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**THE ROLE OF PASTORAL CARE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN  
PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION OF YOUTH IN THE DIOCESE OF  
ADIGRAT – ETHIOPIA**

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for  
a doctoral degree in Pastoral Theology

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, except for references to the work of other people, which have been accordingly acknowledged, this thesis is written in its entirety by me. It has not been submitted to any institution for academic credit.

The responsibility for any inaccuracies or shortcomings that this work may contain belongs to me.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

&	And
ACBE.	Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia
ACS.	Archeparhial Catholic Secretariat
ADLI.	Agricultural Development Led Industrialization
AM.	<i>Africae munus</i>
AMECEA.	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa
AU.	African Union
B.C.	Before Christ
BCC.	Basic Christian Communities
BEC.	Basic [Base] Ecclesial Community
CA.	<i>Centesimus Annus</i>
CAM.	Catholic Action Movements
CCB.	Communauté Chrétienne de Base
CCC.	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CEB.	Communauté Ecclésiale de Base
CEV.	Communauté Ecclésiale Vivante
CEVB.	Communauté Ecclésiale Vivante de base
Cf.	Confer
CID.	Conflict-Induced Displacement
CL.	<i>Christifideles laici</i>
CPR.	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate
CSA.	Central Statistics Agency's
CT.	<i>Catechesi Tradendae</i>
DA.	<i>Dilecti amici</i>
DCE.	<i>Deus caritas est</i>
DD.	<i>Dies Domini</i>
DfC.	<i>Directory for Catechesis</i>
DID.	Development Induced Displacement
DM.	<i>Dives in misericordia</i>
DPO.	Diocesan Pastoral Offices
DRC.	Democratic Republic of the Congo
e.g.	Example
EA.	<i>Ecclesia in Africa</i>
EBC.	Ecclesial Base [Basic] Community”
ECC.	Ethiopian Catholic Church
ECS.	Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat
ed.	Editor
eds.	Editors
EE.	<i>Ecclesia in Europa</i>
EN.	<i>Evangelii nuntiandi</i>
EOTC.	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
ESA.	Emergency Site Assessment
et al.	And others
FC.	<i>Familiaris Consortio</i>



GD.	<i>Gaudete in Domino</i>
GEE.	<i>Gaudete Et Exsultate</i>
GER.	Gross Enrolment Ratios
HV.	<i>Humanae vitae</i>
Ibid.	Ibidem
ICYCW.	International Coordination Youth/Young Catholic/Christian Workers
IDP.	Internally Displaced Persons
IFP.	<i>Il Fermo proposito</i>
IOM.	International Organization for Migration
IYCS.	International Young Catholic Students
LE.	<i>Laborem exercens</i>
LtF.	<i>Letter to the Families</i>
MDID.	Man-made Disaster-Induced Displacement
MDM.	Modern Deductive Model
MN.	<i>Mens nostra</i>
NDID.	Natural Disaster-Induced Displacement
NGO.	None Governmental Organization
no.	number
p.	page
PCC.	Petite Communauté Chrétienne
PDV.	<i>Pastores Dabo Vobis</i>
pp.	pages
RaP.	<i>Reconciliation and Penance</i>
RD.	The Rapid Development
RH.	<i>Redemptor Hominis</i>
RM.	<i>Redemptoris Missio</i>
SCa.	<i>Sacramentum caritatis</i>
SCC.	Small Christian Community
SD.	<i>Salvifici doloris</i>
SNNP.	Southern Nation, Nationalities, and People
SS.	<i>Spe salvi</i>
TDM	Traditional Deductive Model
TIM	Transforming Inductive Model
Tran.	Translator
UN.	United Nations
UNECA.	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
USCCB.	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Vol.	Volume
VS.	<i>Veritatis Splendor</i>
WCC.	World Council of Churches
WYD.	<i>World Youth Day</i>
YCS.	Young Catholic Students
YCW.	Young Catholic Workers (YCW) or Young Christian Workers
YCWO.	Youth Catholic Workers Offices
YM.	Youth Ministry

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Pope Paul VI said that there is a profound link between Christ, the Church, and evangelization. At a time of suffering and challenge, it is not without sorrow to hear people whom we wish to believe are well-intentioned but are certainly misguided in their attitude. They continually claim to love Christ but without the Church, to listen to Christ but not the Church, and to belong to Christ but outside the Church. The absurdity of this dichotomy is evident in the teaching of Jesus Christ when he says “anyone who rejects you rejects me” (Lk. 10:16). How can one wish to love Christ without loving the Church, if the finest witness to Christ, St. Paul said, “Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her” (Eph. 5:25)<sup>1</sup>.

The Church is close to the faithful to guide and accompany Christians through her authoritative teaching, finding new ways of speaking with love and mercy to believers and all people of goodwill<sup>2</sup>. Because it is in and through the Church that man can be transformed and encounter Jesus Christ. Hence, Jesus Christ and His Church are inseparable because He is the Church’s founder and ministerial sacramental structure<sup>3</sup>. Pope John Paul II taught that: “Jesus is not an idea, a sentiment, a memory! Jesus is a person, always alive and present with us! [...] He comes to us in Holy Communion and remains present in the tabernacles of our churches, for he is our friend; he is everyone's friend and wishes particularly to be the friend and prop of you boys and girls on your way through life; you need confidence and friendship so much”<sup>4</sup>. This shows that Jesus accompanies every one of us in our daily life, and refusing to go to Mass is denying the person who sacrificed himself for us on the Cross and rejecting to meet the Savior. The Holy Father, furthermore, centers to be faithful in Christ by pointing them to the Altar of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. EN. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. VS. 3; see also: Cf. B. Huebsch, *Jesus the Master Catechist: Twelve Lessons from Jesus on Being a Catechist*, op. cit., p.33-38.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. Seward, *Christ is the Answer: The Christ-Centered Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Address to the Italian Youth*, 8 Nov. 1978, no. 2; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1978/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19781108\\_giovani.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1978/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19781108_giovani.html), [accessed: 24.12.2021].

Sacrifice, to the Tabernacle, which is the Presence of Jesus Christ because our savior is no abstract nor absent Lord but alive and always with us<sup>5</sup>.

A human being was created to live a life fully and happy life. Any human development, be it moral, ethical, intellectual, spiritual, values, vision, and discipline, depend on how it is instilled and shaped from the beginning, whether at home, in society, or at school. In Ethiopia, the young people formed the majority of the country's total population. The strength of the Church at present, its continuity, and the sustainability of the Diocese of Adigrat, the country in general, depends on the youth.

Adigrat Diocese is one of the oldest Eparchy in the country, located in the Tigray region, northern Ethiopia. The Diocese covers an estimated area of 132,000 km<sup>2</sup>, which is the whole of the Tigray region (note that the western end of Tigray, i.e., Humera, Tselemti, Wolkait, and Tsegedie, are included in the Adigrat Diocese by the "Decretum" issued on December 18, 1999), and northeastern parts of Afar Regional State (Zone 2)<sup>6</sup>. When the Jesuits were leaving Ethiopia, there were over 200,000 Catholics in the country, and an estimated 50,000 of them lived within the territory of the Adigrat Diocese<sup>7</sup>. The Tigray region has a historical background in Ethiopia's religion and political history: Axum is the historical place for the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), where Christianity was established for the first time in the country and which was a historical place of Axumite kingdom. Al-Nejashi mosque, found in Tigray, is one of the world's oldest and most important Islamic sites. Adigrat Diocese was established as the Apostolic Prefecture of Abyssinia on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1839. And on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1847, it became the Apostolic Vicariate of Abyssinia, on March 25, 1937, it was established as the Apostolic Prefecture of Tigray, and on February 20, 1961, erected as the Eparchy of Adigrat<sup>8</sup>. Hence, the Adigrat Diocese also has profound historical and geographical origins.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> ADCS, *Eparchy of Adigrat: Profile of the Eparchy of Adigrat: Boundaries and Population, Catholic Eparchy of Adigrat*, in: <https://www.adigratcatholicchurch.org/profile-of-the-eparchy>, [accessed: 25.04.2020].

<sup>7</sup> ADCS, *Historical Perspectives, Catholic Eparchy of Adigrat*, in: <https://www.adigratcatholicchurch.org/history-1>, [accessed: 25.04.2020].

<sup>8</sup> K. O'Mahoney, *The Ebullient phoenix...*, op. cit. p. 4-8.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, young people currently use some specific terms frequently, such as “my freedom,” “my right,” and so on. But hardly speak about their duties and obligations. Today, when people think about their rights and freedom, they must also consider their duties and obligations. It is essential to consider the responsibilities, duties, and obligations that bring liberty, rights, and freedom. Understanding these depends on how they were instructed and guided starting from childhood. The rights, liberty, and freedom that accept duties, obligations, and responsibilities promote peace, justice, and development. The peace and development of the country and the life of the Church in Ethiopia need to produce a generation that assesses things in justice and fairness and who is accountable for the measurements they take and feels responsible. Taking responsibility and accountability is based on the formation received.

Nowadays, human beings are more globally, economically, socially, politically, and technologically connected. Instead of strengthening the bonds among the communities, countries, political parties, and societies, they are more divided. Arguably, in the world, things are more actively invested in the plight of the oppressed, abused, and broken than ever before. Additionally, Christians are becoming under more intellectual attack or publicly disregarded than ever before today. All these are challenging to the Church, especially in youth ministry (YM). The YM is becoming less trusted and considered less relevant than it has been, which is the influence of the secularized world. The secularized world takes youth to a spiritual uncertainty, but still, the young people have spiritual hunger. Thus, the Church is forced to go deeper and find a more stable Scriptural, Traditional, and social values “footing for not only what and how the Church work but also why she does it and where it fits into God’s plan for the entire Church”<sup>9</sup>.

Today, the youth ministry (YM) is in “desperate need of a theological, psychosocial, and ecological grounded”<sup>10</sup>. While undoubtedly, there are meaningful and powerful ministries in the Church making a substantial effect on the lives of teenagers,

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<sup>9</sup> C. Clark (et. al) (eds.), *Youth ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Five View*, Michigan, 2015, p. xiii.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

there is also a vulnerable area that is difficult to maintain the glow of the early years of YM. This area needs a new path, idea, and approach, which helps to have an enthusiasm for a lifelong commitment to Christ and spiritual transformation. The study attempts to give a fresh approach and perspective to youth pastoral ministry by analyzing the current system and its results. The aspects of psychosocial and spiritual growth of youth resulting from such an approach and formation are also brought out. The responsibility of young people and their spiritual growth is the life of the Church and society. Furthermore, the vibrant youngsters inspire and enrich the Church and community spiritually and morally, in prayers, in reading, and in obeying the Scripture and Tradition of the Church.

Hence, the YM has nowadays become a central stage within the pastoral ministry of the Church. This highly motivates the pastoral ministers and increases awareness among Church leaders that young people are the strength of the present and represent the future of the Church and society as a whole. Therefore, in the service of pastoral care toward young people it is important to give attention to and address the holistic youth development within the religious and social scope of the Church. Life in fullness matters and youngsters prepare to take future responsibility for their Church and society while participating in the present activities. So, to respond to their call, the YM needs to offer hope and integrity to the holistic lives of young people and help them in both the search and the achievement of the fullness of life (cf. Jn. 10:10)<sup>11</sup>.

This study explores and shows the role of pastoral care in the holistic growth or holistic personal transformation of youth. The youth comprise a massive majority of members within the Adigrat Diocese. Therefore, pastoral care of youth efforts must proactively serve as a vital part of assisting within the core of religious activity at the local Church level.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. J. A. Górká, *Youth Ministry in the Face of Unemployment: A Historical-Critical Study of the Development of the Church and its Concern for Your Formation and Employment in Wmanza (Tanzania)*, Morogoro, 2017, p. 1-2.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis would like to explore why the personal transformation of youth is needed. How are society's social values disappearing, and how is it affecting the lives of the young people in the Diocese of Adigrat? How is the religious teaching at home and parishes going on? How can the Catholic Church's pastoral care contribute to the youth's spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social growth?

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ethiopia's youth face overwhelming problems that often hinder their contribution to the Church and the nation's development. These are assumed to result from a catalog of closely related factors. Some of the supposed factors include the way of bringing them up, poverty, corrupted leaders, unemployment, lack of vocational training and skills, peer group influences, lack of basic facilities, continuing spread of exploitation and oppression of people that is rooted in racism and class domination; and lack of humanitarian and societal welfare. From time to time, the nation has witnessed crises in every aspect of life: education, health, social and political development. Because lousy leadership, corruption, political instability, and poor economic management have been society's misery, this has created a lack of direction for the youth. Everywhere, there is an insatiable lust to get rich quickly using unprincipled means, including fraud, cheating, or migrating illegally. And the media is replete with ideas contrary to the norms expected in a moral society with their constant promotion of immorality and hatred.

To be humanity's future, the youth need to have hope at the present<sup>12</sup>. This is why the Catholic bishops in Ethiopia note, "It is of no use to declare rhetorically that the youth are the hope for tomorrow if they do not have much hope in the present"<sup>13</sup>. Hence, any society and Church that allows a good percentage of its youths to be misdirected or

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (henceforth: EA.), Yaoundé, 1995, no. 92; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_14091995\\_ecclesia-in-africa.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>13</sup> ACBE, *The Church We Want to be: Elements for a Common Vision of the Pastoral Action of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, 2002, no. 44, p. 20.

neglected, to ignore the social values and the teaching of the Church, risks the future's cultural viability, potentiality, and survival of society and the Church. Against these background problems, this study explored the role of pastoral care in the transformation of youth in the Diocese of Adigrat.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The specific objectives of this research are:

1. To discover the meaning and concept of youth
2. To investigate and establish the social and cultural background of moral values and the Biblical perspective of the growth in faith
3. To investigate and examine the current challenges of youth ministries
4. To suggest a way of possible solutions to the problems of youth ministries
5. To educate the Christian youth on the appropriate Christian ethics to be followed in society.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research is very significant because youths are the future of the Church and the state. It will assist youth ministers, whether clergy or laity and the society at large with adequate information that can readily be used in instructing and guiding the youth in the Church and society. The ignorance of the Church's teachings and social values of the community by the young people and the changing lifestyles of youths are affecting the Church and society. Thus, the researcher aims to show the root cause, the implication, and the appropriate way of solving youth transformation in the Diocese of Adigrat so that Church, parents, and youth will benefit from the research findings. This work will be a good foundation and resource for all who intend to conduct further research on this topic or related topics in the future.

## METHODOLOGY

When writing this thesis, the researcher will follow the *see–judge–act* method commonly known as the pastoral circle. The thesis will try to show that it has seen a problem through the facts that the youth of the Adigrat Diocese need a new pastoral care approach. Having seen this problem, the thesis will evaluate and show how the YM can contribute to the holistic growth of the young people in the diocese in its work of pastoral ministry. Lastly, on the level of act, the thesis will propose the perspectives for a more effective youth ministry that the diocese has to follow to the success of young people’s lives in the Diocese of Adigrat.

In this research, we shall use an interdisciplinary approach. This is one of the methodological proposals for research projects under pastoral theology<sup>14</sup>. An interdisciplinary approach to research or education involves integrating knowledge from two or more academic disciplines into one activity<sup>15</sup>. The historical, analytical, and qualitative methods are also applied. The employment of the historical method is essential for looking at the role of pastoral care in multidimensional youth formation from the perspective of the situation on the ground. Various sources are examined and analyzed using this method to draw applicable conclusions about the personal transformation of youth. The analytical approach is employed in the examination of numerous sources and materials. In every instance, a text is divided into individual fragments to assist in understanding each part and seeing how it works. The qualitative method is adopted, which collates and analyses data from existing literature relevant to the study. It relies on existing published literature, advances existing knowledge, suggests conclusions based on the current literature, and forms a synergy of ideas while pointing out gaps. This method focuses on computing and explaining specific phenomena and presenting the meaning of

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. W. Szymczak, *Interdisciplinarity in Pastoral Theology: an Example of Socio-theological Research*, in: “*VERBUM VITAE*”, (Vol. 38 No. 2, 2020, pp. 503–527), p. 503.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. D. Paranjpe, *The power of an inter-disciplinary approach to science education and research*, in: “i wonder...”, (2019, pp. 36-42), p. 37.



concepts, which serve as an aid for the researcher to come up with facts and figures that constitute the evidence of the study.

The work will employ library and online research. These will range from the Bible to encyclopedias, books, journals, magazines, Bishops' letters, and various official documents of the Church, as will be acknowledged in the bibliography.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE WORK**

This work will be divided into five main Chapters. Each of the chapters is further divided into titles and subtitles. The whole work begins with a general introduction and ends with recommendations and general Conclusion. Chapter One will present Ethiopia's general socio-economic scene, religion, and the etymological meaning of youth; Chapter Two will discuss youth formation and its components; Chapter Three will investigate the growth in faith in the light of the Scripture and Tradition of Christianity; Chapter Four will analyze the contemporary challenges of youth in the Diocese of Adigrat, and Chapter Five will propose perspectives for more effective youth pastoral ministry.

## CHAPTER ONE

# ETHIOPIA'S GENERAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCENE, RELIGION, AND THE ETYMOLOGICAL MEANING OF YOUTH

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter is set to help us understand why the theme of this thesis is chosen as the role of the pastoral care of the Catholic Church in personal transformation of youth in the Diocese of Adigrat – Ethiopia. Ethiopia is an undeveloped country where the young people are its main development agent. All the young people need special attention towards the holistic growth and development of their Church and the nation. It is in this spectrum that this paper, at the very beginning, is going to give the phenomenon, that is, the situation, experiences, conceptions, and appearances that can be seen to happen or exist in youth. This work will help us to see the actual status of the youth.

This part of the study is about seeing the youth's historical background and the situation on the ground in the pastoral circle. So, before we can probe into this discussion, it is essential to situate the location for our study, the situation that the people involved, and the summation of our discussion.

### 1.1. Historical and geographical overview of Ethiopia

Ethiopia is one of the ancient countries in the world and is an ancient independent country situated in northeast Africa, or, as it is generally known, the Horn of Africa. It is located in the center of the Horn of Africa. Some written and pictorial records show its history covering over 4,000 years; Petroglyphs take it back at least 5,000 years. Archaeology and paleontology brought the country's history back millions of years, and it remained a landlocked country since Eritrean independence<sup>1</sup>. To the outside world,

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. P. B. Henze, *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia*, New York, 2001, p. 1; see also: B. Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 – 191* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Addis Ababa, 2013, p.1.

Ethiopia has long been known as Abyssinia<sup>2</sup>. Because the people reject the name that the European and Arabic world gives to them and prefer to be called Ethiopian, they trace the origin of their line to king Solomon<sup>3</sup>.

Ethiopia shares borders with six countries. Sudan and South Sudan to the west; Eritrea to the north and northeast; Djibouti and Somaliland to the east; Somalia and Kenya to the south. It covers an area of 1.14 million square kilometers (944,000 square miles)<sup>4</sup>. Ethiopia is located between longitudes 33° and 48°E and latitudes 3° and 15°N. Though it lies very near the Equator, the country is far from ‘tropical’ in the accepted sense of the term. On the other hand, the elevated nature of Ethiopia’s highlands, rising to over 1,500 meters, gives more a cooler climate than its geographical location suggests<sup>5</sup>. Owing to its great altitude, the Ethiopian plateau enjoys a moderately temperate climate despite its nearness to the Equator. It has cool weather by contrast with the torrid plains of Danakil and Somaliland, which bound it on the east and southeast<sup>6</sup>.

The highlands of Ethiopia are overlapped by several river valleys, dotted with hills and mountains, often flat-topped, known as *emba*. These *embas* have had an important role and place in the historical advancement of the country, serving as the sites for churches, monasteries, prisons (like the royal prison of emba Geshe in Wollo), and battles (Emballage in 1895 and Emba Aradom in 1936). The people divided their country topographically into three major areas: *dega* (the cool highlands where the annual average temperature is about 16°C), *weyna dega* (the intermediate zone where most of the settled population lives), and *qolla* (the hot valleys and plains attaining their hottest and lowest levels in the desert conditions that prevail in the north-eastern end of the Rift Valley)<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, Oxford, 1965, p. 1-6; see also: Cf. P. B. Henze, *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (henceforth: FDRE), *National Employment Policy and Strategy of Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, 2009, p. 2; and FDRE, *National report on the implementation of the Beijing declaration and platform for action (1995) and the outcome of the 23rd special session of the United Nations General assembly (2000)*, 2000, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. B. Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 – 191* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), op. cit., p.1.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 1-3.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 1-2.

Ethiopia has four major river systems. The first and largest consists of the western drainage system, which includes the Tekeze, the Abay, and the Baro rivers, known respectively as the Atbara, the Blue Nile, and the Sobat in Sudan; they all flow westwards into the Nile. The Blue Nile, known as Abay in Ethiopia, is the most eminent. The second group comprises the Ganale (the Juba in Somalia) and the Wabe Shabale; they both flow towards the Indian Ocean. The third is the Awash River system, composed of the highlands west of Addis Ababa, the Lake Region (the streams along in a leisurely loop), mainly across the Rift Valley until it disappears in the northeast Denakil Plain sands. And the fourth is the Gibe River (Omo river in its lower course) flows south into Lake Turkana (Rudolf) on the border between Ethiopia and Kenya<sup>8</sup>. The rainy season that fills these rivers comes twice a year: the primary rainy season is between June and September, which is called *keremt*, and the little rain season occurs between March and May, which is known as the *belg*. *Belg* is ‘autumn’ in the Ethiopian context, but spring in Europe<sup>9</sup>.

Ethiopia is a country well-known for its connection with Queen Sheba, who visited King Solomon with her gifts (1 Kings. 10: 1-29). It has been known formerly to the outside world by the name Abyssinia. Afterward, due to the influence of Christianity, and by the preference of the people became known under the name Ethiopia<sup>10</sup>. Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, founded in 1887, is host to the African Union (AU) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). Several other international organizations have their headquarters and offices there. Ethiopia is composed of the nine regional states: Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Benishangul Gumuz, Southern Nation, Nationalities and People (SNNP), Gambella, and Harar; and two city administrations: Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa<sup>11</sup>. However, currently, new regions like Sidama and South West are being created.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 2; see also: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ethiopia/Relief>, [accessed: 24.05.2022].

<sup>9</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 2-5; see also: B. Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 – 191* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 10-21.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. FDRE, *National report on the implementation of the Beijing declaration and platform for action*, op. cit., p. 6.

Ethiopia is an African country with a different history from other African countries. It is not only an uncolonized country but also has its own unique Geez alphabet, numbers, and calendar, which originated in the Axumite kingdom in the Tigray region and later was kept by Ethiopia as a state and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church. The eleventh (11<sup>th</sup>) of September is the New Year that starts in Ethiopia, and the year has thirteen (13) months. Each month has thirty (30) days and at the end of the old year and before the beginning of the New Year, are five days and six days in the leap year (after every fourth year), known as *Pagumen*. *Pagumen* is the last thirteenth (13<sup>th</sup>) month of the year. Counting of the time begins in the morning with sunrise one and ends in the evening with sunset twelve.

### **1.1.1. The people of Ethiopia**

By 2007, Ethiopia had a population of about 73.9 million, and its population was predominantly young, with about 45% of the population being below 15 years of age<sup>12</sup>. These people fall into over 80 tribes with over 86 known indigenous languages: 82 spoken and 4 extinct languages<sup>13</sup>. Ethiopia is a country of diverse cultures with different customs and traditions. In 2011, the Central Statistics Agency's (CSA) Population projection estimated the total population of Ethiopia at 94.3 million, out of which 49.5% are women<sup>14</sup>. In 2020, Ethiopia's population is estimated at 114,963,588 people at mid-year according to United Nations (UN) data, which is equivalent to 1.47% of the total world population and ranks number 12 in the list of countries of the world by population<sup>15</sup>. It is the second most populated country in Africa next to Nigeria, and Ethiopia stood 9th in terms of the geographic area in the whole of Africa<sup>16</sup>.

As A. H. M. Jones and Elizabeth Monroe observed, the Ethiopian highlands' first residents (primitive inhabitants) would seem to have been peoples of Hamitic stock,

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. FDRE, *National Employment Policy and Strategy of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. FDRE, *National report on the implementation of the Beijing declaration and platform for action*, op. cit., p. 6; see also: <https://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Ethiopia.html>, [accessed: 24.05.2022].

<sup>14</sup> Cf. FDRE, *National report on the implementation of the Beijing declaration and platform for action*, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Worldometers.info, *African Countries by population (2020)*, in: <https://www.worldometers.info/population/countries-in-africa-by-population/>, [accessed: 05.04.2020]; see also: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ethiopia-population/>, [accessed: 05.04.2020].

<sup>16</sup> Cf. FDRE, *National Employment Policy and Strategy of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 2.

racially and linguistically similar to the Danakil and Somali peoples to the east, southeast, and the tribe of the Nubian deserts to the northwest. In the southwestern part of the highlands, these Hamitic peoples have been strongly modified by the infiltration of the negro tribes infiltrated from the Upper Nile. Their language and racial types differ from the central and northern plateau people. In primitive times, possibly in the first half of the first millennium B.C. (an uncertain date), Arab tribes from Yemen crossed the Red Sea and, landing on the African coast, gradually occupied the northern part of the highlands. One of these tribes, the Habashat, has given the name Habash, which is still known to the Arabic-speaking nations, and the Europeans derived from it to the country the name Abyssinia. Another name Ag'azi has given by the classical language of the country, Geez<sup>17</sup>.

It is a nation where the people are generous, kind, and genuinely welcoming. They are the people who respect the freedom, security, equality, justice, and peace of the human person. For these, the first migrants of Islam are the testimony<sup>18</sup>. The people of Ethiopia are ethnically diverse, with differences based on linguistic categories. It is a country of a mosaic of nationalities speaking multiple languages, divided into four groups by linguists. The three languages (Semitic, Cushitic, and Omotic) belong to the common ancestral language known as the proto-Afro-Asiatic language family. And the fourth group belongs to Nilotic, which is called Nilo-Saharan. The Cushitic and Omotic are the most ancient, and the Semitic languages are the most recent in Ethiopia<sup>19</sup>.

The Semitic languages are Geez, Tigrinya, Amharic, and Gurage, spoken mainly in the northern and central, and Harari in the Eastern parts of Ethiopia. The Semites have played the primary role in the country's history, and its oldest language is Geez, which is

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 7-10.

<sup>18</sup> N. Mohammed, *The Haven of the First Hijra (Migration): an African nation is the Muslims first refuge*, In "Ethiopian Muslims History", source: <http://www.salamta.net/ethiopian%20muslims%20history.htm>, (posted: 05.01.2013), [accessed: 07.04.2020].

<sup>19</sup> Cf. F. Anfray, *The Civilization of Aksum from the First to the Seventh Century*, in: G. Mokhtar (ed.), *General History of Africa. II. Ancient Civilizations of Africa*, Berkeley, 1981, p. 375-376; see also: B. Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 – 191* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), op. cit., p. 5-7; <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ethiopia/Ethnic-groups-and-languages>, [accessed: 24.05.2022]; and <https://www.everyculture.com/Cr-Ga/Ethiopia.html>, [accessed: 24.05.2022].

now confined only to ecclesiastical usage. The most akin to Geez is Tigrinya, spoken by the Tigrayans and the northern and eastern Eritrean inhabitants<sup>20</sup>.

The Cushitic languages are Saho, Oromo, Somali, Sidama, and Afar. Historically Agaw and Bega people were speaking Cushitic in ancient times, but Agaw has now been largely assimilated into the dominant Semitic culture. Oromo is native to the western, southwestern, southern, and eastern areas that constitute the largest nationality in the country; Somali is prevalent among the Ogaden and Hawd inhabitants, while Afar is most common in the Denakil Plain, and also found in Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya. The other Cushitic-speaking peoples are Irob, who speak the Saho language, and which most Catholics of the Adigrat Diocese are found there. Hadiya, Kambata, Gedeo (Darasa), and Konso, who Cushitic-speaking peoples are further to the south<sup>21</sup>.

The Omotic-speaking peoples are situated mainly in southwestern Ethiopia, mainly Wolaita. The Nilotic language-speaking peoples are native to the Western Lowlands, with Kunama speakers being dominant. Kunama speakers are found in southwestern Eritrea and in Tigray, northern Ethiopia, where the diocese of Adigrat is<sup>22</sup>.

### **1.1.2. Ethiopia's Economic Situation and Development Policy**

F. Anfray observed that at the time of the Axumite era, as in the preceding centuries, agriculture and animal husbandry formed the basis of economic life in Ethiopia<sup>23</sup>. This economic life continued until the last decades and the Ethiopian economy has always been affected by civil war. However, over the last five decades, Ethiopia's economic situation and growth have been characterized by different policy orientations and types that can be divided into three: 1974-1991, 1992-2002, and 2003-2018<sup>24</sup>. In terms of policy orientation, 1974-1991 was characterized by a command economy with no or very little chance for the

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. B. Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 – 1991* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), op. cit., p. 5; see also: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ethiopia/Ethnic-groups-and-languages>, [accessed: 24.05.2022].

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. F. Anfray, *The Civilization of Aksum from the First to the Seventh Century*, op. cit., p. 376-377.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. A. T. Mengistu, *Ethiopia's Macroeconomic and Finance Policy Framework for Structural Transformation* in: "United Nations conference on trade and development", UNCTAD/BRI PROJECT/RP 19, September 2021, p. 5-7.

private sector. Besides that, ongoing civil war and continuous drought affected the economy. Agriculture was the only largest sector and significantly declined economic growth<sup>25</sup>.

The 1990s were a time of economic reform toward a market-oriented economy, despite the vital role played by the state. In this period, the policy adopted the strategy known as ‘Agricultural Development Led Industrialization (ADLI), inspired by the dual-economy model of connections between sectors. The policy aims to achieve significant automation through the growth of the agricultural industry and its relationships with other sectors of the economy. The strategy involves successful investment in agriculture and is committed to improving the performance of agriculture. In addition, the privatization of public enterprises was implemented during this period. However, due to the Ethio-Eritrean war of 1998-2000 and drought, the economic performance was characterized by crucial instability<sup>26</sup>.

From 2003 – 2018, the economic policy moved from ADLI to containing industry and urban sectors. This period achieved the construction of industrial parks, relative political stability, and continued and fast economic growth with less volatility<sup>27</sup>. Additionally, the accessibility of better educational opportunities, health care services, infrastructure, and better working conditions are among the growing factors, particularly in urban areas<sup>28</sup>. In the economy’s growth, the agricultural sector contributed about 71%, the service sector 19.6%, construction (including mining) 5.7%, and manufacturing contributed 3.7%<sup>29</sup>. This shows that the Ethiopian economy is mainly based on agriculture.

Agriculture always depends on rain in Ethiopia. The situation of rain has an immediate bearing on the vegetation prospect. The primary rainy season in Ethiopia falls between June and September, called *keremt*. *Keremt* is generally the time of the heavy

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. M. Ketema & G. Diriba (eds.), *State of the Ethiopian Economy 2020/21: Economic Development, Population Dynamics, and Welfare*, Addis Ababa, 2021, p. 13-14.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 34.



rainy season and the main growing season of various food crops. The little rains typically occur between March and May, called *belg*. The *belg* rains are also very significant for some parts of Ethiopia<sup>30</sup>. The growing of varied food crops depends on the temperate conditions of the area. The most common is *teff*, a small cereal indigenous and peculiar to Ethiopia; it is processed into distinctive bread, known as *injera*, which is the typical food for the majority of the people of the country. *Enset* (the root crop) is equivalent to *teff* in the southern parts of Ethiopia. The others like *dagusha* (Eleusine coracana, or finger millet), barley, wheat, and corn are among the main food crops. Beles (cactus, prickly pear) is an essential fruit mainly eaten between June and September, but the people do not give it much attention, especially the government. Furthermore, Ethiopia is endowed with substantial human resources, arable land, livestock, coffee, and natural resource. However, much of its potential has not yet been exploited.

Furthermore, Ethiopia's economy between 2003 – 2017 shows that the average GDP growth rate was 9.6%, and the economy grew at a double-digit rate<sup>31</sup>. Nevertheless, the farm's plowing, cultivating, and harvesting system and, generally, the agricultural scheme are still traditional and ox-drawn plows in the country. Even though it has been faster, Ethiopia's economic development does not transition into a middle-income country and beyond. It does not match the growing population and high youth unemployment. So, despite economic progress, Ethiopia remains among the poorest countries. Unfortunately, Ethiopia is in a civil war at present. Additionally, the economy of the country is crumbling.

Therefore, the country's economy is characterized by low per capita income, high inflation rates, and high unemployment among youth in urban and rural areas. The Eparchy of Adigrat has various resources: such as humans, minerals, and sesame, and it is a significant producer of vegetables, but it needs to modernize.

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. B. Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 – 191* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), op. cit., p. 4-8.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. A. T. Mengistu, *Ethiopia's Macroeconomic and Finance Policy Framework for Structural Transformation*, op. cit., p. 1 & 6.

## **1.2. History of religion in Ethiopia**

Initially, no nation accepted Christianity without first passing through a period of paganism. In history, religion has played a significant role in every human society. Generally, polytheism comes first, and then monotheism. Like the other nations, Ethiopia passed through various cults, and there were/are traditional religious practices in diverse forms of worship according to different tribes and kingdoms<sup>32</sup>.

### **1.2.1. Judaism**

Besides paganism, as for the existence of Judaism in Ethiopia, several sources testified to the presence of the Jewish religion which was practiced by the people. According to several sources and traditional legends of Ethiopians, the country is well known for its link with Queen Sheba, who visited King Solomon with gifts (cf. 1 King. 10: 1-29). In Ethiopian history, the Kingdom of Axum originated rich in culture and religious tradition. The major beliefs of Ethiopians were based on “a divine triad: the goddess sun, the god moon, and the morning star. In every temple, they were revered together, like a Trinity. The supreme religious authority was a king, regarded as a son of a god and functioning as high priest”<sup>33</sup>.

A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe noted that Queen Sheba stayed for about six months, enjoying and wondering at the wisdom with which Solomon directed the artificers and communicating with him on matters of religion. Before long, she admitted her mistakes, abandoned the worship of the sun, moon, and star, and worshiped the God of Israel. She became pregnant, and while the queen left Israel, King Solomon gave her a ring, saying if you have a son, give it to him and send him to me. The queen gave birth to King Menelik the first. After growing up, Menelik traveled to meet his father, King Solomon, in Jerusalem and presented the ring to the king. But King Solomon said in response, instead of accepting the ring: “what need is there of the ring? Without a sign I know you that you

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. T. Mekouria, *Christian Aksum*, in: *General History of African*, op. cit., p. 401-403.

<sup>33</sup> J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, Nairobi, 1998, p.35.

are my son”<sup>34</sup>. King Solomon anointed him with the holy oil of kingship, named him David, and made a law that henceforth only his male son should reign in Ethiopia. After all, Menelik returned to Ethiopia with the Ark of the covenant. The sons of King Solomon’s counselors and officers came with Menelik, and they organized well the religion of Judaism that entered with the queen and later on with Jewish exiles and merchants from Yemen and Egypt<sup>35</sup>.

### 1.2.2. Christianity

The introduction and acceptance of Christianity in Ethiopia have different legends concerning the time, how, and by whom it was established. There is no substantial evidence that Christianity was introduced to Ethiopians in the early times of the Apostles, except the biblical references show that Philip baptized an Ethiopian eunuch (cf. Act. 8: 27-40). But different legends have been spoken by Ethiopians: some believed that the Ethiopian eunuch returned and evangelized; others also believed that Apostle Thomas, before he left for India, stayed in Ethiopia and contributed his part in evangelizing; according to oral and written traditions also early Church Fathers: Mark, Matthew, and Bartholomew did<sup>36</sup>. This shows that evangelization did not happen in Ethiopia in a systematic and organized way.

According to the written sources, the exact time that Christianity was well established in the Axumite kingdom, in the Tigray region, in the first half of the fourth century during the two Christian brothers: Frumentius and Aedesius came from Tyre (modern Lebanon) to Axum and introduced to whole Ethiopia. The king made Aedesius his cupbearer and Frumentius, whom he had perceived to be learned, prudent, and intelligent with a good stand, made him his treasurer and secretary, as well as tutor to the royal children. Frumentius and Edesius slowly began to preach about Jesus Christ.

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<sup>34</sup> A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 10-21; see also: T. Mekouria, *Christian Aksum*, in: *General History of African*, op. cit., p. 402-403; S.T. Habtemariam, *Two Slave Brothers Birthed Africa’s Oldest State Church: The history of the Axum Empire and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church*, in: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2018/may/africa-christianity-axum-empireethiopian-orthodox-tewahedo.html>, [accessed 05.04.2020].

<sup>36</sup> Cf. A. Abraha, *Saint Justin De Jacobis: His Missionary Methodology in Eritrea and Ethiopia*, Nairobi, 1995, p.14-19; see also: D.H. Moore, *Christianity in Ethiopia*, in: “Church History”, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Sep., 1936), p. 271.

Subsequently, they were held in great honor and affection by the king. The king died, leaving his wife with an infant son as heir of the grieved kingdom. After the king's death, the queen became regent and asked the two young men to remain with her to govern the kingdom until her son should grow up enough to reign<sup>37</sup>.

Frumentius held the reins of government until the king's son grew up. He organized opportunities for the Christians who were Roman merchants to influence the people in their faith, to establish various places for prayer while doing himself the same manner, and encouraged others to do the same. He developed the strategy of supplying buildings and other necessities and in any way promoted the growth of the seed of Christianity in Ethiopia. He brought up the son of the king, the young prince, to love the new Christian religion. The young prince learned and exercised well enough and grew up enough to reign. Frumentius and Aedesius completed their mission given by the queen and faithfully delivered it over their trust. The queen and her son wanted them to stay and implored them to remain. But after they organized and prepared the ground, they returned to the Roman Empire. Aedesius returned to Tyre to visit his aged parents and relatives. Frumentius went to Alexandria to visit the Patriarch Athanasius. He told the patriarch about the work of God and the adorable attitude of the royal family of Axum towards Christianity, and urged him to send a bishop over the many Christians already assembled and the churches built in the Axumite kingdom. After carefully examining the words of Frumentius, the patriarch did not want to send a bishop who did not know the country's language and customs<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, the patriarch consecrated Frumentius<sup>39</sup> as the first bishop of the Church of Axum and sent him back to Ethiopia. Frumentius returned to the country and baptized king Ezana and all the royal family. The well-known kingdom of Axum accepted the new Christian

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p.26; see also: T. Mekouria, *Christian Aksum*, in: *General History of African*, op. cit., p. 403.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 26-27; see also: T. Mekouria, *Christian Aksum*, in: *General History of African*, op. cit., p. 403-404; M. Villa, *Frumentius in the Ethiopic sources: Mythopoeia and text-critical considerations*, in: *"Rassegna di Studi Etiopici"*, 3a Serie, Vol. 1 (48) (2017), p. 87-88; D.H. Moore, *Christianity in Ethiopia*, in: *"Church History"*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Sep., 1936), p. 271-273.

<sup>39</sup> The history of the kings in Ethiopia, which is called Tarike Negest, attributes to the famous Frumentius the privilege of having introduced Christianity in organized way into the country. Frumentius is later known in Ethiopia as the Enlightener (Kessate Brhan) or Abba Selama, which means Father of Peace.

religion around the year 320s, which had a decisive influence on its historical-cultural development. It is from this time that Christianity spread through Axum to the whole of Ethiopia. The first Christian king, educated and then baptized by Frumentius, appears to have been Ezana, the son of Ella Amida, and he officially announced Christianity as a state religion. Henceforth, Ethiopia became one of the earliest Christian countries and the second nation after Armenia to adopt Christianity as a state religion<sup>40</sup>.

Until recent times, the state and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC) had been a vital link. But since 1994, the Ethiopian constitution in article 11 preserves the code of separation between the state and religion. Nevertheless, there is a systematic connection between the EOTC and the state, and they influence each other, which has nothing that contributes to the life and development of the young generation and the country<sup>41</sup>.

### **1.2.3. Islam**

The Holy Scripture narrates migration in many ways. To mention some: Jacob fled to Egypt with his family to escape famine (cf. Gen. 45:16-47:12); Saint Joseph and Blessed Virgin Mary went to Egypt to rescue the Child Jesus Christ from Herod (cf. Mt. 2: 13-18). Similarly, Muslims took refuge in Ethiopia through its first Hijra or emigration to Axum after Medina, which took place in 622<sup>42</sup>. Initially, only the Ethiopian Christians nurtured a friendly relationship with Islam. When the first followers of Muhammed were persecuted in Mecca, they took shelter in Ethiopia. Therefore, the Quran forbade jihad against Ethiopians, calling ‘a humble people priests and monks’<sup>43</sup>. Additionally, Arabic writers of the tenth century declared that even though they were Christians, there was no jihad (holy war) against Ethiopians<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 26-33; see also: T. Mekouria, *Christian Aksum*, in: *General History of African*, op. cit., p. 403-411; D.H. Moore, *Christianity in Ethiopia*, in: “Church History”, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Sep., 1936), p. 273-274; N.S. Gill, *What Was the First Christian Nation?*, in: <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-was-the-first-christian-nation-119939>, Jan. 26, 2019, [accessed: Feb.17, 2022].

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Ethiopia's Constitution of 1994, Art. 11, no. 1-3.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. H. Ahmed, *Aksum In Muslim Historical Traditions*, in: “Journal of Ethiopian Studies”, Vol. 29, No. 2 (De. 1996), p. 48.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, op. cit., p.37.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 45.

Ethiopia, in its Tigray region, is the first nation in Africa to experience Islam and is an adorable country in Islamic history and tradition. Because “In Islamic history and tradition, Ethiopia (Abyssinia or Al-Habasha) is known as the ‘Haven of the First Migration or Hijra’. For Muslims, Ethiopia is synonymous with freedom from persecution and emancipation from fear. Ethiopia was a land where its king was a person renowned for justice and in whose land human rights were cherished”<sup>45</sup>. This shows that Ethiopia, Africa in general, was where the human person found hope, security, freedom, justice, rights, and so on. Scripture and the first migration (Hijra) of Muslims are the witnesses. But, at present, the African continent, Ethiopia in particular, is where the civilians are unsecured, human rights are violated, leaders are corrupted, and people are generally treated unjustly, which affects the lives of youth in particular.

#### **1.2.4. Roman Catholic Church**

Ethiopia is a country known as a pre-colonial African Christian country. Additionally, it is the first African country that cherished a friendly relationship with the infant power of Islam at the beginning<sup>46</sup>. Muslims grew in number in the Arab countries and influenced the territory of Palestine, Syria, and Egypt starting in 636 and beyond. The first good relationship between Ethiopian Christians and Muslims did not last long. The Christians of Ethiopia were cut off from the Christians of the Roman Empire until the thirteenth century, which is known as ‘the dark age of Ethiopia’<sup>47</sup>. Arabian conquests stood against Christianity and supported spreading paganism in the country, interrupting the Solomonic succession. Judith seized and destroyed Axum during the tenth century, wiping out all traces of Christianity there<sup>48</sup>.

Additionally, in the first half of the sixteenth century, under the leadership of Imam Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim, which Ethiopians call Ahmed Gran, that is the Left-handed, “with a

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<sup>45</sup> N. Mohammed, *The Haven of the First Hijra (Migration): an African nation is the Muslims first refuge*, in: “Ethiopian Muslims History” source: <http://www.selamta.net/ethiopian%20muslims%20history.htm>, (05.01.2013), [accessed: 07.04.2020].

