidelity, transcendence, and communion, the Holy Spirit uses these communities to awaken young people.”\textsuperscript{11} Conversely, the lack of appropriate pastoral care and guidance could make young people become more vulnerable to negative influences that might affect their spiritual growth.

The concept of identity formation in these postmodern adolescents is presented by Frederick Schweitzer. He understands that the modern framework of identity formation in young people can no longer be applied in the diverse and pluralistic culture of the postmodern world. Schweitzer explains that “we are now in a new century, or even a new millennium, and the lifestyles of the 1960’s have little to do with the lifestyles after the year 2000. The modern idea of identity is outdated because of far-reaching historical changes that make it difficult to hold this idea.”\textsuperscript{12} Schweitzer considers the modern concept of identity formation as individualistic, and too narrow. These limitations, according to him, make it difficult for young people to stand up to the needs and challenges that are specific to the pluralistic postmodern culture of their time. Schweitzer then proposes the “plural self” as a substitute to the single identity formation in adolescence. The “plural self” in postmodern


\textsuperscript{12} Friedrich Schweitzer. \textit{The Postmodern Life Style}, 48.
context is the awareness that no single identity defines a person, and is characterized by flexibility, adaptability, and the possibility of integration into different roles.

Thus, this thesis confronts the question: how can we make pastoral care more adolescent-oriented in a postmodern multi-cultural society? The author will attempt to assess the developing trend of young people in postmodern Africa (and Nigeria in particular) and envision a pastoral care ministry that will assist them, as they search for meaning, relationship, and purpose in Church and Community. It will carefully examine the postmodern concept of the plural self by Schweitzer as the alternative to identity formation, to determine how pastoral care ministry might nurture the spiritual development of young people in postmodern conditions in Nigeria. It is pertinent to note that the plural self as opposed to the predominant western modern philosophy of “the self” and self-actualization has been the functional foundation in most African/Nigerian cultures, where “it takes a village to raise a child.”

Adolescent Spirituality will be discussed in this Thesis, in order to underscore the significance of pastoral care in the spiritual life of the young. In this narrative, I will identify and discuss key issues on spiritual values, prayer life, self-identity and self-esteem that are relevant to young people in the postmodern context. This will be done through the exploration of contemporary literature that addresses the human and spiritual development of youth in postmodern context.

This thesis will explore the understanding of the lifestyle of postmodern youth in Nigeria, using the works of Frederick Schweitzer, who has expressed the need for Church and
Theology to examine the “changing shape of adolescence as a period of life.” This research work responds to that need, and will attempt to demonstrate how postmodern changes affect the spiritual life of Nigerian youth. This thesis will also draw further insights from the research works of Charles Shelton, Kenda Creasy Dean, and Christopher Umoh in presenting a pastoral care framework that could more effectively enhance the spiritual development of the youth. It will also discuss relevant strategies that could be useful in pastoral ministry to engage with youth and their families, in order to find the right balance for continuity and change.

While remaining primarily a research work in the area of Pastoral Theology, this thesis will employ research findings from the developmental psychology, that is, of Erik Erikson on identity formation, and the faith development theory of James Fowler. In the review of their scholarly works, I will endeavor to present what could be pragmatically helpful in the development of a model of pastoral care ministry with postmodern youth. As the research works of most of the authors mentioned here are based on youth in the North American context, it will be the task of this thesis to carefully extrapolate ideas that are relevant in the global postmodern milieu, and in Nigeria. We will endeavor to examine how postmodern youth share unique characteristics globally, and then demonstrate how the understanding of postmodern conditions in Nigeria could be relevant to establishing an effective Pastoral Care Ministry with Postmodern Youth in the country and the continent of Africa at large.

13 Ibid., 55.
The Nature and Significance of the Project

A deeper understanding of the social and cultural changes that have taken place since the advent of postmodernity would help youth to adapt and integrate in diverse contexts with healthy self-affirmation. This thesis will emphasize this adaptation and integration within the Nigerian context. The identity of youth could be well formed to adapt to the plural roles that are presented, so as to be responsible persons. This thesis will, therefore, attempt to define the structures that promote healthy identity formation of young people, and determine how these structures could help to engage with the relevant questions, needs, and passion of the present generation of youth.

Outline

This thesis will be divided into four chapters to outline an adolescent-oriented Pastoral Care Ministry in a postmodern context. Chapter One will define postmodern adolescence, identity formation, and the significance of the plural self in youth. Chapter Two will focus on the spiritual life of postmodern adolescence in order to identify the need for a relevant pastoral care model in youth ministry. Chapter Three will examine the impact of postmodern conditions on youth and their families in Nigeria, and inquire how Church and Theology can provide applicable pastoral response. Chapter Four will establish how pastoral care ministry can effectively nurture youth spiritual development, and guide the youth through healthy identity formation processes in postmodern Nigerian society.
Chapter One: Towards an Understanding of Adolescence

1.1 Meaning and Nature of Adolescence

Adolescence describes the teenage years between the ages 12 to 19, and can be considered as the transitional period from childhood to adulthood in the life cycle of the human person in our journey towards God. It is a stage in which young people undergo significant physical and emotional changes, and is “a crucial time for the development of both religion and spirituality.” Adolescence remains a fascinating period of transition in the life cycle of humans, and provides for an expanded growth just after childhood. The journey towards adolescence begins at birth after nine months of pregnancy. Growing up from infancy is like building a wall. A wall would usually have many lines of bricks, and each new stage of development requires that a previous one has been completed. Thus every person proceeds from infancy at birth, to childhood from the age of two. Childhood is a period of seven to ten years until puberty. In general, puberty begins around the age of 11 for girls and 12 for boys. At puberty, there is a noticeable physical change in a person; and childhood gives way to the beginning of the adolescent period that is being considered in this paper. Adolescence is known to be a stage of transition. It indicates a “transition from a high degree of dependency in childhood to greater independence from the family.” This is indeed a time of rapid change in the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the youth.

Contemporary scholars in Psychology of Religion argue that the teenage years are very important for the spiritual and religious development and the quest for meaning.

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15 Ibid., 92.
Spiritual and religious development is considered here as a process of self-transcendence, where the teenager has to become aware and be actively involved in the building up of his or her spiritual life. Through proper understanding of the process of spiritual development, adolescents can find new directions, develop a personal identity, and build relationships with other individuals and communities.

An important task in the process of development during adolescence is the search for personal identity. Again, James Gollnick explains that “the search for personal identity is essentially the quest to find overall unity, and purpose in human life.” 17 Young people at this stage tend to move away from the values and beliefs of established structures in the society. They become more engaged in raising questions about fundamental beliefs and societal values. All this is done in an effort to discover where they belong, and to personally uncover the truth about the world that they live in.

As adolescents begin to search for personal identity, they tend to spend much more time away from their family. Teenagers at this stage begin to establish new bonding with their peers, and become more comfortable sharing their stories with each other. A young person enjoys a new sense of identity within the structure of the peer group. According to Ann Klaas, “just as a family has rituals or customs that makes it unique, so does a peer group. Because of the desire to be part of the group, teens can feel pressure to conform to the actions and ways of the group. They may change the way that they dress, the music that they listen to, or even the way that they speak, in order to feel like they are a part of the group.” 18 The search for personal identity is an attempt by teenagers to define their beliefs, personhood,

and the future. The need for independence is expressed here, as teenagers proceed to take personal decisions, and make choices as they wish.

The psychological conception of identity formation in adolescence is based on the work of Erik Erikson. It was the idea of Erikson that “each person needed to make a strong commitment to a particular identity, ideology, and group at the end of adolescence, but that this should be preceded by a period of exploration or struggle, and that the well-developed identity should be flexible and open to change.”

Erikson explains that the physiological changes at the beginning of adolescence do have serious influence on identity formation. Thus, the change in the physical dimension of a person can be seen also as change in the whole person. These changes have effect in the thinking process of teenagers, and swing their behavior between two poles. On one hand, teenagers tend to make independent decisions like adults, and on the other hand they would want to be regarded as young ones. This critical time, characterized by emotional upheavals, might eventually give way to an identity crisis in the lives of adolescents. It is important for parents and guides to understand these dynamics, and be capable of providing the needed support to the youth.

In her scholarly work, *Parents, Children, and Adolescents*, Ann-Marie Ambert clearly explains that “the beginning of adolescence is generally determined by the onset of puberty, that is, the development of primary and secondary sexual characteristics in males and females.”

The physical changes in adolescence provide for the awareness of human emotions, and the understanding of personal characteristics. During adolescence, young people are naturally disposed to the possibility of identity formation, self-discovery, and emerging independence.

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from adults. As adolescents continue to mature from childhood to adulthood, they experience remarkable behavioral and social transformation. The spiritual development of adolescents usually occurs not separate from, but as part of this transformational process. Adolescence, as a critical period in the journey of life, brings forth an opportunity for timely intervention to prevent destructive life patterns, and to promote continuing healthy habits. Whether or not the adolescent emerges into adulthood as a healthy, self-reliant individual will depend on the opportunities they have to develop positive attitudes and life skills during the formative years. As adolescents continue to face the challenges of the rapid changes in their lives, they also grapple with the question of their identity formation, in order to properly prepare themselves for the emerging future as young adults.

1.2 The Significance of Identity Formation in Adolescence

Adolescence and the ever more protracted apprenticeship of the school and college years can, as we saw, be viewed as the psychosocial moratorium: a period of sexual and cognitive maturation, and yet a sanctioned postponement of definitive commitment. It provides a leeway for role experimentation, including that with sex roles, all significant for the adaptive self-renewal of society.\(^\text{21}\)

An important task in the process of development during adolescence is the search for identity. Erik Erikson formulated the psychosocial concept of identity versus identity confusion as the framework for understanding the major task of adolescence. He related identity formation to the self which is the core concept of individual psychology.\(^\text{22}\) In the process of forming one’s identity, Erikson notes that “a pervasive sense of identity brings into gradual accord the variety of changing self-images that have been experienced during childhood…the lasting sense of self cannot exist without a continuous experience of a conscious ‘I’, which is the


\(^{22}\) Ibid., 73.
numinous centre of existence." It is within this understanding of identity formation that Erikson would relate the development of ideological values, including religion and spirituality, to the stage of adolescence. The view here contends that the search for personal identity is essentially the quest to find overall unity and purpose in the youth’s relationship with self, God, and others. Young people at this stage do have the tendency to move away from the values and beliefs of established structures in the society. They then become more engaged in raising questions about fundamental beliefs and societal values. All this is done in an effort to discover where they belong, and to uncover the truth personally about the world that they live in.