<sup>46</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 44.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 44-53.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. D.H. Moore, *Christianity in Ethiopia*, in: “Church History”, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Sep., 1936), p. 477.

200-man [*sic.*] strong Turkish rifle corps and enthusiastic followers, he began his jihad the year after the Portuguese embassy had left the country in 1526”<sup>49</sup>. While the king refused to surrender, he lived in fear for his life, fleeing from o hiding place to another. The highlands where all the Christian treasures were stored fell into the hands of Gran. He carried away all the wealth held there for centuries, destroyed most churches, massacred the clergy, burned sacred books and monasteries, and made life precarious. The progress of centuries was destroyed<sup>50</sup>. Ethiopia fell in need of support and requested the Portuguese for help. In 1541, the Portuguese expedition of 400 men marched into Ethiopia under the leadership of Christopher da Gama, son of the famous Vasco da Gama, and in 1543 Muslims were beaten and lost the battle<sup>51</sup>.

King Gelawdewos brought all the lost territories under his control and rapidly reconquered his kingdom. The king of Portugal ordered the surviving Portuguese, numbered about a hundred, to remain in Ethiopia and serve its king. They remained in the country, and their descendants gradually mixed with the rest of the population. The king revived peace, rebuilt many destroyed churches, and made fresh copies of the sacred books they had burnt by Muslims<sup>52</sup>.

The relationship between Ethiopian and Roman Churches began under King Gelawdewos. Rome entrusted the mission to Ethiopia to the Jesuits. The first mission began under the leadership of Bishop Oviedo in 1557, a dominant and passionate man<sup>53</sup>. For the following twenty years, the mission under his administration did not achieve any progress. The great success was achieved only after the arrival of Father Peter Paez, who lived in Ethiopia from 1603 to 1622. Paez was not only a loyal missionary but also a builder and architect, and his ability, in addition to these lines, was assured to be very valuable. He was

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<sup>49</sup> J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, op. cit., p.52.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. D.H. Moore, *Christianity in Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 478-479; see also: J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, op. cit., p.52.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p.81-87; see also: Cf. J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, op. cit., p.52-53; D.H. Moore, *Christianity in Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 477-479.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p.85.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 88-92.

diplomatic and possessed an extraordinary strategy in dealing with the people except for the political challenges. His talent in theological discussion, which the Ethiopians have always enjoyed, was inspiring. Finally, King Susenyos was attracted by the personality of Paez and converted to the Catholic faith. He publicly professed the Roman Catholic faith in 1622, which was an excellent success for Paez, but he did not live too long, which was an unfortunate and unhappy moment for the king. He was deprived of a faithful servant, an inspiring teacher, and a prudent adviser<sup>54</sup>.

After Paez's death, King Susenyos asked the pope to send him a patriarch, and the pope was encouraged by Paez's report and sent Alphonzo Mendez, like Paez, a Spanish Jesuit. But Mendez landed in Ethiopia with a different mentality. He had been loyal and respectful to the Church he represented but had little understanding and respect for the customs and faith of the people he was working with. First, King Susenyos has to kneel and swear allegiance to the patriarch as the pope's representative. In addition to that, Mendez proceeded to reform the church. Many irregularities had been noticed. He doubted the validity of the words and forms of sacraments: suspended all priests until they could be re-ordained by him; all people were to be re-baptized; circumcision was forbidden; the churches were re-consecrated and altars of the Roman form erected, and graven images, such as the Ethiopians considered idolatrous and introduced Latin rite. The calendar was brought into conformity with that of Rome. The liturgy was remodeled, though on the king's request, it was permitted to be celebrated in Geez. The reform aroused great feelings in the local people and met with stubborn resistance, which was answered by violent measures and revolt after the revolt broke out. In the end, after long challenges, Susenyos was abdicated in favor of his son Fasilides, and afterward, he died in the faith for which he

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 92-96; see also: J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, op. cit., p.53-54; D.H. Moore, *Christianity in Ethiopia*, in: "Church History", Vol. 5, No. 3 (Sep., 1936), p. 479-480.



had fought so long. Fasilides firmly stood against the Jesuits and immediately pronounced restoring the old religion of the Ethiopian Church<sup>55</sup>.

Therefore, the period of King Susenyos and Peter Paez was the best period known as Catholic Christianity became the official religion in the history of Ethiopia. Unfortunately, this ended the regrettable period in the history of the Church that the Catholic faith was established and witnessed in Ethiopia from around the first half of the fifteenth century to 1632. The Jesuits, Alphonzo Mendez in particular, certainly had a difficult task. The major problems were a clash with the king, controversies on doctrinal matters, and interference with local customs like circumcision<sup>56</sup>. Henceforth, the hatred and suspicion of Catholics sank deep into the hearts of the Ethiopians. Consequently, it made it difficult to have an ecumenical dialogue with the EOTC today; they see Catholics as suspicious.

After the expulsion of the Jesuits, Rome tried to re-establish the Catholic Church in Ethiopia through different orders and priests, like Capuchins, Franciscans, and an Ethiopian-born bishop (Tobia) several times. However, Ethiopians did not want Roman Catholic Church in any form. The missionaries who attempted to enter the country were either unsuccessful or were killed. Ethiopia nearly two centuries was isolated from the Christians of Europe. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Dejazmach Wubie, the governor of Tigray, sent a letter to Pope Gregory XVI with the assurance that the missionary's protection was no longer reliable<sup>57</sup>.

So, the young Catholic priest who established a presence in Ethiopia was a Vincentian or Lazarist (as the congregation known in Ethiopia) Giuseppe Sapeto. Father Giuseppe Sapeto, an Italian Vincentian, went to Ethiopia from his mission in Syria and reached Ethiopia without any official ecclesiastical authority on the third of March 1838.

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 96-101; see also: J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, op. cit., p.53-54; D.H. Moore, *Christianity in Ethiopia*, in: "Church History", Vol. 5, No. 3 (Sep., 1936), p. 480-482.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. A. H. M. Jones and E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 100-101.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. K. O'Mahoney, *The Ebullient phoenix: A History of the Vicariate of Abyssinia (Rev.as one Book)*, Addis Ababa, 2002, p.4-5.

Pope Gregory XVI, hearing of the protestants' presence in Tigray and receiving an authentic Fr. G. Sapeto's letter, was sufficiently reassured of the possibility of beginning again. Thus the Holy See appointed St. Justin de Jacobis on 10th March 1839 as the Prefect Apostolic of Abyssinia (today's Ethiopia and Eritrea) to lead the mission of the country and all the neighboring territories<sup>58</sup>.

St. Justin de Jacobis (1800-1860), the first canonized missionary of Africa, accepted the task wholeheartedly and, together with Fr. Luigi Montuori, arrived in Adwa On October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1839, and there met Fr. G. Sapeto, where there was no single Ethiopian Catholic<sup>59</sup>. The three Catholic missionaries, Mgr. de Jacobis, Fr. Montuori, and Fr. Sapeto, quickly came together and lived for six weeks quietly in a small house near the Orthodox church of Medhane Alem. At this time, they reviewed their missionary strategic plan and drew up a plan of action as to what their best approach to apostolic work would be<sup>60</sup>. After reviewing the action plan, if one of them may be assassinated, the other two would remain in safety; two missionaries, Fr. Montuori and Fr. Sapeto, left the district of Adwa and went to Gonder. Fr. Sapeto continued to Shewa to join Ras Sahleselassie's endeavor to Christianize the Oromo. Fr. Montuori proposed to continue to Khartoum and open a mission there<sup>61</sup>.

In the apostolic mission, a strategic plan is an essential roadmap. It helps to know what to do, why, and how to do it. Hence, the five points of the action plan that were revised by St. Justine de Jacobis and the two missionaries are:

1. While maintaining good relations with princes and their courts, a certain reserve was called for to preserve their apostolic independence.

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, op. cit., p. 160; see also: B. Facio, *St. Justin De Jacobis (1800-1860): The "First" Justin De Jacobis*, in "Vincentiana", Vol. 44, No. 6, art. 1, 2000, p. 445; A. Abraha, *Saint Justin De Jacobis*, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. A. Abraha, *Saint Justine De Jacobis*, op. cit., p. 69-74; see also: K. O'Mahoney, *The Ebulient phoenix*, op. cit., p. 4; L. Herbert, *Abyssinia and its Apostle*, London, 1867, p. 26-49.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. A. Abraha, *Saint Justin De Jacobis*, op. cit., p. 59-61.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. K. O'Mahoney, *The Ebulient phoenix*, op. cit., p. 6-7.

2. To present a simple and solid Catholic doctrine while avoiding controversy and inconclusive discussions.
3. To cultivate the local clergy's sympathy and avoid the opposition and hostility of local clergy as much as possible.
4. To avoid triumphalistic foundations and to lead a life of apostolic simplicity.
5. To remain strictly outside of all political affairs, intrigues, and disputes<sup>62</sup>.

Ethiopian Christians were isolated from the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from the Christians of Europe. At the arrival of St. Justin de Jacobis in Adwa, Catholic missionaries were very hated, and it was a difficult time. After Adwa, he continued to Gola, Alitena, and Hebo. In the beginning, the people were suspicious of him and hated him like previous missionaries. However, even though the situation was challenging, he was able to attract, inspire, and touch people's hearts and convert them. Through his systematic pastoral ministry and methodology, St. Justine de Jacobis transmitted the Gospel in a lovely and friendly way to the Christians of Ethiopia, converted them to Catholicism, and re-established the Catholic communities in Gola and Alitena in Tigray where the Adigrat Diocese is, and Hebo in today's Eritrea. He died on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 1860, was beatified by Pope Pius XII on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 1939, canonized by Pope Paul VI on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1978, and is well known by the Ethiopian and Eritrean Christian as Kidus Abune Yakob<sup>63</sup>.

Therefore, St. Justine De Jacobis established the Catholic Church in Northern Ethiopia of the day – Tigray and Eritrea before he died. The people changed his name to 'Abona', which means 'our father'. They celebrate his memorial day on the eighteenth of each month (Geez Calendar), and there are different associations in honor of St. Justin De Jacobis, known as Mahber Kidus Abune Yakob (Association of Saint De Jacobis). Throughout the history of the Catholic missionaries to Ethiopia, Peter Paez and St. Justin De Jacobis left a mark on the present Catholic Church. The Adigrat Diocese of the Catholic

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. K. O'Mahoney, *The Ebulient phoenix*, op. cit., p. 2, 107-113.

Church needs to adopt the strategy, skills, and personality of St. Justin and Paez as applicable to the present-day situation, to form the young people in the Church and transform their lives.

### **1.2.5. The Protestant missions in Ethiopia**

In Ethiopian history until today, its internal challenges and divisions open the door to different kinds of interventions and expeditions. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the internal divisions of Ethiopia facilitated new missionary enterprises from Europe. The princes sought alliances, a few priests were open to religious dialogue, and the first Protestant missionaries were German Protestants, educated at the Basel Mission Training School and sent by the British Church Missionary Society<sup>64</sup>. Another attempt was made by the Swedish Evangelical mission in 1866<sup>65</sup>.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Protestants have tried several times to establish missions in Ethiopia but failed to be accepted by the people. But, the Protestants enjoyed comparative peace since the days of Menelik II (king and emperor of Ethiopia from 1889 to 1913), along with other missions. They established missions mainly in the southern parts of the county<sup>66</sup>. However, the EOTC has been little affected by external influences and has sustained its distinct presence throughout the years until today.

### **1.2.6. The Catholic Church compared with other religions, its achievements, and Rites in Ethiopian**

According to the current data, the total population of Ethiopia is approximately 114,963,588 inhabitants<sup>67</sup>. Of the total population, Christians are about 62.8% (Orthodox 43.5%, Protestant 18.6%, and Catholic 0.7%), Muslims 33.9%, traditional 2.7%, and other beliefs 0.6%<sup>68</sup>. The Ethiopian Catholics are few in number (0.7%) but play a magnificent

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, op. cit., p. 157.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 159-160.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. D.H. Moore, *Christianity in Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 282; see also: J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, op. cit., p. 157-160.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ethiopia-population/>, [accessed: 05.04.2020].

<sup>68</sup> Selamta, *Christianity in Ethiopia*, in: <http://www.selamta.net/religion.htm>, [accessed 05.04.2020].

role in education, healthcare, human promotion, and others. It is well known for its development and pastoral work. The number of Catholics has never seen increasing in the Country. Catholics never go house to house or stand in public areas to teach the Gospel to other religious followers for conversion to Catholicism. The Church engaged predominantly in developmental work because of the support from Western Catholic Church (Europe and America). This made her appear like NGO and a charitable organization. Its service is targeted to all people without any difference of religion except in the Sacraments. During employment or vacancies, one of the criteria is religion in other religious offices but not in Catholic, and the Catholics mostly complain<sup>69</sup>.

The achievement of the Catholic Church range from the spiritual, pastoral, social, political, and economic life of the people. No one doubts the leadership role of the Catholic Church in the different spheres of life of the people. All its schools, health centers, and development offices are always needed.

There are two Rites in the Ethiopian Catholic Church. The areas where the Catholic Church was re-established by St. Justine De Jacobis (bishop), in the northern highlands of Ethiopia and Eritrea, starting from 1839, adopted the Geez Rite. St. Justin inculturated himself from the very beginning. St. Justine de Jacobis had great respect and honor for the custom and traditions of the people of Ethiopia. He came to Ethiopia with the principle to convert the country's Christians to the true: One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, i.e., the Catholic Church. But he carefully examined every detail in the ecclesial life of the people of Ethiopia before embracing it to be sure that every mistake and error that might have crept in would be eradicated. So, he "did not regard his European mode of Christian existence as higher than the forms of Christian existence which had been at home for many centuries in the land to which he was sent. [...; because] he saw no antithesis between becoming Catholic and remaining Ethiopian"<sup>70</sup>. Hence, St. Justin adopted the custom and

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<sup>69</sup> Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat (henceforth: ECS.), *Ethiopian Catholic Church Directory*, Addis Ababa, 2017, p. 369.

<sup>70</sup> E. C. Suttner, *Orthodoxy and Catholicism in Ethiopia: The Challenge of Inculturation*, in: "Missionalia", Vol. 23, No. 1, (108-129, 1995), p. 119.

traditions of the country, inculturated, and re-established the Catholic Church with the Geez Rite in the northern part of Ethiopia and Eritrea.

However, Mgr. Guglielmo Massaia (later cardinal), an Italian Capuchin missionary, who re-established the Catholic Church in the southern part of Ethiopia, was not happy with the attitude and cultural stand of St. Justin de Jacobis. Unlike St. de Jacobis, he was not ready to orient himself to the Christian tradition of Ethiopia, to which he came as St. Justin did. Instead, he preferred to re-establish the Latin Rite Catholic Church of Ethiopia. For Guglielmo Massaia, “the spiritual treasures he had brought with him from Europe were sufficient”<sup>71</sup>. Then, he established the Catholic Church with the Latin Rite in southern Ethiopia.

Therefore, the Catholic Church in Ethiopia has 12 dioceses and one Prefecture with two Rites. Four dioceses celebrate in Geez Rite. Eight Vicariates and one Prefecture celebrate in Latin. The two Rites, despite their challenges, are viewed as beauty in diversity.

### **1.3. The etymological meaning of youth**

As the title of this paper indicates, it is to study the holistic growth of youth in general and the contribution of pastoral ministry to it in the Adigrat Diocese. Before proceeding with various evaluations and interpretations, it is important to see the development of the term ‘youth’ and essential developments in youth’s life.

#### **1.3.1. The concept and meaning of youth**

The word ‘youth’ has been understood and interpreted for a long time in various ways. As Joe-Barth C. Abba said, its definition is more of a relative and conceptually vague or nebulous terminology because youth is a word devoid of any precise definition and meaning<sup>72</sup>. According to some researchers, whether a term or concept claims to describe a

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 120.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. J. C. Abba, *Special Pastoral Formation for Youths in Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Berlin, 2005, p. 31.

specific set of human subjects, a process, and a transition, and the actual age bracket for youth is notoriously variable yet<sup>73</sup>.

Pope John Paul II, in his letter to the youth of the world, said: “youth is a period which is certainly distinguished from the period of childhood (it is precisely the time when one leaves the years of childhood), just as it is also distinguished from the period of full maturity”<sup>74</sup>. In general, youth as a term and/or concept, its description and age vary according to the different societies and cultural perspectives. According to Erik Erikson, a famous psychologist, youth starts with establishing a primary association with the world of skills and tools when childhood ends, and puberty begins<sup>75</sup>. It could be challenging to describe as it covers a broad area and notion. Various societies and cultures maintain diverse outlooks and overviews about young people concerning the level of their social, psychological, sociological, and economic development<sup>76</sup>. Youth refers to a young person. Joe-Barth C. Abba, borrowing from the Chambers Dictionary of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, said that it means “youth is a state of being young, early life, the period immediately following childhood. It is an early period of existence, a young person”<sup>77</sup>. So, the one who is in an early stage after childhood starting from the age of adolescence, young, fresh, in the stage of growth, newly arrived, and junior, is referred to as a youth,

Besides that, some countries also define youth as a young person between the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. Others referred to young persons as youths when they began to involve themselves in physical activities, which has connections with biological growth, physical development, maturity, and undergoing physical and psychological change as the manifestations of young age. From all descriptions, the

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. I. Bello-Kano, *Subjects, Agents, or Collectives? The Discourse of Youth and PHILOSOP*, in: “Legon Journal of the Humanities”, [Vol. 20, 2009, pp. 45-68], p. 46.

<sup>74</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter to the youth of the world *Dilecti Amici* (henceforth: DA), Rome, 1985, 3; available: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1985/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_31031985\\_dilecti-amici.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1985/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_31031985_dilecti-amici.html), [accessed: 11.11.2018].

<sup>75</sup> Cf. E. H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society: The landmark work on the social significance of childhood*, London, 1987, p.234-235.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. J. C. Abba, *Special Pastoral Formation for Youths in Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, op. cit., p.31-33.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

definitions based on age have been considered the most suitable for research and policy purposes<sup>78</sup>. Therefore, the explanation of youth might be given as a function of age, activities, and culture. In other words, the meaning of youth describes a specific set of human subjects (adolescents, teenagers, and young people in general), a process (a time of life that is neither childhood nor adulthood, that is, somewhere in-between), and a transition (the period between childhood and maturity)<sup>79</sup>.

The actual age group for youth is highly variable: the United Nations and the World Bank define youth as a person between the ages of 15 – 24/25, respectively; while the Commonwealth youth program refers youth as the people aged between 15 – 29<sup>80</sup>; most of the Bishops' conferences refer to youth as young people starting from 18 to the age of 30-35, but the final document of the Synod of Bishops on *Young People, the Faith, and Vocation Discernment*, considered youth as the group of young people between 16 – 29 years old<sup>81</sup>. According to African Union Commission (AUC), youth or young people refers to every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years,<sup>82</sup> while the Ethiopian National Youth Policy on Youth Development defines “youth as to include part of the society who are between 15 – 29 years”<sup>83</sup>. Furthermore, the United States Catholic Conference also describes youth as those in their late teens, twenties, and thirties; single, married, divorced, widowed; and with or without children<sup>84</sup>. So, youth age varies from country to country and organization to organization.

Once a young person is incorporated into the youth stage, he or she is “the youth of the nations and societies, the youth of every family and of all humanity; also, the youth of

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, *Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: National Youth Policy*, Addis Ababa, 2004, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. I. Bello-Kano, *Subjects, Agents, or Collectives? The Discourse of Youth and PHILOSOP*, op. cit., p. 46-47, 49.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, *Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Final document of the Synod of Bishops on *Young people, the Faith and Vocation Discernment*, no. 10.

<sup>82</sup> African Union Commission, *African Youth Charter*, p. 11; available at: <https://au.int/en/youth-development> [accessed 24/05/2020].

<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, *Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. USCC., *Sons and Daughters of the Light: A pastoral plan for Ministry Young Adults*, United States Catholic Conference, 1997, p.7.



the Church”<sup>85</sup>. Thus, the young people of the diocese need to understand that they have a great responsibility, to develop and change the conditions of families and society in sustaining peace in the nations, as well as they have a significant role in the growth of the Church because “youth is more than simply a period of time; it is a state of mind”<sup>86</sup>. Young people live in the present reality, which becomes the present by the generation of those who are now adults. They have a responsibility and duty to carry on this current reality into the future, which will become one day a reality. As Pope Francis said: “young people are the now and present, and the future also belongs to them, and they are responsible from a moral point of view”<sup>87</sup>.

From a theological viewpoint, youth is not a strictly age-related group. But instead, youth can be seen as inseparable from the whole of humanity or the human condition in general. Youth is an integral part of one’s own identity and part of each human being. Ontologically youth belong to our humanity, therefore, “Once people are young, they will keep their youth, even though their time of youth will diminish and they will become adult or old, and vice versa – being potentially adult and old is embedded in every child and each young person, therefore, our childhood and youth stay within us for the whole of our life”<sup>88</sup>. This show that there is no adult who never experiences the life of youth. All who are old have memories of their young age, childhood experiences, up and downs, that never diminishes in old age. So, “true youth means having a heart capable of loving, whereas everything that separates us from others makes the soul grow old”<sup>89</sup>. Because it is an unforgettable experience and discovery of youth’s life and its countless significance for the life of every human being.

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<sup>85</sup> DA 1.

<sup>86</sup> DA 34

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (henceforth: CV.), Loreto, 2019, no. 64 & 178; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html), [accessed: 04.03.2019].

<sup>88</sup> F. Stech, *Who are Youth in Theological Perspective?*, in: “Journal of Youth and Theology”, Vol. 15, (124-145, 2016), p. 129.

<sup>89</sup> CV. 13.

As Pope John Paul II said, youths are a time given by Providence to every person and given as a responsibility. During that time, youth searches, like the young man in the Gospel, for answers to basic questions; searches not only for the meaning of life but also for a concrete way to go about living his life, which is the most characteristic and fundamental aspect of youth<sup>90</sup>. Additionally, Pope Francis said: “Youth is more than simply a period of time; it is a state of mind”<sup>91</sup>. Every stage of human life, with its enduring value, is a permanent grace. The experience of a well-lived youth always remains in the hearts of human beings and continues to grow, bear fruit, and harvest throughout adulthood. Besides that, as a human being matures, grows older, and structures one’s own life, he or she should never lose that enthusiasm and openness to an ever greater reality, and at every moment in life, a person can renew one’s youthfulness. Thus, growing older means preserving and cherishing the most precious things about youth, it also involves having to purify those things that are not good and receiving new gifts from God so we can develop the things that matter<sup>92</sup>. Pope John Paul II, in his famous Apostolic Letter to the Youth of the World, *Dilecti amici*, said that man is the fundamental and, at the same time, the daily way of the Church, while the period of youth is a critical stage in the life of every human being. Your youth is not just your property, personal property, or a generation’s property. It belongs to the whole of that space that every man traverses in his life’s journey, and at the same time, it is a special possession belonging to everyone. It is a possession of humanity itself<sup>93</sup>.

The National Youth Policy of Ethiopia asserts that youths play a significant role in the development and are the foundation of a society; their energies, inventiveness, character, and orientation define a nation’s development and security pattern. Through their creative talents and labor power, a country makes enormous progress. Young people are a

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, New York, 1995, p. 120-121.

<sup>91</sup> CV., 34.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 160-161.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter to the Youth of the World *Dilecti amici* (henceforth: DA.), Rome, 1985, no. 1; [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1985/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_31031985\\_dilecti-amici.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1985/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_31031985_dilecti-amici.html), [accessed: 11.11.2018].

particular segment of the national population that is sensitive, energetic, active, and in the most productive stage of life as citizens. The youths are also the most volatile yet vulnerable segment of the population in terms of social-economic, emotional, and other aspects<sup>94</sup>. So, generally in Ethiopia, the understanding of youths is limited to these specific situations.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, the young people are ready for the possibility of self-fulfillment through identity formation, self-discovery, and developing independence. As young people develop their maturity from childhood to adulthood, they experience significant behavioral and social changes, which is a growth process. Youth, by nature, as a critical period of journey in life brings forth an opportunity for timely intervention to prevent destructive life patterns and to promote continuing healthy habits, and they emerge into adulthood as healthy, self-reliant individuals depend on the options provided to develop positive attitudes and life skills during the formative years<sup>95</sup>. As youth face the challenges of the rapid changes in their lives, they also contend with the question of their self-fulfillment through identity formational developments to properly prepare themselves for the emerging future as young adults.

Therefore, youth can be defined as a person yet in the years of formation, continuing in the character of fashioning or shaping, development of personality, and occasionally getting training that can help with human capital development. Additionally, youth can be described as a young person in her or his teens, twenties, and, early thirties; single, married, divorced, widowed; with or without children, and regarding age, this paper considers youth between the age of thirteen and thirty-five years old. Youth can be shaped for good or bad by whatsoever emerges in and around their atmosphere since they acquire through observation and experience.

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, *Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 9-11.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. A. Akpanessien, *The Role of Pastoral Care and Guidance in the Spiritual Development of Postmodern Youth in Nigeria*, unpublished, 2015, p. 3.

Hence, it is important to lead the youth to integration, effectiveness, and responsibility of adulthood in the faith. They need to be trained on time because they are very fragile, delicate, ready to take the bent they are given, and they are like clay in the hand of a potter (Jer. 18: 1-6), and as such, whatever shape given leaves a mark<sup>96</sup>. Therefore, their proper guidance matters.

### **1.3.2. Youth as a period of shaping and self-fulfillment**

A significant task in the process of human development throughout of youth is the exploration of personal self-fulfillment. Pope John Paul II explains the stage of youth as “the time of a particularly intense discovery of the human “I” and of the properties and capacities connected with it. Before the inner gaze of the developing personality of the young man or woman, there is gradually and successively revealed that specific and unique and unrepeatable potentiality of concrete humanity, in which carried out the whole plan of a future life as self-fulfillment”<sup>97</sup>. This shows that youth is the period of sowing the seed to harvest in the future life, the time of preparation and ordering the future in advance.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum domini*, noted: “Youth is a time when genuine and irrepressible questions arise about the meaning of life and the direction our own lives should take”<sup>98</sup>. The period of youth remains remarkably an exciting period of discovery and exploration in the journey of human life toward God and provides for a long-drawn-out growth after childhood. It is a period in which youth undergo an essential emotional and physical change, as well as it is the period of “discovering and at the same time of organizing, choosing, foreseeing and making the first personal decision, decisions that will be important for the future in the strictly personal dimension of human existence”<sup>99</sup>.

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. J. C. Abba, *Special Pastoral Formation for Youths in Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>97</sup> DA., no. 3.

<sup>98</sup> Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum domini* (henceforth: VD.), Rome, 2010, no. 104; available: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20100930\\_verbum-domini.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html), [accessed: 26.10.2019].

<sup>99</sup> VD 3.

In human life, youth is when a person is open to all kinds of influences and experiences several challenges. These influences and challenges can determine a person's future path in life: "for good or for bad"<sup>100</sup>. So, an essential task in the development process during youth is exploring the self-fulfillment of goodness in life. The young people at this stage have a habit of running away from the beliefs and values that established societal structures. They become more engaged in raising questions about fundamental beliefs and societal values, and they do all this to discover where they belong and personally uncover the truth about the world they live in to achieve their self-fulfillment<sup>101</sup>. However, among the society in Tigray, where the Adigrat diocese is, discussions about the bodily change of adolescents, sexuality, and so on are not expected or not a norm. It is like a taboo. If a young person asks such a question they are not allowed to say so.

The discovery of self-fulfillment in youth is a gradual process of continual development. This developmental perspective of all human experiences towards self-fulfillment, which sees it as an ongoing process, requires a pastoral minister's attention in the diocese. A religious ministry for youth is essential to care for the developmental desires and issues that preoccupy many young people's lives. An understanding of youth growth improves the pastoral ministry to young people, delivers basic needs through the Church, and eventually enables the adult to challenge the youth gently toward future holistic growth of the person.

During the search for self-fulfillment and shaping personal identity, various psychosocial developmental characteristics can occur in young people starting from childhood: 1) Cognitive development, 2) Moral development, 3) Faith development, and 4) Vocational development to mention some.

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<sup>100</sup> G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a new age: Helping young people and adults to understand and meet the challenges to faith in a changing world*, Dublin, 1999, p. 108.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. E. H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, New York, 1963, p. 235.

### 1.3.2.1. Cognitive development

Cognitive development is the central characteristic of growth throughout the changes that take place in young people, particularly at the age of adolescence. It is the ability to develop thinking and reasoning that results from the biological endowment and the normal processes of human growth. This development can be compared with the food digested by the body. From a physical standpoint, the human organism digests food, which is then reconstructed to serve bodily needs. The same design happens for cognitive development; the human organism receives new information unceasingly and then establishes the basis for deepening mental growth. So that, as the digested food constructs the body of a human being throughout in process, the knowledge also develops and advances throughout time and in the process<sup>102</sup>.

The development of reasoning and cognition is usually considered a process of understanding the world and adapting to the environment, and cognitive structures are defined as progressively adaptive and flexible<sup>103</sup>. Human cognition is a dynamic, developing system that unceasingly changes to more complex levels. Through this fluid, continuing interaction, the young people gradually transform and mature a deep understanding of both the world and the self. Youths, particularly teenagers, are pressured from all sides: from within to become more adult-like; and some of the influences are social pressures from family, peers, teachers, and society in general. These influences may cause disorientation or discovery<sup>104</sup>.

This development by its character includes the capacity to construct hypotheses, form generalizations, and demonstrate abstract thinking. It helps interpret reality by using more complex reasoning, even when such a reason is unnecessary or beyond one's understanding. It transmits from life's concrete, personal experiences to the possible and

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. C. M. Shelton, *Adolescent Spirituality: Pastoral Ministry for High School and College Youth*, Chicago, 1983, p. 29-30.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. R.E. Muuss, *Theories of Adolescence*, New York, 1988, p.182.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. R. Woodbury, *Family Life as Context for Adolescent Moral Development*, in: "Intuition: The BYU Undergraduate Journal in Psychology", [Vol. 9, no. 1, Art. 11, 2012], p. 86; available at: <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/intuition/vol9/iss1/11>, [accessed: 10.07.2020].

potential aspects of situations and unique experiences. This transit involves examining and constructing hypothetical situations of numerous alternatives and solutions to everyday problems. It helps to get reasons and more complex answers by asking questions such as Why is there God? Why do we go to mass? Why am I a Catholic? Who is Jesus? and so on – and reflects on it to mature cognitive capacity. Because “formal thinking sets the stage for more profound reflection on fundamental questions of life and personal meaning”<sup>105</sup>. When young generations have learned some formal thought, they start to ask about meaning and value and how these notions and beliefs are relevant to their own life<sup>106</sup>.

Increased cognitive capacity interconnects with other developmental issues, such as identity. So, as the maturation of a young person continues and enters young adulthood, this cognitive development translates into deeper reflection concerning morality, ethics, and deepening ideological values<sup>107</sup>. There is a traditional way of storytelling, sharing tales, and asking simple but systematic questions among the families (parents with their children) in the diocese. These help the children think, reason, be logical, develop values and ethics, be fair in whatever they do, be disciplined, and so on.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, it is essential to note that not all obtain formal operational thinking of cognitive development. “As teens explore new developmental abilities (cognitive and physical) and do so within various social structures (family life, peer relations, and culture or society as a whole) that they may not have had or experienced as children, they begin to realize their autonomous choices require some responsibility”<sup>108</sup>. This shows that the diocese needs to consider that there are many differences in the gaining of a formal basis of cognition during young age and varies from one person to person, and from family to family. As Pope Benedict XVI, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, said that “youth is a time when genuine and irrepressible questions arise about the meaning of life and the direction our own lives should take. Only God can give the true

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<sup>105</sup> C. M. Shelton, *Adolescent Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum domini* (henceforth: VD.), Rome, 2010, no. 104

<sup>107</sup> Cf. C. M. Shelton, *Adolescent Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 33-39.

<sup>108</sup> R. Woodbury, *Family Life as Context for Adolescent Moral Development*, op. cit., p. 86.

answer to these questions”<sup>109</sup>. Therefore, families do not have equal knowledge of traditional storytelling and sharing legends. So, during pastoral ministry to the youth in the diocese, especially in group settings, focusing and giving attention to this phenomenon is vital. Organizing such a program in youth ministry is essential to help the young generation develop cognition and morality.

### **1.3.2.2. Moral development**

Morality has been defined as having a sense and conduct of what is right or wrong but still developing over the last decades. Currently, like in the moral theology of ethics, it has gotten essential attention in the study of psychology as well. For this reason, it includes: first, to know what is moral is to understand human goodness; to know how to be mature in morality is to know how to grow in human goodness. This point is mainly relevant to adolescence, where teens develop autonomy and prepare for adulthood. Second, morality is more than just making ethical decisions in professional occupations (like engineers, doctors, managers, lawyers, etc.); but is at the heart of the human state and all sincere human relationships; this point is relevant to the growth of adolescents, for they make decisions in their social life, and they must keep some rules and regulations or face the consequences (for instance, schooling, driving, alcohol, etc.)<sup>110</sup>.

Moral development is a process of installing transformation of cognitive structures but not a process of imprinting virtues and rules. It is dependent on the motivation of the social environment and cognitive development<sup>111</sup>. Moral development “concerns rules and conventions about just interactions between people. These rules can be studied in three domains: cognitive, behavioral and emotional”<sup>112</sup>. Children’s reasoning or thinking concerning rules for ethical conduct is essential in the cognitive domain. In the behavioral part, the attention is on how children behave, and in the emotional field, the emphasis is on how children feel morally. So, moral maturity is “a long, gradual process in which

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<sup>109</sup> VD., 104.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. R. Woodbury, *Family Life as Context for Adolescent Moral Development*, op. cit., p. 86-88.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. R. Duska and M. Whelan, *Moral Development: A Guide to Piaget and Kohlberg*, New York, 1975, p. 7.

<sup>112</sup> L. Oqbamicael, *Dynamics of Human Growth*, Nairobi, 2016, p. 36.



understanding moral concepts such as justice, rights, equality, and human welfare underlies how individuals think through their experiences”<sup>113</sup>.

Some psychologists define moral development concerning rules and conventions as just interactions between people. For this reason, in the first stage, justice and rules are essential for regulating a social activity. And at the second stage of moral development, children mature the skill of abstract reasoning and become conscious that people generate rules and laws, and that judging rules (actions) for rules’ sake (the actor’s intentions) as well as the effects require to be careful<sup>114</sup>. It is essential to note some significant points here that children, through cooperative activity, advance an understanding of the purpose and origin of the rules. This needs to get attention in the diocese. Consequently, as they become close to each other experiences relationships of mutual respect. In this stage, adults, parents, and pastors in their ministry have a significant role in controlling and showing the direction to the children to sense equality, justice, respect, and dignity among themselves, and also to have adequate knowledge and understanding to be reliable in the exercise of rules. In the Diocese of Adigrat, the parents and pastors must play a great role in the following three levels of moral development, showing that the child at the first level relies on others. So, the priority is with the self, which is called the pre-conventional level; at the second level, the young person is conscious of individual, family, group, school, or nation that begins to make demands on them. In other words, a person develops external principles for the respect of the law and the needs of society, which is called the conventional level. And finally, at the third level, a person begins to define moral values and principles, and moral reasoning starts to come from the self. The universal ethical principles that award justice and equality to all persons are adopted through principled moral reasoning<sup>115</sup>.

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<sup>113</sup> W. S. Forney [et. al], *Developmental stages of age and moral reasoning as predictors of juvenile delinquents' behavioral intention to steal clothing*, in: “Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal”, Vol. 34, no. 2, [p. 110-126], 2005, p. 112.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. R. Duska and M. Whelan, *Moral Development*, op. cit., p. 7-41.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 42-79.

Nowadays, among communities in Tigray, many young people can be observed not considering the feelings of others, not giving attention to elders, do not care about unethical characters and unjust actions, and can be seen being careless. Because of these facts, morality is strongly argued in social and educational circles. Morality in characteristics or behavioral perspective is defined as good or bad and right or wrong. These develop gradually and in a process involving changes in the community. These changes break or lose good relationships and common values.

Therefore, in the Diocese of Adigrat, it is crucial to play a significant role in moral development through pastoral ministry in young generations' intellectual and spiritual growth. Charles M. Shelton<sup>116</sup>, in his book *Adolescent Spirituality: Pastoral Ministry to High School and College Students*, integrates the moral development theory with Jesus' Gospel invitation: "come, follow me" (Mt. 4:19), as the cornerstone of young people's personality and spirituality<sup>117</sup>. Young people vary in their understanding and reasoning of their values and dignities, and their developmental level influences how they observe personal difficulties and life circumstances. It is important and helpful for an adult to comprehend how a young person reasons about moral challenges and life's problems concerning to social, and moral values. Pastoral ministers must play a great role and help young people to observe that many different values frequently occurred in the circumstances of life, personal relationships, and moral difficulties to be able to prioritize and determine what values have priority for them in the specific situations they are facing during the search for self-fulfillment in relations with the Gospel values.

### **1.3.2.3. Faith development**

By nature, human being starting from childhood develops a sense of being a philosopher through observance and trying to understand their surroundings by themselves. Charles M. Shelton describes it as follows: "just as a child demonstrates an increasingly

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<sup>116</sup> Charles M. Shelton a Jesuit priest and professional psychologist, with several years of experience as a High School Chaplain, died January 20, 2014.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. C. M. Shelton, *Adolescent Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 61

complex structure of moral reasoning, he or she also shows a deepening understanding of his or her faith”<sup>118</sup>. This shows that faith development is a long, gradual process that matures and develops. The development of faith is also the fruit of daily experiences of difficulties in our lives, and it is the result of the support and encouragement of the community of faith with the work of the Holy Spirit because “development in faith and selfhood come through the work of God’s spirit in us”<sup>119</sup>.

According to the theory James W. Fowler develops about faith development, faith makes a difference in shaping our initiatives, responses, relationships, and aspirations in everyday life. Faith development in human beings develops a basic sense of trust in memories of parental presence. It goes with exploring the environment around oneself, interrelating with others, and concentrating on using symbols and stories. Images may be developed which continue throughout life and reaches the age of reason<sup>120</sup>.

Every human person has the ability and starts to think differently after the age of reasoning. With the advent of formal operational thinking, the adolescent develops a more profound understanding of abstract concepts and symbols. Identity formation impacts relationships and a sense of faith in identity. Values, images, and self are synthesized (bring together) their beliefs and values that have mainly unstated character<sup>121</sup>. This is where the diocese’s pastoral ministry can critically evaluate (reflect) the various aspects of faith and play an essential role in teaching using various symbols and images. Because this is a period of self-discovery that happens when a person starts to understand themselves independently. Faithfulness and conceptual dedications are significant aspects of this stage<sup>122</sup>. Individuals begin to understand that many insensible issues and powers influence performances and beliefs formed through an intensified desire to relate to God and a willingness to accept mystery. Some want to connect with those who are different. One

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<sup>118</sup> C. M. Shelton, *Adolescent Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 66.

<sup>119</sup> J. W. Fowler, *Faith development and pastoral care*, Philadelphia, 1988, p.115.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. J. W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, San Francisco, 198, p.119-150.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, p.151-173.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, p.174-183.

might call it a confident pluralism. While one remains grounded in their faith, one extends freedom to others in their faith. During this period, a person is bound up between the tensions of his or her needs and welfare and the demands of others<sup>123</sup>.

In the end, a person reaches the stage of engagement with his/her spirituality as a part of his/her identity which is simply who he/she is. But not everyone reaches this period. This stage is the period that a person can never imagine life without spirituality. Anyone who arrives at this stage of faith development can become powerless in compassion, risking a loss of personal life and identity (for instance: St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Martin Luther King, ...). A person who reached this stage commits himself/herself to the demands of love and justice. During this period, a person is bound up in a permanent desire to supporting and serving others fellow persons. A person who arrives at this stage doesn't care for himself or herself and is primarily a martyr<sup>124</sup>.

The stages of faith development show that a person develops in collaborations and relationships with the surrounding conditions<sup>125</sup>. This helps to integrate the Catholic Christian faith that the message of salvation is proclaimed by the actions and words of Jesus Christ at each level according to the age group. Faith education for the lives of the young Catholics in the diocese of Adigrat is provided within a Church system structured across 35 parishes and four missions<sup>126</sup>. The youth do not benefit from Catholic schools regarding their religion.

The young generation access assistance for catechetical and religious education through parishes and the coordination of the diocesan pastoral office. Parish is the main center for Christian initiation, catechesis, and religious education. But Catholic schools provide only academic studies. Parish offers Sacramental preparation to children according to local (diocese) policies and preferences. Parish priests, youth chaplains, and catechists

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<sup>123</sup> Cf. Ibid. p.184-198.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. J. W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, op. cit., p.199-204; see also: J. W. Fowler, *Faithful change: The personal and public challenges of postmodern life*, Nashville, 1996, p.57-67.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. G. L. Chamberlain, *Faith development and campus ministry*, in: "Religious education", Vol. 74, no. 3, [p.314-324], 1979, p.323.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. *Ethiopic Diocese of Adigrat*, in: <http://www.gcatholic.org/dioceses/diocese/adig0.htm>, [accessed: 22.04.2020].

play a great role in the development of faith in the lives of the young generation. Additionally, Catholic faith development in dioceses, in Ethiopia in general, is served by the collaboration of Diocesan Pastoral Offices (DPO), Youth Catholic Workers Offices (YCWO), Youth Chaplains, and Youth Centers.

However, as the research shows, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, new concepts of catechesis or religious education have been introduced, and religious education is no longer a must in ones education. As a result, the interest in religion and religious education has become at risk, reducing a constructive perception of God's presence or discouraging people, particularly in western countries<sup>127</sup>. Besides, "a wholesome religious faith, with its moral guidelines, can be a very powerful source of sustenance and meaning. Nowadays the practice of religious faith is somehow perceived as unnecessary for people who are young and healthy"<sup>128</sup>. However, in the diocese, most young people still have a solid ambition to know about their religion and practice it. Today's young generation has different mentalities and operates in a very diverse way and environment than the young generations of 30 decades ago. The role of parents, catechists, teachers, and priests need to know how to enter into the modern youth's experience.

So, to get a new understanding of catechesis/religious education, parents, catechists, and priests need to expand their knowledge about human beings' physical, psychological, spiritual, moral growth, and faith development. In addition to expanding their knowledge, creating specific catechetical and educational aims is possible. These would include: enabling positive human experiences, introducing the nonmaterial reality, to helping discover the Christian image of God as three persons in One God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit), the Giver of life and the world, to introduce prayer and liturgical formation, to take care of moral education, to initiate the young generation into community life<sup>129</sup>. Therefore, it is important to assist the youth to have a strong

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<sup>127</sup> Cf. H. Lombaerts and E. Osewska, *Family Catechesis/Religious Education in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Europe*, in: E. Osewska and J. Stala [ed.], *Religious Education/Catechesis in the Family: A European Perspective*, Warszawa, 2010, p. 27-28.