As young people begin to search for their personal identity, they tend to spend much more time away from their family. At this stage, they begin to establish bonding with their peers, and become more comfortable with sharing their stories with each other. Adolescents often experience new sense of identity as they begin to interact with their peers. Just as a family has rituals or customs that makes them unique, so does a peer group. Due to the desire to be part of the group, young people can feel the pressure to conform to the actions and ways of their peers. Sometimes, they may change the way that they dress, the music that they listen to or even the way that they speak in order to feel like they are a part of the group. The search for personal identity is an attempt by young people to define their beliefs, personhood, and the future. In the course of forming an identity, the need for independence is also expressed, as young people proceed to take personal decisions, and make choices as they wish.

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23 Ibid.
The psychological concept of identity formation, as developed by Erik Erikson, contributes to a deeper understanding of young people as they journey in search of meaning and fulfilment of their passion. Erikson’s affirmation of the gifts of fidelity and mature faith during adolescence emerges from his concept that “each person needed to make a strong commitment to a particular identity, ideology, and group at the end of adolescence, but that this should be preceded by a period of exploration or struggle, and that the well-developed identity should be flexible and open to change.” Fidelity, which emerges in the process of identity formation during adolescence, could strengthen the youth’s capacity to trust, and to be capable of making a commitment of one’s self to others, and thus be willing to accept others for who they are.

However, the theory of identity formation in adolescence conceived by Erikson is now being challenged by postmodern experience of pluralism and multiple choices. In this regard, Kenda Dean in her book, *Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church*, carefully observes as follows:

Today, the moratorium that Erikson considered crucial for adolescence has all but vanished. With no moratorium, contemporary young people are thrust prematurely into adult roles, sometimes by circumstance, sometimes by choice...Just as the modern period gave rise to adolescence itself, changing life patterns forced by globalization and postmodernity have altered normative patterns of identity formation.  

Dean’s observation in this case, forms part of the various discussions on the postmodern considerations of the “plural self” as an alternative to the formation of a unitary identity.

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during adolescence. Nevertheless, it will be important to discover how these shifting ideologies could influence the spirituality and Christian identity of the youth.

1.3 Postmodern Concept of the Plural Self in Adolescence

Frederich Schweitzer is a key proponent of the concept of the plural self during adolescence. Schweitzer, in his work, *The Postmodern Life Cycle: Challenges for Church and Theology*, argues that the modern framework of identity formation in adolescence can no longer be applied in a diverse and pluralistic culture of the postmodern world. According to Schweitzer, “we are now living in a new century or even a new millennium, and the lifestyles of the 1960’s have little in common with the life styles after the year 2000. So in this view, the modern idea of identity is outdated because of far-reaching historical changes that make it difficult to hold this idea.”

Schweitzer, having observed the narrow and individualistic nature of identity formation, sees the plural self as a suitable option.

He observes that in the plural self in adolescence, there is flexibility, adaptability, and the possibility of integration into the multi-cultural postmodern society. Schweitzer believes that the plural self enables the youth to fit into different roles as “there can be no fixed identities under the conditions of postmodern life.” However, it is not clear if Schweitzer’s opinion could mean that each youth should not develop any firm personal identity due to

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27 Ibid., 51.
postmodern conditions. Should that be the case, it could lead to confused identities, and the distortion of the process of spiritual development in adolescence.

1.4 Implications of Postmodern Pluriformity to Pastoral Ministry with Youth

It is glaring that postmodern society presents the youth with the challenges of diverse views, culture, and philosophy. Both adolescents and youth guides need to understand how these changes affect the dynamics of integral development in adolescence. A clear understanding of the social and cultural changes that have taken place would help adolescents to adapt and integrate in diverse context, with healthy self-affirmation. Each youth can, therefore, be well developed to take up the multiple roles that are presented. However, I do suspect that if the concept of the plural self is taken too far, it could lead to relativism and the confusion of multiple self-identities that can have implications on the development of personal integrity, the formation of belief system and values in the youth.

The many changes during postmodernity bring along many challenges for the formation of effective pastoral ministry for young people. In the pluralistic world of postmodernity, where there are no absolute truths, it can be a difficult task to guide young people to deepen their understanding of the mystery of God, and to abide by the Christian moral principles.

In Nigeria, most teenagers I have met in the course of pastoral ministry often complained that traditional forms of worship were boring for them. They do desire to worship in community in the manner that they could relate, communicate, and perform different roles.
Youth ministers should respond to these challenges by making efforts to reach out and engage with teenagers and their families, in order to find the right balance for continuity and change in the postmodern cultural context. Even as there is the constant need for identity formation, authority and tradition in society, there is also the responsibility that we have to engage with the questions, needs, and passion of young people in every generation.
Chapter Two: The Spiritual Life of Postmodern Adolescents

2.1 Overview of Adolescent Spirituality

Adolescent Spirituality can be placed in the broad spectrum of Christian Spirituality, and provides for the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs of young people. Spirituality is generally concerned with the life of the spirit that opens a person to the experience of an abundance of life that includes aspects of religious beliefs and values that could deepen the adolescent’s encounter with God. As Carolyn Gratton puts it: “true spiritual life begins with an awareness of our weakness.”

Our vulnerability could, therefore, make us develop a spiritual relationship with total dependence on God. The development and understanding of spirituality during adolescence could sustain character formation and the faith growth of the person.

James Fowler in his theory of faith development, places adolescence at the stage he calls “synthetic-conventional faith”. It is believed that young people at this stage have a plethora of information that comes to them from media, television, and the postmodern society. The external influences in most cases can generate tension and confusion and different forms of contradiction in the life of the adolescent. Fowler understands that, “a coherent faith orientation can guide young people through the various and sometimes incompatible experiences of their lives.” This is indeed a moment for young people to begin to synthesize the divergent worldviews, values, and beliefs which they have so far received.

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They could also develop a faith pattern that is coherent with each person’s identity, and perceptible conventional wisdom. Adolescents at this stage can synthesize their self-images, values, beliefs and faith stories. It is also an ideal formative stage that young people should “construct a balanced sense of self and their world: ideals and role models, attitudes and beliefs, values and commitments, which inspire their imagination into young adulthood and beyond.”

In Christianity, Jesus is regarded as the role model. As adolescents develop spiritually, they begin to relate to Jesus as their friend, and the one that understands them in their daily struggles. Friendship with Jesus is of great value for many Christian youth. Jesus is known to be the one in whom they can put their trust. Within the Catholic Church, I have found that Eucharistic adoration can serve as a basis for a personal encounter with Jesus. During Eucharistic adoration, prayers are offered and young people are led into worship and praise. Spiritual exercises such as adoration and scripture reading create an atmosphere where young people can express themselves and be led into an experience of inner healing and transformation.

2.2 Different Stages of Adolescent Spiritual and Religious Faith Development

In her work, *Integrating Religion and Spirituality into Counselling*, Marsha Frame examines the three stages of religious and spiritual development model as presented by Gordon Allport. Frame explains that Allport’s model was focused on “religious sentiments” that occur in three stages; raw credulity, satisfying rationalism, and religious maturity. The

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understanding here is that children do not yet have the cognitive capacity to understand properly their religious experiences. In the first stage of “raw credulity”, prepubescent children believe everything they hear about religion and spirituality, coming from parents and other authority figures.\textsuperscript{32} The understanding is that at this stage, a child is yet to develop a critical mind that can process and question complex subjects.

The second stage of faith development according to Allport is “satisfying rationalism”. This is the stage when “adolescents begin questioning their childhood beliefs, and might even reject their parent’s religious or spiritual values outright.”\textsuperscript{33} It is at this stage that young people begin to seek answers to the questions that bother them. There are some young people who would take complete departure from previously held religious beliefs. This is most often, a moment of faith crisis for young people. It is at this stage that young people need a non-judgmental spiritual care, and deeper level of catechetical education. I recall that I went through this stage in 1994 when I was eighteen. In my experience, I had doubts about the existence of God. On one occasion; I went into a Church and did not feel any sense of God. I eventually explained my faith struggle to a priest who was kind enough to guide me through that moment when I had doubts about God’s existence.

The final stage of religious sentiments begins at the end of adolescence. This is the stage of religious maturity. At this level, young people are able to maintain beliefs that are useful and meaningful to them, and can reject those beliefs that no longer seem relevant. It is considered that a person reaching this stage can practice religious faith with profound freedom, maturity and with deeper appreciation of the truth of the faith. There is always the

\textsuperscript{32} Marsha Frame. \textit{Integrating Religion and Spirituality into Counselling}. (California: Brooks and Cole, 2003), 37.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 36.
expectation that every person reaches this stage in their faith journey, otherwise there will be a lack of the capacity to deal with challenges during moments of faith crisis.

### 2.3 Dynamics of Adolescent Spiritual Development

Charles Shelton in his work *Adolescent Spirituality: Pastoral Ministry to High School and College Students*, attempts to highlight various aspects of Adolescent Spiritual development. Shelton, a priest and professional psychologist, with many years of experience as a High School Chaplain, seeks to integrate findings of developmental psychology and pastoral counselling to help deepen the understanding of the development of spirituality during adolescence. Shelton understands adolescent spirituality as personal responses to God’s call that takes place in prayer, and a person’s efforts to proclaim God’s kingdom.\(^{34}\)

Accordingly, Shelton outlines four major characteristics of adolescent spirituality:

1. **Christ-centredness**. This is the central characteristic of the teenager’s spiritual life, and it involves developing and deepening a relationship with Jesus Christ. Shelton explains that during the early years of adolescence, this is characterized by accepting Jesus as someone I can talk to about the growing question of self. During the middle and late adolescent years, this relationship takes on a more profound expression that is manifested through a deepening level of commitment, an affective experience of the Lord, and an evaluative stance in which the person of Jesus becomes the guiding principle for the

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adolescent’s moral decision and choices.\textsuperscript{35} The ultimate question is how the person of Jesus makes a difference in the life and relationship of the adolescent. Since an intimate relationship with Jesus is pivotal in the spiritual life of adolescents, there is the need for one to discover and develop that relationship. It is of necessity that youth ministers constantly seek to develop, and sustain the relationship between young people and Christ, fully aware of the centrality of that relationship in spiritual development and in the formation of faithful disciples.