<sup>128</sup> F. McCarthy, *Celebrating Funerals*, Dublin, 2019, p.42.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. H. Lombaerts and E. Osewska, *Family Catechesis/Religious Education in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Europe*, op. cit., p. 27.

understanding of Jesus' message in lives of the young people and to deepen their faith experience to be open to the call of Jesus and sincerely be able to answer their future call.

#### **1.3.2.4. Vocational development**

Everything has its final characteristic, and the developmental theory has its final aspect, which needs to be given special attention to the vocational dedication and discernment of young people's development. Development of vocational commitment comes in the process and develops gradually. Because it is an ongoing, continuous, orderly, dynamic, and patterned process. New Testament teaches that the vocation and the response to Jesus' call is not a conclusive "yes" but rather a gradual process of continual conversion and growth intellectually and spiritually<sup>130</sup>. Among the society in Tigray, the young people are supposed to come to recognize their importance and role in society as adults and understand society's expectations. A developing sense of occupational identity is an essential and integral need throughout adolescence but there is little concern. Because as psychologist Milton Shore has noted, "it is during the adolescent phase that the young person is clearly exposed to the values which are inherent in the society with regard to occupations and vocations"<sup>131</sup>. Vocational development is based on the characteristics of the individual's personal development. It begins from the early ages of childhood, particularly from the time when the child starts to be conscious of different experiences of life. For instance, anything that is related to work. Throughout this period, children observe their surroundings, several people doing various kinds of work. The child's concepts of works are very simple and fantastic in his or her initial stages. But these concepts develop and give specific interests, deepening the understanding of continuous educational and vocational activities.

After the middle ages of adolescence, a teenager begins "to formulate ideas as to fields and levels of work which are appropriate for him, self and occupational concepts

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<sup>130</sup> Cf. K. Rahner, *Reflections on the Problem of the Gradual Ascent to Christian Perfection*, in: "Theology Investigations", Vol. 3, Baltimore, 1967, p.1-3.

<sup>131</sup> M. F. Shore, *Youth and Jobs: Educational, Occupational, and Mental Health Aspects*, in: "Journal of Youth Adolescence", Vol. 1, no. 4 [pp.315-323], 1972, p.16.

which will enable him, if necessary, to make tentative choices, that is, to commit himself to a type of education or training which will lead him or her toward some partially specified occupation”<sup>132</sup>. The youth are expected to live happily in their daily career, profession, occupation, job, and positions. In Tigray, where the Adigrat Diocese is, the parents do not have much understanding about these. Therefore, the youth needs to get guidance from the Church through its catechesis and in the schools in *crystallizing* their vocational choices through learning about different opportunities; *specifying* their vocational possibilities by demonstrating a stronger sense of dedication to their occupational choice, developing their interest in future vocational goals; and *implementing* ones vocational preference<sup>133</sup>. Thus, the vocational development throughout the exploration shapes the specific bases of lifestyle and installs what is necessary for the future in the life of adulthood.

#### **1.4. Youth as a “New” stage and precious treasure of life**

In his famous Apostolic Letter to the Youth of the World, *Dilecti amici*, Pope John Paul II said, “Youth is a special treasure. A special treasure of a man, of a young man or woman, and most often it is lived by young people as a specific treasure. There is gradually and successively revealed that specific and unique and unrepeatable potentiality of a concrete humanity, in which there is as it was inscribed the whole plan of future life”<sup>134</sup>. This shows that youth is a period of newness, freshness, and learning about the lifestyle and world in which young people live. Youth is the period of stimulating, motivating, and treasure of life. Besides, youth is the time for new contacts, companionships, and friendships in a circle more comprehensive than the family alone<sup>135</sup>.

Pope Benedictus XVI, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Africae munus*, noted, “youthfulness is a gift and a treasure from God for which the whole Church is grateful to

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<sup>132</sup> D. E. Super (et al.), *Career Development: Self-concept theory*, New York, 1963, p. 82.

<sup>133</sup> D. E. Super (et al.), *Perspectives on Vocational Development*, Washington, 1972, p. 20-29.

<sup>134</sup> DA. 12.

<sup>135</sup> DA. 13.

the Lord of life. Young people should be loved, esteemed and respected”<sup>136</sup>. This expresses that God gives youthfulness, and all adults receive it, enjoy it, and live it. Youths have great potential and capacity for bringing and making a positive change in society; they are the key to supporting and sustaining peace. Furthermore, they are the center of the development of the Church and the state. Moreover, Pope Francis said youth is “an original and stimulating stage of life”<sup>137</sup>. Thus, youths are energetic agents of change and growth because “it is these young people that have the idea, energy, and creativity to make the world a better place – but only if they are given the opportunity to do so”<sup>138</sup>.

The young people occupy a prominent place in Ethiopian society and establish the majority of the Ethiopian population, estimated at 114,963,588 people, 41% are under the age of 15, and more than 28% are between 15 to 29 ages<sup>139</sup>. And also, young people make up the majority of Africa’s population<sup>140</sup>. They are one of the greatest assets in Ethiopia. Youth is a precious stage of life. Life itself is a gift from God that has its stages; likewise, youthfulness is a precious treasure that God gives. One of the crucial stages of life span is the period of youth and this period is “a key stage in the life of every human being”<sup>141</sup>. Thus, being young enables one to increase in wisdom and unfolds a vast field of experience in relation to knowledge, education, and ethics<sup>142</sup>.

The young generations if they receive the best example from their parents and teachers, can form the best society tomorrow. Through these young people, the Church enkindles the light, the light which illuminates the future. Because the hope and confidence

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<sup>136</sup> Benedictus XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* (henceforth: AM.), Ouidah, 2011, no. 60; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20111119\\_africae-munus.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html), [accessed: 12.10.2017].

<sup>137</sup> CV. 22.

<sup>138</sup> P. Lindley, *Africa and young people: becoming agents of change*, <https://www.virgin.com/virgin-unite/our-community/africa-and-young-people-becoming-agents-change>, [accessed: 16/05/2020].

<sup>139</sup> Cf. FDRE, *National Employment Policy and Strategy of Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 2; and USAID, *Developing Ethiopia’s Youth*, July 2017, [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Fact\\_Sheet\\_Developing\\_Ethiopia's\\_Youth\\_Jul\\_2017.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Fact_Sheet_Developing_Ethiopia's_Youth_Jul_2017.pdf), [accessed: 15.08.2021].

<sup>140</sup> Cf. AM. 60

<sup>141</sup> DA 1.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. DA. 13.



of the Church are in the young people to build a better society and a better world than in the past, and for this, “the Church in a special way sees herself in the young”<sup>143</sup>.

From the Ethiopian point of view, young generations are at the center and essential for the interactions and growth of a society. Yet young people are often placed at the margins of the public sphere and significant political, socio-economic, and cultural processes. In other words, “youth ordinarily is a category of early adulthood, emerging in activity and involvement in society but somewhat limited by societal values and some levels of dependency and perhaps agency”<sup>144</sup>. The constancy and sustainability of a state and the Church can only be safeguarded by engaging them and making them equal partners in the design and growth of society. Because “young people have something which they [adults] lack: they project ‘youth’, energy, physical force, strong emotions, a spirit of adventure, a spirit of freedom, courage to question, and authenticity”<sup>145</sup>. So that they provide “a unique window on processes of social and economic change and facilitates the exploration of some of the big theoretical concerns in social science”<sup>146</sup>.

The young people of the Adigrat Diocese are the resource and treasure of society and can play a vital role in every aspect of the activity, such as the structures, rites, norms, developments, and directions of the well-being of society if they are molded and shaped well. They can make themselves through inventive forms of self-realization. They can make society by acting as a special force, as sources of resistance and resilience, and by their character and behavior. There is a famous saying which can give a clear image of the period of youth: “childhood is a fertile land, youth is a season/time of sowing, and old age is a season/time of harvest. So, be careful of what you sow today, for you will reap the harvest of your youth”, which makes the period of youth a treasure. Pope Benedictus XVI

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<sup>143</sup> DA 15.

<sup>144</sup> A. Ikelegbe, *Beyond the Threshold of Civil Struggle: Youth Militancy and The Militia-ization of the Resource Conflicts in the Niger-delta Region of Nigeria*, in: “African Studies Monographs”, Vol.10, 27(3), [pp. 87-122, 2006], p. 88.

<sup>145</sup> G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a new age*, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>146</sup> A. Furlong, *Youth Studies: An Introduction*, Abingdon, 2013, p. 5.

noted that “young people should be loved, esteemed, and respected”<sup>147</sup>. So, youth is a time of stimulation, novelty, originality, and the beauty of life. But mostly they are misunderstood by the adults who minister to them, which will be discussed below.

### **1.5. Contemporary implications of society towards youth pastoral ministry**

Postmodern society presents young people with difficulties of various views, cultures, politics, and philosophies. Young people naturally have their character, behavior, approach, and so on. There is also a different movement of religion that greatly affect the mind of youth. All these and others sometimes give further insights and understandings of youth. The adult ministers can understand and sees the youth differently. Because “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 of pastoral contact with young people, they wonder when, where, [and] how can this be done”<sup>148</sup>.

Youth directors in the diocese need to know how these changes affect the dynamics of the whole essential development of young people, making it challenging to direct and guide youth to deepen their understanding of the mystery of God, to help them to have enough knowledge of God’s Kingdom, and to abide in the Christian moral values and principles. Understanding the cultural, social, political, and technological changes often helps young people incorporate and adapt to various contexts. Every young person can, then, be well-developed to cover the numerous roles that are accessible.

There are unquestionable factors that clarify why pastoral ministry with youth needs serious consideration of the situation or the context in which it is articulated. Jerome Vallabaraj, in his book *Animating the young: An Introduction to a Holistic Paradigm of Youth Ministry*, distinguishes two-dimensional factors: *external* and *internal* factors. An

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<sup>147</sup> AM. 60.

<sup>148</sup> W. Forde, *The Pastoral Care of Young People*, in: “*The Furrow*”, Vol. 28, No. 5 (pp. 287-299, May, 1977), p. 287.

*external* set of factors comprises historical events, intellectual trends, cultural shifts, and political forces. And *internal* factors are:

- 1) The incarnational character of the Christian message. “God so loved the world” (Jn. 3:16) and wanted to share His every self with human beings and invite them to a life-giving relationship.
- 2) The sacramental nature of reality. It is in Jesus that human beings encounter God most fully.
- 3) The nature of divine revelation in Jesus Christ. Revelation in Jesus Christ is to be understood as God’s self-communication<sup>149</sup>.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, during youth pastoral ministry, some young people today start to complain that the traditional way of worship makes them feel bored. They do want to worship and act in a community in the manner that they could wish, relate and perform different characters and roles, which is a copy and strategy of the protestant sects. Many pastoral ministers feel concerned about such situations and dissatisfied with their pastoral influence on young people. They fear that in the view of a relatively significant number of young people, they are in many ways becoming irrelevant<sup>150</sup>.

It is helpful and vital to pastoral ministry with youth from the view of situational perspective because a situational perspective is an effort to understand young people according to their specific personal, social, and spiritual processes and to guide them toward the desire and requirements of the Church. Because the situational perspective of ministry with youth calls for more than a mere acknowledgment of the situation and recognition of the environment becomes the locus in which the youth can become agent-subjects in a relationship. In this locus, the young seek the fullness of life for all and finally become the locus for the realization of the values of the Reign<sup>151</sup>. Therefore, youth guides and ministers in the diocese should answer to such challenges by making efforts to reach

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<sup>149</sup> J. Vallabharaj, *Animating the young: An Introduction to a Holistic Paradigm of Youth Ministry*, Bangalore, 2005, p. 61-63.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Archeparchial Catholic Secretariat (Hereafter cited as ACS), *Journeying Together in Christ: Acts of the Archeparchial General Assembly*, Addis Ababa, 2013, p. 113-114.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62-63.

out and involve young people and their families to find an accurate balance for stability, continuity, and change in the postmodern cultural context. Furthermore, they are responsible for engaging with the questions, desires, and passions of youth in every generation, and there is also a constant need for formation.

## **Conclusion**

The young people are undoubtedly the majority and highest number in the Diocese of Adigrat as well as in Ethiopia in general. They are also undoubtedly responsible for the numerical growth and enthusiasm of the new religious groups that promote it and the need for political stability. It is also one of the factors that the new Christian movements are challenging the Catholic Church and redirecting young people to these new Christian movements. However, the life of the human person, as witnessed in the current Ethiopian environment, is combined with unsuitability, especially to the relegated value of the human person. Whereas it expresses some aspects of humanity, morality, and work ethic, which seems to consider and take as modernity. It is silent when it comes to disintegrating through an unjust social structure that consigns people to violence and disharmonizing ethnic, political, or religious. Too much self-interest than the common good, materialistic than spiritual, ethnocentric than humanity, and personality.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the growth of young people appear to take a lead in which the persons' ethnicity and language-based that affected by the political deception among its leaders as a means of building their comfort zones at the expense of the young people whose unreliability, disrespectability, and unpredictable behavior are increasingly surfacing in Ethiopia. So, with the current cultural growth, political situation, religious pluralism, and other activities, there is no significant socio-economic and spiritual transformation of Christians who embrace it. On the contrary, widespread disrespect, suicide, corruption, displacement, and immorality exist, and many young people struggle to survive without human dignity. Therefore, there is a need for formation of the young generation, which will be discussed below.

## CHAPTER TWO

### YOUTH FORMATION AND ITS COMPONENTS

#### Introduction

In the world, everything has its basics and originality. As the Scripture records, the primary root and beginning of everything are found in creation. Likewise, God created Adam and Eve in His own “image and likeness” (Gen. 1:27). Adam and Eve, as the first human community, instituted the first couple by the will of God, and in addition as husband and wife are the first foundation of family, which is the first “place of beginnings”<sup>1</sup> of life. In this regard, the family becomes the natural institution where a human being is born and nurtured. As Scott Hahn describes in his book *The First Society*, family is where a person is “born into a community – the community of (ideally) mother, father, and child”<sup>2</sup>.

Young people, who are the strength and hope of the Church<sup>3</sup> and the hope and future of humanity and society<sup>4</sup>, have the root and foundation where they begin to enlighten and develop their talents and skills. In this respect, family is the basis of young people, where they are born, grow up, learn, and mature. It is a place “where children are brought up in the faith”<sup>5</sup>. Besides that, family is also “the place where we learn to appreciate the meaning and beauty of the faith, to pray and to serve our neighbor”<sup>6</sup>. So, the family is a social and community institution that cannot be replaced<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> S. Hahn, *The First Society: The Sacrament of Matrimony and the Restoration of the Social Order*, Ohio, 2018, p.16.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, New York, 1995, p.125.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Message to the youth of the world on the occasion of the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Youth Day*, Vatican, 27 January 2007; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20070127\\_youth.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20070127_youth.html), [accessed: 26.10.2019].

<sup>5</sup> Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (henceforth: AL.), Rome, 2016, no. 16; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20160319\\_amoris-laetitia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia.html), [accessed: 15.05.2018].

<sup>6</sup> AL. 287.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. A. Segula, *The Slovenian Family and Its Religious Upbringing*, in: E. Osewska and J. Stala (ed.), *Religious Education/Catechesis in the Family: A European Perspective*, Warszawa, 2010, p. 157.

## 2.1. Family as a center and fundamental institution of human life

Family is the core and heart of all societies and the Church. Fundamentally, the family is the first association or community to which every person belongs; in this way, it becomes the primary vitality of society and the Church. It is also a natural institution that is founded on the great mystery of divine love, rooted in the sacrament of matrimony as willed by God himself to create an environment of love and life (cf. Gen. 2:18-24; Mt. 19:5)<sup>8</sup>. So, the primary vocation of the family is “love and life”<sup>9</sup>.

Theologically, a family is a community of persons who are created in the “image and likeness of God” (Gen. 1:27) by the love of God, in which is no other creation privileged. It is established through the bond of matrimony and remains united by the love of God. As Pope John Paul II emphasizes, “the family is a community of persons and the smallest social unit. As such, it is an institution fundamental to the life of every society”<sup>10</sup>. So, the family can be presented as a privileged expression of the Church’s presence and mission in the world and the foundation of coexistence<sup>11</sup>.

As the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council called it, the family has different names: the domestic church, the smallest body of gathered believers in Christ; the first and vital cell of society, the domestic sanctuary of the Church<sup>12</sup>. A family is also a place where the fruitful love between Christ and His Church is present and the new citizens of human society are born and grow up. In the family, the members assist each other in achieving

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* (henceforth: EMO.), Lebanon, 14 September 2012, no. 58; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20120914\\_ecclesia-in-medio-oriente.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20120914_ecclesia-in-medio-oriente.html), [accessed: 26.10.2019].

<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, *Speech During the world encounter with families*, St. Peter’s Square – Saturday, 8 Oct., 1994, no.2; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1994/october/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19941008\\_incontro-famiglie.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1994/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19941008_incontro-famiglie.html), [accessed: 05.03.2020].

<sup>10</sup> John Paul II, Letter to the Families *Gratissimam Sane* (henceforth: LtF.), Rome, 1994, no. 17; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_02021994\\_families.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.html), [accessed: 05.03.2020].

<sup>11</sup> Cf. EMO. 58; and Francis, *Visit to the Community of Varginha [Manguinhos]*, Rio de Janeiro, 25 July 2013; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130725\\_gmg-comunita-varginha.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/july/documents/papa-francesco_20130725_gmg-comunita-varginha.html), [accessed: 18.07.2021].

<sup>12</sup> A. Flannery (ed.), Vatican Council Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (henceforth: LG.), New York, 1980, LG. 11; and Vatican Council Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (henceforth: AA.), op. cit., AA. 11.

holiness. For this reason, Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* and Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus*, respectively, called the family “the Church’s Sanctuary in the Home” and “the sanctuary of life”<sup>13</sup>. This shows that a family is also a place where people pray and read the Word of God together. Pope Francis also describes the family as the “natural center of human life”<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, family is the place in which life, as the gift of God, can be appropriately welcomed, protected, and developed in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth<sup>15</sup>. It is where the Gospel is proclaimed, and learned, faith is accepted, and the priesthood of the baptism is exercised through the reception of the sacraments, prayer, and thanksgiving<sup>16</sup>. In a family human dignity is protected from conception to natural death and family members witness their faith<sup>17</sup>. In this regard, the child born to a family is not only the benefit of the members of the family but also the benefit of the entire community into which it is born. In this way, the family can be depicted as “the temple where the flame of life is transmitted. In other words, family is the temple dedicated to the Lord of life”<sup>18</sup>.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, the families need to find their mission within the plan of God. Because they are called by God to play a great role in the history that drives from its essence. Therefore, the Christian family is one of the most important places to accomplish the Church’s mission. As part of the Body of Christ and the image of God’s People, it participates in the prophetic, priestly, and kingly missions of Christ and His Church<sup>19</sup>. As Pope Benedict XVI emphasizes, the Christian family in the Adigrat Diocese should always look to the Holy Family of Nazareth and imitate it as its model. The way the Family of

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<sup>13</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (henceforth: FC.), Rome, 1981, no. 51; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018]; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus* (henceforth: CA.), Rome, 1991, no. 39; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_01051991\\_centesimus-annus.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>14</sup> Francis, *Family and Life: Pastoral Reflections*, New York: Paulist Press, 2015, p. 58.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. CA. 39.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (henceforth: CCC.), London, 1999, no. 1655-1658.

<sup>17</sup> Cf., Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican, 2005, no. 230-237.

<sup>18</sup> A. M. Greenwell, *Catholic Social Teaching: The Family, Gift and Sanctuary of Life*, in: *Catholic Online: Marriage & Family*, <https://www.catholic.org/news/hf/family/story.php?id=44434>, 1/17/2012, [accessed: 07.03.2021].

<sup>19</sup> Cf. FC. 50.

Nazareth observed the law and practiced the religion of the time remains a perfect example of every Christian family, which had the joy of receiving life and demonstrating its piety (cf. Lk 2:22-24, 41)<sup>20</sup>. Any family that takes the Holy family of Nazareth as its model can help children and young people to grow in wisdom, in stature, and in grace before God and man (cf. Lk. 2:52). They will be able to teach their children to trust the Father, to imitate Christ (cf. Cor. 11:1), and to let themselves be guided by the Holy Spirit<sup>21</sup>.

## **2.2. The concept of family in the Diocese of Adigrat, Tigray**

The concept of family in the Diocese of Adigrat, like in other African countries, is a very comprehensive and complex institution. The basic constitution and its relation to the social fabric can be described in the following different structures:

1. It is founded on kinship, marriage, adoption, and other relational aspects;
2. The family may also be patriarchal, matrilineal, patrilineal, multi-local, multigenerational, multiethnic, and multi-religious owing to migration, marriage, and conversion;
3. It is also marked by tensions between African cultural values, Christian teachings, secularism, and other ideologies and religions;
4. A family is a unit of production, consumption, reproduction, and accumulation;
5. Its simplest form consists of a husband, wife, and children.
6. However, in the African context, the concept of family is not like the western understanding. The concept of the family goes beyond the simplest form of extended members. In the African context, the family includes, somewhat vaguely, children, parents, grandparents, and other relatives such as brothers, sisters, in-laws, uncles, cousins, nephews distant and near, and even maids and servants. In addition to these, a family may include the ancestors as well. Besides

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Homily at Mass in Mount of Precipice – Nazareth*, Nazareth, 14 May 2009; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2009/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20090514\\_precipizio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20090514_precipizio.html), [accessed: 18.04.2021].

<sup>21</sup> Cf. EMO. 59.



that, all relatives in the concept of African family have duties and responsibilities towards one another<sup>22</sup>.

Coming back to the custom, tradition, and regulation of family in Tigrayan societies, where the Adigrat Diocese is situated, a lineage of kinship is considered very important. The family lineage of kinship or genealogy is taken both from paternal and maternal sides. Such family lineage or kinship assures a sense of belonging because “these are most often people of one’s own clan, and relatives of one’s mother or father up to a certain degree of kinship”<sup>23</sup>. In every African society, people know how they relate to others through blood kinship and marriage relationships. For this reason, these relationships do not permit marriages among close family members and relatives to a certain degree or generation of kinship. There is also a hierarchy of relationships in Tigrayan families, of course, this is similar to other African families. Such a hierarchy is usually based on age and degree of kinship in the family relationship. For example, young people have duties and obligations that they must carry out for the family. There are similar duties, obligations, rights, and privileges for each member of the family. Commitment to such responsibility and role make them be respected and dictated by society’s moral sense and values. On the contrary, failure to accomplish one’s task and responsibility makes the family members despised by others. In addition to these in the Tigrayan family, all members are expected to be hospitable to one another, relatives, friends, and even strangers<sup>24</sup>.

However, in the Diocese of Adigrat, counting genealogy or the tree of life of kinship from both paternal and maternal sides has its own positive and negative impact on young people’s lives and faith. The positive influence is that it helps strengthen the families through having and knowing extended and large family members and relatives, as well as assisting them in cooperating in times of happiness and sorrow. Furthermore, it helps them

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<sup>22</sup> P. N. Mwaura, *The Gospel of the Family: From Africa to the World Church*, in A. E. Orobator (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholic Look to Vatican III*, New York, 2016, p. 146; and Cf. J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, Nairobi, 1986, p. 109.

<sup>23</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, op. cit., p. 109. p. 100.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ikechukwa A. Kanu, *The concept of ‘Family’ as the contribution of Africa to the consecrated life*, in: Oseci J. O. Ogunu (et. al.) [ed.], *The Catholic Voyage*, Vol. 12, Jan. 2016, p. 35.

to inherit the social values and customs to be fully mature and live in the culture of the extended society, and it gives them confidence.

Therefore, family is the center of young people's lives to develop confidence and signifies that the essential truths of society are taught within the family and that in turn makes life to be centered on the family. In other words, family is where life is produced, and the values of the clan and the tribe are spread<sup>25</sup>.

In human life, married life especially the responsibility of raising children is the most incumbent phase. It is believed in all societies that from the very beginning of human life, God ordered people to multiply and subdue the earth (cf. Gen. 1:27-28). Because marriage and childbearing are considered the focus and center of their expectations, which is the center of human life. They are at the very center of human existence, just as man is at the very center of the universe<sup>26</sup>. Due to that, at a certain age society expects young people most likely to get married and for this reason, the first question among the society in Tigray when a young person dies is: has he/she left children behind? Because like in any African society the understanding of marriage without children in the culture of Tigray is taken as stopping the flow of life through the individual, the line of the genealogy is stagnated and diminished. This is taken as an offense and weakness unless they have made an official vow of consecrated life. It should also be noted that bearing children before or without marriage is another offense by society, as it is against the Church's teaching<sup>27</sup>.

On the other hand, among the community in Tigray, according to the counting of blood relationships of genealogy, a person is always taken as a close family member and relative in society. The degree of limitation is agreed upon by the clan, and nobody is allowed to get married under the number of degrees of kinship they agreed on. This has its negative influence by creating exclusion from each other, creating partiality and contempt for one another. Besides that, by custom parents are the one who chooses marriage partners

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ibid., p.33.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, op. cit., p. 98-100.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 105.

for their children or the mediator<sup>28</sup>, which helps them to be certain that they do not get married to the wrong person. However, today it became a habit of modernizing themselves that young people may choose marriage partners by themselves whom they want and always inform their parents to confirm whether they are from the same line of kinship or not before the marriage takes place. Mostly, young people's way of choosing their partners differ from society to society. In some African cultures, such activities are done during "social gathering, dances and communal work"<sup>29</sup>. Similarly, the method of choosing the marriage partner, time of engagement, and system of wedding differ according to the society's culture<sup>30</sup>. Instead of the parents looking for them, in the current world, they mostly agree secretly by themselves or through friends and inform their parents for confirmation that they must be the right person. Besides that, some youths are not good at knowing their line of genealogy well, and some do not care about it.

The challenge, however, is the idea of the clan and the Church about limiting a certain degree of blood relationships to marry, whereby the Church has a lesser restraint than the clan. In the end, the young people try to get a solution through the Church. And when this happens, the elders of the clan appeal to the Church not to accept those young people who decide by themselves and not to bless their wedding for they are close relatives. Because, if they do so, the people think that they disintegrate the families for they believe they are distancing the relationship and closeness of the kinship of the clan. Eventually, the young people start to live together either within the society or by migrating to remote areas distancing themselves from their families because the community excludes them. Consequently, they miss their community's social values and customs. The worst is that they cannot practice their faith, for they live together without the sacramental blessings, which is the result of counting the genealogy. Additionally, the young parents cannot practice their religion and cannot be exemplary for their children being a living testimony

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. ተስፋስላሴ መድሀኒ, *ታሪክ ኢሮብ (ላሂር መግለጫ)*, አዲግራት, (Tran.: Tesfaselassie Medhin, *The History of Irob (brief description)*, Adigrat), 1993, p. 38-40.

<sup>29</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, op. cit., 100.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 100.

of faith. As a result, it becomes a source of a crisis of morality and faith, which is a big challenge in pastoral ministry. Additionally, children born with different customs, grow up without the values and traditions of their clans, and they grow up without the deep love and care of their grandparents on both sides<sup>31</sup>.

As already mentioned, “Family is the center of life and vital cell of society and of the Church. It is here that the future of the society takes place; it is here that its members acquire basic Catholic teachings. The real Catholic family depicts the life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph”<sup>32</sup>. This shows that a family is like a tree where branches grow in different directions and come from one root. Thus, the young people in Tigray must inherit the values and customs of society. They need to stand on the roots of family life and put out branches of the family life of the clan through the sacramental bonds of marriage, which strengthen their love in faith.

Therefore, family is where the human person is conceived, born, and raised; where they receive and learn the utmost important responsibility, realize and understand their identity, and enjoy earthly happiness, love, and hope. So, counting the genealogy and limiting the line of familial affinity by forbidding marriage to a certain degree needs a particular pastoral approach and care to get a solution from the clan’s elders and the religious leaders in the diocese. Otherwise, the family as the first school where children inherit faith, love, social values, and prayers cannot fulfill its role of education properly, the topic that will be discussed below.

### **2.3. Family as a primary school of faith formation**

In his book *Jesus the Master Catechist*, Bill Huebsch writes, “faith is our response to the announcement of God’s love”<sup>33</sup>. Faith is taught in the family. Faith formation is a lifelong process that helps children and young people to encounter God’s love in the living

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, op. cit., 98-109.

<sup>32</sup> ECS, *Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat Pastoral Commission Strategic Plan 2017-2021*, Addis Ababa, 2016, p. 17.

<sup>33</sup> B. Huebsch, *Jesus the Master Catechist: Twelve lessons from Jesus on Being a Catechist*, New London, 2015, p. 71.

Christ. The parents' instruction and formation in faith are important for their children's right living and success. Because they have the mandate and mission to instruct and teach their children the faith<sup>34</sup>.

Family is the first religious community to which an individual belonged. It is where from parents, grandparents, and other members that one learns about their religious and spiritual heritage. Family is also where one knows and learns about God, spirits, ancestors, and the afterlife<sup>35</sup>. In the family, the human person learns one's identity, values, and religion. Because in the family, God gathers us, forms us, acts in this world, and makes us our first community<sup>36</sup>. God commands the family to take His words into their heart and soul. Orders them to bind at their wrist as a sign and to let the word of God be a pendant on their forehead. God wants the families to teach their children and speak to them at home and abroad, whether they are busy or at rest (cf. Deut. 11:18-21).

Parents' responsibility is not just bringing children into this world. Their responsibility encompasses their children's and young people's life, guiding and directing to personal growth in physical and spiritual maturity. Children learn all the basic morality, obedience, and respect of parents and other elderly people from their parents following God's command (cf. Ex.20:12). After reaching the age of adolescence and above, they start practicing what they were taught in their life. In this way, the family members contribute and share equally the responsibility of their children and young people in general. At home, the children are introduced gradually to what they are expected to do in their lives, specifically "to the physical, economic, social and religious lives of their families"<sup>37</sup>. These make the family "the first and fundamental school of social living: as a community of love, it finds in self-giving the law that guides it and makes it grow"<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. CCC. 2226.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. P. N. Mwaura, *The Gospel of the Family: From Africa to the World Church: From Africa to the World Church*, in A. E. Orobator (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholic Look to Vatican III*, op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>36</sup> Cf., USCCB, *Marriage and Family life Ministries: Follow the Way of Love*, Washington D.C., 1994, <https://www.usccb.org/topics/marriage-and-family-life-ministries/follow-way-love>, [accessed: 04/03/2021].

<sup>37</sup> J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, op. cit., p. 109.

<sup>38</sup> FC. 37.

The family that renews itself and is reborn through the power of God’s Word and the Sacraments is a place of formation in faith and prayer, a seedbed of vocation, the natural school of virtues and ethical values<sup>39</sup>. Faith formation is a life-long process of growth. Young Christians are born into the family, of their parents who confess their faith in Christ and are bound by the sacrament of matrimony. As noted in the Second Vatican Council, the parents, “by word and example, are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. They must foster the vocation which is proper to each child, and this with special care if it be to religion”<sup>40</sup>. Therefore, the parents carry out an irreplaceable role in cultivating and developing all vocations of the human person. It is also this thing, that makes the family an irreplaceable and essential place for “forming the children and young people to consolidate and exercise the virtue of charity, temperance, fortitude, and chastity”<sup>41</sup>.

Family is where we learn about the golden rules of humanity life. “The family is the school of the richest humanity. This is particularly true for the moral and spiritual education on such a delicate matter as chastity”<sup>42</sup>. Chastity is essential in human life, mainly in the lives of Christians, and it requires physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects to solidify it. Christian families have the responsibility and the courage to inform their children and lead and guide the youth to an authentic Christian maturation of their personalities, according to the teaching of the Church, which is the Body of Christ<sup>43</sup>.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, all these things are being incorporated into the culture and tradition of the society and they play important roles within the families. By using such principles, parents introduce their children to basic catechesis like the sign of the cross and reciting of the Our Father and Creed. They guide their children in morality and encourage

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. EMO. 59.

<sup>40</sup> LG. 11.

<sup>41</sup> The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family*, Vatican City, 8 December 1995, no. 48, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/family/documents/rc\\_pc\\_family\\_doc\\_08121995\\_human-sexuality\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_08121995_human-sexuality_en.html), [05.11.2020].

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Cf., CCC. 787-809.

them to practice faith and prayer. For example, each child is expected to know how to lead prayers during meals. If there are many children in the family, they do such activities in turn. In this way, we can say that Catholic families are contributing to society in many ways. Catholic traditions with a keen emphasis on raising children in a family are one of the contributions of the Catholic Church.

In the diocese, the family should know that their daily practical life introduces the children to the living experience of society and religion. According to their parent's daily testimonies, young people become the beauty of life. If the father and mother collaborate, the young people stand and continue the identities where they found themselves in<sup>44</sup>. The families must form their children at home and cultivate them spiritually well, and the assistance of the ministers of the Church is essential. In that case, the young people become disciples who are the ultimate influencers in their lives through one of the utmost essential relationships. The life of youth is the result of the testimonial life of the parents. If the parents care, respect, love, and share the same responsibility they have at home concerning their children and are obedient enough to each other, the children after reaching the age of adolescence and young adulthood become what they have seen in their parents' life and what the parents are.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, in truly Catholic homes, children used to learn through the traditional way of oral teaching from a very early age to know and love God and their neighbor. However, nowadays such traditional roles within families are dying out. But "in the family, the parents, by word and example, should be the first preachers of the faith to their children"<sup>45</sup>. Man as father and husband, and woman as mother and wife, do not assume that they have essential equality and responsibility in the family and instructing the children about their faith (cf. Gen. 1:27-29)<sup>46</sup>. Therefore, it is important "to underline the equal dignity and responsibility of women with men. This equality is realized in a unique

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. AL. 174-175.

<sup>45</sup> O. Ogunu (ed.), *The African Enchiridion: Documents and Texts of the Catholic Church in the African World*, Vol. I: 1905-1977, Bologna, 2005, p.590.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. EMO. 60; see also: B. Mierzwiński, *Men as Husbands and Fathers*, in: J. Golen, R. Kaminski and G. Pyzlak (eds.), *Catholic Family Ministry: The Scientific Reflection and the Practical Ministry of the Church*, Lublin, 2018, p. 502-507

manner in that reciprocal self-giving by each one to the other and by both to the children which is proper to marriage and the family”<sup>47</sup>. And then Catholic parents must therefore realize what an important role the Catholic family plays in the life and progress of the whole people of God; the children are the hope of the Church, and Catholic parents must realize that their influence is at the deepest level of the child’s being<sup>48</sup>.

As Christian faith teachers, the parents do not have enough understanding regarding equality and their tasks towards their children in the diocese. The parents, as well as the society as a whole, must understand appropriately the sense of mission that they have received from God through the sacrament of Matrimony to live a life oriented towards the final goal, eternal life, and teach their children<sup>49</sup>.

According to the teaching of the Christian faith, man and woman have an equal place in the family. None of them have a place superior to the other, but concerning the specific nature of the God-given mission, they have their particular place in the family, which needs to be fulfilled by each of them (cf. Gen. 2: 21-24)<sup>50</sup>. If one of them fails to fulfill their specific responsibility, there comes a gap, and the children miss the constructive instruction that they could get from the right person, which could help them to be confident. It affects the children if they lack a father or mother and grow up before they are ready, which is a real experience nowadays with the absence of a man in the families of the diocese<sup>51</sup>. Therefore, it is said that “the future of the world and the Church passes through the family”<sup>52</sup>. This shows the importance of the parents in cultivating and forming the faith and helping young people discover the Supernatural Being.

In the diocese the parents should know that they have the role of contributing to faith by becoming Gospel-oriented parents, communicating moral values, being involved

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<sup>47</sup> FC. 22.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. O. Ogunu (ed.), *The African Enchiridion: Documents and Texts of the Catholic Church in the African World*, op. cit., p.590.

<sup>49</sup> Cf., B. Mierzwiński, *Men as Husbands and Fathers*, in: J. Golen, R. Kaminski and G. Pyzlak (eds.), *Catholic Family Ministry*, op. cit. p. 503.

<sup>50</sup> Cf., *Ibid*, p. 503-504.

<sup>51</sup> Cf., AL. 177.

<sup>52</sup> John Paul II, *Address to the Confederation of Family Advisory Bureaus of Christian Inspiration*, (Nov. 29, 1980), 4. Available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1980/november/documents/hf\\_jp\\_ii\\_spe\\_19801129\\_consultori.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1980/november/documents/hf_jp_ii_spe_19801129_consultori.html), [06.08.2021].



in service activities, and sharing faith at home<sup>53</sup>. However, at times parents do not think it is their responsibility. The parents' inactiveness and nonparticipation harm the children, parish faith formation, and the married couple's life. To such families, faith is something that happens only in the church, which does not have much effect on everyday life. Therefore, to overcome such temptation and laxity the Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese must take a step toward family apostolate because "the tradition of passing on the faith in the home is disappearing"<sup>54</sup>. This can be done by programming special formations for each member of the family. Here below we will try to show how such roles of family members should be formed.

### **2.3.1. The role of the father**

The role of man in the family that God puts as a husband and father, with the valuable qualities of manhood. Next to his wife the husband shares all life experiences, joys, sorrow, hope, and hardship of the family. Man as a father should be close to his children who need his care as they grow<sup>55</sup>. To be a good husband and father, a man must be responsible and mature psychologically, physically, morally, and spiritually. This means that he must be accountable for himself and others<sup>56</sup>. The father's accompaniment is necessary to accomplish the role and needs of being a guardian, educator, and organizer of the family's life to be complete and valuable<sup>57</sup>.

The Psalmist says, "as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on the faithful" (Ps. 103:13). Children learn as far as they are taught, love as far as they are loved, care as far as they have been cared for and got compassion. So that, when they reach adolescence and adulthood, they return what they have received from

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. M. P. Strommen and R. A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry*, Terrace Heights, 2000, p. 81-99.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>55</sup> Cf., AL. 177.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. B. Mierzwiński, *Men as Husbands and Fathers*, in: J. Golen, R. Kaminski and G. Pyzlak (eds.), *Catholic Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 504.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Z. Zarembski, *Women as Wives and Mothers*, in: J. Golen, R. Kaminski and G. Pyzlak (eds.), *Catholic Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 523-525.

others. Hence, children and young people need tender love and compassion from their fathers and the Church has the responsibility to form fathers care for their children

St. Joseph is a good example for fathers. He “appears as the figure of a respectful and sensitive man. [...] he makes a decision to protect Mary’s good name, her dignity, and her life”<sup>58</sup>. Thus, in the diocese men need to get formation. A man should be helped to follow in the footsteps of St. Joseph being responsible towards his family, particularly to his wife, in his appearance and action as St. Joseph was a “just man” (Mt. 1:19). And he was ever ready to carry out God’s plan and will as entrusted to him in Law (cf. Lk. 2:22.27.39) and given to him through dreams (cf. Mt 1:20; 2:13.19.22). Bringing a child into this world does not make a man simply a father and husband. But he becomes a father by accepting and taking up the responsibility to care for and be concerned for his children. It is important for a father to empower his children by displaying to them the reality of life other than being too protective. This creates a sense of responsibility among the children, who can choose what is suitable for themselves in their freedom<sup>59</sup>.

St. Joseph plays an incomparable role in the history of salvation<sup>60</sup>. This shows that man as husband and father is indebted to play an essential and concrete role in transmitting the faith. Man, as a father, has a specific place and great role in the family and is responsible for instructing his children as much as possible. The figure of the father has a great impact on the family; thus, his presence and absence can influence. In contemporary times, humanity is living in a world full of challenges and problems which is a consequence of the original sin (cf. Gen.3) and struggling to survive<sup>61</sup>. So man is living and experiencing the tough reality of everyday life. Due to that, in the Diocese of Adigrat, some men either migrate to other countries to look for job opportunities leaving their families behind, or become daily laborers in their area. So, they are too busy and do not get enough time for

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<sup>58</sup> Francis, Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* (henceforth: PC.), Rome, 8 December 2020, no. 4; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap\\_20201208\\_patris-corde.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20201208_patris-corde.html), [accessed: 07.03.2021].

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Cf., CCC. 1606-1608.

their families. As a result, children are abandoned and left out alone. They lack fatherly care and assistance.

Most times, men are unavailable among the family members on time, and even when they are present, they do not portray good examples of practicing their faith and showing respect. Additionally, even many of those who stay at home do not share their responsibility with their wives and do not follow up continuously on where the youth spend their time. The children do not get enough love and follow-up from their fathers. The fathers are frequently absent from their families because “fathers are often so caught up in themselves and their work, and at times in their own self-fulfillment, that they neglect their families”<sup>62</sup>.

In addition to personal weaknesses, there also exists a cultural challenge. The culture presents the man as the head of the family; besides that, the man controls and decides everything by himself alone. Yet, in the divine plan man and woman were not created to dominate one another but to live in equality. However, a man still appears in some families as if he is above all and the controller of everything. Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, rightly says about this “fathers who are controlling over show their children, they do not let them develop”<sup>63</sup>. Man has a special place in the family that does not place him above the woman but concerns the specific nature of his God-given vocation<sup>64</sup>. The man is called upon to live his gift and to play his role as husband and father. The place and task of the father in and for the family are unique and irreplaceable<sup>65</sup>, which makes him equal to his wife, sharing equal responsibility.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, therefore, the efforts of family apostolate must restore and encourage the concern of men towards their families, especially their approach and mentality to their wives. The love and respect of the husband for his wife is the most essential for the future of young people’s life. If the children grow up experiencing love

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> AL. 177.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. B. Mierzwiński, *Men as Husbands and Fathers*, in: J. Golen, R. Kaminski and G. Pyzlak (eds.), *Catholic Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 504.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. FC. 25.

between their father and mother, they grow up with values of love and respect for each other.

### **2.3.2. The role of the mother**

As a wife and mother, a woman dramatically influences the family's personality and spirituality. She has an excellent opportunity to observe and understand the family's strengths and weaknesses more than a man. A child is introduced into everyday life, families, society, religious, and spiritual values through the mother. Because of this, she is the child's first teacher and guide. A woman is a wife, mother, homemaker, and educator at the same time. She is the source of motherhood care of the home. Thus, the woman's role in the family is very essential. The mother plays an important role to make happy the family at home. The other equally important role of the woman is that of mother and educator of her children. This role of the mother as an educator is extremely important since the way children are brought up is largely the way they will live and look at society and the world when they grow up. The children of today are the nation of tomorrow. For a Christian mother, this role is even more important, as the mother has the best opportunity to instill in the child all the good concepts of Christianity and in assisting the child this early and in the most important stage of character formation<sup>66</sup>.

Parents who give birth and raise the child are irreplaceable in transmitting the faith. The presence of a father and mother is indispensable for the children, especially when they are under the guidance and protection of maternal and paternal care. A mother has a significant role in the faith development of young people. Unfortunately, parents do not hold the responsibility equally. Most often, it is only the mother who is available and takes on double duties. Women stay at home for various reasons, including pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare. For this reason, a mother should be given special attention and formation. As the saying goes, 'educate a woman and you educate the family, or change a woman and you change the family'. The young people grow with the personality shaped

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. O. Ogunu (ed.), *The African Enchiridion: Documents and Texts of the Catholic Church in the African World*, op. cit., p. 320.

throughout their childhood. During the first period of the child's life in shaping their personality, the mother's physical and spiritual closeness is essential. "The woman helps the child to discover the supernatural world. The special bond that unites them effectively allows her to bring the child closer to Christ"<sup>67</sup>. This shows that the mother has a strong impact on transmitting the faith and continuous shaping of children in the faith. The bond that unites the mother and the child efficiently permits her to help the young person to have a strong relationship with Christ.