2. \textit{Relational}. This characteristic of adolescent spirituality means that the youth’s personal relationship with Jesus is lived out, and realized in all relationships including family, peers, friends, and the community. According to Shelton, “Human relationships also enter the adolescent’s experience for spiritual growth, and this growth is concerned with ultimate meanings, values, but it is incarnated in human encounters and circumstances.”\textsuperscript{36} This then points to the knowledge that each experience that adolescents have with family, friends, and adults within the community could have significant effect on their spiritual growth.

3. \textit{Future Oriented}. This characteristic clearly brings adolescent spirituality from the present to the future. Adolescents are continually trying on new ideas, values, roles, and strategies that can be realized in the future. Shelton observes that “even though the future is by no means secure, adolescents are willing to explore and to attempt answers to life’s

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 337.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 9.
questions.” The expectation is that spiritual experiences of adolescents in the present moment should be oriented towards the future that awaits them.

4. Developmental. This characteristic identifies the various developmental stages of adolescents: physical, intellectual, emotional, sexual, and spiritual. This characteristic also specifies the need to draw insights and perspectives that will help adolescents to understand the scope of their spirituality. Shelton notes that, “Spirituality for adolescents needs to make use of these insights in order to enhance the adult’s understanding of his or her own spiritual growth.” The spirituality of young people could be deepened as they are led to encounter and understand various aspects of human life. An awareness of the developmental perspective of the person could enable adolescents to understand this process of their spiritual growth.

The four characteristics of adolescent spirituality presented by Shelton give insights to how young people can be more spiritually aware as they go through the process of spiritual growth. These Characteristics deepen our understanding of adolescent spirituality, and provide the connection between adolescents, the church and youth ministry.

Shelton further observes that adolescents are at a stage where questions of faith, the meaning of Jesus Christ, and one’s relationship with the larger community become more pressing and genuine. The spiritual and human needs for love, sharing, and relationship could become very intense at this stage. Both the teenager and their guides should be very attentive to these developmental changes. Prayer, as a means of becoming close friend with Jesus, should be discussed in the context of these developmental needs. In the practice of prayer,

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37 Ibid., 10.
38 Ibid., 10.
adolescents should be led always to maintain a spirit of deeper reverence for God. Reverence, which is key in the Ignatian spiritual exercises, is the capacity to be open, and to have a state of mind that allows a person to be truly present and respectful of another. Reverence, as a special appreciation for another, allows that person to enter our lives, and touch us in a special and profound way. Silence is an essential requirement for reverence to happen. At the centre of the spiritual life of the adolescent, it is important to find a balance between developing solitude for prayer, and honouring the adolescent’s developmental need for sharing in relationship and community.

The insights of Shelton could help to challenge the Christian Youth to be more spiritually aware as they walk the path of faith, and deeper Christian commitment. It is the understanding of Spirituality as abiding with Jesus that lays the foundation for a deeper relationship between the adolescent, the pastoral ministry, and the larger Christian community. However, it is unclear how these principles for the understanding and practice of spirituality during adolescence, as proposed by Shelton, could be applied in non-Christian youth programs, and for young people who have already abandoned faith due to the crisis that they are experiencing in their lives.

2. 4 Spirituality of Adolescents’ Passion

Kenda Dean found that “if desire represents the primary theological lens of adolescence, then the human desire for others is not simply or even primarily foundation for sexual intercourse; it is the impetus for life with God, marking all human beings as those God desires for companionship.”39 Dean further explains that “Teenagers seldom distinguish their

39 Kenda Dean, Practicing Passion: Youth and the Quest for a Passionate Church, 117.
desire for God from their desire for one another. As a result, falling in love at fifteen feels like being on Holy ground.\footnote{Ibid.} Human Intimacy is primarily about communion and attachment to the other, and not about sex. In this regard, Robert Kegan notes that “Teens may want to have sexual experience, but, odd as it sounds, they have no real need for genital penetration unless the culture has built a dazzling shrine around it.”\footnote{Robert Kegan. \textit{Over Our Heads}. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 64.} Unfortunately, postmodern culture is presenting young people with many confusing options, which provide no clear directions with regards to discipline, chastity, and self-control.

Kenda Dean believes that attachment relations “trump” sexuality, which is why adolescents, despite their abiding interest in genitalia, ultimately desire relationships that bestow fidelity and self-transcendence. The premature sexual activities among adolescents, according to Dean, could therefore signal a crisis in intimacy, not its fulfilment. It is very important that adolescents in all relationships be invited to be open to the Holy Spirit, who leads us to the experience of God. It is the Spirit of God that opens the reality for young people in such a manner that could bring clarity to the many layers and dimensions of what they would otherwise take for granted.

### 2.5 Necessity of Spiritual Activities for Adolescents

Adolescent spiritual development may seem like a foregone conclusion on the part of parish youth ministers. Some of the approaches or methods for trying to attain a more mature spirituality may \textit{not} be appropriate for young people, not because they are dangerous, but
because either the teenager is not developmentally ready or the youth minister is not properly trained to facilitate the experience.

Young people aspire to participate in regular spiritual activities together with their peers in the community. Programs such as retreats and camps could have positive effects on the spiritual development of young people. These youth-oriented spiritual activities could help young people to interact with each other, and be able to encourage one another in the faith journey that will result in a change of behavior, and the transformation of young people in the process of development.

Even though some young people can be exposed to negative influences during their growing years, it is, however, believed that participation in spiritual activities can help to expose them to values that could have positive effects on the formation of their character. Spiritual involvement can have a moderate deterrent effect on crime, and protect young people from the negative influence of drug abuse that is still prevalent in society today. On this note, James Nelson states that “the positive and protective effects of religious involvement persist even after ruling out possible confounding variables and self-selection factors. Some of the positive effects of religion might be indirect, as when religion causes people not to associate with drug users, thereby lowering the risk of drug abuse. This kind of indirect effect seems especially important in protecting against early or risky sexual behavior.”

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There is the need for communities to promote spiritual exercises that could help young people to rediscover their spiritual pathway, personal stability, and moral compass.\textsuperscript{43} Involvement in spiritual activities provides the basis for a deepening relationship with God in the youth. During church activities, retreat and recollection days, young people engage in prayer as a means of communicating with the transcendence. Constant prayer would lead a young person to an awareness of God’s presence, and to a deeper conversion of heart. Prayerful and meditative reading of the scriptures could also help discipline young minds as they continue to grow in intimacy with God. The experience of intimacy with God could ultimately lead to self-transcendence and freedom from the false sense of self.

By deepening the spiritual life of adolescents, they are at the same time given the support to deal with emotional issues like stress, anxiety, and depression. It is noticeable that attendance at church, and constant practice of spiritual and moral values, can assist young people to develop skills to cope with the different challenges in the process of growing up. Spiritual activities can help young people to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, and deal with suicidal thoughts and anti-social tendencies. Spiritual practices and guidance during adolescence, could also lead to balanced mental health, and behavioral change among adolescents. James Gollnick corroborates this idea when he states:

Religion in adolescence can be seen as part of a general coping pattern to deal with the paradoxes of the young person’s circumstances. Some of the typical adolescent paradoxes and conflicts are the need to be independent from parents while still being dependent upon them, being careful about sexual behavior, yet exploratory, believing in God, yet questioning the supernatural, and subscribing to is that religious faith while tending toward moral relativism.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 268.
\textsuperscript{44} James Gollnick. Religion and Spirituality in the Life Circle, 101.
The emphasis here is that religious faith if well received and practiced, could lay a solid foundation for the overall wellbeing of adolescents. It is therefore incumbent upon parents, teachers, spiritual guides and counsellors to help to promote the integration of spiritual values in youth ministry.

Most young people can be exposed to negative influences during the adolescent years. It is observed, however, that in many instances participation in spiritual activities can help adolescents to be exposed to values that could have positive effects on the formation of their character. Most adolescents find that spiritual involvement can have a moderate deterrent effect on crime, and protect them from the negative influence of drug abuse that is prevalent in present day society. On this note, James Nelson states that “the positive and protective effects of religious involvement persist even after ruling out possible confounding variables and self-selection factors. Some of the positive effects of religion might be indirect, as when religion causes people not to associate with drug users, thereby lowering the risk of drug abuse. This kind of indirect effect seems especially important in protecting against early or risky sexual behavior.”

Christian communities have made possible a network of spiritual activities that assist adolescents to find their spiritual pathway, and moral direction that promotes self-control and virtue, and spiritual experiences that help solidify moral commitments and constructive life practices, as well as positive role models.

Young people in postmodern society continue search for a spiritual home where they can abide and satisfy their spiritual quest. Unfortunately, some adolescents do venture into

46 Ibid.
new age practices, experiment on drugs and illicit sexual activities in an attempt to satisfy their spiritual hunger.

Young people should be made aware of the interiority where they can be present, trust, connect, share and grow in the relationship with God and the community. Intimacy with God is obviously the need of every person, and the youth should be guided to enter into that union. As most young people might not always be aware of that need, it is important that they are supported to reach this level of awareness through reflective and contemplative prayer. These spiritual activities for young people should always form an integral part of the family and community where young people live. In Sub Saharan Africa, most adolescents are unable to cope with challenges of growing up, and are known to come from conditions where spiritual activities and human values are lacking. It is therefore urgent that the family, as the basic unit of the society, create an atmosphere where young people can participate and be nurtured in well-meaning spiritual activities.
Chapter Three: Postmodern Adolescence in Nigerian Context

3.1 Nigeria in Focus

Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of the Nigerian Population

![Percentage Distribution of Nigerian Population](figure1.png)

Source: National Population Commission, 2009

3.1.1 Brief Socio-Political History of Nigeria

Nigeria has the largest population in Africa with over 170 million people (over 75% of which are aged 34 and below, according to the 2009 National Population Commission survey above) and approximately 250 ethnic groups. The Hausa-Fulani (predominantly northern Nigeria), Yoruba and Igbo are the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria.\(^{47}\) Archaeological discoveries have shown that Nigeria is one of the oldest locations of human existence. The official language is English but more than 500 native languages are also spoken. Average life expectancy is 47 years due to poor healthcare, living conditions, and

lack of access to clean water.\textsuperscript{48} There are various events in Nigerian socio-political history that have impacted on her citizens in contemporary era, notably the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970). The civil war erupted barely seven years after the Independence of Nigeria (October 1, 1960). The era in question was both good and evil. It was on one hand the time of peace, and on the other hand, the time of war. The words of Charles Dickens in his popular literature, \textit{The Tale of Two Cities} capture that social situation very well:

\begin{quote}
It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. It was the age of wisdom; it was the age of foolishness. It was the epoch of belief; it was the epoch of incredulity. It was the season of Light; it was the season of Darkness. It was the spring of hope; it was the winter of despair. We had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way--in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

During the Nigerian Civil War, the warlords were unevenly divided between the Nigerian camp (majority) and Biafran (defunct) camp (minority). The protagonist of the latter camp, the late Brigadier General Odumegwu Ojukwu, sought for the secession and subsequent establishment of the \textit{Republic of Biafra} (present South-East and South-South Nigeria). The supposed secession plan failed, and the Federal Military Government still held on to power after the war.\textsuperscript{50} This war era had a unique role in shaping Nigeria’s history. Many eyewitnesses and contemporaries during the Civil War recount that so many anomalies were born in the country during and after the war years. Armed robbery, for instance, was launched in the country as a result of an unprecedented and indiscriminate availability of arms to young people; the military masterminded the killings of the innocent and critics of

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Charles Dickens, \textit{A Tale of Two Cities} – Chapter 1 – The Period.
\textsuperscript{50} Statistics show that about a total of 1-3,000,000 Nigerians lost their lives during the Civil War. (See www.nigerian nation/Civil War).
the government of the day; the social gap between the rich and poor began to soar, as did many other social vices.

Since the post-cold war era, oil based revenues and the disbursement in the Niger Delta (the region that has oil, and contributes to over 80% of the country’s revenue) has led to massive protests and violence among youth. Young people have engaged in attacks against oil firms and workers, hostage-taking and kidnapping of oil workers, vandalizing oil pipelines, and detonating bombs. Tension in the public sphere has caused conflict among minority and majority groups, which has crippled national and social development. The youth's participation in violence is their way of expressing feelings of marginalization and that their voices are not heard in competing for resources. In this same light, it is also good to note that since 1966, the first military intervention and the first bloody coup to be recorded in the history of the nascent democracy, military dictatorship was the order of the day until recently (in 1999), when there was a dramatic transition of power to the democratically elected government.\footnote{Currently, Nigeria just elected a former military dictator, Muhammad Buhari (1983-1985) as the next President of the country. He takes over the position on May 29, 2015. The election has been internationally and most widely acclaimed as the most credible since the independence of Nigeria in 1960. This political feat is indeed a ray of hope for the continent, country and citizens.}

From the foregoing, it can be argued with certainty that the 1960s was the period of the ushering in of \textit{Nigerian postmodern culture} – virtually the same era where unprecedented social changes also began to occur in Europe and America. However, the peculiarity of the Nigerian situation lies in the fact that the other continents of the world had attained a reasonable level of progress in meeting the basic needs of their citizens, whereas Nigeria (and countries in Africa) had their independence during the said era – up till now. They are still grappling with the art of governance due to the ravages of the wars and military interference.
with political leadership. We shall further highlight another salient point to note about Nigeria – values and the saga of colonialism.

3.1.2 Clash of Values in Nigeria’s Colonial History

Africa is unique. This is seen in her culture and way of life. Thus, there is no better phrase to describe the advent of colonialism more than *a clash of cultures*. In his Nobel Peace Prize Award literature, *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe (a Southern Nigerian) vividly describes this clash of cultures and values, which could fully illustrate what colonialism has done to the entire continent, but more particularly, Nigeria. A summary of the story suffices here.

In *Things Fall Apart* (fiction), the main character, Okonkwo, an influential/respectable leader and a ferocious custodian of the African culture, exhibited certain laudable qualities that made him an integral part of his community. This won him the admiration of all as he conscientiously dealt with personal and communal issues. All these were the fruits of his initiation into manhood in the community. Undergoing the *Rite of Passage*, Okonkwo understood what was important to his people. He became aware of the difference between individual and community affairs. He became a human being living for his community. However, over the years, Okonkwo became an extremely volatile man; he was apt to explode at the slightest provocation. To aggravate his mind state, on one festival day, Okonkwo’s gun accidentally exploded and killed an innocent man. This automatically sentenced him to exile.

During Okonkwo's exile, he received *sad news* about a *white man* who spoke to his people about Christianity. Okonkwo believed that the man spoke nonsense, but his son, Nwoye,

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52 We shall examine this aspect of African value system later in this chapter.
was captivated and became a convert to Christianity. The Christian missionaries built a church on a piece of land donated to them by the village leaders. Then they started a school. Nwoye left his father's hut and moved to Umuofia so he can attend the school. When Okonkwo returned to Umuofia, he saw that the village had changed dramatically during his absence. Many of his friends were now Christians. The white men had built a prison; they had established a government court of law, where people were tried for breaking the white man's laws; and they also employed natives of Umuofia. Some members of the community liked the changes and developments. Mr. Brown, the white missionary, respected the traditions of the people. He (Mr. Brown) told Okonkwo that Nwoye, who had taken the name Isaac, was attending a teaching college. Nevertheless, Okonkwo was unhappy about the changes in Umuofia. After Mr. Brown became ill and was forced to return to his homeland, Reverend James Smith became the new head of the Christian Church. But Reverend Smith was nothing like Mr. Brown; he was intolerant of clan customs and was very strict.

One day, violence arose after an overzealous convert to Christianity, unmasked an egwugwu (a traditional masquerade depicting the culture of the people – a taboo to unmask). In retaliation, the egwugwu burned his attacker’s compound and then destroyed the Christian church because the missionaries had caused the people many problems. The men were jailed until they paid a very big fine. In the process of settling the fracas, Okonkwo was infuriated; he, suddenly, jumped forward and beheaded the man in charge of the messengers with his machete. When none of the other clansmen attempted to stop the messengers who escaped, Okonkwo realized that they will never go to war and that Umuofia will surrender. Everything had fallen
apart for Okonkwo (from where the classic piece derives its title); he committed suicide.\textsuperscript{53} He couldn’t win!

Looking at this story from Okonkwo’s side, there was a clash of cultures, and he couldn’t withstand such a \textit{change} in his ancestral \textit{sacrosanct} way of life. This is a prosaic form of Nigeria’s history of socio-political crises and problem of reconstruction (a common phenomenon plaguing the entire continent of Africa).

\textbf{3.1.3 Challenges and Crises}

The effects of colonialism and socio-political reconstruction of Nigeria could be felt in all aspects of her socio-political life. However, we shall concentrate more on what pertains to the youth and the family. One of the challenges and crisis is in the area of moral values. There is a mass compromise of human values, like the virtue of chastity, and this has led to the abuses of human sexuality. Most of our youth are faced with sexually indecent activity with a view to making ends meet. They come from poor families and economically deprived societies. Thus, the economically stronger members of society abuse their rights with the power of money and riches. The predisposing dangers faced by children, condemned to hawking on the streets in our towns, go to confirm the fact that the poor economic situation of our countries in Africa serves as one of the primary factors that engender the sexual abuses of our female children. Many anti-life corporations, like USAID and others, sponsor programs that are inimical to the proper understanding of the dignity of the human sexuality. They

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encourage the use of contraceptives and propagate information that trivializes the creative and *unitive* purpose of human sexual activity.\(^{54}\)

We are in an era where the slogan “if you cannot beat them, join them” appears enticing. Many do not accept immoral behaviors as fundamentally sinful. They have lost the sense of sin. The lack of proper education on sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS has led to the destruction of the bright future of our young people. The family, Church, schools and government have not taken seriously this aspect of education that is geared towards enlightening humanity on the effects of these diseases, and how to diagnose or control them.\(^{55}\)

HIV infection rates among youth vary according to gender, region, education, marital status and other factors. Gender norms constrain young women from controlling their reproductive and sexual lives. The highest rates of infection happen in the Southeast part of the country, lowest in the Northeast. Urban areas have the higher rates than rural places of residency. Youth with little or no education comprise 1.3% of infected youth, as the cost of education is too high and unaffordable, especially for young women in rural areas who still hold on to cultural norms, and traditional moral values.

In contrast; those with higher levels of education comprise 4.7%. Prevalence of contraction was higher among youth, who had never been married, at 2.6%, in contrast to those who were married, at 1.8%. Premarital sex is common, even though it is considered a taboo in many ethnic groups. Youth who had previous education and testing for HIV/AIDS

\(^{54}\) Chris Umoh, “*Human Sexuality in Contemporary Africa,*” in the *Oracle, June 2008,* (62-88).

\(^{55}\) Ibid.
had higher rates of STD contraction, in contrast to those who had no awareness of HIV/AIDS.\textsuperscript{56}

Another deplorable condition in Nigeria is the \textit{Boko Haram} insurgency that has affected the lives of young people and their families. It is a condition that is calling for urgent action, and an appropriate pastoral response. Boko Haram, which means “Western education is forbidden,” was founded in 2002 by an Islamist cleric named Mohammed Yusuf, in response to Nigeria’s democratic transition, nationalism and Western influence. Boko Haram has as its official name: \textit{Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad}, which means “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad.” Members are known to make reference to the Islamic verse that states, “Anyone who is not governed by what Allah has revealed is among the transgressors.”

In November 2013, the United States government designated Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organization. Boko Haram has links to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and is responsible for killing thousands of people.\textsuperscript{57} As at January 2015, Boko Haram is known to have seized swathes of territory in Nigeria’s northeast, and has killed more than 13,000 people, displaced 1.5 million people, and destroyed churches and mosques.\textsuperscript{58}

The abduction of more than 200 school girls in Nigeria in April 2014 was a terrible attack that affected the lives of Nigerian youth and families. The entire world cried out for the


return of the girls to no avail. Only a few of the girls have been able to escape from their captivity. Boko Haram has stubbornly continued to attack young lives by targeting schools in its north-eastern stronghold with recklessness.\textsuperscript{59} The Nigerian government has been weak in the response to this menace. As a result of the Boko Haram insurgency, and the seeming negligence of the government’s obligation to protect, care and nurture the youth, some 10 million young Nigerians are presently not in schools. Most of these young people are girls being subjected to torture and many forms of violence. It is quite frustrating that, instead of learning to read and develop their potential, young women are abducted and married off in their teenage years. The young men, on the other hand, are often brainwashed, and then recruited into terrorist ranks, thereby perpetuating a cycle of poverty and instability.