In the Adigrat diocese, mothers are the strongest in witnessing their faith and practicing daily. Generally speaking, they are better in devotion to faith and gathering together in associations, dedication, and moral strength. In times of challenges, they devote themselves to supplication and witness to tenderness. Mothers are often the first in genuine and meaningful religious practices. They play a primary role in forming new faithful and helping the faith itself in a simple and profound warmth that is exemplary to the young people<sup>68</sup>.

The mother is the first to introduce and teach her child the prayer, truth, loving presence of God, His commandments, and moral discipline of distinguishing right from wrong. Her living testimony of faith helps and leads the child to know about God and to feel the close relationship of God as a loving and providential Father<sup>69</sup>. A mother, by her unique experience of joy and effort, is the family's shelter, which makes her accompany her child along life's journey at the service of love and life. So, mothers play a great role in bringing generosity and fidelity to children and developing young people's social, cultural, economic, and political life by shaping their lives<sup>70</sup>.

In the diocese, women are the first to involve in various areas of education, cooperation, and in all kinds of movements of the Church. Furthermore, they are always

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<sup>67</sup> Z. Zarembski, *Women as Wives and Mothers*, in: J. Golen, R. Kaminski and G. Pyzlak (eds.), *Catholic Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 524.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. AL. 174.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Z. Zarembski, *Women as Wives and Mothers*, in: J. Golen, R. Kaminski and G. Pyzlak (eds.), *Catholic Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 524.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. LtF. 2.

willing and ready to assist benevolently to serve those in need. They have a great responsibility to teach and influence the lives of young people towards developing such kind of cooperation, willingness, and readiness, which help the young people to develop their personality of cultural and spiritual values<sup>71</sup>. These need to be encouraged in the diocese, the young people to follow in the footsteps of their mothers and also, the fathers to contribute their part.

### **2.3.3. The role of children**

Nowadays in the Diocese of Adigrat, young people are seen relating happiness and love with luxury, possessions, and jobs. They live in a world that where the media propagates unverified information that is not real for the context where they live today. This in turn affects their future, faith, and relationships. Instead of focusing on sustainable relationships and humanity rooted in love, they focus on temporary and volatile things. They evaluate things not for their values but according to money and luxury. Perhaps, it is acceptable that they are helped for a better life in this world. But it is wrong to want to live better at the expense of essential things such as faith and healthy relationship. The style of life that is presumed to be better when it is directed towards ‘having’ rather than ‘being’ needs to be corrected. Similarly wanting to have more, not to be more but to spend life in enjoyment as an end in itself<sup>72</sup>. This should be addressed by the Church. Because children should be educated that “no job, no plans, no possessions, no idea of ‘freedom’ can take the place of love”<sup>73</sup>. Similarly, a relationship of filial love among neighbors, friends, and communities is becoming weak from time to time. On the contrary, immorality, hatred, and court accusations due to children are increasing. Hence, integral faith formation and integrated family catechesis are essential for the progress of love in families, among friends and neighbors. Thus, molding children to a real love of family and neighbors is an urgent task for the children of the Diocese of Adigrat. However, such a formation is not separated

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. LtF. 9.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. CA. 36.

<sup>73</sup> 7 *Quotes on Family Life from Mother Teresa*, <https://tomperna.org/2016/09/02/7-quotes-on-family-life-from-mother-teresa/>, September 2, 2016, [accessed: 10.03.2021].

from the formation of all the family members. Because it is at home that such a formation is given, in this way, the family fully participates in the mission of the Church. Moreover, before young ones hear the Word of God preached from the pulpit, they form a picture of God drawn from their earliest experiences of being loved by parents, grandparents, godparents, and other family members<sup>74</sup>. They are strengthened by grace for the holiness of life; the couple should carefully cultivate and pray for steadiness of love, large-heartedness, and the spirit of sacrifice<sup>75</sup>.

Therefore, when the family carries out the mandate and mission of the church at home in ordinary ways, children are helped to grow in love and believe in other personal values and traits.

## **2.4. Values in the family**

Human beings have an individual journey to traverse in life. Every action of a person in every situation and at every stage defines their background of family values. Once the family possesses common and basic values, they can shape their children in the line with what they envision their family to be. Children are what their parents are. The values they shared at home, where they were born, guide them throughout their life. Because the values shared in a family have the power to shape the person's life. Therefore, we shall discuss below the basic and most important values that form the life of a child in the family of Adigrat Diocese and enriches them with other values.

### **2.4.1. Love**

A human being is created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:27-18). “God is love” (1 Jn. 4:8), and love is the power coming from God. In God, love is identified with the inner communion of the Three Divine Persons<sup>76</sup>. Bishop Jean Laffitte noted, “The

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. USCCB, *Marriage and Family life Ministries: Follow the Way of Love*, Washington D.C., 1994, <https://www.usccb.org/topics/marriage-and-family-life-ministries/follow-way-love>, [accessed: 04.03.2021].

<sup>75</sup> Cf. GS. 49.

<sup>76</sup> *Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition* (part of Biblical Teaching), Quezon, 2017, p. 51.

family is a sign of God's love as well as a manifestation of Him as love"<sup>77</sup>. This shows that the center of the family is love. Love of God, love of each other, and love of neighbor. Without love, there is no life in the family. Then that makes the family a sign of love. The fundamental mandate and mission of the family are to live in love and to witness it through their daily life. Besides that, to teach their children practically because "man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God Himself which only in this light manifests its true meaning"<sup>78</sup>.

Love has its source in the mystery of the Trinity: in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, who in most intimate mystery is a family<sup>79</sup>. Family is the image of the one and triune God. Additionally, the one and triune God proclaimed by Jesus Christ, finds its best testimony in the family for it is the most convenient environment of free gift and love in which the Word of God can be proclaimed, welcomed, and meditated on and grow like a seed that becomes a great tree. The fundamental personal relations in the family: parent, child, brother/sister, and husband/wife, form the life of the Church through the experience of God as Father, and Christ as a brother. Their experience as children in, with, and through the Son, and the experience of Christ as the spouse of the Church is where they find their full development<sup>80</sup>. Unfortunately, nowadays in the diocese, most families lack awareness of the enjoyment of these experiences, which is affecting the lives of youth to reproduce the fundamental aspects of human love in the family.

The signs of divine love are present in creation. However, the complete revelation of the intimate mystery of God came to us through the incarnation when God himself became man (cf. Jn. 1:14). The manifestation of divine love is total and perfect in the Cross (cf. Rm. 5:8)<sup>81</sup>. A human person is created for love and called to live in self-giving, in the

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. J. Laffitte, *The Choice of the Family: A Call to Wholeness, Abundant Life, and Enduring Happiness*, New York, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> FC. 11.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Message to the youth of the world on the occasion of the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Youth Day*, Vatican, 27 January 2007, p. 2; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20070127\\_youth.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20070127_youth.html), [accessed: 26.10.2019].

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Francis, *Family and Life: Pastoral Reflections*, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Message to the youth of the world on the occasion of the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Youth Day*, op. cit., p. 2.



unity of body and spirit, which is a gift from God that to live the supernatural communion of love together with God and with brothers and sisters<sup>82</sup>. To build security, stability, and trust in the young people of the diocese, the couple must love each other as their priority and express their love to their children by loving each other; then, they become a dedicated and devoted family. Devoted family instilled the basic aspects of human love in their children, and the young people develop self-confidence because “love is the only force capable of changing the heart of the human person and of all humanity, by making fruitful the relations between men and women, between rich and poor, between cultures and civilizations”<sup>83</sup>.

Love is the principle and power for the communion of the family<sup>84</sup>, which is commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 15:12). It enables us to develop common good and avoid disaster together as a community of persons that brings the family into the community of love, which prays together for their benefit. Pope Benedict XVI appeals to the young people to “trust in a love that is true, faithful and strong; a love that generates peace and joy; a love that binds people together and allows them to feel free in respect for one another”<sup>85</sup>. This shows that love overcomes all and brings all that is good.

As Pope Benedict XVI describes, love has a semantic range, such as love of country, love of one’s profession, love between friends, love of work, love between husband and wife, love between parents and children, love between family members, love of neighbor and love of God<sup>86</sup>. The person’s love of God and good relationship with the living Christ makes the dream a reality and helps to widen the horizons. That love also elevates, encourages, and inspires the person to have a better and more beautiful life. Moreover, for

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<sup>82</sup> Cf. The Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family*, op. cit., no. 8-15.

<sup>83</sup> Benedict XVI, *Message to the youth of the world on the occasion of the 22nd World Youth Day*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>84</sup> Cf., FC. 18-27.

<sup>85</sup> Benedict XVI, *Message to the youth of the world on the occasion of the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Youth Day*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus caritas est* (henceforth: DCE.), Rome, 2005, no. 2; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20051225\\_deus-caritas-est.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html), [accessed: 04.08.2018].

love to be accurate, it must create the good of persons and communities, it makes that good and gives it to others<sup>87</sup>.

At present time, there are various kinds of threats to the love of society and the love of neighbors in the Diocese of Adigrat, among the communities of Tigray in general in which the young people live. It indicates and looks as if the young people growing in love and respect for each other are under attack in different ways. The attack can be through religious, economic, social life, ethnicity, politics, and the like looking to destroy from different ways the tradition, beauty, and life of the young people that are made up of and for love. These are the problems of attack on the love of society, which is the challenge of young people's lives in the diocese. Another dangerous attack on the filial love of the young people is on the level of the country ethnical hatred that is passed on from generation to generation. So, instead of growing in hope and love, the young people suffer in darkness through a kind of revenge. In this way, the love and respect among neighbors as well as in society are diminishing and affect youth's lives. Mother Teresa of Calcutta once noted, "To parents: It is very important that children learn from their fathers and mothers how to love one another – not in the school, not from the teacher, but from you. It is very important that you share with your children the joy of that smile. There will be misunderstandings; every family has its cross and suffering. Always be the first to forgive with a smile. Be cheerful, be happy"<sup>88</sup>. In other words, this shows that parents have the obligation and responsibility to raise and help their children to grow up in love and avoid hatred. Children should be assisted in learning respect rather than disgrace and revenge on their neighbors.

The children's future depends on the foundation the parents lay on them during their childhood. The family is the school where the human person gets an introductory lesson and learns to love for "love begins at home"<sup>89</sup>. Furthermore, love is demanding and

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus vivit* (henceforth: CV.), Loreto, 2019, no. 138; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html), [accessed: 03.04.2019].

<sup>88</sup> Mother Teresa, *Do Something Beautiful for God: The Essential Teachings of Mother Teresa, 365 Daily Reflections*, Florida, 2019, p. 162; *7 Quotes on Family Life from Mother Teresa*, <https://tomperna.org/2016/09/02/7-quotes-on-family-life-from-mother-teresa/>, September 2, 2016, [accessed: 10.03.2021].

<sup>89</sup> Mother Teresa, *Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech*, Aula of University of Oslo, 10 Dec. 1979, <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1979/teresa/acceptance-speech/>, [accessed: 04.03.2021]; Mother Teresa, A

responsible in all human situations: it is even more challenging in the case of all Christian life and those open to the Gospel<sup>90</sup>.

At the same time, the parents of the diocese must know that family is the school to learn how to endure difficulties and suffering, know when to apologize, always be first to forgive, and be cheerful in life, whether rich or poor. Because love brings life to the family and sustains them in good and bad times. What they do in their family to create a community of love, help each other to grow in love, and serve those in need is crucial, not only for their sanctification but for the strength of society and the Church. It is a partaking in the work of the Lord, a sharing in the mission and mandate of the Church<sup>91</sup>. Therefore, the diocese's pastoral ministers need to give focus on the family apostolate on how to endure difficulties, suffering, forgiveness, and so on.

#### **2.4.2. Prayer**

While speaking about the growth of young people in faith and looking at the family's contribution, it is incredible not to scrutinize prayer among the fundamental pillars of human life. Jesus Christ commands us to be always vigilant and constantly pray. He said, "watch and pray that you may not undergo the test" (Mt. 26:41). St. Paul the apostle also said: "persevere in prayer" (Rom. 12:12; Col. 4:2); "with all prayer and supplication, pray at every opportunity in the Spirit. To that end, be watchful with all perseverance and supplication for all the holy ones" (Eph. 6:18); "pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thes. 5:17-18).

Prayer is the raising of one's mind and heart to God; it is an act of faith and hope, fulfilled in our surrender to the love of God. It is the act by which one enters conscious, loving communion with God<sup>92</sup>. Pope Benedict XVI, in his Encyclical Letter *Spe salvi*,

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*Gift for God: Prayer and Meditations*, New York, 1996, p.11-13; Mother Teresa, *Do Something Beautiful for God: The Essential Teachings of Mother Teresa, 365 Daily Reflections*, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. LtF. 14

<sup>91</sup> Cf., USCCB, *Marriage and Family life Ministries: Follow the Way of Love*, Washington D.C., 1994, <https://www.usccb.org/topics/marriage-and-family-life-ministries/follow-way-love>, [accessed: 04/03/2021].

<sup>92</sup> R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, New York, 1994, p. 348, 1065; see also: CCC. 2559.

describes prayer as the school of hope<sup>93</sup>. Prayer is the first essential setting of hope. It is the way to listen and speak to God, which increases the power of hope and enables one to be a witness to hope. In other words, prayer is an exercise of desire<sup>94</sup>. Hence, prayer is an essential component for the development of faith and spiritual growth, because it is a means and source of one's holistic spiritual growth of the Christians. And prayer is the filial expression of one's desires for self and others to the heavenly Father from whom all good things natural or supernatural come; it is the ascent of the mind to God; and as well as it is speaking with God<sup>95</sup>. There are different kinds of prayer:

1. Prayer of petition. It is requesting God's gifts or good things for our needs.
2. Prayer of praise. It is an act of acknowledgment, recognizing or appreciating God's unconditional love and infinite goodness toward us.
3. Prayer of thanksgiving. It is an act of recognizing the grace and gifts received from God.
4. Prayer of contrition. It is acknowledging and recognizing personal mistakes or failure to respect the fundamental relationship with God.
5. Prayer of adoration. To adore means to love deeply and respect somebody highly. Prayer of adoration is an act of cultivating affectionate devotion to God<sup>96</sup>.

Scripture as the source of prayer, sometimes speaks of the soul or the spirit, but most often of the heart. According to Scripture, it is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain<sup>97</sup>. Saint Paul says, "hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5); the Holy Spirit that is given to us makes our heart to seek God and not despair. "The Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how

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<sup>93</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe salvi* (henceforth: SS.), Rome, 2007, no. 32-34; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20071130\\_spe-salvi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi.html), [accessed: 10.03.2019].

<sup>94</sup> Cf. SS. 32-33.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. M. Tatar, *Communal and Community – Forming Character of Prayer*, in: "Collectanea Theologica", [Vol. 90, no. 5, 2020, pp. 741-765], p. 741-742.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. F. Antonisamy, *An Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, Mumbai, 2008, p. 57-63; see also; R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 348-349, 1065-1066.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. CCC. 2562.

to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings” (Rom. 8:26). Christian weakness is part of the sufferings of this present time (cf. Rom. 8:18). And also, groans of prayer which helps our prayers by making up for what is lacking in them and giving to them earnestness, sincerity, and intensity<sup>98</sup>. Therefore, the source of power in prayer is the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit teaches us to pray as we do not know how to pray (cf. Rom. 8:26). According to F. Antonisamy, “it is in the Spirit that we dwell. We live, move, think, and speak in the Spirit. Without the Spirit, our hearts and minds will get dried up. This is the reason why Jesus told the Samaritan woman in Jn. 4: 24: God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth”<sup>99</sup>. The Christians of the Adigrat Diocese must teach their children that prayer is an essential element in daily life to grow in faith and have close relations with God. Because a Christian life without prayer is like a fish surviving without water. To pray is not to step outside history and withdraw to our private corner of happiness, but to pray properly is to undergo a process of inner purification that opens us up to God and thus to our fellow human beings<sup>100</sup>.

The families of the diocese must consider that in the life of their young people, prayer has a significant role. The present time is challenging and demanding to pass through various kinds of obstacles. There are different battles surrounding spiritual life. Prayer is vital to winning the challenges of spiritual battles in the world. In solving these spiritual battles, programs, activities, conferences, and plans on the human level have little result. However, humble prayer brings God’s intervention in life because “humility is the foundation of prayer”<sup>101</sup>. For prayer to bring God’s intervention and develop the power of purification, on the one hand, it must be something very personal, an encounter between the intimate self and God, the living God. Additionally, the young generation in the diocese

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<sup>98</sup> *The African Bible* (Side commentary on the Letter of St. Paul to Romans), Nairobi, 2010, p.1897.

<sup>99</sup> F. Antonisamy, *An Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. SS. 33.

<sup>101</sup> CCC. 2559.

must be guided and enlightened by the prayers of the Church and the saints, by liturgical prayer, in which the Lord teaches us again and again how to pray properly<sup>102</sup>.

The children and young people must hear their parents praying. As the family model prayer, their children and the young generation begin to see them talking to God as something they can do. Because “It is here that the father of the family, the mother, children, and all members of the family exercise the priesthood of the baptized in a privileged way by the reception of the sacraments, prayer, and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life and self-denial and active charity”<sup>103</sup>. Prayer inspires the inner life of Christians and is the path that Christians can talk to God and invite Him to work in our lives because, through prayer, Christians allow God to handle the situation in daily life.

From the parochial experience of the researcher in the Diocese of Adigrat and generally from the feedback of the young people of the diocese, the effect of childhood prayer experience holds an important place. The youngsters remember well how their families treated them during their childhood, adolescence, and even in their young adulthood, reminding them if they observe unusual delays or any unaccustomed characteristics in them. Those young people who have been taken frequently to the church by their parents at the age of childhood and told to pray and attend church activities are generally strong in their faith wherever they go, whether in high school, college, university, or after graduation. Some families are religious. However, they are not serious about teaching and showing the right path to their children. Consequently, their children become weak in their prayerful life. Friends likewise also contribute a lot in assisting in each other’s life. Those who are not active in their faith and Church activities expect and await some specific activities and programs to occur in parishes. So, those young generations with positive experiences in their families are much more satisfied with their lives<sup>104</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. SS. 34.

<sup>103</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (henceforth: EA.), Yaoundé, 1995, no. 92; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_14091995\\_ecclesia-in-africa.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>104</sup> Cf. A. Segula, *The Slovenian Family and Its Religious Upbringing*, in: E. Osewska and J. Stala (ed.), *Religious Education/Catechesis in the Family: A European Perspective*, op. cit., p. 158.

In the Diocese of Adigrat parishes, catechesis teaching targets how to recite and memorize certain articles of faith. St. Paul said, “we do not know how to pray” (Rom. 8:26). We often think that we pray only when we are saying something and asking for things. St. Paul shows that words are not as important as the deep desire of the Spirit of God within us<sup>105</sup>. “Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our heart”<sup>106</sup>. To pray together as a family is vital. Mother Teresa describes, “the family that prays together stays together”<sup>107</sup>.

Therefore, prayer nourishes youth’s life from within, keeps them in love with Christ, and helps them to exercise Christian virtues<sup>108</sup>. However, the families in the diocese are not all well instructed in the doctrine of the Church. Majority cannot read and cannot inculcate alone and assist their children and youth in developing faith. For young people to mature enough in their faith and to have a life of prayer for their growth, pastoral ministers need to organize different programs according to their necessity to “bring the good news of salvation to all, and to offer the faithful a catechesis which leads them to a deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ”<sup>109</sup>. Hence, the parish programs of the diocese need to contribute deep meaning of prayer through their activities.

### **2.4.3. Education**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council has considered the importance of education in a person’s life and its influence on social progress. The Fathers of the Council wrote, “True education is directed towards the formation of the human person in view of his final goal and the good of the society to which the person belongs and in the duties of which he will, as an adult, have a share”<sup>110</sup>. This shows that the Church’s vision of education and the Catholic

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<sup>105</sup> *Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition* (Side Commentary on the Letter of St. Paul to Romans), op. cit., p. 1659.

<sup>106</sup> Mother Teresa, *Do Something Beautiful for God: The Essential Teachings of Mother Teresa*, op. cit., p. 36, 279.

<sup>107</sup> K. Spink (ed.), *Mother Teresa: An Authorized Biography*, New York, 2001, p. 7.

<sup>108</sup> Cf., AM. 100.

<sup>109</sup> Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* (henceforth: AM.), Ouidah, 2011, no. 103; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20111119\\_africae-munus.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html), [accessed: 10.12.2017].

<sup>110</sup> A. Flannery (ed.), Vatican Council II Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum Educationis* (28 Oct. 1965), (henceforth: DE.), New York, 1980, no. 1, p. 727.

institutions are supposed to form a young generation who will be good citizens of this world, inspiring society with the ferment of the Gospel. The qualities and skills of a human person develop in a multidimensional way. Education is an essential means of human life's progress and helps to widen the spectrum of personal choices of lifestyles and values. So, due attention is vital for children and youth to harmoniously develop their physical, moral, and intellectual qualities. Education enables people to read the Scriptures, to nurture and cultivate their own lives. Education assists individuals in bearing the responsibility of a family and running the nation where they live and work.

Education liberates a person from illusions, and dependence, helps to avoid decision-making based on insufficient or erroneous information, a limited choice of occupation and recreation, and so on. Further, education helps to understand personal dignity and uniqueness as a human person. It helps to know the meaning and responsibilities of human freedom with individual rights and duties because it expands the range of possibilities and understandings of personal choices. Additionally, education expands the economic, political, social, and religious horizons, disclosing their corresponding structures and patterns<sup>111</sup>.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, through faith education, young people should be helped to learn to adore God the Father in spirit and truth (cf. Jn. 4:23), especially through liturgical action. They should be trained to live their own lives in the new self, justified, and sanctified through the truth (Eph. 4:22-24). Thus, they should develop into perfect manhood, which is intimated to the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:1,3), and strive to make their contribution to the growth of the Mystical Body<sup>112</sup>.

Education is in a very special way, the concern of the Church, for it has the duty of proclaiming the way of salvation of all people, of revealing the life of Christ to those who believe, and of assisting them with constant care so that they may be able to attain to the fullness of life<sup>113</sup>. For this reason, the Catholic Church has a long history of involvement

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 83-86.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. DE. 2.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. DE. 3.



in education. She has emphasized that there can be no genuine education without God because education is seen as one of the best ways to lift people from their poverty; the ministry to the mind is always connected to the ministry to the heart, the salvation of those the Church teaches, which is an essential feature of the social gospel<sup>114</sup>.

According to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council, Catholic Schools are expected to create an environment inspired by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel that both stimulates and invigorates education. Such an environment enables the young generation, whereas developing their own personality, to grow at the same time in that new life which has been given to them in baptism, thus orienting students to live in a social context illuminated by faith<sup>115</sup>.

Catholic schools are at one and the same time places of evangelization, well-rounded education, inculturation, and initiation to the dialogue of life among young people of different religions and social backgrounds<sup>116</sup>. It is a precious resource for learning from childhood how to create bonds of peace and harmony in society since they train children in the African values that are taken up by those of the Gospel<sup>117</sup>. Hence, the Catholic Schools in Ethiopia are well-known for making citizens who are ethically disciplined and emotionally stable. In most cases students who received their education in Catholic schools make a positive impact on their society, both in the life of their families and at the national level, working under different professions, thus witnessing the contribution of Catholic Schools.

However, education for young people requires the influence and collaboration of various and heterogeneous factors. Today, it is unquestionable fact that the collective work of these actors in the educational field: the family, the Church, and Catholic schools can play a great role and lead to the successful improvement of the atmosphere of education effort among young people. Nevertheless, the influence of the family in collective work is essential. The lack of the proper figure of parents, poor follow-up, and ineffective

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<sup>114</sup> Cf. A. McBride, *Images of Jesus: Ten Invitations to Intimacy*, Minnesota, 1993, p.132-133

<sup>115</sup> Cf. GE. 2.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. EA. 102.

<sup>117</sup> AM. 134.

participation of contemporary parents in the life of young people are the main cause of educational problems<sup>118</sup>. As Zbigniew Zarembski observes: “the educational process begins when the child is conceived and continues until the young person becomes independent and fully assumes life’s tasks”<sup>119</sup>. Continuous follow-up with the family greatly impacts the success of young people’s education. Because the first and natural environment for the child’s education is family, which is divinely instituted for that purpose. The education received and instructed in the home will last longer when the family itself is well-regulated and virtuous and parents continuously edify their children<sup>120</sup>.

However, in the diocese of Adigrat, most families did not get the opportunity for education. This is also true of the whole country. Hence, for the achievement of Christian virtues and Gospel-based moral values, the collaboration of the parents, family members, parish priests, school chaplains, catechists, teachers, educators, and school psychologists have an important role in the process of young people’s education<sup>121</sup>. So, for its achievement according to the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, the Catholic schools should be:

1. Inspired by a Supernatural or Trinitarian Vision, Mission, and Wisdom;
2. Founded on a Christian Anthropology;
3. Animated by Communion and Community of faith, hope, and love;
4. Imbued with a Catholic Worldview throughout its Curriculum;
5. Sustained by the Gospel Witness of Teaching<sup>122</sup>.

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<sup>118</sup> Cf., M. Zając, *Children in the Family*, in: J. Golen, R. Kaminski and G. Pyzlak (eds.), *Catholic Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 526-527

<sup>119</sup> Z. Zarembski, *Women as Wives and Mothers*, in: J. Golen, R. Kaminski and G. Pyzlak (eds.), *Catholic Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 523.

<sup>120</sup> O. Ogunu (ed.), *The African Enchiridion: Documents and Texts of the Catholic Church in the African World*, op. cit., p.589.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. M. Zając, *Children in the Family*, in: J. Golen, R. Kaminski and G. Pyzlak (eds.), *Catholic Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 526.

<sup>122</sup>J. M. Miller, *Five Essential Marks of Catholic Schools*,

<https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/education/philosophy-of-education/five-essential-marks-of-catholic-schools.html>, & <https://catholicliberaleducation.org/holy-sees-teachings-catholic-schools/>, [accessed:22.04.2021].

The pedagogical formation to be based on these essential elements in Catholic schools in Ethiopia would become a great achievement to develop numerous attitudes, disciplines including the capacity of inner freedom and a credible witness to the faith; the capacity to build mature relations with each other; to build creativity; to foster peaceful dialogue, and to build sociability with fellow brothers and sisters<sup>123</sup>. Because, at the present time, faith is going under crisis more than anything else in the world. Wojciech Cichosz, in the summary of his book in English *Pedagogia Wiary: we współczesnej szkole katolickiej* (Faith Pedagogy: in the contemporary Catholic school), raises questions about the necessity of the Catholic schools, its mission in the contemporary world, and the possibility to form faith. He notes that it is important to take faith as the main topic and he emphasizes that what is needed in the Catholic school is a pedagogy of faith since at the basis of Catholic schools is the pedagogy of God<sup>124</sup>. And the main source of the pedagogy of faith is “both the Bible, Tradition and Christian culture including the contemporary pedagogical thought”<sup>125</sup>, which is a conviction that Catholic schools are supposed to follow. Because according to W. Cichosz, the Catholic school is characterized by a double dimension, which is right. It is “the horizontal and the vertical one, the secular and the religious one (educating, bringing up, evangelization, and Christian initiation). What should set the Catholic schools apart from others are, most of all, its reference to the Christian conception of the world and of man”<sup>126</sup>.

However, according to the Ethiopian constitution, the ‘pedagogy of faith’ in schools is prohibited for the constitution officially inscribes, “education shall be conducted in a manner, which is in all respects, free from religion, political and cultural influences”<sup>127</sup>. Consequently, there is no possibility of teaching about religion in the school. The pedagogy of faith in the Catholic schools is deliberately avoided and it changed from the transformation based on Christian values of the traditional Church school into a secular

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<sup>123</sup> Cf., DfC. 148-150.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. W. Cichosz, *Pedagogia Wiary: we współczesnej szkole katolickiej*, Warszawa, 2010, p. 435-442.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 438.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 439.

<sup>127</sup> Ethiopia's Constitution of 1994, Art. 90 Section 2.

school like the state public schools. As a result, secularization is spreading and human and Christian values are diminishing. Respecting the person is becoming valueless.

Therefore, in the Diocese of Adigrat, the program for a pedagogy of faith is bound only around the parishes, outstations, and youth centers, which is not successful without the collaboration of Catholic schools. However, in the present time, the world is going more and more towards secularization and the young generation needs to lean toward God, know Him, and allow their lives to be led by God. But “Catholic schools are a precious resource for learning from childhood how to create bonds of peace and harmony in society”<sup>128</sup>. Therefore, in order to flourish the Christian values, it is important that Catholic schools return to their identity of education, bringing up and evangelizing in order to hold the whole salvation history, which is both the mystery of man and the mystery of God and His love<sup>129</sup>. Because, “a Catholic school cannot be just an institution, but first and foremost it must be a community of people, following the example of the Trinitarian love of God”<sup>130</sup>. But it is not possible to organize against the constitution. Then, it is recommended that all religious leaders come together and prepare common moral values to be given in all schools for the sake of the common good of societies.

## **2.5. Society as a concrete foundation for ethics and moral formation in Tigray**

Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, noted that “the family and society have complementary functions in defending and fostering the good of each and every human being”<sup>131</sup>. This indicates that the family and society should always play an essential role in fostering the common good and developing complementary functions in collaboration. The human person is born in the family and learns within the family the first basic education of the social values and develops it in society. Scott Hahn emphasizes that “the union of man and woman as husband and wife (and, God willing,

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<sup>128</sup> AM. 134.

<sup>129</sup> Cf., W. Cichosz, *Pedagogia Wiary: we współczesnej szkole katolickiej*, op. cit., p. 440-441.

<sup>130</sup> W. Cichosz, *Wychowanie Integralne: Praktyczna recepcja gimnazjum w Zespole Szkół Katolickich im. Św. Jana Pawła II w Gdyni 1992-2019*, Pelplin, 2019, p.802.

<sup>131</sup> FC. 45.

father and mother) is the very foundation of not just every human society, but of all humanity”<sup>132</sup>. This shows that family is the basic foundation of society. Every society has its own moral and cultural values, rites of passage, way of conflict resolution, et cetera that are correlated with the Gospel values, which need to be respected and preserved.

The creation of human beings as male and female highlights the important structural and subjective element, that is, the relationship of a human being with others which constitutes the foundation for a community of people<sup>133</sup>. Children are born and grow in a community of people. Children and young people inherit fundamental values and human elements from their ancestors. The children and young generation obtain basic instructions in the family. Because family is the first place of commencement of the good principle, values, virtues, morality, and ethics. The good that starts in the family is developed and advanced in society. So, the family is a vital cell of society and of the Church but whenever these fundamental experiences are lacking, society as a whole suffers violence more<sup>134</sup>.

Society is where the young generation obtains social knowledge and advances the social and cultural values they started to learn from their family. Family, as an institution, is the foundation of society and a crucial cell in forming well-disciplined children. It is at the heart of social and Christian life<sup>135</sup>. The family, as a community of persons, is thus the first human society<sup>136</sup>. Human beings are created for communion, and our nature finds its fullest expression in community with other persons<sup>137</sup>. Hence, the Christian community is where the Christian values take structure and emphasize the value of the sanctifying path to its faithful believers. In the community, the Holy Spirit pursues the truth through the living faith. Besides that, in the community through the ministry of the Church, the entire spiritual structure based on the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love takes place and

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<sup>132</sup> S. Hahn, *The First Society: The Sacrament of Matrimony and the Restoration of the Social Order*, op. cit., p.14.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. M. Tatar, *Structure of man in the biblical act of Creation*, in: “Analecta Cracoviensia” 44 (2012), [pp.191-198], p. 196.

<sup>134</sup> AM. 42.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. J. Laffitte, *The Choice of the Family: A Call to Wholeness, Abundant Life, and Enduring Happiness*, New York, 2015, p. 16.

<sup>136</sup> LtF. 7.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. S. Hahn, *The First Society: The Sacrament of Matrimony and the Restoration of the Social Order*, op. cit., p.14.

develops in it<sup>138</sup>. Therefore, from a sociological point of view, a person belonging to a community is subject to the process of socialization, referring to the characteristics and goals of a given community<sup>139</sup>

The Tigray people have common cultural values of society and economic life<sup>140</sup>. For instance, traditional ways of conflict resolution or reconciliation, making justice among communities, rights, responsibilities, peacebuilding systems, hospitality, and teaching morals and ethics through telling stories thought at home. But by now telling stories at home is disappearing<sup>141</sup>. Mostly the people of Tigray collaborate well; they have strong social bonds and good cultural ways of solving situations, which keep them together in good and bad times. For example, when people face some challenges such as drought or war, they try to come together to provide solutions. Women gather in the church or in the hills carrying stones on their heads, and they do processions with special prayers and songs. Having stones signify humiliation and contrition for their sins and asking for forgiveness. It is a petition to get rain or for peace, which has a biblical background (cf. Ex. 19–20; 24; 32–34; Dt. 4–7;9).

In addition to the above, the traditional way of conflict resolution is one of the essential social values that play a significant role in peacebuilding, human development and, peaceful coexistence among the societies in Tigray. When disagreement happens among neighbors: the neighbors delegate each of them one representative, and the community should give them the third one to represent the community, and totally after they become three (but sometimes they can be five according to their necessity) they start to solve the problem. The one who is given by the community is the main organizer. For instance, if two boys clashed and if one beat the other's head and bleed, or attacked some part of the body; the one who attacked should provide one litre of butter, 1kg of honey, a

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<sup>138</sup> Cf. M. Tatar, *The Church and Its Authority in Ecumenical Spirituality*, in: “Studia Theologica Varsaviensia UKSW”, [2020, pp. 671-680], p. 677 & 680.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. M. Tatar, *Communal and Community – Forming Character of Prayer*, op. cit., p. 744.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. ተስፋ-ስላሴ መድሀኒ, ታሪክ ኢሮብ (ሓፂር መግለጫ) (Tran.: Tesfaselassie Medhin, *The History of Irob (brief description)*, op. cit., p. 34-69.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 44-45.

fatty goat, and others<sup>142</sup>. Then, they wait until the person who injured one is cured. After the injured person gets better, they do all the processes in a fair way, and as the custom allowed the representatives to begin the process of negotiation.

Additionally, if they kill each other, there is a special peace process and rituals to reach an agreement. If someone kills another person, they have to solve the situation in a fair way for peaceful coexistence. The person who has killed another one has to get enough punishment and pay compensation. The two conflicting parties delegate a representative and the society selects three persons. They follow all the processes and if they fail, they return to society to report in order to start a new process. But if they were able to reach the final stage the relatives of the culprit prepare all the necessities like meals and others. On the day of reconciliation, the culprit should be covered with a black veil, tied with a rope, and handed over by an elected person to the community who lost their loved one. The one close to the diseased person unveils and unties the culprit and releases him. After all, they kill an ox on behalf of the culprit to seal the forgiveness. They prepare the meat with other meals and eat it all together as a sign of forgiveness and reunion<sup>143</sup>.

However, due to human weaknesses, it is natural that there could be disagreement and conflict both individually and as a group. There is also a popular saying among the Irob society that is “ኩራየካህ ማሮለ መልአኸ ማክዮ፣ ኩራየህ ማሮለ ሰጣን ማክዮ” (meaning: I am not an angel not to get angry, and I am not Satan to remain angry). It has a deep religious meaning and expresses the necessity of forgiveness and reconciliation<sup>144</sup>. Forgiveness is another value that brings peace and peaceful coexistence. In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus invited all humankind to work for peace. He assures us that “blessed are peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Mt. 5: 9). But, nowadays, these common values and being an artisan of peace are disappearing among societies in Tigray. When any disagreement occurs among the people, there is an abandoning of the cultural

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<sup>142</sup> Cf. ተስፋ-ስላሴ መድሃኒ, ታሪክ ኢሮብ (ሓፂር መግለጫ)(Tran.: Tesfaselassie Medhin, *The History of Irob (brief description)*, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. EA. 79.

and traditional framework of conflict resolution. This system is good for restoring broken relationships, the union of hearts, and peaceful coexistence, because the traditional way of conflict resolution is the “only authentic reconciliation can achieve lasting peace in society”<sup>145</sup>. Though as an individual or a family, instead of being reconciled by the elderly or reconciliation commission through the traditional conflict resolution framework, they prefer to go to court. The court case, however, takes time, and the worst never brings lasting peace. Because the court only punishes and judges for how long the criminal should be imprisoned or how much should pay, and it is enough. In the end, they return to the traditional conflict resolution system. The court case makes it difficult. All in all, abandoning reconciliation through the traditional way affects society and the life of the young generation. Consequently, the condition cannot be convenient for the young people in their area, and due to that, they migrate to escape from any kind of revenge. It is unfortunate to see these kinds of values disappearing or disrespect but reconciliation overcomes crisis, restores dignity to people, and opens the way to development and lasting peace among people at all levels<sup>146</sup>

Besides that, in Tigray, the social values and moral disciplines are degrading through various misbehaviors, drug abuse, addiction or alcoholism, gender inequality, sexual abuse, cultural degradation, various kinds of conflicts, and so on. These are destroying the lives of individuals and families as a whole. Also with economic development, problems and threats are emerging because the desires of the people are increasing to possess things rather than to relate them to the truth<sup>147</sup>. Possessing things forms artificial needs and makes a person desire material goods and disgraces human

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<sup>145</sup> AM. 21.

<sup>146</sup> Synod of Bishops - Special Assembly for Africa, *The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace: “You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world” (Mt 5: 13-14) “LINEAMENTA”*, Vatican, 2006, no. 68-70, p. 44-46.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. CA. 37.



person by making the youth find satisfaction in material things and be dependent on them<sup>148</sup>. Pope John Paul II, called this “consumerism”<sup>149</sup>.

Society, therefore, is a field where people cooperate with each other when there is confusion and misunderstanding, some correction and punishment may be given to show one another the right path<sup>150</sup>. Hence, a society in order to cultivate the young generation who are ethically and morally skilled and disciplined: must, first of all, be disposed to respect and preserve social and cultural values. It implies that they have to rediscover the value of social life, cultural virtues, human dignity, and the value of the traditional framework of conflict resolution. Secondly, the society to become the concrete foundation of a disciplined young generation, pastoral ministers need to teach and nurture social values, Christian ethics, and moral virtues through ongoing formation. Because the Church can play a significant role in preserving, upgrading, and teaching the common cultural values of the society as well as social and economic life. This is achieved especially when the Church accompanies the young people in their journey of integration into society, the topic that will be discussed below.

## **2.6. The Church as the traveling companion of young people**

The Church is the spiritual and pilgrim people of God. Church means the Assembly convened by God, or the Assembly of God’s elect. They are also called the saints: “all the Churches of the holy ones” (1 Cor. 14: 33)<sup>151</sup>. At the same time, the Church is a pilgrim and missionary that is called and sent to serve and bring all humanity in communion under the one Lordship of Christ (cf. Eph.1:10)<sup>152</sup>.

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<sup>148</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente* (henceforth: EMO), Lebanon, 14 September 2012, no. 58; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20120914\\_ecclesia-in-medio-oriente.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20120914_ecclesia-in-medio-oriente.html), [accessed: 26.10.2019].

<sup>149</sup> Cf. CA. 36-37, 41 & 57.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. O. Phelps, *The Catholic Vision for Leading Like Jesus: Introducing S<sup>3</sup> Leadership Servant, Steward, Shepherd*, Huntington, 2014, p. 78.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. *Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition* (part of Biblical Teaching), op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. A. Flannery (ed.), Vatican Council II Declaration on The Church’s Missionary Activity *Ad Gentes* (henceforth: AG.), op. cit., no. 2.

The Church is communion (cf. Act. 2:4; Heb. 13:16). The communion existing between the baptized and the Divine Persons (cf. 2 Cor. 13:13; 1 Cor. 1:9, 10:16) brings about communion among themselves (cf. 1 Jn. 1:7) both in the spiritual (cf. Act. 2:42; Phil. 1:5, 2:1) and the material sense (cf. Rom. 15:27; Gal. 6:6). The Church is the presence of divine Truth in our world (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15). It is the manifestation of God's love (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26; 2 Cor. 4:7) and, despite the weakness of its members, it is a sign of God's presence (cf. 2 Cor. 4) and God gives it strength (cf. Rev. 2:8, 3:8)<sup>153</sup>. Hence, the Church as an instrument of God is called to fulfill this goal, which is the common vocation and mission of all Christians through the Sacrament of baptism<sup>154</sup>.

Jesus Christ said to his disciples, "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mark 16:15). The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council noted the mission of the Church is inseparable from the mission of the Son, Jesus Christ, and from the mission of the Holy Spirit because they constitute a single economy of salvation<sup>155</sup>. The Synod of bishops during the second special assembly for Africa emphasized, "the Church's mission is to proclaim the good news of salvation, a salvation that frees man, every man, in every way: spiritually, morally, culturally, economically and socially"<sup>156</sup>. This shows that the Church is the living and docile instrument of God that was instituted on the foundation of the Apostles as a community of faith, hope, and charity<sup>157</sup>. Her mission is to lead the people to the whole truth (cf. Jn. 16:13) and to be the witness of the truth (cf. Act. 1:8; Jn. 14:6). Through her witness, human beings may recognize and acknowledge the loving presence, and communication of God<sup>158</sup>.

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<sup>153</sup> Cf. *Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition* (part of Biblical Teaching), op. cit., p. 46-47.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. CCC.1213, 1267-1270.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. AG. 3-4, p.814-817; & DfC. No. 22, p.38.

<sup>156</sup> Synod of Bishops for Africa, *The Church in Africa in Service to Reconciliation, Justice and Peace*: op. cit., no. 53, p. 35.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *General Audience: Christ and the Church*, St. Peter's Square, (Wednesday, 15 March, 2006); available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2006/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20060315.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20060315.html), [06.07.2021].

<sup>158</sup> Cf. DfC. 22-23.

As Pope Benedict XVI noted, “the Church transmits all that she is and believes; she hands it down through worship, life, and doctrine”<sup>159</sup>. What was handed on by the Apostles contains everything that helps to make the People of God live their lives in holiness and increase their faith. In this way, the Church, in her doctrine, life, and worship, perpetuates and transmits all that she is and believes to every generation<sup>160</sup>. The Church carries out the same mission that Jesus Christ received from the Father and reveals himself throughout his earthly life as the Savior and servant sent by the Father for the salvation of the world (cf. Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Lk. 2:49, 4:16-21) and the same mission of the Holy Spirit, who is proceeded from the Father and the Son to be the consoler and helper (cf. Jn. 13-17).

Today, the Catholic Church of Adigrat, being part of the Universal Church, carries on this task of evangelization and tries to reach out to all people and continues with its mission of evangelizing all nations because “the Church exists in order to evangelize”<sup>161</sup>. Jesus Christ is the ultimate source of authority and force and even a planner in the work of the Church’s ministries. But, in the human mind, the Church plans to be more productive in undertaking the mission of evangelization and in accompanying the development of faith in the daily life of young people.