As Boko Haram attacks continue in Nigeria, the group is building an insurgency that has affected the human development, and spiritual growth of young people. Adolescents taken away from their schools are being exposed to physical and psychological sufferings and abuses. They also face the risk of being uprooted from their homes and communities, internally displaced as refugees, and deprived of education and recreation as a result of being child soldiers. Children in Nigeria, being recruited as child soldiers by Boko Haram, are denied access to education and are killed or injured indiscriminately.\textsuperscript{60}

Currently, it is believed that Boko Haram controls about 20,000 square miles in Borno and Yobe States. The International Rescue Committee estimates that as many as 1,000

\textsuperscript{59}Boko Haram’s Impact on Nigeria in the Economist, March 9th 2014. On Wednesday, April 29, 2015, American Broadcasting Corporation reported the rescue of some girls and women from the grips of Boko Haram in Simbasa forest in Maiduguri-Nigeria though it has been speculated that the 200 Chibok girls are not part of the rescued. See ABC7online.org//World News.

refugees a week are crossing the Nigeria-Niger border into Niger’s Diffract region. Four out of five of these refugees are women and girls, who feel helpless in the face of Boko Haram’s violent attacks. In addition, over 100 camps have been set up for internally displaced people across northern Nigeria, with some camps spilling over into Abuja, the country’s capital. Beyond the widespread displacement, many children are killed or orphaned by these terrorist acts. Most children in the affected areas find themselves severely traumatized, while many are wounded or forced to live on the streets. Some of the attacks have been on schools in areas such as Gujba, Buni Yadi, and Potiskum. This has led to many schoolchildren being killed, and most schools being destroyed or shut down.

According to UNESCO, Nigeria now has the world’s highest number of out-of-school children, due mainly to the terrorists’ activities. This is a major area of concern to The Global Fund for Children (GFC) and its partners in Nigeria. GFC is committed to supporting small community-based organizations that use innovative, culturally appropriate, and participatory methods to find sustainable solutions to local challenges.61 These and other collective efforts offer some rays of hope to the country, and young people in particular.

3.1.4 Hope and Prospect in Postmodern Nigeria

Nigeria is a very religious country, with the dominant religions being Islam and Christianity. There are other religious minority groups – African Traditional Religion, Judaism, and New Age. Young people are often willing to identify with their religious

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groups. This is a ray of hope. In addition, the Federal and State Governments respectively have the youth in their agenda and budget every year. Nigerian Olusegun Obasanjo, former President, believes that identifying and addressing issues that would enhance the lives of the youth would improve overall national development. He understands that youth constitute Nigeria's only hope for a real future. The Nigerian government characterizes youth as ambitious, enthusiastic, energetic and promising. They are considered vulnerable in society because of the rapid pace of change they experience at this time in their lives. A National Youth Development Policy was created and designed to advocate Youth Development.

The 2009 National Youth Policy views youth welfare as vital to the Nigerian nation and its socioeconomic development. This policy is seen as a youth participation project, versus a project that identifies problems and needs. In that way, the policy recognized five priority areas that need to be addressed to enhance the lives of youths. These include the impact of globalization, access to and use of communication technology, the impact of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS, intergenerational issues in an aging society, and youth perpetrators and victims of armed conflict. The Policy is guided by several national and international policy initiatives, including National Policies for education, gender, health, population for sustainable development, and the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS). The Millennium Development Goals, the African Youth Charter, and other international agreements further guide policy goals.

The Policy prioritizes the difficulties young women have faced throughout history. Some women experience less occupational opportunity, physical violence and abuse, and labour exploitation. They suffer negative consequences from teenage marriages and pregnancies. The Policy seeks to protect their rights and promote female youths' interests and
goals. By empowering females, restoring their dignity, establishing programs to end gender-based discrimination and promoting their rights, Nigerian Youth Policy places emphasis on the needs of young women. The National Youth Policy has adopted a program for the young who are physically challenged. The Federal Republic of Nigeria believes that persons with disabilities have rights that should be protected by the government. The program promotes awareness of the struggles of the physically challenged, removing negative attitudes, while empowering the young men and women with disabilities.  

Educating youth in Nigeria is equally prioritized with the goal of reducing poverty, inequality, and overall increasing economic growth. Now, primary (basic) education is a requirement for every child in Nigeria to receive a minimum of nine years of free education. The government's dominant role is to provide funds from the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), and Education Trust Fund (ETF). Some of the problems Nigerian youth face in education are biased access to junior secondary, and senior secondary education for the poor, and the need to adjust the school curriculum to focus on the transition from school to labor economics. The National Youth Policy has implemented a variety of focuses in the hope of improving overall quality of education. These focal points include: development of critical fields of knowledge in applied science and technology, technical skills, vocational skills in agriculture, and promotion of the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

The policy developed leadership roles and life training skills which seek to keep youth focused on education, politics and overall youth agency. The youth are encouraged to partake in a variety of programs including: gang related violence prevention, extra-curricular

62 Ibid.
competitive and recreational game activities through organizations. A student union was launched, encouraging leadership roles for youth and democratic culture. Thus, all hope is not lost for the continent, Nigeria, and the young people in particular. The family tradition in Nigeria is also another area where hope for the future lies.

3.1.5 Family and Life Style

We cannot fully exhaust the core facts and values about Nigeria without at least making mention of the family. Most Nigerians live in extended large families with separate living quarters. A Nigerian child may be breastfed until the age of two. Nigerian mothers believe there is a bond created between mother and child by breastfeeding. Indeed, this bond is very strong in a typical African family. Educating children is regarded as a community responsibility in some ethnic groups. However, since parenting styles differ among cultures in Nigeria, children adapt to one of three roles, depending upon their culture: authoritarian, authoritative, or permissive. Both boys and girls learn to be responsible and hard-working at age 5 (it is not a crime in Nigeria to spank a child if he/she proves to be incorrigible). Boys contribute to routine tasks outside the home such as helping with the livestock, and helping in the fields. Girls contribute inside the home by cooking and cleaning. Elders tend to value boys higher than girls for their physical abilities and their ancestry. First, fifth, tenth, and fifteenth birthdays are marked by a large gathering for socializing and food and drink consumption as a traditional celebration. Nigerian urban youth develop romantic relationships that are generally kept secret, but couples are increasingly receptive to meeting publicly. Although romantic relationships often lead to marriage, cohabitation prior to
marriage is being increasingly accepted in urban areas. Romantic couples tend to save money during this time.  

### 3.2 Postmodern Youth in Nigeria

Until recently, adolescents (and youth) were seen as a healthy segment of population and received low priority for services. But biology and society bring on additional health problems; those resulting from unprotected sex, violence and substance abuse. … Today, people are reaching puberty earlier, marrying later and spending a longer time between childhood and adulthood. Young people – a group with special health needs – find their health needs neglected or ignored.

The question looming large on our minds is what was the youth condition in Nigeria before now?

#### 3.2.1 Nigerian Youth Before Postmodernism

According to D. S. Umoh, the *Rites of Passage* belonged to the traditional African society as an indispensable organ which created and recreated the community by rejuvenating its members, thereby assuring its continuity and well-being. The term is a technical one used for various initiation rites. It could be used interchangeably with the word “initiation.” The exercise was categorized into three broad groups. The first one was the general initiatory rites

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63 Ibid.


65 Dominic Umoh. “Rites of Passage: Their Forgotten Values and Significance” Koinonia Vol. 1, June 2000, 84. A similar masterpiece of work is presented with a neighboring background to that of D. S. Umoh. The work is an earlier version of the traditional institution of moral values among the Efik-Africans. See Joseph Ekarika, Maidenhood: Boudoir Mysteries in Traditional Puberty Initiations; An African Preparation for A Chaste Christian Wedlock – A Challenge to Modern Juveniles (Rome:Tipografia Citta Nuova Della Panom, 1984). This unique story as quoted in this paper was vividly retold in Chris Umoh’s published article, “Human Sexuality in Contemporary Africa” (2008).
(transitional rites), which was compulsory for every member of a given community.\textsuperscript{66} The second was not compulsory for all. It depended on the free choice of members (initiation into secret cult – not a diabolical one but a group which helped to build up the community sometimes through constructive criticisms and checks and balances). And the third one dealt with the rites of initiation into the priestly cult.

The rites that concern our discussion here are the initiatory rites. These rites were for the boys and girls. They were administered to them at puberty. The rite for girls, known as fattening, had much to teach about the African notion of sexuality. Through these rites, a girl was initiated into womanhood. These rites were very important for the healthy preservation of the community. Fattening was organized to fall within the initial critical period of the girl’s life, that is, at the outset of menstruation (menarche). In this way, she was taught the necessary measures she needed for handling life’s problems and personal crises. This instruction was important to the girl because at this stage she had started to receive certain signs in her body or hear a language in her body, which she did not understand. She was usually worried about them. Thus, fattening was an institution that helped her to handle this problem.

It was an institution that prepared the girl to move from girlhood to womanhood. It prepared the girl for a responsible married life. The period for this exercise depended on circumstances. It could be one year or two depending on the circumstances. The age bracket of the girl was 14 and 15. She had to be separated from the outside world and from normal life. The most important aspect of this exercise was the instruction the girl received at this

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid. These rites include naming ceremonies, puberty rites, initiation into age groups and of course burial rites.
period. The initiation was to reveal the mysteries surrounding the sacred, life and sexuality. This initiation offered the girl a conducive environment, not only for sex education, but all what concerns the marital home. She was taught the secrets and sacredness of human sexuality and fertility, child’s care, and the customs of the land. The teaching was done orally using short stories, folktales, myths, riddles, songs, proverbs, wise sayings, recreational activities, the passing on of oral tradition, and the expectations of the marital life.

All these were tools for wise living found only among adults and experienced Africans. The individual had to relate these stories to real life situations to judge the most appropriate decision to take at each instance. The nature of the stories made for good moral instruction, not like some of our contemporary films and videos, which present the wicked and immoral as models or stars and destroy the virtuous, thwart justice and go undisturbed about these issues.

In African traditional folk-stories, the righteous may suffer, justice may be threatened, the poor may be oppressed, but evil can never triumph over good, injustice over justice. Such stories were narrated to young girls in ufok nkuho – the fattening room. These gave flavor to the moral life of the community. In a typical African society, sexual relations are only allowed when one is legitimately married. Thus, pre-marital sex was not allowed. In fact, at this stage and until marriage, a girl was presumed a virgin. This circumstance made for promotion of a high level of sexual morality in Africa. It was done for the benefit of the entire community.

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From the aforementioned, it is clear that there was a strong sanction against those who indulged in sex for selfish reasons in Africa. The case of teenage pregnancy was outrageous. The value of human sexuality was very much located in human fertility. The stress was put on the life-giving dimension of human sexuality (procreative dimension of it).

B. Kisembo accounts that things have fallen apart in contemporary African understanding of sexual morality. The initiation rites of our young people have is dying. It is then clear that after such a fall, a vacuum has been created in the mind of people, which needs to be filled with a new way of looking at sexual morality. This vacuum has been taken over by current philosophical systems of postmodern society. One such system is Consequentialism; an aspect of it is utilitarianism, which is a secular ethic that proposes the negative moral theory that there is only one good that people should pursue in life. That good is none other than pleasure. This implies that the individual should pursue in his or her life the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. In this pursuit, sexuality has become a thing that is done only for fun. It is separated from its sacred character. This indeed is worrisome.

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3.2.2 The Present Conditions of Nigerian Youth

Figure 2: Proportion of Young People who are Sexually Experienced by Age 15 and 18 Years in Nigeria, 2008

This is indeed the real condition of the adolescents in particular, and their families in Nigeria. The impact of postmodern conditions is enormous. Appearing like a lightening

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70 Even though the included statistics are female-oriented, the young male is not left out in wayward and malevolent behaviors. Vices like alcoholism, cultism, sex addiction, etc. are observed among young men as well.
within a twinkle of an eye, the harm is done, the result and casualty unimaginable. The statistic presented here is only a demonstration of the status quo of the adolescents in Nigeria. Analyzing this data, one readily observes the high rate of teenage marriage in the northern part of the country where Islam dominates compared to the south where Christianity dominates. The utilitarian ethics of seeking pleasure in everything we do has been extended to include the way we relate sexually to one another. Thus, the search for the morality of human sexuality in Africa has become urgent. Sexual morality in contemporary Africa needs to be re-defined and re-emphasized. This is already a devastating impact on postmodern youth in Nigeria.

3.3 Impact of Postmodern Conditions on Youth and Family

3.3.1 Negative Wave of Globalization and Secular Culture

The wind of globalization which has coalesced disparate nations into one global village is in no small measure the reason beneath the cultural erasure of peoples' identities and the gradual disintegration of their cultural values. Two major catalysts responsible for these developments are: urbanization and copycat consumer technology. Over the years, following the political independence of the dependent African nations, people have emigrated from the villages to urban areas, owned TV sets and have unlimited access to the Internet, the print and electronic media. Since then things have never been the same. People have copied and assimilated almost everything, not just the good but weird and alien lifestyles that are so much at variance with their cultural values; and they have accepted these as their own. As a result of these, value systems have changed, money has replaced respect for elders and leaders have lost their voices. Foreign elements have polluted Africa, and as Chinua Achebe would say, “Things have fallen apart and the centre can no longer hold.”

Largely, what could be seen as challenges for young in the Nigerian context could equally be applied the world over. Some of the tools of globalization, as they relate to the

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adolescents and their family highlighted above, are the mass media and the internet. It is interesting to note that a child in the kindergarten in Nigeria now knows what is happening in the United States and Canada (for example)! The grandparents and parents are at a loss. This raises a question on how capable parents can protect the integrity of their family in these postmodern times. Nowadays parents cannot regulate and filter the unlimited pieces of information which their kids are uploading and downloading from websites. The parents may not have the money to afford a television and electrical generator because of the high cost of maintenance in Nigeria, but their young child, in one way or the other, has money to buy iPod, smart phone or similar gadgets, relating freely with the world while the parents remain ignorant and uninformed about the whole issue.

The secular society or culture in which the young person lives in the contemporary society is a wounding culture. Paul Ritt explains that our contemporary culture is indifferent at best and hostile at worst, to the prospects of her citizens. Its citizens are shaped more by secular values than they are by the gospel values of Jesus Christ. Our young people in this situation need to learn more in-depth about our primordial culture: its values, its preferences, its trends, especially its heart.\(^{72}\) The essentials of the moral values of ancient Africa remain the same; the only difference is the changing circumstance and method.

### 3.3.2 Identity Crises

Another impact of postmodern conditions on youth and family is identity crisis. We have seen that the abandonment of the rites of passage (without an adequate replacement) has led Africans into the crisis of loss of identity and basic human values including the value of human sexuality. Families and their young members are both at the crossroad of identity. In

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\(^{72}\) Paul Ritt, “Three Challenges for Seminary and On-going Formation,” Origins 34 (June 2004), 77.
discussing issues of identity crisis in Africa, Tawana Kupe draws an analogy about *multiple identities* (a common phenomenon) in Africa. Multiple identities have something to do with the fact that the distinction between the rural and the urban in Africa is not very sharp in many aspects. The interaction between rural and urban people is very high. The rural areas are associated with origins, roots and identity. This identification is problematic because in many cases land dispossession during the colonial era displaced many people from their ancestral lands. In fact, among a large majority there is an existence in both places. Urban people still maintain rural homes in order to supplement their meager urban wages and also because the urban area is still seen as a place of employment rather than permanent residence.\(^7\)

Drawing a parallel with the above analysis, it thus follows that the postmodern young men and women especially those in modern social systems like schools but who happen to come from a poor rural background, are confused with regards to their family and place of origin. This is because the interaction between them with diverse backgrounds (sometimes extremely rich versus very poor) is very common nowadays. The poor child seems to be confused as to why the family is not as rich as the other, which could explain why a child from a *good* family later joins a gang, and then becomes a terrorist in the society.

### 3.3.3 Re-defining Freedom

Still, another impact of postmodern conditions on young people and their families borders on freedom. It is a fact that the world is becoming *smaller and wider* – smaller in the sense of globalization, and wider in the sense of varied nature of experiences. Now, much

emphasis is laid on human freedom and rights. Thus, postmodern youth and parents in Nigeria would have to understand the true meaning of freedom.

Freedom does not mean doing what one wants the way one wants it. That ideology is the wish of many contemporary adolescents. This is essentially rooted in the self—a self that has no other guide except it’s self—and is set up over against all other realities in the universe. This type of freedom would mean being a god unto oneself. This has nothing to do with the biblical notion of freedom. The biblical notion of freedom is not self-centred. It is not rooted in autonomous self. It is a gift that comes through an encounter with the living and true God Who calls us out of the house of servitude. This notion of freedom involves discovering my identity as one among others, as part of a people. It is not individualistic. It flows from a shared life. In this way, the other—God or neighbour—is not seen as obstacles to my freedom but that which makes my freedom possible because freedom is a consequence of a certain kind of relationship.74

Freedom does not operate in a moral vacuum. Once this happens, it becomes meaningless and if each choice is as good as every other, there is nothing worth living or striving for. In such a situation, society decays.75 In fact, to be truly free, we must liberate ourselves from illusions and unruly behaviours. Freedom is not addiction. In the words of Paul Ritt, “addiction is one of the wounds of our secular culture. These include addictions to alcohol and other drugs, to sex, to the internet, to work, to the denial of truth, among others.”76 These addictions have their root in the widespread environment of fear and insecurity. Paul Ritt suggests that the use of the tools of family-of-origin assessment, sexual-history inventories, and regular forums-for-discussion on chastity be used in the pastoral care of the youth. All these should be done in honesty, sensitivity and appropriate confidentiality in order to help the adolescent to grow in the knowledge and freedom about their humanity.


sexuality and morality.\textsuperscript{77} This awareness should help to broaden the vision and mission of the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON), as part of the efforts to evangelize young people.

3.4 Prospects of the Catholic Youth Ministry in Nigeria

3.4.1 The Establishment of the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria

The young should become the first apostles of the young, in direct contact with them, exercising the apostolate by themselves among themselves, taking account of their social environment; “they found it difficult to fit into most of the existing adult dominated parish organizations. Most began to claim they could get on very well on their own, and went to Church only on Sundays. Some began to claim they knew all about the faith, had for long experienced it all and no longer believed in it.”\textsuperscript{78}

The Catholic Youth Ministry was formed to actualize the above dream of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). History records, following the concern of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), that the Catholic Youth of Nigeria celebrate the International Youth Year (IYY) declared by the United Nations in 1985. Several meetings between Chaplains responsible for youth affairs, and Youth leaders from the various dioceses of Nigeria, were held to plan for a National Catholic Youth Rally still in that same year (1985). This year, therefore, marked a profound development in the perspective of the Nigerian Church’s effort to reach out to her youth in a more concrete way. It is quite obvious so far, that each diocese had her youth program independently and locally prior to 1985; now it is more coordinated from the parish to the national levels.

The Church had always been accused of focusing more on the wisdom of elders, and neglecting the enthusiasm, energies and potentials of the young. Of course, the Church had


\textsuperscript{78} See cyonanniversary.blogspot.com/history (Accessed April 30, 2015).
demonstrated concern for youth through her education efforts in the establishment of schools, and encouragement given to such school-based bodies, such as the Young Catholic Students Movement (YCSM) and the Nigerian Federation of Catholic Students (NFCS). This encouragement was, however, seen to be incomplete, as the parish, the basic forum of ecclesial and apostolic activity, received less attention in the Youth apostolate effort.

On the socio-religious level, young people cannot easily find their role within the Church especially within the present parish structures. They do not feel involved in the parish, where almost everything is done by and for adults. There is hardly any option for the young, and if there is, it comes last which means that it is not a priority. On passing out from school, therefore, the young could not feel as if they belonged and involved, within the context of their experiences. Many even were inclined or tempted to reject God, or lose meaning in life, or begin seeking new models in pseudo-charismatic movements, or begin drifting to other religious persuasions, or engaging in drugs and other ills.79

Another factor, very much related to the overconcentration on the school based youth apostolate at the detriment of the parish based, that led many to form the opinion that the Church had neglected the youth, was the takeover of the Church schools by the government (during most of the military dictatorial era in Nigeria’s political history). It seemed as though the Church had been incapacitated in that aspect and with less attention than was previously focused on the parish youth apostolate. The opinion that there was Church-neglect of the youth apparently received overwhelming confirmation. The takeover of Church schools by the government, a deliberate policy launched at a World Islamic Festival held in the early

79 Ibid.
1970s, was aimed at the dubious destruction of Christianity in Nigeria, under the guise of improving on the standard of education by some Muslim dictators.