The Church, in her, accompany, brings the Good News into all levels of humanity, transforms humanity from within, and helps the Christians to live according to the Gospel. The Church’s purpose in the diocese in accompanying is to evangelize and precisely for the young generation’s interior change. So that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, especially through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the

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<sup>159</sup> Benedict XVI, *General Audience: The Apostolic Tradition of the Church*, St. Peter’s Square, (Wed., 13 May, 2006); available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2006/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20060503.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20060503.html), [accessed: 06.07.2021].

<sup>160</sup> Cf. A. Flannery (ed.), *Vatican Council II Dogmatic Constitution on *Dei Verbum**, (henceforth: DV.), op. cit., n. 8, p. 754.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. ACBE, *Pastoral Letter the church we want to be: Elements for a Common Vision of the Pastoral Action of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, 2002, no. 19-20.

personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs<sup>162</sup>.

The Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese accompanies the young generation by making them understand, practice, and live their faith. The Church is the pilgrim Church on earth and should guide its followers by organizing pilgrims and workshops according to their age group. The parishes are very weak in managing pilgrims at the parish level. Among young people, the Protestant movement appears as the modern religion and is more attractive than the Catholic Church. They think the Catholic Church is more traditional, ancient, and not meeting their needs. However, the teaching and norm of the Catholic Church are always old yet always new<sup>163</sup>. The very serious and forbidding reality with some Christians today in identifying with any denomination depends on where people believe their needs are better met than looking for truth<sup>164</sup>.

Whereas the Church forms strategic programs according to its social doctrine in areas of Evangelization and Catechism. The Church is open to the new generations, welcoming and educating the youth, men, and women, in the spirit of the Gospel values so that to respond to their needs and legitimate aspirations<sup>165</sup>. The Church is challenged in this context to experience a renewal of its mission by reorienting the gospel message to lead those within it to a more mature and transformed faith<sup>166</sup>. Because the people mostly fail to discover, understand, and follow in using the role of the Church. Hence, the pastoral activities of the Church must help everyone to discover and to make good use of the Catholic doctrine and the role of the Church within the civil and ecclesial community, in particular within the family<sup>167</sup>. Because the Church knows that she has received the special

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<sup>162</sup> Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (henceforth: EN.), Rome, 1975, no. 18; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html), [accessed: 01.05.2019].

<sup>163</sup> Cf. FC. 29.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. G. T. Wankar, *Toward Common Ground: Catholicism and Pentecostalism in African Christianity*, in: "World Council of Churches", 2018, p. 115.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. ACBE, Pastoral Letter *The church we want to be*, op. cit., no. 57.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. GS. 43.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. FC. 27.

mission of teaching, guiding, and protecting the most serious responsibility of transmitting human life and the growth of young people and children in their faith<sup>168</sup>.

Through the Church ministry, children and young people discover a path on how to use their skills and talents to lead them to God and His Gospel. The Church has a big role in leading and guiding young people in setting out the program to help them know their skills and abilities, like singing, playing music, sports, etc. Not only setting the program, but they must also keep them active participants in the activities of the Church. Young people are often overprotective from participating in any decision of the family and the Church. Setting a steady foundation and giving continuous attention to the young is essential. These programs and activities enable the Church leaders and youth ministers to accompany the families to influence and monitor their young people's and children's skills and relationship with God. It is essential to keep young people growing and involved in family-based discipleship. It needs to be a listening church that hears and understands its follower's cries<sup>169</sup>. The Church fulfills such a mission by carrying out different roles and responsibilities. Here below we will deal with some of these roles.

### **2.6.1. The Church as a teacher**

Caring for the faithful is one of the critical issues in the Catholic Church's pastoral ministries. The Church, as a teacher, is never tired of taking responsibility to assist its members to understand the nature, mission, and life of the Church, as well as proclaiming the law of morality, and ethics and guiding the moral life of the people. The pope as the head of the Catholic Church is the teacher of his folks. Hence, the pope teaches and gives solutions to the problems of the time through his encyclical, exhortations, letters, messages, and homilies. The bishops and priests according to their necessities passes the teachings of the pope to their folks<sup>170</sup>.

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<sup>168</sup> Cf. FC. 29.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. P. N. Mwaura, *The Gospel of the Family: From Africa to the World Church*, in A. E. Orobator (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholic Look to Vatican III*, op. cit., p. 154-158.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. FC. 33.

Nowadays, most people ignore these teaching of the Church and the Sacraments. Most times, interest and attention are given to worldly pleasure, and it leads to losing the understanding of the nature, mission, and life of the Church. Due to different challenges, the Church faces difficulties at individual and social levels<sup>171</sup>. These have affected the lives of Christians, especially young people, in a complex way surrounding faith and the value of living a holy life. Because of today's culture, it becomes difficult for families to foster faith and social values at home<sup>172</sup>.

Therefore, in the Diocese of Adigrat, studies clearly show that young people do not have consistent and lasting spiritual input about their faith and the Word of God. There is little access to the teachings of the Church's authority, structure, character, mission, sacraments, and teaching of the popes<sup>173</sup>. Because of these inadequacies, there is no consistent position of youth in participation in various activities and the service of the Church. They become restless and lack patience for contemplation and listening to the Lord through prayers and reflections to get a solution to any kind of crisis in their lives. The Ethiopian bishops' conference noted "the lack of an ongoing catechesis of youth making them leave the Church, the issues of morality, family and marriage life and challenges of living Christian spirituality are amid other challenges"<sup>174</sup>. Furthermore, there are also many wrong teachings, particularly from the protestants fundamentalist detesting the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacraments, and the honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary that cause imbalance to Catholics, which is a challenge, particularly to the families today.

The Catholic schools in Ethiopia strictly became academic because the constitution does not allow religious classes<sup>175</sup>. Most families have only themselves and the parish to rely on for support in passing on the faith and social values. The Church, as the teacher of

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<sup>171</sup> Cf. G. T. Wankar, *Toward Common Ground: Catholicism and Pentecostalism in African Christianity*, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, New York, 2001, p. 187.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. ACS, *Journeying Together in Christ: Acts of the Archeparchial General Assembly*, op. cit., p. 116-117.

<sup>174</sup> ECS, *Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat Pastoral Commission: ECC-ECS Strategic Plan 2017-2021*, Addis Ababa, 2016, p.22.

<sup>175</sup> *Ethiopia's Constitution* of 1994, Art. 90 Section 2.

truth, strives by every means in its power to safeguard the integrity of the Catholic faith<sup>176</sup>. Every opportunity should be taken by the Church to evangelize the family, helping them reflect on their faith and encouraging them to share it with their children and youth. The Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese, as a teacher, must affirm families, and offer practical ideas on how they can work with their young people in solving their challenges. Additionally, the Church must organize programs to impart the teachings of the Magisterium, according to its time, and assist the youth to be able to confront any teaching against their faith<sup>177</sup>.

### **2.6.2. The Church as a Mother**

Pope Francis, in his Encyclical Letter *Lumen fidei*, said that the Church is a Mother who teaches us to speak the language of faith and the Church, like every family, passes on to her children the whole store of her memories<sup>178</sup>. Therefore, the Church is God's holy people and its mission is the mission of love. Love is there to serve and to die so that human beings might have life and have it abundantly<sup>179</sup>. Furthermore, Pope Francis to the general audience, explained the Church, as a mother who “nurtures us throughout life by illuminating our path with the light of the Gospel and by sustaining us with the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist”<sup>180</sup>. The Church is a true mother who cares for her children and guides them on the path of salvation. She is a mother who gives life in Christ and who lets us live with all the other brothers and sisters in the communion of the Holy Spirit. Because she has given birth to her children in baptism<sup>181</sup>. As a mother, the Church is reliable to her

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<sup>176</sup> PIUS XII, Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei*, Rome, 1945, no. 116; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_enc\\_20111947\\_mediator-dei.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20111947_mediator-dei.html), [accessed: 09.12.2020].

<sup>177</sup> Cf. J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, op. cit., p. 187-189.

<sup>178</sup> Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen fidei* (hereafter: LF.), Rome, 2013, no. 38 & 40; [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130629\\_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html), [accessed: 23.08.2019].

<sup>179</sup> Cf. R. C. Sarah, *The Day Is Now Far Spent: In Conversation with Nicolas Diat*, San Francisco, 2015, p. 30.

<sup>180</sup> Francis, *General Audience*, St. Peter's Square, Wednesday, 3 Sep. 2014, no. 2; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140903\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140903_udienza-generale.html), [09.12.2020].

<sup>181</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 1-2.

children. And Church's credibility gives certainty to the Christians, her children, who live in the Church<sup>182</sup>.

The Church is “the people of God”<sup>183</sup>. Every Christian belongs to the Church and one cannot be in communion with God without being in the Church<sup>184</sup>. Being in the Church is feeling in the hands of God, who is a father and loves us, cares for us, waits for us, and makes us feel his tenderness<sup>185</sup>. The Church is a Mother to all Christians because she gives birth in baptism. She is a Mother who gives life in Christ and who makes all Christians live with all their fellow Christians in the communion of the Holy Spirit, and all who are baptized, men and women, together from the moment of baptism. From that day, the Church as a caring mother, makes everyone grow in faith through the strength and the power of the Word of God, she shows the path of Salvation, defending them from any dangers and evil<sup>186</sup>. As the mother, the Church committed and offer herself in the service of evangelization to feed her children the spiritual nourishment which nurtures and makes the Christian life bear fruit. She nourishes us with the traditions, word of God, and Sacraments just as mothers nourish infants through their bodies. So that Christians are not orphans for the mother Church takes care in good or difficult times<sup>187</sup>.

The Church has specific features that make her a great mother. Mentioning some of them that attributed to the Church as a mother:

1. The Church is humble. “Humility is closely linked with love (cf. 1 Cor. 13). It is lowliness that becomes selflessness”<sup>188</sup>. Jesus Christ humbled himself

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<sup>182</sup> Cf. M. Tatar, *The Church and Its Authority in Ecumenical Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 679.

<sup>183</sup> DV. 8.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Francis, *General Audience*, St. Peter's Square, (Wed. 25 June, 2014); available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140625\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140625_udienza-generale.html), [accessed: 06.07.2021].

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Francis, *General Audience*, St. Peter's Square, (Wed. 11 Sep., 2013); available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130911\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130911_udienza-generale.html), [accessed: 06.07.2021].

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Francis, *General Audience*, St. Peter's Square, (Wed. 18 June, 2014); available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140618\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140618_udienza-generale.html), [accessed: 06.07.2021].

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Francis, *General Audience*, op. cit., Wednesday, 3 Sep. 2014, no. 2-3.

<sup>188</sup> W. H. Shannon, *Humility*, in: M. Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, Minnesota, 1993, p.517.



for the love of human beings. The attitude of the Church is always the same as Jesus Christ had (cf. Phil. 2: 1-18) and the Church humbles herself for the love of her children.

2. The Church is empathetic. The Church has the ability to understand and share the feelings of her children and respond with empathy to comfort them that she learns from God the Father, and Jesus Christ her spouse (cf. Eph. 5: 22-32; Is. 53: 4; Jn. 11; and 2 Cor. 1:3).
3. The Church is authoritative. Jesus Christ instituted the Church and gave her authority and mission, orientation, and goal: to shepherd the People of God and increase its numbers without ceasing. The Church holds three sources for her authority in the passing of the Faith: Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium<sup>189</sup>.
4. The Church is supportive. She is always available to accompany and care for her needy child, lift up the fallen person, care for the sick, seek the lost, shake the sleeping one, and defend the defenseless and persecuted children. The Church supports teaching the word of God and feeding the Sacraments that touch all the stages of the Christian life<sup>190</sup>.
5. The Church is loving. Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Letter issued *Motu Proprio*, noted, “The Church loves all her children like a loving mother, but cares for all and protects with special affection those who are smallest and defenseless. This is the duty that Christ himself entrusted to the entire Christian community”<sup>191</sup>. Because of her love for her children and all human beings, the Church is always ready and vigilant to take care of and protect them and suffer with them and for them.

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<sup>189</sup> Cf. CCC., 74-100, 763-766, 874.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. CCC., 84-95, 1210.

<sup>191</sup> Francis, Apostolic Letter issued *Motu Proprio*, Vatican, 4 June 2016; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio\\_20160604\\_come-una-madre-amorevole.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio_20160604_come-una-madre-amorevole.html), [accessed: 26.08.2021].

Therefore, the Church is our Mother in faith, in the Sacraments, hierarchical administration, ecclesiastical governance, and communion<sup>192</sup>. The Church, as the Mother, is close to everyone who finds themselves in difficulties: she knows their situation well, which is often very arduous, and at times genuinely tormented by problems of every kind, not only individual but social ones as well<sup>193</sup>. Also, the Church cannot accept violence, especially the force of arms, as means to liberation, which is uncontrollable because she knows that violence always provokes violence and irresistibly engenders new forms of oppression and enslavement, which are often harder to bear than those from which they claimed to bring freedom<sup>194</sup>.

Tribalism and political indifferences are perilous challenges to the harmony and communal life of human beings in Ethiopia. The Church has the call to live in a visible unity and to keep alive the essential characteristics of that unity<sup>195</sup>.

Besides that, the Church as a mother, work with an open heart to all her children and embraces everyone with all their problems, for it is a place for all. Its door should be open to everyone to be a member of her community and share in the life of the Church<sup>196</sup>. To be a community member is important to believe and baptize (cf. Mk. 16:16), and it is always open for those who recognize their unworthiness and present themselves before Christ to have life. The Church is always ready to open its door and it is obvious how to enter through the door. God does not rejoice in the loss of anyone but desires all to be saved and restored to fellowship with Him (cf. Lk. 15: 1-32). Likewise, the Church's desire is always to seek the lost with open doors for those who choose life (cf. Sir. 15: 9-20). However, the Church as a Mother should teach her doctrines unceasingly.

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<sup>192</sup> Cf. LG. 6, 14, 15, 41, 42.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. FC. 33.

<sup>194</sup> Pau VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, (henceforth: EN.), Rome, 1975, no. 37; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html), [accessed: 26.01.2021].

<sup>195</sup> Cf. World Council of Churches, *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper 198, Geneva, 2005, no. 2.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (henceforth: EG.), Rome, 2013, no. 46-49; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html), [accessed: 01.05.2019].

Therefore, as a mother and teacher, the Church is responsible for introducing the works of mercy (cf. Lk. 6:36), forgiveness, dialogue, reconciliation, justice, and peace to all political leaders without taking any side. Because “in God’s providence the Church exists, not for itself alone, but to serve in God’s work of reconciliation and for the praise and glory of God”<sup>197</sup>. So, the Church must keep looking for justice, peace, dialogue, and reconciliation while defending the dignity and rights of all human beings, for they are created in the image of God. The Church should reject all discrimination based on race, gender, or social class<sup>198</sup>. The Church is impartial and neutral with undivided attention because it is Universal and open to every human being. She is a light sent to serve all human beings who are created in the image of God without any discrimination and work to promote the integral development of human beings<sup>199</sup>.

Whereas, when the Church fails to reveal the danger or consequences of the tribalism and political differences leading to conflicts, the Church fails in its mission. The failure of the Church leads to the failure of the state, which consequently affects the lives of young people. This is what we are witnessing in Ethiopia. The Church could have played a role in alleviating the political differences leading to the bloody war in Tigray and other parts of the country. The failure to act promptly makes it too late now. So, division among Christians due to tribalism and political differences, as pope Francis said, is a wound of the Church and at the same time causes a wound to Christ: in fact, the Church is the body of which Christ is the head<sup>200</sup>. Hence, the Church must defend all people from the dangers that come from Satan’s presence and be a voice for all who face oppression in the world to bring them to an encounter with Jesus. This defense also consists of being vigilant and exhorting by watching over the deception and seduction of the evil one<sup>201</sup>. In this way, the

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<sup>197</sup> World Council of Churches, *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper 198, op. cit., no. 8.

<sup>198</sup> ACBE, Pastoral Letter *The church we want to be*, op. cit., no. 53.

<sup>199</sup> D. Ayuch, *The missionary nature of the Church in the book of Acts. An exegetical and theological study*, “ICOANA CREDINȚEI”, (Vol. 4 No. 7, 2018, p. 5-12), p. 8-10.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Francis, *General Audience*, St. Peter’s Square, (Wednesday, 8 October 2014); available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco\\_20141008\\_udienza-generale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20141008_udienza-generale.html), [accessed: 06.07.2021].

<sup>201</sup> Cf. LG. 15.

Church contributes to assuring the future of young people, where they get peace and security to pursue their dreams in life. Here below, we will see some examples of the Church's commitment in this area by closely looking at the last three popes' contributions.

### **2.6.3. The Commitment of the last three popes to young people: Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis**

The young generations always have a special place in the hearts of the Holy Fathers. Each of them contributes a complementary vision, taught them with their own core elements, and show their closeness to the young people as a particular group specifically.

#### **2.6.3.1. Pope John Paul II's unique pastoral approach towards the youth**

Pope John Paul II about young people said, "You are the future of the world, the hope of the Church. You are my hope"<sup>202</sup>. He saw the future in the young people and his special approach enabled him to see who the young people are. According to Pope John Paul II, young people are the hope of the Church, and the Church looks at them with particular expectations. He said, "the Church looks to the young; or rather, the Church in a special way sees herself in the young – in you as a group and in each of you as individuals"<sup>203</sup>. The pope could see the youthfulness and continuity of the Church in the young generation and understand the special place the young people should have in the Church.

The holy Father after being ordained as a priest, Karol Wojtyla, his approach and conversations with the young people were special occasions for the young generation to speak with him about their relationship with faith, and their personal situation enabled him to discover the fundamental importance of youth<sup>204</sup>. Discussion opens the door to expressing personal desire and organizing the opportunity to meet the need of everyone. Furthermore, Pope John Paul II is able to know what the young people need, and any visits

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<sup>202</sup> John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, op. cit., p.125

<sup>203</sup> DA., no. 15.

<sup>204</sup> John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, op. cit., p. 120-121.

to the parish must conclude with a meeting with the parishes' young people and discover what to do with them, for them, and through them<sup>205</sup>.

Young people have distinctive features that require to identify it in every youth. Youth is not only a time of life that corresponds to a certain stage of age. As Pope John Paul II describes, it is also a period given by providence to every person and given as a responsibility. During that time a person searches, like the young man in the Gospel, for answers to basic questions; he searches not only for the meaning of life but also for a concrete way to go about living his life<sup>206</sup>. In addition to that, at every period of his or her life, a person desires to find love, and in the period of youth, he or she desires it even more strongly. They need to be corrected, to be told yes or no, and they need a guide<sup>207</sup>.

Mostly, the young people of Adigrat Diocese face various challenges like war, poverty, unemployment, hunger, and other dehumanizing events. The war, particularly in Tigray, takes the lives of many young generations. Ethiopia's history is a testimony of how the war affects not only the people of Tigray but the whole of Ethiopians and Eritreans<sup>208</sup>. Politicians and leaders use the people, particularly the young, for their benefit. They fail to see the state's future in the young generation but focus only on how long they can stay in power. Due to war, families are always scattered, suffer and disappear, and the economy of the country ruin. Young people migrate to escape the problems of their homeland. To prevent such kind of situations it is essential that religious leaders must read the signs of the time<sup>209</sup>. It is necessary to talk to the politicians and advise them rather than take one side of the political parties. Because "Following Christ, the Church seeks the truth, which is not always the same as the majority opinion. She listens to conscience and not to power, and in this way, she defends the poor and the downtrodden"<sup>210</sup>.

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<sup>205</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 121-124.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 120-121.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. M. T. Maru, *Causes, Dynamics, and Consequences of Internal Displacement in Ethiopia*, Berlin, May 2017, p. 14; see also: A. H. M. John & E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, Oxford, 1965, p. 81-87.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. GS. 4-10.

<sup>210</sup> FC. 5.

The Catholic Church in Ethiopia, with the other religious leaders, needs to understand the desire of the young people and be able to see their peaceful future. The young people need who listens to and understands them. Church leaders need to learn from the pastoral approach of Pope John Paul II, to see the reality and youthful face of the Church in the young people and stand for the right. Youth need a Church that works for their safety and guarantee them. They need the Church's enthusiasm, fresh and new approach with love, trust, and being happy among them<sup>211</sup>. The young people have massive potential and skills for good and for creative possibility, which requires attention and a listening ear on the part of the Church to answer their questions and respond to their needs and expectations<sup>212</sup>.

### **2.6.3.2. Pope Benedict XVI's appeal to youth to search for a better and true life**

Pope Benedict XVI, like his predecessor Pope John Paul II, throughout his pontificate shows his devoted closeness to the young people. Pope Benedict XVI borrowing the words of John Paul II, which shows the complete harmony of the two popes, encouraged the young people to approach Jesus Christ without any fear and appealed to them to open their hearts to Jesus Christ, saying, "Dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ, and you will find true life"<sup>213</sup>.

There are crucial ways to strengthen the young people's faith and help them open their hearts toward Jesus Christ, the Savior. These are through the study of the Catechism with passion and perseverance, dedication to learn or sacrificing of personal time for it, reading the Catechism and the Scripture with friends, forming study groups and creating networks, talking and sharing about their faith among themselves and with others is

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<sup>211</sup> Cf. DA. 15.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>213</sup> Benedict XVI, *Mass for the inauguration of the pontificate*, St Peter's Square, 24 April 2005; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2005/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_hom\\_20050424\\_inizio-pontificato.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20050424_inizio-pontificato.html), [accessed: 11.07.2021].

important to mention. In the Diocese of Adigrat, young generations need to know what they believe, and they need to know and understand their faith. This helps them to be vigilant in their faith, have more deep-rooted beliefs, and engage with the challenges and temptations of this time with strength and determination<sup>214</sup>.

According to Pope Benedict XVI, in searching for a true and better life, he reminds that the young people are the architects of their own moral, cultural, and spiritual growth. It is their personal free decision to accept in their hearts, minds, and lives, the patrimony of truth, goodness, and beauty which has taken shape in the course of centuries and whose cornerstone is Jesus Christ<sup>215</sup>.

The young people who are accompanied by responsible agents of formation and education are able to witness the love of Christ in their daily life. Particularly, in the area where they are called to demonstrate the love of God: the first one is in the area of the church, our spiritual family, made up of all the disciples of Christ. Where they are called to express their love and grow in it, and secondly, to prepare with commitment and love for the future that awaits them<sup>216</sup>. Further, it helps them to courageously think of and discover the gifts they have received from God so that they can pass them on to others in turn and learn to make recourse to their personal history, conscious of the incredible legacy passed down to them from previous generations<sup>217</sup>.

Everybody has good intentions for their loved ones, particularly our young generations, and all are aware of how challenging is the task of education nowadays. For a good and meaningful life for youth in the Diocese of Adigrat, it is important to provide good formation and direction about the truth and guidance in their lives. These help them to have the ability to discern good from evil, and about their health, not only physical but

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<sup>214</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Youcat: Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Munich, 2010, Preface.

<sup>215</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address to the Diocese of Rome at the presentation of the "Letter on the urgent task of education"*, St. Peter's Square, 23 February 2008; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/february/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20080223\\_diocesi-roma.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080223_diocesi-roma.html), [accessed: 24.07.2021].

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Message to the youth of the world on the occasion of the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Youth Day*, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Message for the twenty-eighth World Youth Day*, 2013; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20121018\\_youth.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20121018_youth.html), [accessed: 26.10.2019].

also moral. Therefore, it is helpful to identify several standard requirements of authentic education by all agents. First, it needs all that closeness and trust which are born from the experience of the agents: parents, priests, teachers, and everyone who has direct educational responsibilities. This encourages young generations to keep a balance between freedom and discipline by overcoming selfishness and becoming capable of authentic love<sup>218</sup>.

Pope Benedict XVI said to the young people: “Dear young people, enticements of all kinds may tempt you: ideologies, sects, money, drugs, casual sex, violence. [...] Be vigilant: those who propose these things to you want to destroy your future! In spite of difficulties, do not be discouraged and do not give up your ideals, your hard work and your commitment to your human, intellectual and spiritual formation”<sup>219</sup>. This reminds us that the plan of Jesus Christ for youth is to have a better and more authentic life. The young people need to approach Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic adoration and Bible sharing among themselves without any fear, for he never disappoints. This approach opens their hearts and eyes to see God’s presence in their lives and allows God’s Spirit to dwell in their hearts. As Christians, they are called to be a witness to the truth (cf. Jn. 14:6), which converts and makes them missionaries among their colleagues. Christians need to be vigilant in their faith and not be drawn by anything that does not give true happiness. They need to make every effort to discover the true love that comes from God and that transforms everything; experience the community and be part of the Church. The young people must communicate and celebrate in the Church, for there they find real life, which enables them to change the world, bring consolation to those who suffer, and make the environment a welcoming place for all<sup>220</sup>. Therefore, Pope Benedict XVI encourages the young generation to be reasonable

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<sup>218</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Letter to the Diocese and City of Rome on the urgent task of educating young people*, 21 January 2008; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2008/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_let\\_20080121\\_educazione.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20080121_educazione.html), [accessed: 27.07.2021].

<sup>219</sup> AM. 63.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. J. M. Maté, *Benedict XVI's message to young people*, in: “City of God: Augustinian Magazine”, [2013, Vol. 226, no. 2], p. 356-357.



in their life and to know why they are doing whatever they do and do it to find a better and true life.

### **2.6.3.3. Pope Francis's enthusiasm to show the important place of youth in faith**

The celebration of the 28<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day (WYD), 24 March 2013, was a special opportunity for Pope Francis to express his enthusiasm and comment on the joy, and hope of the young people. He emphasized the position of youth in faith as follows: “you have an important part in the celebration of faith! You bring us the joy of faith and you tell us that we must live the faith with a young heart, always: a young heart, even at the age of seventy or eighty. Dear young people! With Christ, the heart never grows old!”<sup>221</sup>. The readiness, closeness, and enthusiasm of Pope Francis towards young people show us his full harmony with the thoughts of his predecessors.

Pope Francis released a historic document, the Apostolic exhortation *Christus vivit*, the first document on young people. According to Pope Francis “It is important to realize that Jesus was a young person. He gave his life when he was, in today’s terms, a young adult”<sup>222</sup>. This shows the beauty and importance of Jesus Christ’s youthfulness for every Christian because Jesus Christ “emptied himself, taking the form of slave” (Phil. 2:7); took on human flesh and dwelled among us (cf. Jn. 1:14); he grew up in wisdom (cf. Lk. 2:40,52); he lived as a young person and even gave his life as the ransom for many (cf. Mk. 10:45). Therefore, all Christians are called to imitate Jesus Christ which is a call to complete self-surrender. It is a call that needs to get an answer and start at a young age. It is an invitation to everyone to be renewed daily in faith and to live with that same sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. It is being restored and transformed in Jesus Christ is to be fully alive.

The renewal of faith is possible, constantly receiving new strength born of God’s word, the Eucharist, the daily presence of Christ, and the power of His Spirit in our lives.

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<sup>221</sup> Francis, *Homily on Palm Sunday*, St. Peter’s Square, Saint Peter’s Square, 24 March 2013, no. 3; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130324\\_palme.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130324_palme.html), [accessed: 13.12.2020].

<sup>222</sup> CV. 23.

This develops unceasingly attending mass, praying daily, reading the Holy Bible, and asking for the assistance of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which is the path to finding and getting the strength and courage to be ever renewed in Christ and be a joyous existence in the world<sup>223</sup>. The young generations are the leaven of faith. Where they gather, there is inspiration and enjoyment, which can cause spiritual excitement.

Nowadays, there are different challenges of the present times in and outside of the Church, as well as personal spiritual crises. These are challenging the young generations of the Adigrat Diocese. However, such a crisis can only be addressed and overcome by living a holy life today. Holiness is not something that can wait for the future but is a daily practice in life because God created everyone to be holy (cf. Mt. 5:48; 1 Pt. 1:15-16; Lev. 19:2) and to be fully alive in Jesus Christ<sup>224</sup>. Therefore, the Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese must teach that the young people are called to be renewed and spread-out hope, for they represent new directions for humanity and open the way to the future<sup>225</sup>. The celebration of World Youth Day is one which the three popes employed to reach out to the young people in every corner of the world. Here below we will mention some of the most significant contributions of this celebration to the growth of the Faith.

#### **2.6.3.4. The World Youth Day and its significance to the growth of faith**

Discussing World Youth Day (WYD), the first person who comes to mind is the Holy Father John Paul II, a friend of young people. WYD was initiated in the heart of the Holy Father and announced in 1985 for the very first-time instituting youth days on a global level<sup>226</sup>. He confirmed his pastoral plan for the young people at the level of the Universal

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<sup>223</sup> Cf. CV. 35-36.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. CV. 1.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. EG. 108.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, op. cit., p. 124.

Church at the end of the year during his Christmas encounter with the Roman Curia<sup>227</sup>. However, he emphasized that it was invented by the young people themselves<sup>228</sup>.

The WYD created a vibrant occasion in the Universal and local Churches. Pope John Paul II said, the WYD “gave new birth to new structures inspired by truth, solidarity, and peace”<sup>229</sup>. Thus, it is a special occasion for the young people to learn and know the truth, at the same time to strengthen solidarity among themselves, and enjoy peaceful coexistence. The WYD signifies how much is the value and meaning of peace to all people of different religions in the world. There cannot be a celebration of faith if there is no peace. There cannot be peace if there is no solidarity. There cannot be an opportunity to know the truth if there is not a gathering to listen to the teaching of the Church. Hence, the WYD helps to know how important peace is and it is “a great festival of faith in which the Spirit of God was actively at work, building deep communion among the participants who had come from all over the world”<sup>230</sup>. Thus, the WYD is a special occasion to build harmony and spread the faith. The WYD brings the world’s youth together, which is an opportunity for them to experience practically the Oneness of the Universal Church and build deep harmony among themselves. It shows how to shape the living and vibrant Church together, as well as it is an opportunity to create a network among themselves. Therefore, the celebration of WYD is a privileged instrument for the pastoral care of youth, which favors the formation of the young people through prayer, study, and reflection at the parish and diocese levels<sup>231</sup>.

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<sup>227</sup> John Paul II, *Address to the College of cardinals, the Curia and the Roman prelatore before Christmas*, 20 Dec. 1985; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1985/december/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19851220\\_auguri-curia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1985/december/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19851220_auguri-curia.html), [accessed: 22.07.2021].

<sup>228</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>229</sup> John Paul II, *Urbi et Orbi* message to “the city and the world” on Easter Sunday, 7 April 1985; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/messages/urbi/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_19850407\\_easter-urbi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/messages/urbi/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19850407_easter-urbi.html), [accessed: 22.07.2021].

<sup>230</sup> Benedict XVI, *Message for the Twenty-sixth World Youth Day (2011)*, Vatican, 2010; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20100806\\_youth.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20100806_youth.html), [accessed: 26.10.2019].

<sup>231</sup> Cf. EA. 93.

Pope Francis identified the WYD as “a sign of faith for the whole world”<sup>232</sup>. The Church is One and Universal by its nature<sup>233</sup>. The gathering of the youth along with their bishops, priests, catechists, teachers, and members of religious and lay institutions around the world with the pope, “Vicar of Christ”<sup>234</sup>, the successor of the apostle and the head of the Catholic Church, is a good occasion for the testimony of the Church’s communion and faith. Nowadays, the WYD is one the best structure in the Church to bring the participants closer to the Savior through catechesis. Because the aim of catechesis is to help people grow closer to God, to put people not only in touch but also in communion and intimacy, with Jesus Christ<sup>235</sup>. So that WYD is playing a great role in the pedagogy of faith formation and in its growth.

The crucial objectives of the WYD are: to enables the Church to show how much it cares and thinks about the young people and to communicate to the young people with certainty, the truth, and love, which is Christ himself. It is an important and modern method of evangelization and catechesis<sup>236</sup>. Hence, the Church strives to match and complement the young people’s expectations to achieve these objectives and grow in faith.

In order to achieve its objectives, the WYD always renewed its journey with new topics according to its schedule. Since it started in 1985, the Holy Fathers have been addressed and taught different themes in various ways focusing on its timely necessities for the celebration of WYD in diocese and international level. The Holy Sea addressed to the world youth through apostolic letters, messages, speeches, homilies, and prayers from its preparations until the end of the program. The theme that was chosen by Pope Francis

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<sup>232</sup> Francis, *Homily on Palm Sunday*, op. cit., no. 3.

<sup>233</sup> Cf. CCC. 813-816.

<sup>234</sup> CCC. 882.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, New York, 2001, p. 11.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the College of cardinals, the Curia and the Roman prelatore before Christmas*, (20 Dec. 1985); available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1985/december/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19851220\\_auguri-curia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/speeches/1985/december/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19851220_auguri-curia.html), [accessed: 22.07.2021].

for the year of international celebration in Lisbon (1-6 August 2023) is “Mary arose and went with haste” (Lk 1:39)<sup>237</sup>.

Therefore, the effects of WYD on the development of faith:

1. The Church can have confidence in the young people and have the courage to trust them, considering that they are critical players in the life and mission of the Church<sup>238</sup>.
2. It is an excellent occasion to have an authentic dialogue with the young people, which is a suitable means to proclaim the Gospel, encounter Jesus Christ, and experience God through His Word for the progress of faith<sup>239</sup>.
3. WYD is the day all young Christians are called to meet from all over the world and it is an opportunity to experience the universality of the Church. Those young people are not all come from the comfort zone but from all parts of the world including those living in countries with threats to their faith, from the area where there is political instability, and this in turn makes them discover the gift of diversity in religion and the importance of peace as they share their different national and regional experiences of faith and exchange ideas and projects in youth formation<sup>240</sup>.
4. The WYD is a means to transmit the Gospel message to youth and strengthen the positive image of the Church among youth and among people who host them in a particular country. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to teach the youth crucial values and to encounter the Universal Church with its leader, the Holy Father, to strengthen their faith and interpersonal relationships<sup>241</sup>.

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<sup>237</sup> *Chronicle of World Youth Days*, [https://www.vatican.va/gmg/documents/gmg\\_chronicle-wyd\\_20020325\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/gmg/documents/gmg_chronicle-wyd_20020325_en.html), [accessed: 22.07.2022].

<sup>238</sup> Cf. DA. 1.

<sup>239</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Vigil of Prayer on the 15<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day*, Tor Vergata, (Saturday 19 August 2000), [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2000/jul-sep/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_20000819\\_gmg-veglia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2000/jul-sep/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20000819_gmg-veglia.html), [accessed: 06.12.2021].

<sup>240</sup> Cf. P. Guzik, *The legacy of World Youth Day (Why bother organizing a large Church event?*, J. Stala, P. Guzik (ed.), “*World Youth Day 2016 Krakow: The School of Faith and Humanity*”, (p. 137–156, Krakow, 2018), p. 139-140.

<sup>241</sup> Cf. P. Guzik, *The legacy of World Youth Day (Why bother organizing a large Church event?*, op. cit., p. 146-147.

5. Therefore, the WYD contribution to the growth of faith is significant in three dimensions: it offers an opportunity to personally encounter Jesus Christ as One Church, an encounter that calls the youth to conversion, to love, to the community, to grow, and to build a better world around them; it is a good opportunity for the Holy Father to encounter the world youth together and offer them a message of hope, which is crucial in a world that is plagued by violence and suffering; and it is a good occasion to the inhabitants of the host country to experience the Universal Church, listen to the Word of God, and celebrate or receive the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation with the youth that gathered from different corner of the world<sup>242</sup>.

However, even though WYD became one of the most inspiring and enthusiastic events in the World, it does not mean that all the dioceses can send their representatives to participate with millions in the events, and Adigrat Diocese is one of them. One of the biggest challenges is financial. Nevertheless, it does not mean that young people do not benefit from the WYD. They benefit in various ways. First of all, from the messages of the Holy Fathers to the world's youth on the occasion of WYDs, and secondly, from the events prepared in the diocese with their bishop during the WYD and others. Therefore, the institution of WYD brought to the Adigrat Diocese is an opportunity to organize various spiritual movements for the young people at the parish level, University level, and for Youth Catholic Workers. Nevertheless, it is not as strong as it is expected. Because its preparation and attention are mostly given to the gathering day but not having continuous daily, weekly or monthly programs. Therefore, as the young generations are the subjects and objects of evangelization<sup>243</sup>, it is necessary that the care, helping, orienting, educating, and locating for the young people especially be developed with the overall pastoral plan of national, diocesan, and parochial levels towards strengthening the faith.

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<sup>242</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. ECS, *Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat Pastoral Commission: ECC-ECS Strategic Plan 2017-2021*, Addis Ababa, 2016, p. 20-22.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, the formation of youth components are discussed. A particular emphasis was placed on the youth of the Diocese of Adigrat, Tigray-Ethiopia. The chapter tried to discuss the roles of families, societies, and the Church. The study underscored the need and importance of a mutual and dynamic approach to pastoral care in youth apostolate, with a particular focus on the Diocese of Adigrat. Ethiopia has the biggest youngest population (estimated at 104 million, 41 percent is under the age of 15. More than 28 percent is aged 15 to 29)<sup>244</sup>. Ethiopia's youthful population is an untapped resource and an incredible asset for positive growth. However, the political situation, in particular, is not using them as a means of positive development by allowing a peaceful multi-parties system for sustainable peace. Instead, the political system is using the youthful generation for violence and destruction, spreading secularization and diminishing human rights and Christian values, affecting the lives of the youth and the mission of the Church. Families have important roles to play in preparing young people to face and change such problems. The study argued that the Church through the education of the families has a big role to contribute and alleviate such challenges. Examples were offered through the contributions of the three popes to the education of young people.

The human being is born with a pure heart and the mind grows depending on how the parents bring up or introduce them to the world. To be disciplined and transformed, one needs to be introduced into the faith and encounter the Lord. The parents are responsible for teaching their child the faith, and the family is the basic foundation of the future of their child's life of physical, spiritual, and intellectual formation. The contribution of society to develop what started in the family and the Church's duty in cooperation to grow and mature in the faith is essential. Hence following the anthropological basis of youth formation,

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<sup>244</sup> USAID, *Developing Ethiopia's Youth*, July 2017, [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Fact\\_Sheet\\_Developing\\_Ethiopia's\\_Youth\\_Jul\\_2017.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1860/Fact_Sheet_Developing_Ethiopia's_Youth_Jul_2017.pdf) [15.08.2021].

chapter three will discuss growing in faith in light of the Scripture and Tradition of Christianity.



## CHAPTER THREE

# GROWING IN FAITH IN LIGHT OF THE SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION OF CHRISTIANITY

### Introduction

This chapter examines the themes that relate to the relationship between persons and God. The foundation of a person's entire life depends on the personal relationship one has with God from which strength and absolute sureness of the person stream from.

The Scripture is the “*Word of God*” that is collected in the form of books. In its human aspect, it is composed by inspired people who had received the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Whereas in its divine aspect, the author of the Scripture is God Himself<sup>1</sup>. When a person reads the Scripture in the spirit of prayer, it is beneficial in many ways. It is “sweeter than honey” and “the lamp to feet and a light to the path” (Ps. 119: 103, 105) that enables them to listen to the voice of their master<sup>2</sup>. It reveals to the person the will of God in what circumstances he/she is found. Because “it goes to the very heart and identity of the Christian life. The word has the power to transform lives”<sup>3</sup>. As Pope Benedict XVI notes, loving the Scripture and the Church is a path to a treasure of very great value and teaches how to appreciate its richness. Loving and following the Church is important, for it has received the mission of showing people the way to true happiness from its founder<sup>4</sup>.

Through the Holy Scriptures, God speaks to the person in human language<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the Bible is the meeting place with the Lord and leads one to the Holy Eucharist, the one

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. CCC. 105-106; DV. 9; VD. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete Et Exsultate* (henceforth: GEE.), Rome, 2018, no. 156; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20180319\\_gaudete-et-exsultate.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html), [accessed: 03.04.2019].

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Benedict, *Message to the Youth of the World on the occasion of the 21st World Youth Day*, Vatican, (9 April 2006); available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20060222\\_youth.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20060222_youth.html), [accessed: 26.10.2019].

<sup>5</sup> Cf. CCC. 109.

true and Triune God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) receives the ultimate worship the world can give him and transform our lives<sup>6</sup>.

### **3.1. The Meaning of Faith**

According to the biblical understanding, faith implies both trusting in and surrendering to God in Jesus Christ who changes the manner of life (the act of faith), giving testimony to the faith in daily life and saving the mystery of Jesus Christ (the content of faith)<sup>7</sup>. Christians enter into the fellowship of the Triune God and the membership of the Christian community by professing the one faith of the Christian community at baptism. Through that system, our faith is inseparable from the act and virtue of clinging with our whole person in surrender to God. It is also accurate intellectual content by which all Christians closely know and confess the saving work of God preached in the Gospel. So, as Walter Kasper emphasized, faith is like a mold in which the Kingdom of God takes shape, and it is an answer to the news of the coming of God and his Kingdom. This answer is only possible in power and in the light of the Good News<sup>8</sup>.

John the Evangelist presents faith as an encountering with the very person of Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 4:50; 5:40,47; 6:35). Having faith in the word means to come to Jesus Christ himself and through faith experience his presence and power in one's life (cf. Jn. 4:42)<sup>9</sup>. In another context, John connects faith with knowledge: "To believe in Christ is to know him. The object of faith is more explicit in John: that Jesus came from God (Jn. 16:30), that he is the Holy One of God (cf. 6:69), that he is the Messiah (11:27). Jesus is the object of faith, and since Jesus is one with the Father, faith in Jesus is faith in the Father (5:19-27; 12:44,49; 14:1,6-11; 16:27-30; 1 Jn. 2:23)"<sup>10</sup>. Faith, therefore, is an encounter with the

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. GEE. 157.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. M. A. Fatula, *Faith*, in: M. Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, Minnesota, 1993, p. 380.

<sup>8</sup> W. Kasper, *Jesu the Christ*, Mainz, 1985, p. 82.

<sup>9</sup> M. A. Fatula, *Faith*, in: M. Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 380.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism: Completely Revised and Updated (New Ed.)*, op. cit., p. 29.

living God manifested in Christ, it brings us to Christ who is the light, it generates in us the divine life and prepares us to give public testimony even to the point of death.

According to St. Paul, faith is the foundation of Christian existence, and justification is through faith and Baptism. Faith, therefore, is important to reconciliation with God and liberation from sin<sup>11</sup>. Abraham was justified by his works; however, Christians are justified by faith in God's saving grace given to us in Jesus Christ: the just person lives through faith (cf. Rom.1:16-17, 3:24). To believe is to accept and receive this gift as the real power in our lives, giving us a whole new life in an intimate relationship and communion with Jesus (cf. Gal. 2:20; 3:26; 2 Cor. 4:18; 5:7; 13:5)<sup>12</sup>. Faith, for Paul, is also obedience to God (cf. Rom. 1:5; 16:26), demanding entire self-surrender to Christ.

According to different scholars, in the context of religion, faith means the whole orientation and attitude of one's life before God. In contrast, belief indicates the assent to or affirmation of certain propositions implied by faith or held by the faith community. In practice, however, the term embraces a range of meanings from a truth to be believed (cf. Eph. 4:5) to having confidence issuing in action (cf. Heb. 11) or implicit trust<sup>13</sup>.