In the Catholic Diocese of Ikot Ekpene (the writer’s home diocese), the Catholic Youth Organization has a very viable program which rolls over from year to year. The Organization always has her annual Youth Week both at the Parish, Deanery and Diocesan levels. At such times, the youth participate in Scripture reading, quizzes, prayer and sacramental sessions, and other retreat seminars. They compete in religious and sporting events, and experienced experts are invited to give talks on some areas of their lives. Each month, there are Youth Rallies or Encounters at various Parishes. It is crystal clear, then, that the youth in Nigeria have some level of pastoral care. Yet, much still needs to be done, especially in the vicarious and peculiar circumstances of the youth today.

3.4.2 The Urgent Need for Effective Pastoral Response to Nigerian Youth

The importance of education of our young people in virtues before they enter into adulthood is emphasized in the traditional African life.\(^{80}\) This education is urgent before young people come to take their responsible position of leadership in the community. In the area of human sexuality, education in the virtue of self-control and chastity is very necessary in our HIV/AIDS infected continent, Africa. The rapid spread of the disease poses moral and pastoral demand on every African in particular, and every human person in general. With all these in mind, it is our conviction that African traditional moral values, when rekindled with the light of the Gospel, will effectively promote sexual morality and integral health among

\(^{80}\) Dominic Umoh, “Rites of Passage: Their Forgotten Values and Significance,” 89.
Africans. This will imply the need, not only to emphasize the ethics of chastity, but also to stress the importance of virtues like justice, fidelity, self-care and prudence.\textsuperscript{81}

Whenever one cultivates the capacity for love and reverence, for himself/ herself and the other, the individual is building the foundation for the virtue of chastity. One of the preliminary stages of chastity is modesty. It flows from the perspective of gratitude for one’s masculinity or one’s femininity, and it expresses itself in mutual reverence and shared responsibility.\textsuperscript{82} This means that the key to chastity in the youth’s way of life is always the cultivation of reverent mutual love, rational self-control and integrating the sexual expression of oneness into totality of reciprocal love.\textsuperscript{83}

Thus, there is utmost need for our youth pastoral ministry to be structured in such a way that it responds to this moral and deep spiritual need of the postmodern African youth. Here is the central issue in youth ministry – faith formation. Faith formation needs enough muscle to focus the youth more on the lives of others, especially those in need, and less on themselves and the satisfaction of their wanton desires. Any faith that remains a matter of duty, of fulfilling certain requirements or expectations, of begrudging obedience to what one has been told, or acting out of a sense of obligation does not work, especially not over the long haul. Unfortunately, this is where the postmodern Nigerian youth find themselves – shallow and superficial only – \textit{sheepishly} following the church, and not internalizing and integrating the faith into real life. Our faith can only become what it is meant to be when we

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 112.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Bernard Haring, \textit{The Virtue of an Authentic Life} (Bandra: St Paul Press, 1995), 17.
\end{itemize}
realize how magnificently Christ is in us. And, of course, Christ should be the ultimate model of formation in this age.

Again, human sexuality is a very meaningful aspect of our human development. It is what defines the human person. It has to do with intimacy in friendship and union in marriage. This form of love is an expression of our capacity for friendships. It makes us who we are, namely beings created in need of one another or beings-in-relation. In other words, it is a fulfillment of the biblical injunction of the book of Genesis, “it is not good for a man to be alone.” It is good to note here that this capacity for going into relationship with one another, in the sense mentioned here, is gravely compromised in our contemporary society. Many factors like trivialization of the human body have come to inhibit our ability to enter into relationship. We are now clearly faced with symptoms of a wounded culture in the area of human sexuality. The idea of complementarily between man and woman has been heavily attacked by contemporary writers on human sexuality. This should be incorporated largely into pastoral programs for the youth. Youth pastoral care, which is born in our culture, would acknowledge how the ancient taboos on sexual matters have affected the adults, who seem to be shy in discussing such matters with the youth. Thus, there is great need for an approach to Youth ministries which is both diagnostic and didactic. When our young people have their sexual moral life under control, other aspects of life will naturally fall in their respective places. Sex was once worth waiting for, why not now?

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86 Genesis 2: 18, (African Bible).
For warring and violent areas of Nigeria, a firm pastoral care is a great need. The young people growing in such environments face the crisis of faith and personal freedom. They might be brainwashed into believing in the utilitarian culture of short-cuts. As Boko Haram adherents continue to criticize western education, any youth could easily be lured into this unwholesome culture. Thus, the pastoral care that is community-based and educationally-friendly could be encouraged. The life stories of adults in the faith, and pastors, could be a great source of inspiration and motivation for the young, who would have a balanced view about life and faith. The experience of struggling and staying open to God, believing that one’s ambition is not hidden from Him should be shared, to strengthen the young mind, who would understand that “your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering” (1 Peter 5:9). A more personal approach could help in this regard. Similar pastoral cares, which address the young people directly, could be put in place in all levels of the faith life. These would definitely have a lasting effect on postmodern youth and future generations in Nigeria.

In this chapter, we have examined the impact of postmodern conditions on the youth and families in Nigeria. However gloomy it might appear, there is still great hope for a better future.
Chapter Four: Fostering the Spiritual Development of Young People Through Pastoral Care Ministry

4.1 Pastoral Ministry with Young People

4.1.1 Goal of Youth Pastoral Care Ministry

Many priests today feel concerned about, and dissatisfied with their pastoral impact on young people. They fear that in the view of a fairly significant number of young people, they are in many ways irrelevant. Young people appear increasingly indifferent to the priest and often confused about his role in the community. While many priests recognize this urgent need to create effective and developing methods for pastoral contact with young people, they wonder when, where and how this could be done. They point to the fact that young people are never at home when they are on “visitation”. They appear indifferent to religion in the formal setting of the post primary classroom, and bored in Church. Such individual experiences of priests are highlighted by surveys and statistics.\(^8\)

In the above observation, Walter Forde clearly expresses the lack of pastoral care of young people. In Nigeria, there is a form of indifference when observing the attitude of young people as they develop. This then shows the urgent need for effective pastoral methods of care for the youth. Young people in postmodern Nigeria need special attention, both from the adult community, and the Church in particular. In the Church’s circle, this attention is categorically known as pastoral care.

Pastoral Care is understood to be the ministry of compassionate presence, nurturing growth toward wholeness, modeled on Jesus’ care for people, especially those hurting and in need. Pastoral care provides guidance to young people as they grow, “providing scaffolding while they build character and discern their vocation. It equips them to deal practically and prayerfully with life situations, fostering the link between spirituality and decision making. It

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promotes life-giving choices, including those around sexuality, problem solving and relationships."  

Pastoral Care deeply involves outreach in the service of compassion; loving the individual in every situation. It requires personal and direct support for young people, especially listening to them in a spirit of ongoing companionship. Pastoral Care Ministry encourages regular access to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. Pastoral Care creates networks of support for young people, communities and families, both in times of crisis and through ongoing services and programs. It promotes the development of communication skills, and links with the wider community to provide direct aid to youth at risk, and advocates for change in systems that prevent the positive development of young people. Given the importance of Pastoral Care, let us now examine how we can effectively minister to young people in Nigeria through the Youth Pastoral Ministry.

In the Nigerian context, the overall goals of Youth Pastoral Ministry can be summed up into three objectives:

a. To foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person;

b. To draw young people into responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith community;

c. To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today.

The three main goals and focus areas of Youth Pastoral Ministry in Nigeria describe the mission of the whole Church, and underpin the importance of the ministry with youth.


89 Ibid.
Young people are the Church of today, shaping the Church of tomorrow. In examining these three goals, one observes the full development of the whole person, which is the goal of Christianity itself.

4.1.2 Application to Youth Ministry in Nigeria

We have seen the peculiar situation of the youth in Nigeria. Now we see that if these goals are effectively applied, the situation of young people could get better each day, and Nigeria will be great because of her bright future. Ministry with young people is a venture about which one ought to be deeply passionate. There are many strategies for youth ministry that link to this frame of mind, from the national and diocesan level to youth ministry in parishes and schools.

Catholic Youth Ministry seeks to involve young people within the whole faith community, expressing and understanding who we are as Church, in our relationship with God. This Vision Statement is a call to the entire faith community to be in ministry with young people. Youth Ministry in Nigeria has to be revolutionized if the fruits are to be realized. In line with the well-known African proverb, “It takes a whole village to raise a child”, communities have the opportunity to experience youth ministry as a vital, integral element of the whole community, and not as an optional addition. The question in many local communities is; “Where should we go from here?”

4.2 Effective Pastoral Practices with Youth

4.2.1 Focus of Youth Pastoral Practices

The last question automatically becomes a framework upon which ministry with young people can develop, and where all expressions of it can find a home – including school,
parish, diocese, religious orders, groups and movements, university chaplaincies and event-based youth ministry. There are good things happening in youth ministry throughout Nigeria, often unacknowledged or unknown. There are also significant gaps and challenges and always more that could be done. Engagement with World Youth Day\(^90\) has shown the local Church that it is possible to build on current efforts, involve the whole community and create wonderful opportunities for all to explore and experience ministry with young people.

### 4.2.2 Engaging Youth’s Passion in Pastoral Practices

There are stereotypical models of youth ministries in Nigeria, and this directly contradicts the nature of the young people – dynamic, energetic, vibrant and adventurous. There are, of course, meetings and encounters among the youth groups in Nigeria. These meetings and youth encounters should be made to include picnic, boating, recreation and sharing of social experiences. These activities will transform the energies and desires of young people, and will broaden the spiritual art of living out the Christian virtues in everyday life. These suggested forms of activities definitely are capital-intensive, and will require the efforts of the community, and the Church.

### 4.3 The Role of Prayer, Guidance and Community in Pastoral Care for Youth

#### 4.3.1 Prayer and Worship with Youthful Heart

Prayer and Worship, being God-centered, deepen young people’s relationship with Jesus Christ. They include the celebration of liturgy, communal and personal prayer. Through Prayer and Worship, young people awaken an awareness of the Holy Spirit at work in their

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\(^90\) Here, the Pope meets and interacts with youth from all over the world. Next year, the World Youth Day is to be hosted in Poland, the home country of Saint John Paul II (1920-2005).
lives, incorporating them more fully into the sacramental life of the Church. Prayer and Worship encourage and nurture the personal prayer life of young people, their families and the whole community. Through this focus area, the Church invites young people to discover the joy and sacredness of Divine Liturgy, encouraging full, conscious, active and authentic participation in the Eucharist, the source and summit of the Christian life. Liturgy is the primary place of the Word of God, and encourages an understanding of the essence and structure of the Mass. This is an ongoing journey, encouraging full entry into the mystery of the Mass, and engaging all the senses.