Faith is a gift of God. It is a light coming from the future and brings in front of us vast horizons that lead to the breadth of communion; it opens the way before us and accompanies our steps through time. So that it is closely bound up and it is related to hope<sup>14</sup>. Because "faith is the solid reality of hope, the conviction about the invisible world"<sup>15</sup>. Faith also can be defined as a spiritual walk that is led and guided solely by God's voice and is God's beautiful experience<sup>16</sup> because, its source, its motive as well as its goal is God<sup>17</sup>. Similarly, faith is a path and a light that enables one truly to know God and understand the

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism: Completely Revised and Updated (New Ed.)*, op. cit., p. 28-29.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. M. A. Fatula, *Faith*, in: M. Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 380.

<sup>13</sup> F. K. Flinn, *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, New York, 2007, p. 270.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei* (henceforth: LF.), Rome, 2013, no. 4, 8, 9; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130629\\_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei.html), [accessed: 23.08.2019].

<sup>15</sup> R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism: Completely Revised and Updated (New Ed.)*, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. R. C. Sarah, *God or Nothing: A Conversation of Faith with Nicolas Diat*, op. cit., P. 199.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism: Completely Revised and Updated (New Ed.)*, op. cit., p. 35-36.

meaning of life's mystery in depth<sup>18</sup>. Furthermore, faith is “a commitment of our entire being”<sup>19</sup>. It can be summarized as a total self-surrender to the Savior Jesus Christ and placing one's heart unconditionally into the hands of God.

Therefore, theologically, faith is defined as the open acceptance of God's self-communication, which places the believer into a free personal and communal relationship with God. It is the focal point of all the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). In the New Testament, faith is centered in the person of Jesus Christ, his specific relationship to the Father, his mission as the accomplishment of the promise of a Messiah who will inaugurate the messianic kingdom of God, his victory over natural forces, and the demon, and his atoning work of salvation and redemption from death and evil (cf. 1 Cor. 15:12–28)<sup>20</sup>. Because it is Jesus who initiates and consummates faith (cf. Heb. 12:2)<sup>21</sup>. Therefore, faith is an assertiveness of acceptance and trust in the presence of God, as well as readiness and openness to God's revelation, work, and invitation.

### **3.2. Faith and the current situation in the Diocese of Adigrat**

In Ethiopia, paganism and Judaism were practiced side by side before the arrival of Christianity into the Tigray region, in the Axumite kingdom of that time. Having known that Christianity began in the Jewish land, by keeping pro-Christian Jewish traditions, Ethiopians believe that they are the first Jewish Christians<sup>22</sup>. Mostly, the present dominant culture of the West, compared to previous generations, no longer helps and encourages religious faith. Ruther, it undermines it<sup>23</sup>. However, religion is more adorable and publicly celebrated in Ethiopia. For example, the Feasts of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. M. A. Fatula, *Faith*, in: M. Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 387.

<sup>19</sup> R. C. Sarah, *God or Nothing: A Conversation of Faith with Nicolas Diat*, op. cit., p. 200.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. LF. 15 & 20; see also F. K. Flinn, *Encyclopedia of Catholicism*, New York, 2007, p. 270-271.

<sup>21</sup> R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism: Completely Revised and Updated (New Ed.)*, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. A. Abraha, *Saint Justine de Jacobis: His Missionary Methodology in Eritrea and Ethiopia*, Nairobi, 1995, p. 33; also A.H.M. Jones & E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, Oxford, 1965, p. 10-21; S.T. Habtemariam, *Two Slave Brothers Birted Africa's Oldest State Church: The history of the Axum Empire and Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church*, in: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2018/may/africa-christianity-axum-empire-ethiopian-orthodox-tewahedo.html>, [accessed 05.04.2020].

<sup>23</sup> M. P. Strommen and R. A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry*, Terrace Heights, 2000, p.73.

Baptism of Jesus Christ are national public Feasts celebrated in public places, particularly by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC), which is more official. Even though it is unlike the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church also celebrates such feast days in a solemn way best.

The Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese, with the other three dioceses of the whole country, is known by the name “Ethiopian Catholic Church” or “Geez Rite.” It rightfully holds and preserves the local traditions and culture without lessening the primacy of the Chair of Peter. The Chair presides and protects authentic differences seeing such differences does not hinder the unity but rather contributes towards it<sup>24</sup>. The Jewish traditions are seen greatly influencing the Christian faith, especially among the Catholic and Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia. For example, we can mention the forbidden diets written in the Old Testament, particularly those mentioned in the book of Leviticus chapter 11<sup>25</sup>. In addition to this, the daily life of the people and the economy are interconnected as well. According to the understanding of the people, nothing can be added to or taken from what has been laid down in the Sacred Scripture. Christians keep the tradition of eating clean and prohibiting unclean animals<sup>26</sup>.

The challenge is that the people in Tigray, where the Adigrat Diocese is situated, connect the forbidden diet with faith. However, everyone is free to abstain from whatever they want to refrain from or to eat whatever they want to eat. The Kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit and the love and respect of one’s neighbor. It is wrong for anyone to become a stumbling block by eating (cf. Rom. 14:3, 17, 20). But complaining about diet while acting against peace and justice is unacceptable in front of God, for it is impossible to love God while hating one’s brother or sister (cf. 1 Jn. 1:20-21). The people mostly appear religious but fail to practice

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<sup>24</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (henceforth: EA.), Yaoundé, 1995, no. 11; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_14091995\\_ecclesia-in-africa.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Y. Beyene, *Justin De Jacobis: The Art of Dialogue*, in: “Vincentiana”, Vol. 44, No. 6 [Full Issue], 2000, p. 478-479.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. A. Abraha, *Saint Justine De Jacobis*, op. cit., p. 39.

their faith through forgiveness and justice because faith must be shown in action and good work (cf. Jam. 2:14-26). So, the forbidden diet becomes a crisis of faith that will be discussed below.

### **3.2.1. Faith and its crisis today**

Faith is the gift of God<sup>27</sup>. God takes the first initiative (cf. Gen. 12) and man responds to God's initiative by faith. It is always a loving response to a loving, covenantal initiative<sup>28</sup>. Furthermore, "faith is also and above all an ecclesial reality. God is the one who gives us faith through our Holy Mother Church"<sup>29</sup>. This shows and confirms that faith is the gift of God that comes to us through our Mother Church.

Christians are called to be witnesses of their faith. Such a living and mature faith that penetrates our lives and dedicates us to the work of peace, justice, and security for everyone in the world should be visible to all. Our faith in Jesus Christ makes us responsible for each other and for our human history. Our faith, therefore, gives us eyes to see all of humankind in a new light and inspires us to work for full human solutions to the problems and evils in the world<sup>30</sup>. True faith is lived in daily life and is translated into concrete action in the world at the service of Christ and his members. However, such faith that translates itself into concrete action in love is lacking nowadays. For this reason, there is a crisis of faith in the Church.

Robert Cardinal Sarah responds to the contemporary crisis of faith with an analogy. He said, "the attitude of the modern world resembles the cowardice of Saint Peter during the Passion, as it is described for us in the Gospels"<sup>31</sup>. Like Peter, the modern world has denied Christ. Nowadays, people are afraid of God, afraid of following Him and becoming

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism: Completely Revised and Updated (New Ed.)*, New York, 1994, p. 19; also Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*, 29 June, 2013, no. 7, 14 and 19.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. R. C. Sarah, *The Day Is Now Far Spent: In Conversation with Nicolas Diat* (Tran. by M. J. Miller), San Francisco, 2019, p. 26.

<sup>29</sup> R. C. Sarah, *The Day Is Now Far Spent: In Conversation with Nicolas Diat*, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. A. Flannery (ed.), Vatican Council II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (henceforth: GS.), New York, 1980, no. 21, 55 & 11.

<sup>31</sup> R. Sarah, *The Day Is Now Far Spent*, op. cit., p. 24.

His disciple. They wanted to shine in the world's sight, and three times deprived of and denied our God. People mostly declare in their faith that they are not sure about God, the Gospels, dogmas, and Christian morality. Currently, Christians are ashamed of the saints and the martyrs; due to the secularized world. Some young people are uncomfortable talking about faith, embarrassed by God, His Church, and her liturgy, and trembled in the presence of the world and its servants<sup>32</sup>.

Like the Church in other parts of the world, the Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese is facing various challenges in regard to the faith of its members. Such challenges and crises can be seen in many ways. For instance, Sunday obligations are taken for granted in many ways. Instead of going to Sunday worship, people go to work and organize meetings. At times, young people prefer to join new religious movements such as charismatic protestant groups, and so on. In this way practicing and living the Catholic faith becomes a challenge. Sometimes reading and interpreting the Scripture also has its own setbacks. Not a very small number of people believe that the Scripture can be interpreted according to one's wishes. In this case, as R. Sarah says faith faces a time of crisis by the world that has become under the dominion of Satan and of sin; the world of ideologies that denies human nature and destroys the family; the structures, which impose a new world ethically, play a decisive role and have become today a crushing power that propagates itself over the airwaves through the unlimited possibilities of technology. Then the crisis of faith is part and parcel of a secularized society that is cut off from God and from supernatural realities<sup>33</sup>.

Nowadays, the passing on of faith is also another challenge in the diocese. It is becoming a hot issue for Church. Despite hard work and good desire, the crisis of faith is increasing. Faith is seen influencing very little in the daily lives of believers. Its power to give testimony and its capability to be handed on look like going on weaker and weaker. Faith is dependent entirely upon free self-revelation and the bestowal of God, and God's

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 24-25.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. R. Sarah, *The Day Is Now Far Spent*, op. cit., p. 45-46

grace enables every one of us to respond to the divine self-giving in faith. Therefore, in the parishes of the diocese, our act of faith is dependent on the exterior word of the preacher and the interior inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the testimonial life of the preacher, who inspires both the preacher's words and the listener's minds and hearts if they are to believe<sup>34</sup>.

In the diocese, like in the other Christian world, it is becoming difficult to fight any law against faith and nature that they try to impose on people. It is becoming hard to oppose anything against the teaching of the Church and its Tradition. It is not easy to fight any law against life, against the family. Conversion is necessary to save society from the tragic world and its apostasy into which humanity has fallen. Conversion is a personal commitment, but it does not come without the help of God and his grace, which helps faith to be truly rooted in Christ. Conversion is a break from the past and taking the direction of Christ. Hence, the Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese has its responsibility to give direction to the people. Pastoral ministers are called to nourish and strengthen the people's faith by teaching the Holy Bible, Tradition, and Magisterium<sup>35</sup>. So, faith shall be grown through daily practice, which will be discussed underneath.

### **3.2.2. Practicing faith and its growth**

According to St. Paul, faith must increase (cf. 2 Cor. 10:15). Unless faith grows, it becomes weak and dies (cf. 1 Thes. 3:10; Rom. 14:1). The source of growth in faith is love (cf. Gal. 5:6). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit plays a significant role in illuminating our interior life to grasp and understand the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 2:2-16; 12:3; Eph. 1:17-18; 3:14-17; Col. 2:2). Through the work of the Holy Spirit, believers are enabled to know and love God (cf. Gal. 4:8-9; Eph. 4:18; 5:8; 2 Cor. 4:6). Because everything is directed and focused on toward union with God through Christ and in the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:11, 19-23, 29; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; 2Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:19-21; 1

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. M. A. Fatula, *Faith*, op. cit., p. 381.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. R. Sarah, *The Day Is Now Far Spent*, op. cit., p. 46.



Thes. 4:17). So, as St. Peter urges believers, they are called to strive and grow in faith (cf. 2 Pet. 1:5-7).

For faith to develop and spiritual growth to take place, prayer life is very important. Faith is nurtured through contemplative life and an interior relationship with God. Because faith grows in an intense life of prayer and contemplative silence. Faith is nourished and gets courage through day-to-day meetings with God through adoration, meditation, silent contemplation, and prayer, which is declared in the Creed, celebrated in the liturgy, and lived out in keeping the Commandments. Its principal sources are Sacred Scripture, the Fathers of the Church, and the Magisterium<sup>36</sup>.

Growing in faith means reshaping one's life in daily contact with Christ. Mature faith does not cling itself to a system or even to feelings of faith, but only to God<sup>37</sup>. The Gospels teach us to grow in faith precisely by praying for it as a gift: "Lord, help my unbelief!" (Mk. 9:24); "Lord, increase our faith" (Lk. 17:5) because things can become real only through prayer. Faith nourishes and deepens believers' life. Faith in itself is nurtured through practice and communal prayer that is the Church's liturgy because in the liturgy, "what we pray we believe, and what we believe we pray. By its nature, therefore, the liturgy has the power to nourish our faith. When we truly celebrate the Eucharist together"<sup>38</sup>. So, maturity in faith brings a true personal conversion in our lives with the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit heals the inner wounds and then makes us humble, gentle, and peaceful with all that the Father desires for us<sup>39</sup>.

Faith is also an essential criterion for radical conversion and to have eternal life in Jesus Christ. For this reason, the pastoral ministers of the diocese are necessary to deepen the roots of faith and make it applicable to all Christian lives. It is important to focus faith on what is central to Christian belief: the saving power of the Triune God; the healing

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<sup>36</sup> R. Sarah, *The Day Is Now Far Spent: In Conversation with Nicolas Diat* (Translated by Michael J. Miller), San Francisco, 2019, p. 26.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. M. A. Fatula, *Faith*, in M. Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 387.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 388

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 388-389.

mystery of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for all; and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, especially in the Sacramental celebration<sup>40</sup>. Speaking of the Diocese of Adigrat, though many young people are baptized and raised in the Catholic faith, it is rare to see some of them practicing their faith today. For instance, attendance of Holy Mass by the young people is becoming lesser and lesser. There are different reasons for this challenge. For instance, after elementary school, many young people migrate to cities to continue their high school, and then some continue to college and others go to university. After they leave their home parishes some of them become weak in practicing their Catholic faith. Even some get engaged with Protestant movements, which eventually has its own consequences and dangers of going astray for Catholics. Some young people could be found not attending mass anymore in Catholic parishes. Likewise, many young adult workers are not seen attending mass.

On weekdays the workers engage in their daily work. On Sundays or other public holidays, they involve in social matters like visiting those who are in grief or other social activities. Pastoral ministers are called to nurture the needs of such young people through prayerful engagements so that their faith can increase. An increase in faith continually seeks prayer, love, and witnessing more deeply of what one believes in a committed way, particularly in participating in the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist<sup>41</sup>. The "Eucharist is a precious nourishment of faith"<sup>42</sup>. It helps everyone to be consoled and console others.

The Catholics Church in the Diocese of Adigrat, and in the country as a whole, is not growing according to its age. The Church is doing less in education to faith. Instead, it is engaged in investing all its resources in social developments like education, health, human promotion, social rehabilitation, and so on<sup>43</sup>. Even if these things are mostly the responsibility of the government, the Church is seen to be fully involved in such works. As a result, this has affected the Catholic Church a lot in its pastoral ministries and

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. K. Rahner, *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality*, New York, 1983, p. 38-40.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 38-40.

<sup>42</sup> LF. 44.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat (henceforth: ECS.), *Ethiopian Catholic Church Directory*, Addis Ababa, 2017, p. 369.

evangelization because the mission of the Church is to evangelize and make disciples (cf. Mt. 28:19)<sup>44</sup>. When the offices of social development and the government have workshops and seminars, they give daily allowances for the participants. These have a great impact on the Church and challenge it a lot. When the Church organizes conferences and workshops to develop an interior life of prayer and faith through building the knowledge and truth of the Gospel of the people, they expect daily allowances to be given by the Church as the government does. This has an impact on the spiritual growth of the faithful, and as Jesus Christ said it is better to “work then, not for perishable food, but for the lasting food which gives eternal life” (Jn. 6:27).

Furthermore, in the daily life of the Christian life of the diocese, the practice of fraternal faith, simplicity of faith, and certainty of faith are important for the growth of interior life<sup>45</sup>. First, faith forms a relationship among fellow Christian brothers and sisters, which is called fraternal faith. The word ‘fraternal’ implies a relationship. If there is a fraternal faith, there is honesty, capable to bear witness to the faith, and trying to carry it out in practice in our lives, painfully and prayerfully. In pastoral ministry, today it is essential to show a fraternal faith towards our unbelieving brothers to be heralds of the Gospel, to be a fruitful example in faith, to share the agonies of their lack of faith, and pray in Christ for the grace of faith<sup>46</sup>. Secondly, the Christians of the diocese need to know that a characteristic of faith nowadays is its radical simplicity because of the courage and enthusiasm to believe and the ability to make faith significant and meaningful in our daily lives expect today more than ever before<sup>47</sup>. Thirdly, the Christians of the diocese make sure that the certainty of faith derives from the nature of faith as a trusting and open relationship to the whole of reality in general and of human existence. It is to choose the truth and reality

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (henceforth – EN.), Rome, 1975, no. 18; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19751208\\_evangelii-nuntiandi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html), [accessed: 01.05.2019].

<sup>45</sup> Cf. K. Rahner, *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality*, New York, 1983, p. 32-43.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, p. 34-35.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Ibid*, p. 37.

of beliefs. For instance, selfless love makes sense, and can only be discovered by choosing it<sup>48</sup>.

The Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese can provide several ways to make it possible to educate Christians and help them in understanding the true faith and have strength in their faith. These things include:

1. Meditation on Scripture – it prepares us to better understand the story of God and the character of God,
2. Practicing prayer and other spiritual disciplines – these things can clarify God’s ongoing work in our world,
3. Living life deeply embedded in a community – community life empowers us to discern different ways through which we can make our story and makes us better connect with the ongoing story of God at work among us,
4. Obedience to what God has already revealed – it is obvious that our practices and discernment cannot be godly unless it agrees with what God has already done and said<sup>49</sup>.

These simple exercises can help the Christians for positive spiritual growth in the diocese where true faith is its foundation.

### **3.3. The spirituality of work and its testimony in Christian faith**

Work is closely related to the life of human beings, culture, and religion. It is a central theme in social life, political science, and in the history of Christian spirituality<sup>50</sup>. Work is also intimately related to faith, life, religion, and the world. Work means any activity by man, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances; it

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Ibid, p. 42.

<sup>49</sup> D. Chancey and R. Bruner (eds.), *Owning Faith: Reimagining the Role of Church and Family in the Faith Journey of Teenagers*, Abilene, 2017, p. 100-102.

<sup>50</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem exercens* (henceforth LE.), (14 Sep. 1981), no. 1, available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_15051961\\_mater.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html), [accessed: 25.10.2021]

means any human activity that can and must be recognized as work. Thus, work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures<sup>51</sup>.

The Second Vatican Council gives great attention to work, connecting it closely with faith and condemning the division between daily life and faith, making it clear that God's plan restores, develops, and brings it to great wholeness through our work<sup>52</sup>. Furthermore, the document warns the consequences of disregarding our responsibility by saying "the Christian who shirks his temporal duties shirks his duties towards his neighbor, neglects God himself, and endangers his eternal salvation. Let Christians follow the example of Christ who worked as a craftsman; let them be proud of the opportunity to carry out their earthly activity"<sup>53</sup>. This shows how much the dignity and value of work are.

In Judaism and Christian belief, faith and work are intimately related. In a special way, some Old Testament texts forbid work on feast days like the Sabbath. At times these biblical texts are taken literally, especially in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church interpretations. Traditionally, the Orthodox Christians are not allowed to do manual works on feast days. Consequently, the concept and essence of work and the Law of the Old Testament are in-conflict in the mentality of people in Tigray where the Adigrat Diocese is situated. They connect faith with feasts including memorial days. According to the understanding of the people, faith relates to the biblical reference to God's work of creation and rest pattern. They connect work with the seven days of creation that God created everything in six days and rested on the seventh day, he blessed the seventh day and made it holy (cf. Gen. 1:1-2:3). So that, for the people, all feasts and memorials are holy like the seventh day that God made holy, and they take them as not-working days and anyone who works (works like farming, irrigations, agricultures, constructions, and so on) on a feast or memorial days is taken as weak in faith. The problem is that one feast or Memorial Day is celebrated monthly not once a year. Thus, some people do not keep that mentality and are

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* (henceforth: LE.), Castel Gandolfo, 1981, introductory part without number; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091981\\_laborem-exercens.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>52</sup> Cf. GS. 34 & 57.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

always seen as anti-religion. Feasts and memorial days would be good if they were used for reflection, prayer, contemplation, and visiting elders, the weak, and the sick in hospitals and/or in-home, but instead, most people spend them in court, in the house of liquor or others which do not help them to develop spiritually, and economically.

As Jack Dominian observed, work should adhere to the Ten Commandments with respect for truth, honesty, integrity, and giving value for wages and salaries received. Because the contemporary world's need for work is, to assert the importance of fairness, justice, and the avoidance of exploitation. Then morality can go hand in hand with the task of developing<sup>54</sup>. Work is the task of human beings that is given by God (cf. Gen. 1:27-28) and while working, human beings are in the presence of God. Because it is an extension of God's loving creativity, which humans can all share in, and they should not underestimate its importance because our identity depends on the living connection of work and home since work is a source of pleasure, achievement, toil, and stress, which is part of human life<sup>55</sup>. Consequently, when people are in the secular workplace, they are in the company of God, cooperating and extending his holy work. They are therefore involved in a spiritual, divine dimension<sup>56</sup>.

Pope John Paul II observed that the Christian spirituality of work should be a heritage shared by all. Especially in the modern age, the spirituality of work should show the maturity called for by the tensions and restlessness of mind and heart<sup>57</sup>. In addition, a Christian spirituality sees work, prayer, study, and contemplation as intertwined, all directed to praising God because work is fundamentally holy. It must also be balanced with times of relaxation, solitude, and prayer<sup>58</sup>. So, the Christian spirituality of work must contain a loving presence for and generous assistance of the vulnerable and continuous

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<sup>54</sup> J. Dominian, *Living Love: Restoring hope in in the Church*, Darton, 2004, p.175, 1047-1048; see also: LE. 1 and 19.

<sup>55</sup> Cf., *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>56</sup> Cf., *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. LE. 25.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. E. C. Sellner, *Work*, in: M. Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, Minnesota, 1993, p. 1048-1049.

friendship of each other. Instead of looking at work as a challenge and crisis of faith among the communities in Tigray, they should take it as an occasion for an active and common enhancement for an effective witness of the beatitude (cf. Mt. 5:1-16) and effective service of the most vulnerable (cf. Mt. 25: 31-46). Through work, man must earn his daily bread and contribute to the continual advance of science and technology and, above all, to elevating the cultural and moral level of the society within which he lives in a community with those who belong to the same family<sup>59</sup>. Therefore, the Tigray people should understand that work is the duty given to humans as a mandate by God, the creator of the universe. It is a sharing in the creator's activity that will be discussed in the following topic.

### **3.4. Work as sharing in the activity of the Creator and a means to achieve the given mandate**

When human beings created as male and female, they were given the words “Be fertile and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:27-28). This indicates that they received a mission to achieve and a task to accomplish. Human beings were created in the image of God and have been told to have dominion over creatures of the sea, of the air, and all living thing moves on the earth (cf. Gen. 1:28). Human appears as the delegate of their Creator to rule over the works of His hands, care, and subdue the world in His name<sup>60</sup>. God's likeness gives them authority over the rest of creation (cf. Ps. 8:5-7)<sup>61</sup>. Work is a means of participating in the work of salvation, an opportunity to hasten the Kingdom's coming, develop our talents and abilities, and put them at the service of society and fraternal communion<sup>62</sup>.

Thus, human beings are called to be faithful to the will of God and achieve the mandate that has been given in the world through work. Work is a good thing for man,

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. LE. Introductory part with number.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. J. De Fraine, *The Bible and the Origin of Man*, Rome, 1962, p.26

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *The African Bible*, Nairobi, 2010, side commentary on Genesis 1:26, p. 26.

<sup>62</sup> Francis, Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* (hence forth: PC.), Rome, 2020, no. 6; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap\\_20201208\\_patris-corde.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20201208_patris-corde.html), [accessed: 07.03.2021].

which is useful to enjoy and worthy corresponds to man's dignity, which expresses this dignity and increases it. The people of Tigray must know that through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes more of a human being<sup>63</sup>. Because work is as old as the life of human beings on earth. This is true for any type of work without distinction. Any work if done with honesty and for the right purpose and in the right and just way is holy and respectful.

However, mostly the people in the Diocese of Adigrat, the young generation, in particular, can be seen disdaining some work that is available, being more selective, particularly looking only for an office job. But Jesus taught that all work was meant to express a person's love for God and solidarity with one another to bring about God's reign. He is particularly hard on the lazy servant who hides his talents (cf. Mt. 25: 14-30), and he warns us that ultimately our life and work will be judged in terms of our loving service to one another: "whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me (Mt. 25:40)"<sup>64</sup>.

In Biblical stories, God created the world in six days and the literary figure six is considered an imperfect number. By describing creation as having occurred in six days, the Book of Genesis clearly states that creation itself is incomplete. So, the people of Tigray need to recognize that humanity must continue in work the creative process begun by God, which is a major principle from Genesis that applies to the spirituality of work: the recognition that works, creativity, and human efforts continue what God has started<sup>65</sup>. Therefore, as God's original creations are good (cf. Rev. 15:3), the continuous effort and creativity of a human being's daily work are also good. This makes a human being share in the activity of God and achieves the mandate that was given to him. Because the fundamental truth that man, created in the image of God, shares by his work in the activity

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<sup>63</sup> LE. 9.

<sup>64</sup> E. C. Sellner, *Work*, in: M. Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 1047.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. E. C. Sellner, *Work*, in: M. Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 1045.



of the Creator and within the limits of his human capabilities that human beings given the mandate to continue and develop the activities that are entrusted to him through work<sup>66</sup>.

Therefore, from all creatures only “man alone has likeness to God”<sup>67</sup>. The human being alone is the privileged creature who has been given a special mandate to work. This mandate obliged the human being to earn daily bread (cf. Ps. 127:2; cf. also Gen. 3:17-19; Prov. 10:22; Ex. 1:8-14; Jer. 22:13). Human beings must work for the development of modern technology and advancement of science because human eats the bread produced by the work of his or her hands and this means not only the daily bread by which his or her body keeps alive but also the bread of science and progress, civilization and culture<sup>68</sup>. Hence, the people of Tigray must consider that everyone must strive to be elevated from within by the grace of Christ and work vigorously so that by human labor, technical skill, and civil culture, created goods may be perfected according to the design of the Creator and the light of his Word<sup>69</sup>. Working persons, whatever their job may be, cooperate with God and, in some way, become creators of the world around us by building and developing our common home<sup>70</sup>. Because the crisis of our time, which is economic, social, cultural, and spiritual, can serve as a summon for all of us to rediscover the value, importance, and necessity of work for bringing about a new normal from which no one is excluded<sup>71</sup>. Work, therefore, is a means to exercise and live the unique characteristic of equality and dignity that is only given to human beings who are created in God’s image and likeness.

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<sup>66</sup> GS. 12; and also LE. 25-26.

<sup>67</sup> LE. 25.

<sup>68</sup> LE. 1.

<sup>69</sup> LE. 25.

<sup>70</sup> Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* (henceforth: LS.), Rome, 2015, no. 13; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), [accessed: 05.05.2018]; see also: PC. 6.

<sup>71</sup> PC. 6.

### 3.5. The image and likeness of God as a sign of equality and human dignity

God created human beings at the end of his good work of creation. He created him in his own “image and likeness” (Gen. 1:26), which refers to the soul, and made him the masterpiece of his creation. By creating him in his ‘image and likeness’, God made man greater than anything created for “he is made in the image of the ever-greater God”<sup>72</sup>. The Creator formed the creature; the Creator is infinite, but the creature is finite. Though finite, a man was created perfect, for God looked at everything He had made and found it to be ‘very good’<sup>73</sup>. Therefore, a human being is the crown of the whole work of God’s creation<sup>74</sup>

As the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council noted, in His fatherly care for all human beings, God desired that all human beings should form one family and deal with each other in a spirit of brotherhood, because all of us were created in the likeness of God. So that, love of God and one’s neighbor are the first and greatest commandments. Because the love of God cannot be separated from the love of one’s neighbor (cf. Rom. 13:9-10; cf. 1Jn. 4:20)<sup>75</sup>. God made human beings in his own image. As David J Atkinson (et. al.) noted, this has two primary ethical effects: first, the sanctity of human life, which shows the necessity that human life needs to be treated as inviolable on the grounds of the image of God. Second, the equality of human beings. The essential human equality is based on our common creativity in God’s image. The rich and the poor are equal before God (cf. Prov. 22:2; 29:13) and whatever one person does to the other does to God himself (cf. Prov. 14:31; 17:5; 19:17)<sup>76</sup>.

There are two sides to life in the human person: the material and spiritual side<sup>77</sup>. Nowadays, most people in Tigray are taking more attention to the material side, which is quite visible, and straying from God, which is invisible. But human beings “should do

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<sup>72</sup> J. Saward, *Christ is the Answer: The Christ-Centered Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, New York, 1995, p.77.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. E. Charles, *History of Christian Education*, Chicago, 1973, p. 20.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. M. Tatar, *Structure of man in the biblical act of Creation*, op. cit., p. 191.

<sup>75</sup> GS. 24.

<sup>76</sup> D. J. Atkinson (et. al.) [eds.], *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, Nottingham, 1995, p. 54.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. CCC. 355-384.

things that will help him reach a closer union with God”<sup>78</sup>. By nature, human beings are social and relational based on the relationship of the Trinitarian mystery. However, there is disintegration among young people in the diocese for various reasons, in Ethiopia in general, where they are more disintegrating. There is developing more ignorance of each other and disrespect among neighbors, which is affecting the life of the young generations in the Diocese. Additionally, people want to dominate each other either by ethnicity or individually. There is also an understanding that men are superior to women. Such kinds of systems “were employed in the past to implicitly justify unjust structures of domination and control both in the Church and in society at large”<sup>79</sup>. These mentalities still affect societies and the understanding of some young people in modern times.

In history, Ethiopia known is a religious country, and the people assume that they have the love of God and think they are more religious. However, in practice, the love of neighbor is losing its meaning. Currently, people are focusing on the person’s identity, ethnic group or clan, and from which area he or she comes, which he or she never chose to be from any ethnic group nor to have any identity. What the person is given and became by God. God is the fountain of his or her being and the “steam must resemble the spring which produced it”<sup>80</sup>.

Human beings, while remaining biologically similar to those other living beings in nature, contain in an essential and unique way an image and likeness to God. The uniqueness of human beings has its base on the Trinitarian family as a community of human life, as a community of persons united in love<sup>81</sup>. Therefore, as Pope Benedict XVI observed human beings are directly related to God. He calls the human being, and each human person

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<sup>78</sup> L. D’Angelo, *Come Home...The Door is open: an invitation to reconciliation*, Meriden, 1982, p. 57.

<sup>79</sup> J. A. Bracken, *God*, in: M. Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, op. cit., p. 445-446.

<sup>80</sup> A. Clarke, *The AGES Digital Library Commentaries: Clarke’s Commentary the Old Testament* (AGES Software, Version 1.0), Albany, 1997, p. 30.

<sup>81</sup> John Paul II, Letter to Families *Gratissimam Sane*, Rome, 2 Feb. 21994, no. 6, available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_let\\_02021994\\_families.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.html), [accessed: 03.05.2020].

is known, loved, and willed by God because each person is God's image<sup>82</sup>. Hence, religion particularly Christianity is not about ethnicity or about individual relationships with God, which is only vertical. It is also about the community that collaborates and gets together by the Spirit and about the relationship of the community with Jesus Christ, which is horizontal. The prayer Jesus taught us begins with "Our Father" (Mt. 6:9-13), not "My Father". No one ever prays alone. Every Christian prays in Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, to the Father.

Therefore, God's image and likeness gave human beings essential dignity, equality, and personal identity that indicates vertical and horizontal relations. They are called to be and should try to become ever more God's representatives and even a partner in His spiritual paternity<sup>83</sup>. So, human beings are called to serve God through each other, which is important to grow in the service of the Lord, the topic will be discussed below.

### **3.6. Growing up in the service of the Lord**

The alterations and transformations that occur in faith and the life of faith happen in time and over time<sup>84</sup>. Faith develops in daily activities through various kinds of services. Growing up in the service means transforming in God's grace and participating in the means of grace. Transforming in the grace of God is fundamentally a process of participation in the service of our Savior. So, the process of coming to faith and growing in the life of faith is fundamentally a process of participation<sup>85</sup>. Because "the life of faith is a living, moving, dynamic existence that takes place in the environment of the Spirit. This existence includes the experience of growth in the manifold aspects of our nature: our bodies, minds, feelings, judgments, social relationships, [and] imaginations. In the Spirit, we come to recognize this growth as God's gift"<sup>86</sup>. Involvement in the activities of service

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<sup>82</sup> Benedict XVI, *'In the Beginning...': A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, Michigan, 1995, p. 45.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. J. De Fraine, *The Bible and the Origin of Man*, op. cit., p. 26-27.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. C. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, Louisville, 2005, p. 34.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Ibid, p. 38, 40-41

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p. 38.

helps to transform faith and loyalty that develops young people's bond to the Church<sup>87</sup>, and it increases the relationship in society through fraternal service inspired by love<sup>88</sup>. Because it is fundamental for the service of the family and the service of each other for it transforms the life of the Christians in the Church<sup>89</sup>.

The life of faith involves change, transformation, growth, and maturation<sup>90</sup>. Because the giving of one's life in service to others, and ultimately to Christ, is faith-enhancing<sup>91</sup>. One of these processes occurs through the service of the Lord for he said "whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt. 25:40; Mk. 9:41). Therefore, Mother Teresa of Calcutta witnessed it saying: "these are all living proof of the reality of Christ [...] And it is for sure that it is to Jesus"<sup>92</sup>.

In the Adigrat Diocese, the people sometimes take it the wrong way by not properly understanding how to serve the Lord and get God's grace and blessings. The means of grace through the service of the Lord are mistakenly regarded by Christians. They consider the service of the Lord has been done only in the church and is related to liturgical worship. Any service outside the church is considered only the duty of clergy and religious brothers and sisters. For instance, visiting prisoners, the sick in the hospital or at home, helping the elderly and disabled, and so on, are based only on personal relationships and knowing each other. It does not consider to do the ministry of service as individual or group apostolate as giving care for the least brothers and sisters as the service to humanity. Craig Dykstra observed, "this conception often led to distortions of the church's [*sic.*] proper self-

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. M. P. Strommen and R. A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 94-96.

<sup>88</sup> Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* (henceforth: AM.), Ouidah, 2011, no. 29; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20111119\\_africae-munus.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html), [accessed: 10.12.2017].

<sup>89</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (henceforth: FC.), Rome, 1981, no. 28-48; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>90</sup> Cf. C. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. M. P. Strommen and R. A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 94.

<sup>92</sup> Mother Teresa, *Where there is Love, there is God: A path to closer union with God and Greater love for others*, New York, 2010, p. 166.

understanding and to destructive patterns of ministry and life in the world, and it still does so in some contexts today”<sup>93</sup>. This shows that the misunderstanding and misconception of the Church community are leading to distortion and misrepresentation of the Church's proper essence of the service and certainly, the people in the diocese, need to get continuous instructions that giving service to the weak is not only the duty of clergy and the religious but also of the lay faithful as well.

Everyone is called to be a missionary by participating in the service of the community. Because God works through people who are his instruments to do good. So that the hands and hearts of human beings are called to manifest the Love of God in today's world, and Mother Teresa of Calcutta was a great example of the current time<sup>94</sup>. She has been an instrument of God's love for humanity especially for the poor and the destitute. Service is based on voluntary and self-giving to others freely. Individually, there is a good indication that it is focused on personal relationships and knowledge, but organized humanity-centered service is not given attention. Service of the Lord to the human being, who was created in the image and likeness of God, is charitable work, and it is a response to “the glory of God who calls us into being and invites us to share the blessings of his eternal generosity and inexhaustible love”<sup>95</sup>.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta observed that “faith in action is love. Love in action is service”<sup>96</sup>. This shows that service to the vulnerable and those in need is the expression of the love of Jesus in the world nowadays. It is important in the Diocese of Adigrat for the young people to know that the service of love means the “work at the salvation and sanctification of the poorest of the poor”<sup>97</sup>. Because our faith is profoundly social, and no

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<sup>93</sup> C. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Mother Teresa, *Where there is Love, there is God: A path to closer union with God and Greater love for others*, New York, 2010, introduction part p. xi.

<sup>95</sup> M. Whipp, *SCM Studyguide to Pastoral Theology*, London, 2013, p. 20.

<sup>96</sup> Mother Teresa, *Where there is Love, there is God: A path to closer union with God and Greater love for others*, op. cit., p. 208.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

one can be called truly Catholic unless all hear and heed the Church's call to serve those in need and work for justice and peace in an organized manner<sup>98</sup>.

The ministry of service is an essential aspect of the Church's mission. Because service is an effective part of catechesis for both adults and young people when the Church allows the ministry itself to teach. And like so many lessons it is best learned in, with, and through the community. So, it is good to consider how Jesus taught us to understand that service is not just an action, but a life-altering attitude fostered best in community with others<sup>99</sup>.

Our faith calls every one of us to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers<sup>100</sup>. Thus, in the diocese when young people are involved in direct service of those in need, they provide an example to the rest of the Christian community about the importance of service to others<sup>101</sup>. And our Christian service must be oriented in the same way since being of service ought to unite us with those with whom everyone works<sup>102</sup>. Therefore, youth ministry leaders, catechists and teachers, and service-project coordinators must draw attention to what the parish or school youth are doing so that parents, faculty, and parishioners understand the effect of such service<sup>103</sup>. Furthermore, youth pastoral ministers must instill in young people a social consciousness and a commitment to a life of justice and service that is rooted in their faith in Jesus Christ, in the Scriptures, and in Catholic social teaching<sup>104</sup>. Because service is an important dimension of social action<sup>105</sup>. Service is also

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (hereafter – USCCB), *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, Washington, 1997, p.38.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, Cincinnati, 2001, p.55-56.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. USCCB, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. R. J. McCarty and L. Delgatto (eds.), *The Vision of Catholic Youth Ministry: Fundamentals, Theory, and Practice*, Terrace Heights, 2005, p.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. R. J. McCarty and L. Delgatto (eds.), *The Vision of Catholic Youth Ministry: Fundamentals, Theory, and Practice*, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. USCCB, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. R. J. McCarty and L. Delgatto (eds.), *The Vision of Catholic Youth Ministry: Fundamentals, Theory, and Practice*, op. cit., p. 126.

a means to enrich a Christian identity that is rooted in obedience. Consequently, it is essential to discuss the life of young people in contrast to the Christian identity.

### **3.7. Christian identity and the life of young people today**

Life is a journey with various experiences of rejection, misunderstanding, suffering, ambitions, ups and downs, searching for knowledge, and survival. It is a pilgrimage on earth. As the Synod of Bishops on *Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment* observed, Jesus experienced all these and turned his gaze towards the future, entrusting himself into the Father's safe hands in the strength of the Spirit<sup>106</sup>.

In Ethiopia, the Tigray region in particular, amid the rapid social, political, and economic changes, added to different religious movements, the lives of the young people are changing dramatically. As a result, many young people are called to examine their faith. They ask challenging faith-related questions and try to find and look for solid and practical solutions. Nowadays, in the Diocese of Adigrat, young people want to see and know everything about their beliefs. Accordingly, they seek to find and get spiritual, intellectual, and human satisfaction that suits their understanding. Being too enthusiastic, they try everything. At times some may be found attending Mass in the morning, during the day they try to learn Church songs or read the Bible. Some may be seen joining movements and concerts organized by some Protestant Churches. It is opportune to mention that Protestant Pastors use such advantages to convince young people to join their movement some young people fall into such traps, and many others strongly resist, responding to the invitation with a firm decision that they received the Lord when they were baptized, and also in the Word of God and Eucharist in the Mass<sup>107</sup>.

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<sup>106</sup> Cf. Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*, no. 63; Available at: Final Document - XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on "Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment", (Vatican, 27 October 2018), [accessed: 19.10.2019].

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Archeparchial Catholic Secretariat (Hereafter cited as ACS), *Journeying Together in Christ: Acts of the Archeparchial General Assembly*, Addis Ababa, 2013, p. 115-116.



As the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II observed that young people, at the same time, are the present and the future of humanity. Thus, it is important to assist them in developing and overcoming their daily obstacles like illiteracy, idleness, hunger, drugs, and others. To meet these challenges, young people should be called upon to become the evangelizers of their peers because no one can do this better than they do. The Holy Father emphasized that the pastoral care of youth must be a part of the overall pastoral plan of the dioceses and parishes. So, the young people will be able to discover the value of the gift of self, an essential means for the person to reach maturity<sup>108</sup>.

The young people in today's world are, at times, misunderstood. Many times they are considered immoral or careless and irresponsible. But this is not true. Yes, young people want to try everything. They want to know what life is about. They want to discuss the secrets of their faith in depth. They have a strong desire to learn about God, and when they do find out, they have a strong desire and determination to witness their faith. Therefore, the Church, recognizing the youth's eagerness and commitment to be evangelized, has a great responsibility and duty to build up their lives in their human, spiritual, and intellectual identity<sup>109</sup>. Young generation who have grown up in the service of the Lord and enriched their Christian identity become the friends of Jesus Christ, who is eternally young, the topic that will be discussed below.

### **3.8. Jesus Christ as eternally young, a friend of youth**

Naturally, young people's hearts are ready to change, turn back, get up and learn from life. As Pope Francis noted, Jesus Christ, who is eternally young, wants to give us hearts that are ever young and a constant source of newness. His outstretched arms on the

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<sup>108</sup> Cf. EA. 93.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. ACS, *Journeying Together in Christ: Acts of the Archeparchial General Assembly*, op. cit., p. 116.

cross are the most obvious sign that He is a friend willing to stop at nothing, for He has loved His own in the world and loved them to the end (cf. Jn. 13:1)<sup>110</sup>.

But life is like a voyage on the sea of history, and often dark and storms deter our journey. Consequently, every person is called to watch for the stars that indicate the route. The true stars of our lives are Jesus Christ himself and the people who have lived exemplary lives. They are lights of hope. Indeed, Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history<sup>111</sup>. It is important and must not be thought that Jesus was a withdrawn adolescent or a self-absorbed youth. His relationships were those of a young person who shared fully in the life of his family and his people. He learned his father's trade and then replaced him as a carpenter<sup>112</sup>.

The Catholic Church of Adigrat Diocese believes that the ministry of the new evangelization and a call for the transformation of spiritual life cannot be achieved without the participation of young people. Every young person who feels in their heart that the Lord is inviting them to a mission is at the same time invited to hear the Father saying "you are my beloved Son" (Mk. 1:11) and Jesus Christ, a young and friend of the youth, is ready to accompany and introduce everyone to the life of grace<sup>113</sup>. Because he is "a youth for youths, becoming an example to youths, and thus sanctifying them for the Lord"<sup>114</sup>. Therefore, in Jesus Christ, all the youngsters can see themselves with their fears, hopes, uncertainties, and dreams and entrust themselves to Him. For them, it will be a source of inspiration to contemplate Jesus' encounters with the young. Youth can recognize their skills, strengths, and weaknesses in 'the eternal Jesus' and youth friends, and they can know

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<sup>110</sup> Cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (hereafter: CV.). no. 12-13; 118; available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20190325\\_christus-vivit.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html), [accessed: 03.04.2019]; see also: EG. 11.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe salvi* (henceforth: SS.), Rome, 2007, no. 49: available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20071130\\_spe-salvi.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20071130_spe-salvi.html), [accessed: 10.03.2019].