Encouraging and forming young people to participate in service roles in the liturgy is an important part of youth ministry. It requires effective preaching and an awareness of elements such as appropriate music and the use of multimedia to engage the vitality of young people, whilst adhering to liturgical norms in the intergenerational community. Prayer and Worship introduce young people to spiritual reading, and the life of the saints, upon whom they can model their young lives. It explores the history and tradition of our faith, in elements such as sacramental and icons. It encourages them to find their own creative expression, recognizing that there is a unique path to holiness for each person.

In addition to Eucharistic and Sacramental worship, youth ministry should encourage and provide opportunities for other forms of prayer. Such opportunities should engage young people’s personal experiences, and integrate active listening to the Word of God. The expression of prayer may include music, art, dance and drama. Effective youth ministry provides models of personal prayer, and introduces young people to resources and experiences that encourage further development in the breadth of community prayer and personal relationship with God.
4.3.2 The Role of the Community

The role of the community in the pastoral care of the youth cannot be overemphasized. Daisy Nwachukwu explains that “Communities provide essential foundational structures for human interaction and life sharing in togetherness. From the beginning, the primary intention of human life in communal living is that communities are life-giving, life-sharing and life-supporting. This very essence of communities, which is building life together, has been fragmented, in the process of urbanization.”\(^{91}\) Even at that, the Church still remains a community – there is always a gathering and a sharing of life and mission. That being the case, the sense of the communal life, which ancient Africa once had, is yet to be integrated in the sense of membership in the Church, and caring for the young. Now, the chasm dividing people is widening even when the world is known as the \textit{global village}. Individualism holds sway even in the Church’s circle. Once upon a time, a child in any African society belonged not to an individual, but to the entire community – any elder could correct any child at no cost, and with goodwill. Now, it is quite the opposite. If the sense of belonging to the community is revived in young people, they could offer more to such a community. The Church in Nigeria should imbibe this strategy in her pastoral ministry for the youth.

Faith sharing remains part of our identity as a community. This includes encouraging young people in discipleship, inviting them into our Church community and journeying with them as they grow. Young people should be seen as part of the Church of today, not only the Church of tomorrow.\(^{92}\) As we are all related to the young people in different ways, they

\(^{91}\) Daisy Nwachuku. “Creating Communities through Pastoral Care and Counseling in the Fragmentations of Urban African Life” in \textit{Voices from Africa on Pastoral Care} (May, 2013), 35-52.

\(^{92}\) Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. \textit{Anointed and Sent} (2009), 3.
should be encouraged to take up their place in the community, in which they form an important part. Therefore, we all need to be active in ministry with them to reflect this understanding that we are God’s work of art (cf. Ephesians 2:10), and that every human person needs to be given the opportunity to realize this. The best is to help each other to develop an even deeper relationship with Christ.

The Good News of Jesus Christ finds fullness, and is realized when it is lived out in community and in our relationships. It is through loving relationships, lived out truthfully and authentically, that we best discover ourselves and the mystery of God in others. Through community and relationship we can be fully alive. Community life flows out of who we are and how we interact, continually and openly inviting others into it.

Young people value building community within their peer groups. Building the Christian community is an integral part of youth ministry. The visible presence and active engagement of young people in the intergenerational community, not only provides opportunities for the whole community to acknowledge and value young people, but it also gives young people an insight into their integral role in the Christian environment. It further provides opportunities to develop significant mentoring and discipleship. Community life and youth ministry flourish when the atmosphere of the whole community is welcoming, and all members – regardless of age – know that they are valued, and their presence and contribution appreciated.

4.4 Evaluation and Conclusion

Young people in Nigeria today need training for transformation. A person who has been transformed can be in the position to help others go through the process of change. As society
today has become very complex, so are young people confronted with various challenges. Pastoral care programs, such as retreats, should help young people to deeply reflect on issues that are relevant to their lives. Each youth should be challenged to become an agent of change, even among his or her peers. As agents of change, young people should be the light of the community in which they live: in their families, in the classroom, and in their relationship with others in the community. Outreach programs in youth ministry, should be directed to the disadvantaged and marginalized members of the community: the aged, homeless, and those suffering from illnesses, especially HIV/AIDS. Youth programs should also help to provide for the training of young people to respond to issues of social justice, and care for God’s creation.93

Pastoral care programs should help young people to develop the capacity to break down barriers of arrogance, ignorance, racism, sexism, terrorism, tribalism, xenophobia and other social evils plaguing Nigeria and Africa. As followers of Jesus, young people should learn to be disciplined and enthusiastic about life. Young people in Nigeria should be encouraged to discover and share with each other that fullness of life which Jesus promises. During the last world youth day in Brazil, I was delighted to hear Pope Francis challenge young people to go out and make disciples.94

The faith community is the context in which young people need to be drawn into the life and mission of Jesus Christ. For most young people, this includes the family, home,


parish, school and youth-based groups or movements, where an intimate relationship with God can be nurtured. Young people should be encouraged to discover their identity, and share and develop their God-given gifts, for mission in the local faith community and beyond. Faith Communities should strive to be places that inspire young people, give them a sense of belonging, find them a home in the church, and provide them the opportunity to minister side by side with adults. Young people are more likely to gain a sense of identity in the community when they are fully engaged as members, living their life in Christ. They need to be given the opportunity to contribute in areas where they have gifts and skills, apprenticed in developing liturgical and parish ministry skills.

While there are many obstacles that can hinder the healthy spiritual growth of the youth: family breakdown, poverty, discrimination and social injustice, to the increasingly secular worldview portrayed in the social media and popular culture, there is no need to despair. Pastoral Ministry with young people needs to address these issues in response to those who are suffering, and provide an integral approach to addressing the problems.

Young people must be invited into relationships within the intergenerational community, and nurtured in their ongoing relationship with God, understanding that their call is continually dependent on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In a world where people increasingly compartmentalize their lives, young people should be actively encouraged to draw from God as their source, principally through the liturgy, and to live Christ’s Mission in the world, in both the personal and community dimensions. The church has a mission beyond that of the gathered worshipping community: it is the responsibility of the community to form young people to use the skills and passion developed in their faith community, to enable them to be principal agents in sharing the Good News of God’s love in the wider world.
Discipleship is at the heart of the Church’s mission. All ministry with young people need to be directed towards discipleship, and encouraging young people to develop their personal relationship with Jesus, fostering an understanding of the Good News, and participating in their worthy adventure towards eternal life. Through baptism, Christians are called and nourished through the Eucharist, and then empowered by the Holy Spirit to live fully in Christ. This takes place within a supportive community, as members of the Body of Christ. The church, as a community, has the obligation to reach out to young people, welcome them and help them to find their place in the Church, and accept and encourage the gifts and the passion that they bring into the community. The Church needs to invite young people to see the Christian faith as a way of life that provides meaning, direction and purpose in their lives.

Discipleship calls us to live our Christian lives in the midst of the wider world. The models that are presented to young people need to be personally challenging, and focused on transformation. We need to find concrete ways for young people to personally experience the demands and the adventure of being disciples, where they are stretched in their experiences, and given opportunities to further develop skills, and deepen their understanding and practice of true Christian discipleship. Young Christian disciples need to be formed so that they can take their place in the concrete circumstances of daily life, and change their communities for the better. Youth ministry should be directed towards this goal.

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Growth in faith is a life journey which engages the whole person. Youth is a crucial time in that journey for asking questions and searching for truth. Our challenge in the Church is to foster in young people, a sense of identity that will provide a guiding direction for the rest of their lives. Personal and spiritual growth begins in childhood, and continues through young adulthood and beyond. The awareness of this process of development should be at the core of youth ministry.

Young people need to be nurtured in developing a sense of self-worth, and an understanding that they are created and loved by God, whose plan for them contains a path and a future (cf. Jeremiah 29:11). As a faith community, this is done through prayer, leading by example, and providing solid foundations for character and moral formation. Jesus came that we may have the fullness of life (cf. John 10:10). People striving towards personal and spiritual growth do encounter obstacles and wounds. It is through the grace of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist that a person continues to grow in the relationship with God. Active participation in the celebration of these sacraments, and the daily study of God’s Word should form part of the pastoral ministry with young people.

In this thesis, spirituality has been discussed as a significant aspect of development in young people. The necessity for pastoral care in this process of growth has also been identified. It is important that young people are not left to travel all alone through the challenges of life as they develop. From experience, and through this presentation, it is very glaring that every young person needs pastoral care and guidance in every step of the way. On a recent visit to Villanova High School at Mary Lake, I found, during my interaction with
most of the students, that they really needed an adult person that they can trust, and with whom they can trust enough to share their story.

After listening to all of their concerns and personal struggles, I advised the students to follow up with the school counsellor and their parents. It was surprising that none of them wanted to share their struggles with the counsellor or a parent. In the course of writing this thesis, I thought of those students at Villanova, and the many young people in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa, who have shared with me the stories of their life struggles and spiritual journey, and their need for ongoing guidance and pastoral care.

It is my sincere hope that the ideas presented here would further challenge the pastoral care workers, ministers, parents, teachers and the community to identify with young people in their significant moment of spiritual development, and to promote an integrated pastoral-care approach to youth ministry, that can be relevant to youth in their given cultural context. Through this study, I have come to a better understanding that the present generation of young people in Nigeria can make positive change in the society, as they develop physically and grow spiritually.

The resilience of young people will have to originate from their ability to think critically, interact with others, and realize their interdependence on each other and the universe. I do always believe in the wonderful gift of young people. They are very well endowed with both human and spiritual energy, that must be well harnessed and given the right channel. Young people may be difficult at times, but we need to engage them. We need to be sensitive to their needs, understand their narratives, and be able to hold their story.
Unfortunately, many young people today feel a lack of support and connection, and as a result alienate themselves from the community. The Catholic Community in Nigeria has already lost a generation of young people, due to the lack of pastoral care that is relevant to nurture them spiritually. It is necessary, therefore, that the pastoral care ministry be more involved in assisting young people to discover the treasure of faith, and find care and guidance in the process of their spiritual development.

When the ideas presented in this thesis are taken into consideration in the various Youth Ministries in Nigeria, it is the author’s sincere hope that the overall meaning of youth lives will be rediscovered, and the positive effects of such rediscovery will be appreciated. In conclusion, 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 (Communities) should strive early enough to launch their youth on the path of perfection. But, sooner rather than later!

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