<sup>112</sup> Cf. CV. 28.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. CV. 25.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (Book II, Chapter 22, 4), Available at: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103222.htm>, [accessed: 23.11.2021].

their true Mother, the Church, which never abandons them but instead walks alongside them on their new path of life<sup>115</sup>.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, the young people's participation in each parish ministry and youth association for spiritual growth was based on individual effort and group initiative. They point out that in the fast-paced and changing world, in the light of their faith, the youngsters have not had enough spiritual assistance to face their challenges and overcome them. And after realizing that there was a gap between the services of the spiritual, intellectual, and apostolic building of the youth in every parish, a youth chaplain was appointed at a diocesan level. However, even though there was not a youth chaplain, young people still needed to know that they were not alone, for Christ is always with them in the journey of their lives through the parish priests. The Lord has called them and chosen them to live in the freedom of the children of God. It is important to turn to Him in prayer and love and ask Him to grant them the courage and strength always to live in this freedom and walk with him who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (Jn. 14:6)<sup>116</sup>.

Therefore, it is Jesus Christ who stirs in young people the desire to do something great with their lives, the will to follow an ideal, and the refusal to allow themselves to be grounded by mediocrity. He is the one who gives them the courage to commit themselves humbly and patiently to improve themselves and society, making the world more human, mutual, and more fraternal, focused on eternal life as their target<sup>117</sup>. So, the youngsters of the diocese need courage to seek Jesus Christ and live in Him daily, which will be addressed below.

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<sup>115</sup> Cf. Final Document of the Synod of Bishops on *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*, op. cit., n. 63.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Address on the occasion of 12th World Youth Day Baptismal Vigil*, Longchamp, 23 August 1997, no. 9; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/travels/1997/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_23081997\\_vigil.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/travels/1997/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_23081997_vigil.html), [accessed: 06.12.2021]

<sup>117</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Address on the occasion of 15th World Youth Day Vigil of Prayer*, Tor Vergata, 19 Aug. 2000, no. 5; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2000/jul-sep/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_20000819\\_gmg-veglia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/2000/jul-sep/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20000819_gmg-veglia.html), [accessed: 06.12.2021].

### 3.9. The courage in the spirit to seek Jesus Christ and trust Him

The dialogue of the baptismal rite expressed the infant's reception into the community of believers and the infant's rebirth in Christ. This dialogue shows us that the parents seek access to the faith for their child and communion with believers because they see faith as the key to eternal life, and trust is the substance of hope. Nowadays, for some people, faith does not give them happiness and they do not find the prospect of eternal life attractive for it is not tangible. What they desire is not eternal life at all, but this present life, for which faith in eternal life seems something of an impediment. To continue living forever and endlessly appears more like a curse than a gift<sup>118</sup>. This rejection of faith by some people is affecting the life and faith of the young generation.

However, the nature of trusting in the Lord makes the diocesan young people sometimes to be available around the church, no matter how many they are, at least some of them are available. They are eager to practice songs. Young people have a strong desire and thirst to be ambassadors of the Word of God and missionaries in their personal lives<sup>119</sup>. They are already active members of the Church and they represent its future. Often youth ministers encounter in them a spontaneous openness to hearing the word of God and a sincere desire to know about Jesus Christ<sup>120</sup>. Because as the study shows that young people, whatever their possible ambiguities, have a profound thirst for genuine values which help them to find their fullness in Christ<sup>121</sup>. When the young people are open to the Spirit of Christ, God initiates them into a way of life that is totally new and they are encouraged to share God's own life. They joined to the Father and to Christ in a vital union that not even death can break (cf. Jn. 14:23)<sup>122</sup>.

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<sup>118</sup> Cf. SS. 10.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. ACS, *Journeying Together in Christ: Acts of the Archeparchial General Assembly*, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum domini* (henceforth: VD.), Rome, 2010, no. 104; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20100930\\_verbum-domini.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html), [accessed: 26.10.2019].

<sup>121</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Vatican, 2001, no. 9; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/2001/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_20010106\\_novo-millennio-ineunte.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte.html), [accessed: 18.03.2019].

<sup>122</sup> Cf. J. Vallabaraj, *Animating the young: An Introduction to a Holistic Paradigm of Youth Ministry*, op. cit., p.30.

However, the young people of the diocese face enormous challenges today: the uncertainty of relationships in a digital era, diminishing opportunities for work, the growth of political violence, discrimination, and degradation of the environment. All of these make it difficult for them to find a road where they can build supportive personal faith and family relations based on solid spiritual foundations<sup>123</sup>. The ecclesial journey is marked by difficulties and the need for spiritual, moral, and pastoral renewal of its programs. And yet the Holy Spirit continues to arouse the thirst for God within people and the Church to awaken a new fervor, and new expressions for the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ<sup>124</sup>.

Hence, as pope Benedict XVI emphasizes, the concern for the young people of the Adigrat Diocese requires courage and clarity in the daily message of the Gospel. The Church needs to support young people to gain confidence and familiarity with sacred Scripture so it can become a compass pointing out the path in their courageous search for Jesus Christ. And it is essential that youth chaplains of the diocese walk with them through life testimonies, assisting in their eagerness and teaching them to love the Gospel in deep knowledge and to share it, especially with their peers, and thus to become authentic and credible messengers<sup>125</sup>. To be the messenger of the Gospel entails encouragement and the young generation is resourceful and has an enormous untapped capability and potential to be the disciple of today, which will be addressed below.

### **3.10. Make disciples to be sent**

Jesus Christ sent his disciples out to “make disciples of all nations” (Mt. 28: 19). Being a disciple means being a student of Christ for the rest of your life. Disciples constantly learn from the teacher, Jesus Christ. Their relationship continues to be maintained with their master for the rest of their lives through an engaged life in an intimate

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<sup>123</sup> Cf. Jesuits, *Journeying with youth*, “Apostolic Preferences”; available at: <https://www.jesuits.global/uap/journeying-with-youth/>, [accessed: 28.11.2021].

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*, Vatican, 2020, no. 38, p. 45.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. VD. 104.

relationship with Jesus Christ, the Redeemer<sup>126</sup>. Learning to be a disciple is deciding to be on a mission in Christ. That mission has its fullest meaning in Christ, and can only be understood through Him. The young people need to see the entirety of their life as a mission by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs that He gives them<sup>127</sup>. The youth need to have a true opportunity to explore what discipleship ultimately involves. This should include offering young people an understanding of vocation that includes Christian marriage, priesthood, religious life, diaconate, and lay ministry. They need to know and be known by the Church's ministers if they are to better understand how God is calling them to live as disciples<sup>128</sup>.

Because it is in following Jesus Christ that young people display all the richness of its potentiality and acquires its full meaning. They can discover the sense of a life lived as a gift of self, and experience the beauty and truth of growing in love. It is in following Jesus Christ that they feel called to communion with Him as living members of a single body, which is the Church, and it will be possible for them to understand the personal call to love: in matrimony, in consecrated life, in ordained ministry, in the mission *ad gentes*<sup>129</sup>.

Nobody is born being a disciple and having the ability to carry out his or her activities. It is only needed to learn, and experience with guidance. It is important to learn and have the interest to be sent<sup>130</sup>. Ministry with the young generation helps them learn what it means to follow Jesus Christ and to live as His disciples today, empowering them to serve others and to work toward a world built on the vision and values of the reign of God<sup>131</sup>. Nowadays the biggest problem is the challenge of being true disciples<sup>132</sup>. The crisis

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<sup>126</sup> Cf. J. Dees, *To Heal, Proclaim, and Teach: The Essential Guide to Ministry in Today's Catholic Church*, Indiana, 2016, p. 215.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. GEE. 19-24.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. USCCB, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Message for the XXXII World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, Vatican, 1994, no. 1; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/vocations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_18101994\\_world-day-for-vocations.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/vocations/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_18101994_world-day-for-vocations.html), [accessed: 03.12.2018].

<sup>130</sup> Cf. C. Dykstra, *Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices*, op. cit., p. 44-46, 158-161.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. USCCB, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. G. Weigel, *The Courage to be Catholic: Crisis, Reform, and the Future of the Church*, New York, 2002, p. 32-34.

of discipleship is rooted in a spiritual crisis, a crisis of fidelity<sup>133</sup>. Its solution is a “deeper fidelity. By everyone”<sup>134</sup>. From the Gospel story, everyone can understand that Jesus, in the years of his youth, was training, and being prepared to carry out the Father’s plan. His adolescence and his youth set him on the path to that sublime mission<sup>135</sup>.

The period of youth and the meaning of life is a time of real and irrefutable questions arising about the direction our lives should take<sup>136</sup>. In other words, it is the stage where the spiritual battle begins<sup>137</sup>. A wise young person is open to the future, yet still capable of learning something from the experience of others<sup>138</sup>, because “disciples learn from disciples”<sup>139</sup>. So, catechesis is an essential component of youth ministry and one that needs renewed emphasis. If the Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese wants to succeed, it must offer young people a spiritually challenging and world-shaping vision that meets their hunger for the chance to participate in a worthy adventure<sup>140</sup>.

Discipleship is more holistic. It concerns every aspect of our lives because, as followers of Jesus Christ, we all want our whole lives to be light. Every Christian wants to be the best Christian, employees, neighbors, spouses, and parents as much possible as can be<sup>141</sup>. However, in the Diocese, very few dream of growing up to become a parish catechetical leader, priest, religious brother, or religious sister. Instead, many young people dream to be medical doctors, and lawyers, taking up a trade, becoming a teacher, working in sales, and so on<sup>142</sup>.

The catechetical system and Bible studies in the diocese are held in preparation for the reception of Sacrament like Confirmation and the first Holy Communion, but not a lifelong process. And the faithful remain without deepening their faith, which is becoming

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<sup>133</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 144-145.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. CV. 28.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. ACS, *Journeying Together in Christ: Acts of the Archeparchial General Assembly*, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. D. Chancey and R. Bruner (eds.), *Owning Faith: Reimagining the Role of Church and Family...*, op. cit., p. 48.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. CV. 16.

<sup>139</sup> D. Chancey and R. Bruner (eds.), *Owning Faith: Reimagining the Role of Church and Family*, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>140</sup> Cf. USCCB, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. J. Paprocki, *Called by Name: Preparing Yourself for the Vocation of Catechetical Leader*, Chicago, 2017, p. 1.

a good opportunity for the protestant sects nowadays and requires a serious deepening of faith<sup>143</sup>. If the Catholic Church of Adigrat wants to be confident that its young people will commit themselves totally to Jesus Christ, is important to prepare and teach them the way they can be supportive and give everything in return. The Church needs to provide concrete ways by which the demands, excitement, and adventure of being a disciple of Jesus Christ can be personally experienced by adolescents, where they tax and test their resources and where they stretch their present capacities and skills to the limits<sup>144</sup>.

A disciple is one who follows Jesus Christ, loves Him, wants to learn from Him, be with Him, and share Him with others<sup>145</sup>. Every Christian who is baptized into Christ has a vocational responsibility to make Christ present in the world. Although that vocational responsibility is lived out in many different ways. Every Christian vocation begins with baptism and with the baptismal responsibility to conform one's life to Christ<sup>146</sup>. Thus, learning to be a disciple is willing to build a personal relationship with God and to make Christ present among people no matter what their religion is. Because God has a way of guiding us down roads we never even knew they existed. Somewhere on everyone's journey of faith, God called everyone to travel down the road that led every person to serve his people, the church, as a disciple<sup>147</sup>.

In the Diocese, most young people have a strong desire for their human, intellectual, and spiritual building. The Church knowing their commitment has a great responsibility to build up and prepare them in their human, spiritual, and intellectual capacity to be the witnesses of Christ in their daily lives<sup>148</sup>. It is easy and suitable in minor seminaries to keep the regular programs like regular devotions, bible studies, and spiritual exercises but in the

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<sup>143</sup> Cf. EA. 76.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. USCCB, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, op. cit., p. 10-11.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. J. Stanz, *Developing Disciples of Christ: Understanding the Critical Relationship between Catechesis and Evangelization*, Chicago, 2017, p. 48.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. G. Weigel, *The Courage to be Catholic: Crisis, Reform, and the Future of the Church*, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. J. Paprocki, *Called by Name: Preparing Yourself for the Vocation of Catechetical Leader*, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. ACS, *Journeying Together in Christ: Acts of the Archeparchial General Assembly*, op. cit., p. 115-116.



parishes is difficult for the people to keep the regularity because of the geographical inconvenience<sup>149</sup>.

Also, modern culture influences young people's lives and downplays God's expectations of them and their future tasks<sup>150</sup>. The young people to be dedicated as disciples of Jesus Christ in their lives, they need to be trained in the biblical discipline. They need to have experienced Christians who can teach them about relationships like those of Moses, Joshua, David, Jonathan, Elijah, and Elisha. It is important to learn about the disciples' relationship with Jesus Christ, their master, and it is essential to know how to imitate this relationship<sup>151</sup>. Disciples were modeled and learned under the guidance of Jesus Christ because he was intimately involved in their personal development and spent three years walking with and training them. Thus, the disciples of Jesus built on the kind of relationships that they had with Him<sup>152</sup>.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, it is important to present God's word with the testimony of life in a way that brings out its implications for each person's vocation and helps young people decide how they will give to their lives, including that of total consecration to God<sup>153</sup>. The Church should not focus solely on intellectual knowledge but on the heart. The Catholic Church Adigrat should form disciples<sup>154</sup>, who carry the Cross of Christ in their hands, the words of Life on their lips, and the saving grace of the Lord in their hearts<sup>155</sup>. However, some obstacles are seen deterring Christian values from young people's lives. Therefore young people need accompaniment from the Church to overcome spiritual desertification, which will be discussed below.

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<sup>149</sup> Cf. K. O'Mahoney, *The Ebullient Phoenix: A History of the Vicariate of Abyssinia* (Revised as one book), Addis Ababa, 2002, p. 140-142.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. D. Chancey and R. Bruner (eds.), *Owning Faith: Reimagining the Role of Church and Family...*, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 45-46.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. VD. 104.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. J. Dees, *To Heal, Proclaim, and Teach: The Essential Guide to Ministry in Today's Catholic Church*, op. cit., p. 215.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Homily of 8<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day: Eucharistic Celebration at the Cherry Creek State Park*, Denver, 15 August 1993, no. 6; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1993/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_hom\\_19930815\\_gmg-denver.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1993/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19930815_gmg-denver.html), [accessed: 06.12.2021].

### 3.11. Spiritual desertification that eliminates Christian roots

The search for irreplaceable messages stems from the context of many young people being taken in by ideologies and being used and exploited as cannon fodder or a strike force to destroy, terrify or ridicule others. Worse yet, many of them end up as individualists, hostile and distrustful of others; in this way, they become an easy targets for the brutal and destructive strategies of political groups or economic powers<sup>156</sup>. The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience<sup>157</sup>.

Nowadays, various kinds of messages are broadcasted and transmitted in different ways. One of these is the world of highly digitalized culture that has profoundly impacted ideas of time and space, our self-understanding, our understanding of others and the world, and our ability to communicate, learn, be informed, and enter into a relationship with others. Because in many countries, the internet and social networks already represent a firmly established forum for reaching and involving young people, not least in pastoral initiatives and activities<sup>158</sup>.

Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, and no place for the poor. God's voice is not heard, the quiet joy of his love is not felt, and the desire to do good fades, which is a real danger for the believers in the Diocese of Adigrat<sup>159</sup>. In some places, spiritual desertification has come about as the result of attempts by some societies to build without God or to eliminate their Christian roots<sup>160</sup>. The desire for the delighting and comforting message of joy, and the

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<sup>156</sup> Cf. CV. 73.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (henceforth EG.), Rome, 2013, no. 2; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html), [accessed: 01.05.2019].

<sup>158</sup> Cf. FD. 21.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. EG. 2.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. EG. 86.

message that gives eternal newness, are deeply rooted in the hearts of human beings<sup>161</sup>. Therefore, amidst the challenging environment that causes the lives of Christians are “loneliness, manipulation, exploitation, and violence, even to the extreme case of the dark web”<sup>162</sup>. But, as Pope Francis said, there is also an essential one that the Church should never be quiet about. It is a message containing great truths that we all constantly need to hear to overcome spiritual desertification. Hence, all Christians, the young people in particular, need to be accompanied by youth ministers by nurturing them with the reality of the Lord<sup>163</sup>. Thus, the young generation needs to be fed an irreplaceable message, which will be addressed below.

### **3.12. An irreplaceable message for youth**

In our daily life, people come and go. Some people are easily replaced, and some are irreplaceable. These can be messages, poems, and quotes. The irreplaceable message in Christian life is God the Father, who is love; God the Son, Jesus Christ, the master teacher; God the Holy Spirit, the comforter, and the counselor. These will be addressed respectively in detail below.

#### **3.12.1. God the Father – Who is love**

John, the evangelist, describes that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (3:16). This shows that the Church, by its very nature, is a gift of the Triune God, is called into being by God the Father. Pope John Paul II, in his Encyclical Letter, *Dives in misericordia*, teaches, “God who is rich in mercy” (Eph. 2:4) revealed Himself in His very Son, Jesus Christ, and made known to us as Father (cf. Jn. 1:8; Heb. 1:1f). So, the more Christian listens the irreplaceable message of the Gospel, the more they are directed in

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<sup>161</sup> Cf. EG. 9-13.

<sup>162</sup> CV. 88.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. CV. 111.

Jesus Christ to the Father<sup>164</sup>. God manifested Himself as the Father because “God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him” (1 Jn. 4:16). Hence, as Pope Benedict noted, in Christian life, God’s love is fundamental because it is the heart of Christian faith: the Christian image of God and the resulting image of mankind and its destiny<sup>165</sup>. Additionally, the first great truth that must be listened to is God’s love for the human person. Our earthly father might be distant or absent or harsh and domineering. But there is certainly security in the embrace of the heavenly Father, of the God who first gave life, and continues to give it at every moment. He is stable in support and, at the same time, fully respects the person’s freedom<sup>166</sup>.

One of the first things that the Bible teaches us is that God is a creator and an artist of human life. The motivation for creation came from the very essence of God, which is goodness and love<sup>167</sup>. God the Father expresses in his words his love, which is significant, honest, trustworthy, and concrete, and invites everyone to a relationship of openness and fruitful dialogue. A human being does not come by chance into this world. He is the work of God’s hand, and important for him to and concerned about the human person. At the same time, he is open for dialogue during the comfort and ready when life faces challenges<sup>168</sup>. However, in the Diocese of Adigrat, in the world in general, some people are separating themselves from the love of God by sin and putting themselves at the service of egotism, self-seeking, self-will, self-advantage, and self-importance<sup>169</sup>. Still, there is love in the word of God; love reveals itself as the meaning of life; the world and man find fulfillment only in worldly love<sup>170</sup>.

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<sup>164</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in misericordia* (henceforth: DM.), Rome, 1980, no. 1; Available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30111980\\_dives-in-misericordia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>165</sup> Cf. DCE. 1-2.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. CV. 112-113.

<sup>167</sup> Cf. J. Stanz, *Developing Disciples of Christ: Understanding the Critical Relationship between Catechesis and Evangelization*, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. CV. 114-117.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. W. Kasper, *Jesu the Christ*, op. cit., p.86.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Ibid.

The heart of God's message and care is and will always be the same. God's immense love continues to be revealed through the Church ministers. God constantly renews his faithful ones. With this newness, He can always restore our lives and communities, and even if the Christian message has known periods of darkness and ecclesial weakness, it will never grow old<sup>171</sup>. Some young people in the Diocese of Adigrat show a desire for God, albeit still vague and far from the deep knowledge of the God of revelation. And many have a genuine desire to develop their talents to offer something to our world<sup>172</sup>. Therefore, the absolute newness is the newness that God himself mysteriously brings about and inspires, provokes, guides, cares for, and accompanies in a thousand ways through pastoral caregivers<sup>173</sup>.

### **3.12.2. God the Son – Jesus Christ, the Master Teacher**

Nowadays, the young people face many religious problems, and at the same time, some parents do not understand what is happening to their youngsters' faith<sup>174</sup>. Some don't even want to hear the word religion mentioned, and others can be seen as confused. Some also ultimately rejected the Catholic faith and joined other sects of Protestantism. They thought that Catholic Church had no love and felt that true brotherly love and charity could be found in a religion where all types of people were welcomed, where all joined hands and sang, clapping, shouting, crying, and spirit possession as one big family, which everybody is not comfortable with<sup>175</sup>.

The people of Ethiopia are seen as incapable of possessing peace, stability, freedom, and life through their unaided resources. Life is constantly threatened, freedom suppressed and sold, and justice trampled upon<sup>176</sup>. Furthermore, the basic things of life are so hard to achieve, for those who live despised and outcast, who live under oppression, who have

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<sup>171</sup> Cf. EG. 11.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. CV. 84.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. EG. 12.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. L. D'Angelo, *Come Home ... The Door is Open: An Invitation to Reconciliation*, Meriden, 1982, p.23-28 and p. 149-154.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. L. D'Angelo, *Come Home ... The Door is Open: An Invitation to Reconciliation*, op. cit., p.149-154.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. W. Kasper, *Jesu the Christ*, op. cit., p. 73.

nothing to look forward to, who feel cut off from God, which is referred to them by Jesus Christ as “the poor in spirit” (Mt. 5:3)<sup>177</sup>.

Human beings have always been oppressed in history and Jesus Christ came to show us how to overcome the suffering history of humankind<sup>178</sup>. Because Jesus Christ, who has a unique title “Teacher” (cf. Mt. 8:19; Mk. 4:38; 9:38; 10:35; 13:1; Jn.11:28) and who is “the way and the truth and the life” (Jn. 14:6) is the Master Teacher who came to lead and teach the love of the Father in Spirit through revealing God to human beings and opening human beings to himself making us participants in the life of the Holy Trinity<sup>179</sup>.

Jesus Christ came to proclaim the Kingdom of God to liberate the oppressed, give hope to the future, announce salvation for all, and then offer God’s love for all<sup>180</sup>. The Kingdom of God is the final reality of Jesus Christ<sup>181</sup>. However, even though Jesus often speaks of the Kingdom of God, he never expresses what this Kingdom of God actually is. All he says is that it is at hand (cf. Mk. 1:15)<sup>182</sup>.

The Kingdom of God has its own character. Firstly, it has an eschatological character that shows eschatological hope. Importantly, the people of the Adigrat Diocese must understand that the Kingdom of God is the word of comfort and hope in a situation of distress. It is the word given to help us live the present life with respect and love for each other to inherit the Kingdom of God. Jesus’ message about the approaching Kingdom of God is God’s firm and final offer<sup>183</sup>. Secondly, the theological character of the Kingdom of God is the coming of God and the coming of the Kingdom of his love, because Jesus’ God is the God who is near, unique, caring (cf. Mt. 6:30), who feeds (cf. Mt. 10:31) and

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<sup>177</sup> Cf. J. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, New York, 1994, p. 82.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (henceforth: CT.), Rome, 1979, no. 5-9; Available: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_16101979\\_catechesi-tradendae.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_16101979_catechesi-tradendae.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>180</sup> Cf. J. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 67-70.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69, 75-76.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. W. Kasper, *Jesu the Christ*, op. cit., p. 74-78; also cf. J. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, op. cit., p. 74.

who is close to his own in love<sup>184</sup>. The Kingdom of God is purely God's initiative, gift, and grace<sup>185</sup>; it is universal, and open to all, though not to all in the same way<sup>186</sup>. Another thing is that the coming of the Kingdom of God is totally God's work. Because it is only given (cf. Mt. 21:43; Lk. 12:32) and appointed (cf. Lk. 22:29) at God's timing and will. So that the only option is to inherit it (cf. Mt. 25:34)<sup>187</sup>.

Thirdly, the Kingdom of God has a soteriological character. For Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God is the offer of salvation. Jesus' preaching is not a message of fear, rather it is a message of joy. It is the central element in the concept of salvation, and for this reason, the synoptic Gospels often use the term good news (cf. Mk. 1:14, 14:9; Mt. 4:23, 9:35, 24:14; cf. Lk. 16:16)<sup>188</sup>. Pope Francis said: "those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew"<sup>189</sup>.

The Kingdom of God corresponds to hope in history<sup>190</sup>. And its joy is the joy of the Gospel that fills the hearts and lives in all who encounter Jesus<sup>191</sup>. In essence, it has to be proclaimed with joy and must produce joy<sup>192</sup>. Jesus commands his disciples saying "love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (Jn. 13:34). Jesus gave this commandment during the last supper and manifested fully the total and perfect love in the cross. It is important to trust in a love that is true, faithful and strong; a love that generates peace and joy; a love that binds people together and allows them to feel free in respect for one another<sup>193</sup>. However, most Christians of the diocese, especially young

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<sup>184</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 78-80; also cf. J. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, op. cit., p. 77-78.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. J. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, op. cit., p. 76-77.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 82; also cf. W. Kasper, *Jesu the Christ*, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. W. Kasper, *Jesu the Christ*, op. cit., p. 81.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 83-87; and J. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, op. cit., p. 102.

<sup>189</sup> EG. 1.

<sup>190</sup> Cf. J. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, op. cit., p. 70-71.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. EG. 1.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. J. Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, op. cit., p.78.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Message to the Youth of the World on the occasion of the 22nd World Youth Day*, 2007; available: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20070127\\_youth.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20070127_youth.html), [accessed: 26.10.2019].

people, are becoming weak in spreading love, and respect for one another, living in peace, and joyfully abiding with one another. Rather people have become a threat to one another individually or in a group, which is the result of political division and this affects the young people's lives and faith. Religious leaders need to spread mutual respect and love without giving space to political issues.

Therefore, the Kingdom of God, *Eu-aggelion* the good news, is at hand through respect and love for each other. Thus, conversion, *metanoia*, the radical behavioral change is required from the people. It is essential for all to live a life worthy of the Kingdom. Hence, Christ the Master Teacher, invites young generation to be formed as disciples; welcomes them, particularly the lost; to teach them about the Kingdom of God as the fullness of the truth and compassionate love of his Father through the Church ministers<sup>194</sup>. Furthermore, it is essential to accompany people on their journeys of faith (cf. Jn. 13)<sup>195</sup>.

### **3.12.3. God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and Counsellor**

Wherever God the Father and God the Son are, there too is God the Holy Spirit “to indwell our heart and empower us for good and holy living”<sup>196</sup>. “The grace of the Holy Spirit flowing from the Savior’s wounded heart renders us capable of that loving gift of self in which alone our freedom becomes free”<sup>197</sup>. He is the one who quietly opens hearts to receive God’s message. The Holy Spirit keeps alive our hope of salvation and helps to grow in joy the one who is open to his work<sup>198</sup>. The “mission of the Spirit is that of transforming the disciples into witnesses of Christ”<sup>199</sup>. The Holy Spirit is always at work and has a message to young people to transform them to be witnesses of Christ in their lives. Jesus Christ taught about the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn. 16:13) and promised that He will be

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<sup>194</sup> Cf. J. Stanz, *Developing Disciples of Christ: Understanding the Critical Relationship between Catechesis and Evangelization*, op. cit., p. 79-80.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. B. Huebsch, *Jesus the Master Catechist: Twelve Lessons from Jesus on Being a Catechist*, New London, 2015, p.33-38, 45-47.

<sup>196</sup> J. Seward, *Christ is the Answer: The Christ-Centered Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, op. cit., p.95.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. CV. 130.

<sup>199</sup> CT. 72



both gift and giver of all gifts. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were able to know the truth and bore witness “to the end of the earth” (Act. 1:8) of what they had heard, seen, contemplated, and touched of the Word of life (cf. 1 Jn. 1:1). The action of the Holy Spirit in human beings drives them to cling to the true good, to the communion of the Father and of the Son in their faith<sup>200</sup>.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, some youngsters denounce the Catholic faith during the transition from infancy to adulthood and join the protestant Churches. Even some of them were altar boys and were joyful. However, this childlike faith is not built on a personal commitment. It is rooted in the grace they received through baptism, which is the gift and virtue of faith and is usually built upon their parents’ commitment to faith in Christ<sup>201</sup>.

It is natural when a child reaches the age of an adult to ask adult questions and as a consequence to make personal decisions and commitments. Mostly at this age young people face several temptations and questions to give up the Catholic faith. The person then is tempted by a spiritual challenge and his free will is engaged in a kind of spiritual battle. Because by the time a person is called upon to make his or her personal commitment to Christ, life becomes filled with distractions, changes, temptations, and crosses<sup>202</sup>. When the whole person is oriented toward God, it is because of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, giving life to our mortal bodies (cf. Rom. 8:11)<sup>203</sup>.

The question is: what can be done to help such persons walk in the right direction? At times, people in Tigray are challenged to mix superstition with faith. For example, when people have been sick for a long time and have not had any solutions from medical doctors are often confused. They try to look for traditional solutions such as approaching Orthodox “Debteras”<sup>204</sup>. Others approach protestant pastors for the same issue. Due to these things,

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<sup>200</sup> Cf. DfC. 162, p. 111.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. L. D’Angelo, *Come Home ... The Door is Open: An Invitation to Reconciliation*, op. cit., p. 23-25.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 24-25.

<sup>203</sup> R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism: Completely Revised and Updated (New Ed.)*, op. cit., p. 162.

<sup>204</sup> Deftera is a cleric and/or a lay doctor in the EOTC, who highly respected for his knowledge of books. Traditionally also taken as someone who has a special knowledge as healer and mostly who sings hymns and dances for churchgoers, and who performs exorcisms and white magic to aid the congregation.

a lot of people are misguided concerning faith and are inclined to miss their direction. The Defteras and pastors have their way of expressing themselves as if they are working and speaking in tongues to heal the people or at times they feel as if they are miracle workers. There are chronic diseases that cannot be cured by the prayer of the pastor, by the water blessed by Deftera, or by other means that can be given by Deftera. But the Defteras or pastors tell the people to stop the medicine prescribed by their doctors and this adversely affects their lives financially as well as their faith. It is natural that someone who is suffering from various diseases to wish to get better and to look for any possible healing process. Those people often fail to stand strong in their faith and ask the Holy Spirit to comfort them<sup>205</sup>.

Pope Francis said the important thing that can be done is to ask the Holy Spirit each day to help us experience anew the great message that fills our life with light and leads it along a better path, helping us to find the right spiritual direction we need, and in the best possible way<sup>206</sup>. By nature, human beings are spiritual beings because of the Spirit of God, who is, in a sense, the vital and original principle in humans. Life in the Spirit is a gift and a grace bestowed on human beings and constitutes a way in which they participate in the nature of God through the creation and by means of the re-creation which has taken place in Christ<sup>207</sup>.

The people of God, the Church, are called to be the image of the Trinity and called to holiness through the responsible nurturing of the gift and grace of the Spirit that everyone has received<sup>208</sup>. To appreciate the Holy Spirit in individual life and to participate in the communion of the Church, since the unity of the Trinitarian communion constitutes the sanctity of the people of God, requires continuous discernment and practices<sup>209</sup>. Always at the root of spiritual practices, there is the action and work of the Holy Spirit to lead and counsel in times of crisis in one's life and to comfort in times of sorrow. Because the Holy

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<sup>205</sup> Cf. CV. 130-133.

<sup>206</sup> CV. 131.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. J. Vallabaraj, *Animating the young: An Introduction to a Holistic Paradigm of Youth Ministry*, op. cit., p.22.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Ibid., 23; also: cf. LG. chapter 5.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Ibid., 24.

Spirit exists to console, comfort and lead. There is no spiritual exercise without His action. If the Holy Spirit has a pre-eminent place in the whole life of Christians, it enables us to be active in our daily mission. “The People of God acknowledge that it is the Spirit who builds the Reign of God with the course of history and prepares its full manifestation in Jesus Christ. It is the Spirit who stirs people’s hearts and quickens in the world the seeds of the full salvation which will come at the end of time”<sup>210</sup>.

Whenever difficult things come, it is important to remain calm and listen to the Holy Spirit but people in the diocese fail to listen to the Holy Spirit and, as a result, despair. Thus, they need guidance from their pastoral ministers. As the Church teaches its faithful, St. Joseph is our great example to examine and understand the situation of difficulties and how the Holy Spirit guides and gives direction on what to do and how to do it. When Joseph recognized that Mary was pregnant, albeit he wanted to leave her secretly for he was righteous (cf. Mt. 1:19) but he did not do that; because he took time and listened to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Thus, says St. Paul: “If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25), and seek spiritual help (Jas. 5: 13-16). Because the Indwelling Spirit offers the young people, in fact, all believers, hope and courage, heals their weaknesses and enables them to overcome passion and selfishness<sup>211</sup>. When young people are nurtured through an irreplaceable message of God, they can find the answer to problems and the questions that arise in their lives, and below we will discuss such a process.

### **3.13. Jesus Christ as the answer to the questions young people ask today**

Like in any place, the young people in the Diocese of Adigrat ask many questions relating to their faith. For instance, about the meaning of life, the existence of God, healing, happiness, peace, and so on. They ask questions when they feel depressed, when they feel that God is late to answer their prayer and so on. To answer these and similar issues, it is important to articulate the central role of Christ. According to the Fathers of the Second

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. Ibid., 30.

Vatican Council, in their Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et Spes*, our Lord Jesus Christ, true God made true man, reveals God and man. Jesus Christ, who is God and one person of the Trinity, reveals God to all of us, and at the same time, also reveals that human beings are persons made in the image of an invisible God<sup>212</sup>. In Jesus Christ, God was made man; people discovered the meaning of life, the invisible God became visible; he became the happiness for which everyone long, the peace that everyone needs, and their way to freedom and justice. As Pope John Paul II emphasized, the person who wishes to understand himself thoroughly must draw near to Christ with their absolute being. He must, so to speak, enter into him with all his own self; he must appropriate and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption to find himself. If this profound process takes place within him, he then bears fruit not only of adoration of God but also of deep wonder at himself<sup>213</sup>.

If the young people of the Adigrat Diocese want to know the dignity, greatness, value, freedom, and meaning of life that belong to humanity, it is not possible without the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Because Christ's revealing of man is not a theory or an ideology but a fact, the fact that by his incarnation, the Son of God united himself with every man, became man himself, one of us: like us in all things except sin (cf. Heb. 4,15)<sup>214</sup>. God the Son became man to end the sinful fragmentation of our race. He is sent by the Father to recapitulate humanity, to draw every human into unity with Himself and so with His Father and with one another<sup>215</sup>. Thus, without accepting and believing the teaching of the Church, nobody can understand Christ; nobody can meet Christ; nobody can get a satisfactory answer to any question posed by the human heart. In his Encyclical Letter

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<sup>212</sup> Cf. GS. 22; see also: CCC. 359.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (henceforth: RH.), Rome, 1979, no. 10. Available: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_04031979\\_redemptor-hominis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>214</sup> Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Sign of Contradiction*, New York, 1979, p. 102.

<sup>215</sup> Cf. J. Seward, *Christ is the Answer: The Christ-Centered Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, op. cit., p. 80.

*Redemptor hominis*, Pope John Paul II invited everyone to find themselves in Christ because Jesus Christ, the redeemer, is the center of the universe and history<sup>216</sup>.

During any suffering, crisis, disaster, illness, and so on, people ask questions like ‘where is God?’, ‘does He really exist?’, and ‘why is He remains quiet when all these things are happening?’. The same questions are still asked the Christians in the diocese. However, Christ answers the question about suffering and the meaning of suffering not only by his teaching, the Good News, but most of all by his own suffering, which is integrated with His teaching of the Good News in an organic and indissoluble way<sup>217</sup>. Christ is the answer and He gives meaning to whatever deprived of Him is ridiculous an intractable enigma<sup>218</sup>. Believers are called Christian by believing and following the redeemer Christ and “fellowship in Christ’s afflictions is the only way to hear His answer to the question of suffering”<sup>219</sup>.

Furthermore, the hearts of young people in the Diocese of Adigrat have hunger and thirst to satisfy their spiritual life. Likewise, they search answers to many questions about justice, the meaning of life, equality, and how to live everyday life. Christ, the incarnate Word of God, is “heavenly bread, living water, and the divinely provided answer”<sup>220</sup>. He is the only answer to all kinds of questions that come into the hearts of human beings and the “only response fully capable of satisfying the desire of the human heart”<sup>221</sup>. The human capacity to know the truth and will freely has been weakened and wounded by the Original sin, and human beings entered into the darkness that needs to be scattered, into an unruliness that cries for order. Therefore, it is the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, who is the only liberator from any oppression and answers any need, and it is from the Church of

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<sup>216</sup> Cf. RH. 1.

<sup>217</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Salvifici doloris* (henceforth: SD.), Rome, 1984, no. 18; Available at [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1984/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_11021984\\_salvifici-doloris.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1984/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_salvifici-doloris.html), [accessed: 18.03.2019].

<sup>218</sup> J. Seward, *Christ is the Answer: The Christ-Centered Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>221</sup> John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor* (henceforth: VS.), Rome, 1993, no. 7; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_06081993\\_veritatis-splendor.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

Christ that a human person receives that answer<sup>222</sup>. Because it is from the Church that we learn of the full splendor of Christ's moral truth that shines upon the world<sup>223</sup>. What is important for the young people of the diocese is to listen and learn the teaching of the Church about moral truth that shines in the Church to get the answer concerning their moral questions and inherit eternal life, the topic that will be addressed below.

### **3.14. The current moral questions of youth and its relevance to eternal life**

Currently, the world poses various questions, and there are many discussions and arguments happening, whether religious, political or business. There are questions about happiness, freedom, rights, self-determination, democracy, peace, etc. However, nowadays, some of the young people in the Diocese of Adigrat ask questions regarding the teaching of the Church, particularly about morality and commandments. For instance, abortion, having sexual relations before marriage, confession, living together without matrimony, and so on. All these are indications of “empty love for God”<sup>224</sup>. Anyone, who honestly and sincerely loves God, loves the Church, accepts her teaching faithfully, and loves the Mass and the Sacraments. Because love is like that, and it wants to do things in order to show the beloved that the love is sincere<sup>225</sup>.

The situation of abortion, having sexual relations/intercourse before marriage, and ignorance of confession are becoming daily practices, which is contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church. Abortion is a highly ‘silent pandemic’ in Ethiopia because moral and religious contestations hinder political commitment and legal reforms<sup>226</sup>. For many Christians, the issue of abortion is highly personal and private. Discussions about this topic with many people can become inconvenient and frustrating. Yet the fact is that it is crucial

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<sup>222</sup> Cf. J. Saward, *Christ is the Answer: The Christ-Centered Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, op. cit., p. 93-96.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. VS. 2,28 and 95.

<sup>224</sup> L. D'Angelo, *Come Home...The Door is open: an invitation to reconciliation*, op. cit., p. 127-130

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. A. Blystad (et. al), *The access paradox: abortion law, policy and practice in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia*, “International Journal for Equity in Health”, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2019 , p. 2; available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336102869\\_The\\_access\\_paradox\\_Abortion\\_law\\_policy\\_and\\_practice\\_in\\_Ethiopia\\_Tanzania\\_and\\_Zambia](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/336102869_The_access_paradox_Abortion_law_policy_and_practice_in_Ethiopia_Tanzania_and_Zambia), [accessed: 13.01.2022].

to know the evil of abortion is greater<sup>227</sup>. According to the Ethiopian Code, the revised abortion law of 2005 allows women to terminate pregnancies that result from rape or incest. Similarly, the law allows abortion if the fetus has a severe defect, if the continuance of the pregnancy endangers the life or health of the mother, or the child, where the birth of the child is a risk to the life or health of the mother, or if a girl is under the age of 18<sup>228</sup>.

While both Christianity and Islam consider induced abortion to be an act against the will of God, a broader global anti-abortion movement also condemns abortion on more general moral and philosophical grounds, arguing for the right to life of the unborn child. Young women in low-income countries, and particularly adolescents living in rural areas, are disproportionately represented in the statistics making unsafe abortion a massive inequity problem<sup>229</sup>. Accordingly, the country's Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) increased from 8% in 2000 to 41.4% in 2019<sup>230</sup>.

The young people of the diocese need to understand that the question of eternal life has a fundamental link with morality. It is about the whole meaning of life; interior life and the echo of a call from God are the origin and goal of human life<sup>231</sup>. Alfred McBride and O. Praem recommend that anyone who still does not believe in sin, immorality, and evil go to Auschwitz and see firsthand. For them, nowhere else exhibits a greater experience of the tangibility of evil than at Auschwitz, and they said it would be a mistake to say that lunatics caused it. It is better to state that it was caused by sin<sup>232</sup>.

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<sup>227</sup> Cf. M. J. Zia, *The Enduring Faith and Timeless Truths of Fulton Sheen*, Cincinnati, 2015, p. 94, 103-104.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. FDRE, *The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: Proclamation No. 414/2004*, Addis Ababa, 2005, art. 551.

<sup>229</sup> Cf. A. Blystad (et. al), *The access paradox: abortion law, policy and practice in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia*, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>230</sup> Cf. D. Bekele (et al.), *Contraceptive prevalence rate and associated factors among reproductive age women in four emerging regions of Ethiopia: a mixed method study*, "Contraception and Reproductive Medicine", [Vol. 6, No. 18, 2021, pp. 1-13], p. 2; also see: Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) [Ethiopia] and ICF, *Ethiopia Mini Demographic and Health Survey 2019: Final Report*, Rockville, 2021, p. 38; available at: <https://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-FR363-DHS-Final-Reports.cfm>, [accessed: 14.01.2022].

<sup>231</sup> Cf. VS. 7.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. A. McBride, *Images of Jesus: Ten Invitations to Intimacy*, Cincinnati, 1993, p. 146.

Fr. Weldegebriel Abraha\* says that sin means living without life because it does not have its own life<sup>233</sup>. Additionally, Alfred McBride and O. Praem said, “sin kills the unborn and moves some today to call for the killing of the elderly. When we are open to killing humans in the first six months of their existence (abortion) and the last six months of life (euthanasia), we will soon be willing to kill them anytime. Sin causes death: For the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23a)”<sup>234</sup>. This shows that sin affects the conscience of human beings, leads to cruelty, and destroys the moral future of human being.

The Incarnate, Son of God, is at the same time the teacher of morality and the source of life that every one of us is called to live. Hence, the moral life is nothing other than to follow Jesus Christ. He is the only path to reach our final goal<sup>235</sup>. Today, every person needs to see himself or herself in the young man who asked Jesus Christ: “Master, what good work must I do to receive eternal life?” (Mt. 19:16).

The young man’s question derives from the spiritual and moral aspect of what good work must be done about eternal life. Good work leads him to eternal life, which is his destiny. What to get? He already answered that it is to inherit eternal life<sup>236</sup>. Jesus responded to the young man, “If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Mt 19:17). Through his answer, Jesus made a profound connection between eternal life and obedience to God’s commandments. God’s commandments show a person the path of life and lead him or her towards it. Jesus, the new Moses, gave the commandments of the Decalogue (cf. Mt. 19:18-19; Rom 13: 8-10); He confirms them and proposes them to us as the path and condition of salvation<sup>237</sup>.

As Pope John Paul II said, Jesus shows that the young man’s question is a religious question. The goodness that attracts and at the same time obliges man to do good has its

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<sup>233</sup> Cf. ወልደገብርኤል አብራሃ, ርቅዕ ምስሊ ኢየሱስ, (Tran: Abraha Weldegebriel, *Righteous image of Jesus*) Desta Printing Press, p. 132-134.

<sup>234</sup> A. McBride, *Images of Jesus: Ten Invitations to Intimacy*, op. cit., p. 147.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. J. Saward, *Christ is the Answer: The Christ-Centered Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, op. cit., p. 93-94.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. VS. 6-27.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. VS. 12-13.



source in God. Only God himself is the source of goodness. He is the source of human's happiness. Jesus brought the question about morally good action back to its religious foundations, to the acknowledgment of God, who alone is goodness, the fullness of life, the final end of human activity, and perfect happiness<sup>238</sup>.

At the present time, the people of the diocese, like all Christians of the world, are exposed to the temptation to refuse God in the name of their own humanity. But Christians should be aware of being children of God, sharing in the divine nature, being enclosed in the fullness of God in Christ. The future of humanity has been entrusted, in a particular way, to the essential moral choices that new generations are being called upon to make. The Christians of the diocese today must hold responsibility for family life, for the young people in particular, and for the life of nations<sup>239</sup>. Christ is the Teacher, the Risen One who has life in himself and is always present in his Church and the world. The Church, the bride of Christ, is teaching the truth about moral action<sup>240</sup>. Therefore, it is important today for the Christians of the diocese to turn to Christ once again to receive from Him the answer to their questions about what is good and evil; to encounter Him, and to grow in faith, knowledge, and practice in their daily life.

### **3.15. Encountering Jesus Christ leads to the transformation of heart, mind, and hands**

Jesus Christ is the center of the Christian life and the whole universe. He taught his disciples to abide in Him (cf. Jn. 15: 1-17) because He came to save us and is the only redeemer of human beings. So, to encounter Jesus Christ is important to confront sin, men's actual sins here and now, but also the beginning of the history of human sinfulness: the sin of Adam. Thus, the gate of heaven opened through the death and resurrection of Jesus

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<sup>238</sup> Cf. VS. 9.

<sup>239</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace*, 1 Jan. 1985, no. 2, 5 & 11; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_19841208\\_xviii-world-day-for-peace.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19841208_xviii-world-day-for-peace.html), [accessed: 03.12.2018]

<sup>240</sup> VS. 8.

Christ and redeemed us for divinization, that is to say, for a share in grace and glory, in the life of the Blessed Trinity<sup>241</sup>.

Pope John Paul II emphasizes, encountering and uniting with Jesus enables us to breathe a new atmosphere; form new goals and new ideas; to understand ourselves more fully because in Christ, Christians grasp the secret of humanity<sup>242</sup>. “Christianity is Christ! It is a Person, a Living Person! To meet Jesus, to love him and make him loved: this is the Christian vocation”<sup>243</sup>. The human heart longs to be one with its Creator and it must keep God’s commandments as transmitted faithfully by the Church (cf. Jn. 14:23f) and Jesus must be the central point of Christin’s daily life. Because of this ‘encounter’, God made it possible through his Church<sup>244</sup>. The Church wishes to serve this single end: that each person may be able to find Christ, in order that Christ may walk with each person the path of life<sup>245</sup>.

Nowadays, living as a Christian is becoming controversial, affecting young people’s spiritual lives and becoming the challenge of youth pastoral ministries. Some young people say, ‘I have Christ in my heart,’ ‘no need to go anywhere because I can have direct contact with Jesus Christ’. For these and other reasons, some youngsters do not go to Church; they do not receive the sacraments, and they do not follow and keep the teaching of the Church. This kind of practice is developing slowly. By contrast, some young people have a zeal for their faith.

Transforming in faith to encounter Jesus Christ involves three interrelated aspects: it is an affair of the passionate heart, a thoughtful mind, and it results in good actions

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<sup>241</sup> Cf., J. Seward, *Christ is the Answer: The Christ-Centered Teaching of Pope John Paul II*, op. cit., p. 45-47, 55-62.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Youth of England and Wales*, 2 June 1982, no. 4; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1982/june/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19820602\\_giovani-ninian-park.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1982/june/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19820602_giovani-ninian-park.html), [accessed: 11.01.2022].

<sup>243</sup> John Paul II, *Message for the 18th World Youth Day*, 13 April 2003, no. 4; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/youth/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_20030311\\_xviii-world-youth-day.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/youth/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20030311_xviii-world-youth-day.html), [03.12.2018].

<sup>244</sup> Cf. VS. 7.

<sup>245</sup> Cf. RH. 13.

through hands<sup>246</sup>. Therefore, the young people have to discover who they are and develop their own way to transform in hearts, minds, and hands to encounter Jesus Christ.

### **3.15.1. The role of the heart**

The heart is the center of a person and plays a great role in transforming faith, growing in maturity, and having valuable Christian character. Faith is understood as an inward, mystical, or emotional encounter with the living God. As Dennis P. Hollinger writes “The believers encounter God in a deeply personal, living, dynamic fashion so that feelings and inclinations of the heart are forever changed. Christian growth is perceived as an increasing awareness of the presence of God and an unleashing of divine power within. In this manner, one’s will is refashioned and one’s thinking and actions are brought into line with God’s will”<sup>247</sup>. Hence, the heart is the center for human emotions, feelings, affections, spiritual experiences, soul, spirit, imagination, passion, the Spirit, piety, personal holiness, mysticism, and the inner self to encounter Jesus Christ<sup>248</sup>.

“The glory of youth is in the heart, more than in physical strength or the impression given to others”<sup>249</sup>. Faith is an affair that both captures our hearts and requires us to give our hearts. It is a relationship in which love and trust are both received and given. Faith is an affair with both a human side and a divine side. Concerning the human side, the heart develops by sensing others’ love, feeling secure, trusting people, and loving people. Concerning the Divine side, it develops by realizing God’s love, sensing God’s care, trusting God’s promise, and loving God<sup>250</sup>.

Therefore, the youth chaplains of the Adigrat Diocese must teach their young generation that Jesus Christ, who is eternally young, wants and is ever ready to give us

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<sup>246</sup> Cf. M. P. Strommen and R. A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 75-80.

<sup>247</sup> D. P. Hollinger, Hollinger, *Head, heart & hands: Bringing together Christian thought, passion and action*, Downers Grove, 2009, p. 21.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 21-26.

<sup>249</sup> CV. 9.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. M. P. Strommen and R. A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 75-76.

hearts that are ever young. True youth means having a heart capable of loving, inspired by God's love, and trusting in God's care and promise whereas everything that separates us from others makes the soul grow old. As Christians, we should open our hearts to the Lord, and live good Christian lives. The youngsters of the diocese need to know this well. Thus, every young person who feels called to a mission in this world is invited to hear the Father speaking those same words within his or her heart: "You are my beloved child" (Lk. 3:22)<sup>251</sup>. Blessed Virgin Mary is the example and supreme model for all Christians, particularly for young people for she was a young woman whose heart overflowed with joy (cf. Lk 1:47), that sought to follow Christ with enthusiasm and docility. Young people must therefore follow in the footsteps of our Mother, Blessed Virgin Mary with an open heart to believe only in one God. They need to walk reflecting the light of the Holy Spirit, looking at life with faith, and treasuring all things in her youthful heart (cf. Lk 2:19.51). However, for young people of the Adigrat Diocese the Church need to find ways of keeping close to the voices and concerns of young generation; it needs to make more room for the voices of youngsters to be heard, and at the same time, it must set the conditions for the preaching of the Gospel that can touch the heart truly, decisively, and fruitfully<sup>252</sup>.

### **3.15.2. The role of the mind**

The Catholic Church of Adigrat wants its young people to grow in knowledge since the Church is convinced that the more, they know God, the more they will love God. Faith is more than an affair of the heart. It is also a commitment of the mind: the thinking, willing, and judging aspects of our lives. As a commitment of the mind, faith seeks to know and understand God, who is love. It involves knowing biblical beliefs and traditional Christian truths that the Church holds and teaches about God. Faith, as a commitment of the mind to transform, is nurtured by what the Church teaches, namely, that God exists, that Christ died for us, and that Christ arose and lives with us today. Further, the commitment of the mind enables one to say: Christ is my savior; it enables one to claim his promise of salvation,

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<sup>251</sup> Cf. CV. 9, 13, 17 & 25.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. CV. 38, 43 & 46.

presence, and power<sup>253</sup>. It is said that “The Christian life is a growth in knowledge, mediated through the Word of God. The primary goal of life is to cognitively know and defend the Christian understanding of reality. Mystery of the Bible and theology are the most important elements in spiritual development”<sup>254</sup>. Thus, the human mind is the key to transforming the inner self, and motivating human action to encounter Jesus Christ. So, the mind is the center for the intellect, thoughts, knowledge, theology, wisdom, truth, the Word, faith, rationality, cognitive approach, orthodoxy, and doctrines towards encountering Jesus Christ<sup>255</sup>

In the Diocese of Adigrat, the youth should know that their life is a state of mind, and it is enough to have an open mind towards all those who have the desire and willingness to be encountered by God’s revealed truth<sup>256</sup>. Because transformation in faith involves the whole being through the mind to know God, encountering Jesus Christ is knowing him better and improving daily life in him<sup>257</sup>. In his Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium – Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis invited all Christians, “everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them”<sup>258</sup>. So, encountering Jesus Christ through accepting the teaching of the Church in faith enables us to participate in the communion of the Father and the Son, which helps us to begin truly to live to the full (cf. Jn. 10:10), because the very power of the Risen Lord is experienced in our lives (cf. Jn. 14:12).

### **3.15.3. The role of the hands**

In contrast to emphasizing the mind or heart, the role of the hands in faith to encounter Jesus Christ, stresses the “pivotal element in Christian experience is action: it is

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<sup>253</sup> Cf. M. P. Strommen and R. A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 77-79.

<sup>254</sup> D. P. Hollinger, Hollinger, *Head, heart & hands: Bringing together Christian thought, passion and action*, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>255</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 17-21.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. CV. 34 & 234.

<sup>257</sup> Cf. VS. 3; also: Cf. B. Huebsch, *Jesus the Master Catechist: Twelve Lessons from Jesus on Being a Catechist*, op. cit., p.19-20.

<sup>258</sup> EG. 3.

a faith of doing. Christianity at its core is not about beliefs, doctrine, mystical experiences or inward feelings, though these all may have their place. Rather, the essence of true faith of hands to encounter Jesus Christ is an outward expression of divine realities, particularly in witness, service, justice and act of mercy”<sup>259</sup>. Therefore, hands are the outward manifestation of works, social action, Christian action, ministry, outward expression of faith, service, justice, acts of mercy (cf. James. 2: 14-26)<sup>260</sup>,

In the Diocese of Adigrat, the young people should equip their hands and make every effort to be more effective and productive in their faith and ministry. Filled with the love of Christ, youngsters are called to be witnesses of the Gospel wherever they find themselves and wherever they live. Being an apostle does not mean carrying a torch in the hand, possessing the light, but being that light that becomes a life fully lived in good and loving action<sup>261</sup>. For faith to be complete, it must be seen in action and lived in daily life. Faith without love and action has no meaning. It manifests itself in action, in the service of God and others. In other words: faith is obedient to God’s Laws in seeking to observe the Ten Commandments, and making moral decisions. And faith is also obedient to God’s mission in reaching out to those treated unjustly, suffering hardships, and sharing the Gospel. So, the young generation of the diocese must know that faith is an affair of the heart and a commitment of the mind that results in a flow of good action<sup>262</sup>.

Because faith creates a dynamic interaction between the heart, mind, and action; in turn, this dynamic interaction promotes greater faith and is seen in the way an effective relationship with God increases people’s interest in learning more about God they have come to love and trust<sup>263</sup>. Therefore, the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Adigrat should address faith as an affectionate bond of the heart with God, a commitment of the mind to

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<sup>259</sup> D. P. Hollinger, Hollinger, *Head, heart & hands: Bringing together Christian thought, passion and action*, op. cit., p. 26-27.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. Ibid., 26-32.

<sup>261</sup> Cf. CV. 175.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. M. P. Strommen and R. A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry*, op. cit., p. 79-80.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 80.

know more, and service of hand to enhance the faith begun as an affair of the heart. These are the ways to convert hearts to a vibrant faith that helps young people to encounter the living Christ in their lives.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explained the themes of growing in faith in the light of Scripture and the Tradition of Christianity. Though the chapter had a global perspective, particular attention was given to the Diocese of Adigrat. A specific emphasis was given to the biblical and theological understanding of faith and its meaning. Christianity was introduced through the Axumite Kingdom, in the Tigray region where the Adigrat Diocese is found and spread throughout Ethiopia. The Christianity that was established in the fourth century is known as the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) today, which follows the Geez Rite. As young people grow physically, it is also important that they advance spiritually and intellectually in their faith. In this regard, it is explained that young people should courageously seek Jesus Christ, follow Him, trust Him, and live by Him.

The chapter discussed the current situation of faith in the Diocese of Adigrat, its challenges, its efforts to grow, its understanding of work, and its connections with the feasts. Furthermore, the emphasis was placed on the Church focusing on forming servants and making disciples because these future servants and disciples are the hope of the Church and the state. Therefore, the study underlines the importance of further instructions needed through pastoral ministries. It also emphasizes the necessity of giving directions for teaching about equality, dignity, freedom, and the Christian identity. In accomplishing these, it is essential to study the present situation of young people and their life of faith. This should incorporate the current challenges of young people a theme that will be discussed in Chapter four.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses and tries to answer the question: what are the challenges in youth pastoral ministries in the Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese? This question helps to discover the nature of the situation and its reality on the ground. Nowadays, young people are living in a world obsessed with different kinds of challenges, crisis, and economic insecurity and instability. Globalization plays a great role in cultural change. It also has a great impact on African cultures: it touches the core of African culture that a community based on blood and territory, which is among the main factors of cultural change in Africa one can distinguish. Historical and traditional administrative systems are among others, which are in a big challenge today.

The Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia (ACBE) writes, “A young population is a richness for any country but what constitutes a challenge is their current situation”<sup>1</sup>. This shows that young people are a good opportunities for the development of the country and the Church as well as they are the strength of the future society and they need to have hope to prepare well and be the hope of the future.

However, the world is full of divisions and brings many global challenges. Some of the challenges are already there, and some are new. These challenges are affecting the journey of every Christian life and faith. It is essential to strengthen how to resist the bad influence on the young people and help them how to prevent the risk of the challenges among youth. Therefore, here will be discussed some current challenges in youth pastoral ministries in the Diocese of Adigrat.

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<sup>1</sup> ACBE, *The Church We Want to be: Elements for a Common Vision of the Pastoral Action of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, 2002, no. 44, p. 20.



#### 4.1. Losing the sense of sin and the meaning of Sunday

From the Holy Bible and Tradition of the Church, all Christians come to know that Sunday is “the Lord’s Day”<sup>2</sup> (cf. Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10) and allows us not only to pray, do penance, and get closer to our Savior Jesus Christ both in his Word and Eucharist but also to reflect on the Christian moral principles that should lead and guide our lives in daily contact with our fellow brethren. Pope John Paul II observes that Sunday starting from the Apostolic time has always been granted special attention in the history and life of the Church because it recalls the day of Christ’s Resurrection, which is the very core of the Christian mystery<sup>3</sup>.

The Catholic Christians in the Diocese of Adigrat, like the other dioceses in the country, live with religious pluralism, affecting and confusing young people’s spiritual life and their moral situation. There are traditional religions, Christians, Islam, and various sects (or new religious movements) and dominations in Ethiopia<sup>4</sup>. They have their doctrine, concept, and understanding of sin and Sunday. Social life, global liberalists, and anti-Catholic Church movements also affect the lives of young people regarding the Commandments and Sacraments. For instance, in the teaching of the Protestant’s spirituality and sanctity of Christian life, they teach: “each individual has direct access to God and is not dependent on the Church, priests, or the sacraments for salvation”<sup>5</sup>. Hence, the Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia (ACBE) emphasizes that “Despite the laudable efforts of the Catholic Church in the field of education we sincerely should ask ourselves if, besides the good academic level of our institutions, our Catholic Schools make really a difference in the moral and human formation of the whole young person”<sup>6</sup>. The

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<sup>2</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* (henceforth: DD.), Vatican, 1998, no. 1; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1998/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_05071998\\_dies-domini.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1998/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_05071998_dies-domini.html), [accessed: 07.11.2019].

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. O. Ogunu (ed.), *The African Enchiridion: Documents and Texts of the Catholic Church in the African World*, Vol. I: 1905-19977, Perugia, 2005, p. 590-591.

<sup>5</sup> T. Allik, *Protestant Spiritualities*, in: M. Downey (ed.), *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, Minnesota, 1993, p. 784.

<sup>6</sup> ACBE, *The Church We Want to be*: op. cit., no. 44, p. 20.

Catholic Schools are respectable in offering a good academic level of education and still good in making difference in producing disciplined students. However, it contributes very little to the faith of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Adigrat and the whole country.

The Church is established by her bridegroom and Lord, Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 5:25-27; Mt. 9:15; Mk. 2:19 and Lk. 5:34). Jesus Christ is the source and root of her mission. Having been sent by God the Father, He has sent out in His turn those who believed in Him and accepted Him as Lord, Light, and Guide to proclaim the Word of life by administering the sacraments of salvation<sup>7</sup>. Jesus Christ instituted the new law of the sacraments. The Catholic Church teaches the necessity of the sacraments for salvation, although not every sacrament is necessary for every individual. The sacraments give spiritual transformation in Christian life through spiritual birth, growth, healing, and mission to a Christian's life of faith, for they are a visible symbol of the reality of God and a channel of God's grace; they are an outward sign of an inward grace<sup>8</sup>. Because “ Jesus Christ is the unique source of salvation and of grace through the Cross”<sup>9</sup>, which is essential for everyone to understand.

Robert C. Sarah said: “the loss of the sense of God is at the origin of all crises”<sup>10</sup>. Losing the sense of sin is the beginning of the loss of the importance of God, and the loss of the meaning of Sunday is the loss of the presence of God in personal life. There is no possibility of prostrating oneself and adoring with full of sins, and there is no way to stand before the Almighty God by holding on to our sins. The liturgy of Sunday is an act of human beings to the love of God and His kindness. The Christians of the diocese must know that being unable to realize the faults committed is the beginning to lose the sense of sin, and it leads not to finding time for God and making to lose the meaning of Sunday, which makes at the end to forget God. “If man forgets God, ends up celebrating himself. He then becomes his own god and sets himself up plainly in opposition to God. He acts as

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. O. Ogunu (ed.), *The African Enchiridion...*, op. cit., p. 591.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. CCC. 1210.

<sup>9</sup> R. C. Sarah, *The Day Is Now Far Spent: In Conversation with Nicolas Diat* (Tran. by M. J. Miller), San Francisco, 2019, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

though the world were his own private domain”<sup>11</sup>. This shows that undoubtedly the loss of the sense of sin is becoming practical in the diocese nowadays and influencing the spiritual growth of young people. It makes a man feel free, which means human beings do not think that they are in danger, the young people in particular. So, as Robert C. Sarah made clear, nowadays, the loss of the transcendence of God is the loss of the sense of salvation because man no longer feels any need to be saved. That means evil is good; good is evil. Hence, there is no existence of good and evil<sup>12</sup>.

Therefore, the loss of the sense of sin is an obstacle to healthy growth that affects the lives of so many young people<sup>13</sup>. Most times, lukewarm youth like to go to Mass. For such kinds of people, it is not a sin to stay away from Mass deliberately. This is the first and most common problem of spiritual crisis among young people. However, the Catholic Church teaches that it is a sin to abstain from Mass intentionally, just as it is a sin not to do your Easter duty or escape confession, or break the law of marriage. To break the law of the Church willingly and intentionally is a grave sin, and one of these laws is attending Mass on all Sundays and holidays. Mass is the core of all Catholic worship because Mass is the saving link between God and humans<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, the ministers of the Church in Adigrat Diocese need to re-examine their commitment to youth apostolate and give concern for deep Religious instruction in youth centers and outside of it. So, the Catholic Church of Adigrat needs to remind the Christians of the effect of losing the sense of sin and Sunday through her pastoral ministries. One of the challenges to losing the sense of sin and meaning of Sunday is the misuse of the digital environment, which will be discussed below.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 37

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 43-49.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. USCCB, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, Washington D.C., 2010, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 189-198.

## 4.2. Technology: the digital environment

According to the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, the new technologies have dramatically changed society, on the other hand, what is the meaning and value of this feverish activity? They said we must glorify God in cultivating His creation, which includes the modern triumphs of human progress. However, our stewardship of the earth requires justice towards human beings, which has far greater worth than our technological advances<sup>15</sup>. Consequently, in the last few years, technology has developed and unimaginably spread globally. Mass media has increased communication, and it has influenced human life so much; mainly, it has a lot of impact on the spiritual life of young people<sup>16</sup>. The Church adopted the new technology tools as a gift in earlier times, and the Vatican created one of the internet's earliest sites in 1995, making many Church documents available on the Web<sup>17</sup>. During the 43<sup>rd</sup> World Communication Day, Pope Benedict XVI emphasized that the digital environment has come with a new form of communication and approach, particularly among young people. He encouraged them to adopt these new tools of technology<sup>18</sup>. Also, the Catholic Church recognizes that if the media is utilized correctly, it can be of excellent service to people and, at the same time, can employ these technologies against the plan of God<sup>19</sup>.

Pope John Paul II, appreciating the powerful presence of media, said that if it is used by the believer with unwavering faith and in obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it can help preach the Gospel and strengthen the harmony among the ecclesial communities more effectively. The media is an excellent opportunity for the Church to spread the Gospel

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. A. Flannery (ed.), Vatican Council II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (henceforth: GS.), New York, 1981, no. 33-35.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. B. Vogt, *The Church and New Media: Blogging converts, Online activists, and Bishops Who Tweet*, Huntington, 2011, p. 15-19.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Message for the 43rd world Communications Day: "New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship"*, Vatican, 2009; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/communications/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20090124\\_43rd-world-communications-day.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20090124_43rd-world-communications-day.html), [01.02.2022].

<sup>19</sup> Cf. A. Flannery, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council: Decree on the Media of Social Communication *Inter Mirifica* (henceforth: IM.), New York, 1981, no. 2.

and religious values, promote dialogue, ecumenical and inter-religious cooperation, and build a society's dignity and the common good<sup>20</sup>.

However, the misuse of the new technology disintegrates people on social media and diminishes the value of relationships of human persons because of an addiction to digital media. There is no respect for one another, no respect for privacy. Pope Francis said: "Everything has become a kind of spectacle to be examined and inspected, and people's lives are now under constant surveillance. Digital communication wants to bring everything out into the open; people's lives are combed over, laid bare, and bandied about, often anonymously. Respect for others disintegrates"<sup>21</sup>. Digital media exposes everything secretly. Some information comes out namelessly. Sometimes, there is nobody who is responsible for the information promulgated on social media and which disintegrated people.

Information is one of the valuable and essential factors for transforming the present generation and achieving a close relationship among the communities. In society, people have the right to information to accept it or not, based on the circumstances in each case and about the matters regarding individuals or the community. Information should always be accurate and complete to exercise the right to correct information<sup>22</sup>. The young people have difficulties with self-control and familiarize themselves with moderation in their use of social media and fail to have a deep understanding of what they see, hear or read to distinguish the correct information to spread and defend the truth and foster Christian influence among the communities.

In Ethiopia, the printing press has become very common, especially issuing new CDs, DVDs, VCDs, and MP3 files with speeches, sermons, and teaching are essential in

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter: *The Rapid Development* (henceforth: RD.), Vatican, 2005, no. 1-9; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/2005/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_20050124\\_il-rapido-sviluppo.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2005/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20050124_il-rapido-sviluppo.html), [accessed: 07.11.2019].

<sup>21</sup> Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (henceforth: FT.), Assisi, 2020, no. 42; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html), [accessed: 07.10.2020].

<sup>22</sup> Cf. IM. 5.

inter-religious polemics. About Ethiopian religions in the diaspora: websites, blogs, Facebook, and YouTube are popular sites for generating disputes, competition, debate, and accusations among religions, and politics are very challenged by activists who are based in foreign countries. Hence, new mass media is very high on spreading religious polemics and circulating political critiques in the country<sup>23</sup>.

The Holy Father Pope John Paul II notes that “The isolating and alienating influence of a large part of the media, all these things can produce confusion in young people about the truths and values which give a genuine meaning to life”<sup>24</sup>. Therefore, the rapid development of technology distinguishes the new generation from all previous societies. The world has become significantly smaller due to new technology, and there are various kinds and easier access to television, films, computers, the internet, etc. Furthermore, media transform the culture and change the idea of history. The media has a language that the parents cannot understand when their youth watch television or other communication access in their home in the diocese, in Ethiopia generally. The fast changes in technology touch on everyone’s daily life. The media changed the values and behavior of people. For instance, cellular phones entirely changed the situation and made it easy to communicate from any corner of the world while walking or sitting. There is no attention to the person beside them. There is developing much ignorance among people and giving value to electronics; instead of sharing ideas with a person is becoming easy to watch cell phones.

Technology has brought much exterior progress and affected interior life because it creates a very different generation from what has gone before. Some people look for immediate answers and quick results and fixes; they are mostly in a hurried movement. Hence, those who look for immediate results and quick fixes have difficulties remaining

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. J. Abbink, *Religion in Public Spaces: Emerging Muslim–Christian Polemics in Ethiopia*, in: “African Affairs”, Vol. 110, no. 439, 2011, p. 271.

<sup>24</sup> John Paul II, *Apostolic Journey to the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Australia and Sri Lanka 10th World Youth Day: Address to the Young People in "Rizal Park"*, Manila, 14 January 1995, no. 2; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1995/january/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19950114\\_vigilia-manila-gmg.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1995/january/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19950114_vigilia-manila-gmg.html), [accessed: 10 March 2022].

calm and reflecting to cultivate a deeper interior life that helps their daily spiritual growth, which is the impact of technological development<sup>25</sup>.

The development of technology and young people's knowledge is not going together in countries like Ethiopia. The majority of the parents in the diocese, as well as throughout the country, cannot read, and they do not know what is happening in the media. Even those who read do not know how to operate. So, they are ignorant about what their children watch on their smartphones or even on television. Also, the youth do not know how to manage and how long to use, which is a lack of time management on social media. For example, the young generations spend time on facebook just scrolling down and parents do not know what is going on among their youngsters. Hence, they cannot help their children because technology poses a severe challenge for believers, particularly parents, families, and those responsible for forming children and young people<sup>26</sup>.

The digital era can be used for all people to advance together to a higher level of life. Still, it takes human life in a different direction because there are many wealthy and impoverished people. Technology is conquering the exterior world and being able to control nature. Still, it is difficult to overcome and be in charge of our interior world which is the lack of internal conversion. Media separates Christians, particularly young people from spiritual transformation to a world focused on the digital environment, and instead of going to Church to pray to God, they easily limit themselves to finding a solution to their problems of life within the margins of their homes using television, YouTube, or telephones. This has blocked the time towards God in prayer to ask for answers to the problem in human life and look for a quick solution from technology, which caused people to be more dependent on media than God<sup>27</sup>.

Unfortunately, one of the root causes of the evil that torments our generation are: injustice, poverty, hunger, war, and violence. These are the problems and challenges today

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age: Helping young people and adults to understand and meet the challenges to faith in a changing world*, Dublin, 1999, p. 32.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. RD. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p.31-34.

that threaten the future life of young people and humanity in general. Hence, to solve the most social issues of technology, as George Boran<sup>28</sup> indicates, two things are lacking: “spiritual conversion and political will”<sup>29</sup>. This shows that politics affects spirituality, and politics plays its own game through social media. Then to solve technological conditions, spiritual conversion and political will are needed, which is essential for holistic development.

The Universal Church, even though quick in adopting technology, nowadays, the Catholic Church in Ethiopia, particularly Adigrat Diocese, is much behind compared with the other religion. Thus, the diocese must use New Media, and there is a need to speed up using the technology as a Church, or will lose ground soon. Undoubtedly technology, by handling and managing properly, can help the Church to inherit and promote evangelization, to encourage formation, and teach Christian values, ethics, moralities, and the common good in society to continue throughout future generations as needed<sup>30</sup>.

Besides that, technology affects spiritual growth and significantly impacts social development because media closely relates to the political, economic, and cultural situation. Hence, it is essential for the diocese to ensure collective accountability in protecting the importance and dignity of every person and to avoid the risk of manipulating and conditioning the relationship and service of people, particularly the young generation. This invites the requirements of formation, participation, and dialogue in its process. It is essential to make sure the formation of mass media is known and used intelligently and appropriately to avoid the risk of manipulating and heavily conditioning rather than serving people. This can happen only through close cooperation within the participation in the administration. Then there can be an excellent opportunity to promote dialogue through

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<sup>28</sup> Father George Boran CSSP is a Spiritan priest and an international expert in the field of youth ministry. He is currently the Superior Holy Ghost Congregation (Spiritans) Brazil South West, since 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 32-33.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. B. Vogt, *The Church and New Media*, op. cit., p. 21 and 59.



mass media that become vehicles of knowledge, solidarity, and peace, which can avoid the risk of violation and injustice<sup>31</sup>.

Besides dissociating people from God, in Ethiopia, the media has divided communities through various kinds of information, which is religious or political propaganda without any base. Just a tweet spreads throughout the world within a minute and affects the mentality of the people and diverts their viewpoint about God or within the community that they live in and affects the spiritual and intellectual transformation of young people. Political activists have also played their role in causing a lot of violations and divisions through social media among the communities of Ethiopia, and among different ethnic groups, which influence faith, peace, reconciliation, justice, accountability, and dialogue<sup>32</sup>.

Therefore, the Catholic Church should work with the media to stand at the service of authentic information because it is a vital tool for authentic harmonization and promoting peace by avoiding violation, destruction, and division. So, its moral perspective is essential for it can encourage service or disservice, propagate truth or falsehood, information can readily become disinformation, and form deformation. Hence, the Church should need to appear frequently in the media, not only using the media as an instrument for evangelization. But also to promote and teach reconciliation in truth, justice, and peace. Additionally, it needs to use media to promote a solid formation in ethics, moral values, and truthfulness that will assist journalists to avoid the attraction of the sensational temptation to manipulate information and to make easy money, which can be made greedy and corrupted<sup>33</sup>. Because it has its own new culture that has its language and above all its specific values and counter-values. So, mass media must be evangelized as it is needed<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. RD. 10-11.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p.32-33.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae munus* (henceforth: AM.), Ouidah, 2011, no. 142-146; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20111119\\_africae-munus.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html), [accessed: 10.12.2017].

<sup>34</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (henceforth: EA.), Yaoundé, 1995, no. 51 and 71; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_14091995\\_ecclesia-in-africa.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

to build, transform, and sustain a society in its diverse sectors: educational, religious, cultural, economic, and political. Media has a significant role in the growth and improvement of humankind, making the person spiritually mature, more conscious of the dignity of their humanity, more accountable, or more exemplary and aid to others, particularly the vulnerable. For this, the time of restrictions due to the pandemic of COVID-19 is a good example. It became a solution to evangelize through the internet. The internet touches all aspects of our humanity either inspiring our spiritual dimension and strengthening our interpersonal relationship with God or making to lose the meaning of worship and dissociate our interpersonal relationship with God. However, the internet can easily be a space of confusion making everything possible through the internet. There is the truth that is constant, non-substitutable on the internet, and objectively recognizable for instance the Sacrament of Penance and receiving the Holy Communion. Therefore, it needs to give direction and guidance because it is making the world too secular, which will be discussed below<sup>35</sup>.

### **4.3. Secularism**

George Boran defines secularism as the rejection of God's existence. And for secularism, only science can answer the question of life, sufficiently to explain human existence, the meaning of life, and solve human problems. And according to secularism human person can try to control nature through science, and there is no need for God and religion to explain many phenomena that were previously considered mysteries<sup>36</sup>. So, the agnostic and skeptical environment, modern secular worldviews, and ideologies present humanity with its greatest challenge and influence on the interests and conduct of young people's involvement in sacraments and practicing the faith.

As Pope John Paul II defines, secularization is the loss or lack of the symbols of the Christian presence; the absence of the integration of the Gospel message into daily

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p.31-34

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 58-59,62.

experience; living without faith in Jesus Christ. Living one's faith in Jesus becomes increasingly difficult in a social and cultural setting in which that faith is constantly challenged and threatened<sup>37</sup>. Additionally, according to Pope Benedict XVI, secularization reduces religious belief to the lowest common denominator. Faith becomes passive acceptance that certain things out there are true, but without practical relevance for everyday life. As a result, secularism separates faith from life: living as if God did not exist<sup>38</sup>.

A specific materialistic idea of secularization and an intellectual upheaval caused by the avalanche of insufficiently critical ideas spread throughout social media has affected the deepening of faith and the family relationship<sup>39</sup>. In another word, secularization is a decline of religious beliefs and practices. These reduce the value of God's revelation handed down to us in the living tradition and the Holy Bible to the human elements that lead to interpretations that deny the historicity of the divine aspects. The generations fail to respect the historical character of revelation, creating confusion and lacking constancy in faith formation. Consequently, it hurts the transformation of spiritual life and pastoral activities<sup>40</sup>.

Secularism is all about personal interest and making use of freedom as the person wishes, which is an end of freedom in itself<sup>41</sup>. Intellectual freedom has undoubtedly transformed the world and achieved it but then misused with catastrophic consequences for individuals and society<sup>42</sup>. Because secularism is the undogmatic human tendency to

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* (henceforth: EE.), Rome, 2003, no. 7; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_20030628\\_ecclesia-in-europa.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_20030628_ecclesia-in-europa.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Apostolic Journey to the United States of America and Visit to the United Nations Organization Headquarters Meeting with the Bishops of the United States of America Response to the Questions Posed by the Bishops*, Washington, 16 April 2008, no. 1; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20080416\\_response-bishops.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080416_response-bishops.html), [accessed: 26.06.2021].

<sup>39</sup> Cf. EA. 76.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum domini* (henceforth: VD.), Rome, 2010, no. 35; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20100930\\_verbum-domini.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html), [accessed: 26.10.2019].

<sup>41</sup> Cf. RH. 21.

<sup>42</sup> S. Ó. Conaill, *Secularism and an Adult Church*, in: "The Furrow", Vol. 48, No. 10, Oct., 1997, p. 524.

prioritize the immediate concerns of earthly life: food, shelter, career, financial security, entertainment, and only targeted materials<sup>43</sup>. Then “God becomes the enemy of autonomy and liberty. Wishing to be free, a man refuses to accept what he considers to be constraints and even goes so far as to reject any form of dependence on God”<sup>44</sup>. This shows that man denies all the power of God, who created us free and out of love.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, children follow catechesis until they receive the First Holy Communion and their knowledge of the Scripture, theology, Church, and spirituality remains on the level of First Communion children<sup>45</sup>. For different reasons, once they reach the university level, nowadays, they are starting to lose their faith identity due to the impact of the secularized world, particularly when they began to live in wealthy nations with secularized cultures.<sup>46</sup> As a result, young people try to live with a double approach. While on the one hand, looking after material prosperity and deeper consumerism and materialism. On the other hand, they are searching for a meaningful life and seeking to learn new forms and methods of meditation and prayer that help them with their spiritual transformation of inner life<sup>47</sup>.

In today’s world, societies are secularizing at an imaginable speed. The Catholic Church of Adigrat is very slow in fostering Christian values and moral life so that the young generations know and understand that God is the root of all good, the limitless source of the moral life, and the bulwark of a profound sense of universal filial relationship<sup>48</sup>. However, there is an attempt to reduce Christianity towards human perceptions in the world that is affecting all Christians. The human being is only interested in earthly matters, pays attention to temporal needs, strives for personal well-being, and is good in the material. These make the person while humankind has a short life on earth, only to think about

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 519.

<sup>44</sup> R. C. Sarah, *God or Nothing: A Conversation on Faith with Nicolas Diat*, San Francisco, 2015, p.168.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. VD. 96.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (henceforth: RM.), Rome, Dec. 7, 1990, no. 38; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_07121990\\_redemptoris-missio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>48</sup> Cf. VD. 117.

horizontal dimension and the kingdom of God inclines to become something wholly human and secularized; what matters are programs and struggles for a liberation which is socio-economic, political, and even cultural, but within a horizon that is closed to the transcendent<sup>49</sup>. Therefore, it is necessary in the Diocese of Adigrat to promote appropriate teaching of the Scripture among young people to help them live a suitable Christian moral life in the world of religious pluralism, the topic will be addressed beneath.

#### **4.4. Religious pluralism and its controversies**

The Catholic Church believes in interfaith dialogue while still proclaiming the truth of Jesus Christ. As the Holy Fathers of the Second Vatican Council made clear, the Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in other religions. They said the Church has high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth that enlightens all men<sup>50</sup>. Furthermore, Pope John Paul II, in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptor hominis* describes the work of the Holy Spirit in all religions. The Holy Spirit works through all religion's principles of morality, prayer, and spirituality<sup>51</sup>. However, the fullness of truth is Jesus Christ and fully preserved and found in the Catholic Church, while in other religions is only a ray of truth.

The Catholic Church kept its traditional method centered around the priest until the recent time, and the laities were just marked as observers. But since the Second Vatican Council, the Church has confirmed the importance of the participation of the laity in the programs and systems of the Church. Although the Church is trying to involve the laity in the structure, still not yet able to succeed. Also, the new religions continuously provide

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. RM. 11 and 17.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. A. Flannery, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council: Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, (henceforth: NA.), New York, 1981, no. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (henceforth: RH.) Rome, 1979, no. 6: available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_04031979\\_redemptor-hominis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

greater chances of participation for all members; and they feel that they got special attention and respect; and recruited expressed as if they were nobody in the Catholic Church<sup>52</sup>.

In the history of Ethiopia, the EOTC had more privilege of its connection with the state, and at present, all religions are equal by the constitution<sup>53</sup>. The Ethiopian Orthodox Christians (EOC), remembering that they were dominant in all cases, for a long time had no active conversion strategies but have now grown to a great extent as a response to the others. This also makes the EOC more alert in practicing the religion among their faithful.

Pentecostal and Evangelical groups (with the other many sects or new religious movements) take the activity of evangelizing and conversion as their priority. They reject any traditional and cultural exercises like rituals, reverence and devotion of Mary and Saints, veneration of ancestors, and performance of historical poetry or epics that ‘interfere’ with their service to God, recognition of religious courts, holidays, etc. places, and times for prayer<sup>54</sup>. However, the Catholic Church is always quiet; and has no involvement in such kind of public competition, but is always affected by the other’s contests, and the young people are influenced a lot.

In Ethiopia, Christianity and Islam are the oldest religions starting officially from the fourth and seventh centuries, respectively. Society, historically, is formed by diversity and inter-religious co-existence. Their identities are understood as the diverse ways in which different religious identities developed together with a sense of mutual respect. In addition to the above, Catholic Church, Protestant, and Evangelical Churches have become official religions in Ethiopia since the nineteenth century. However, it is essential to note that the tension among religions can sometimes be non-constructive and even devastating. Because nowadays, the new religious movements (sometimes called religious sects), motivated by the Protestant and Evangelical movements, spread in all parts of the country.

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 39-40.

<sup>53</sup> *Ethiopia’s Constitution* of 1994, Art. 25.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. J. Abbink, *Religion in Public Spaces*, op. cit., p. 268-269

Many of these movements follow “a fundamentalist interpretation of the faith”<sup>55</sup>. These religions are increasing and provoking a critical evaluation of others.

Currently, in Ethiopia, like in other countries of Africa, the relationship between Christians and Muslims appears as having a new strategic movements under the influence of both state policies and worldwide connections. The identity of religion is emerging and becoming more popular and dominant as the first official identity of the people and more ideological. This development affects public places, where the nature of religious identities is presented and opposed in a self-consciously critical style. This common sphere of national political and civic identity can disintegrate and become the center of conflict and ideological violation. And those who involve in such kinds of disputes are generally young people. The Ethiopian government is secular, with its constitution assuring the protection and freedom of religious worship. But religion celebrates very much in public places and is present in common areas functioning as an essential celebration for community life. So, religious polemics are increasing in Ethiopia like in many other African countries such as Nigeria, Mali, Kenya, and Tanzania. Additionally, in Ethiopia, there is developing on the importance of religious celebration in public areas through occasions and becoming a religious polemic between Christians and Muslims<sup>56</sup>.

The revolution of new technology is developing the pluralism of new ideas and new cultures. People have access to all kinds of opinions, sentiments, and ideas. The pluralistic environment is arising many different and conflicting views and arguments that take nowhere except dividing and being obstacles to the common benefit and development of the nation. The time of the current generation in Tigray, Ethiopia in general, is much different other than the previous generation. Previous times when parents, particularly the father, spoke in the home and the priest spoke in the parish were honored and taken as law. Censorship has no place at preset time and no longer works anymore. The Church was recently required to guide, lead, and protect the faithful from different sentiments,

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<sup>55</sup> G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. J. Abbink, *Religion in Public Spaces*, op. cit., p. 253-254.

influences, and ideas. However, the time has changed today. The young generations have access to watch and listen to various religious teachings. Christians are teaching against Christians in the country, and the fear and threat of punishment by God no longer convince the younger generation, which is a big challenge to young people's spiritual growth<sup>57</sup>.

In addition to that, fundamentalist preachers are increasing in Ethiopia both among Muslims and Christians, aiming to reform local religion and spread the faith internationally, focusing on the core theological differences. They seek to impose a doctrine in all circumstances without regard to practical considerations, that have led to more doctrinaire positions and symbolic power struggles in public places in Ethiopia. From time to time, this discourse becomes an attempt to invalidate the faith of others. The new religious polemics manifest attitudes of mutual toleration and collaboration altering, if not reducing. This kind of inclination is also causing political problems in the country. Furthermore, the challenge of the appearance of religious competition creates different debates and the most rivalry over the commonplace, most times when and where to build mosques, churches, or chapels; self-presentation in the media; public celebrations, and religious 'noise' production using loudspeakers (all except Catholic Church) is another challenge<sup>58</sup>.

Besides the above, another dispute in the religious matter is the qualitative differences in conversion attitudes, teachings, approaches, and strategies among Christians; as well as among Muslims, particularly the Salafist-Wahhabi groups focused on widespread conversion by *da'wah*<sup>59</sup> first within the Muslim community itself and then among others. Furthermore, another significant issue is the acoustic competition of massive religious noise production. All, except Catholic Church, attached microphones to every church, mosque, a chapel to pound out calls to prayer, sacred songs, sermons, and religious vices, surrounding and involving people who may not even have any interest to hear them.

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 33-35.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. J. Abbink, *Religion in Public Spaces*, op. cit., p. 254-255, 261, 267-271.

<sup>59</sup> Da'wah is the act of inviting or calling or converting people to embrace Islam.



Hotels and cafes also pound out through microphones their unreligious noise songs. This becomes a new competition field in religious pluralism and trespasses common space<sup>60</sup>.

The Ethiopian constitution recognizes religious pluralism without any interference in political issues and allows freedom of religion, belief, and opinion<sup>61</sup>. Consequently, the competition of faith increases occasionally and influences the government. The effect of religious debate and actions regarding the public sphere is regularly practiced and developing problems because religious pluralism continues to produce controversies and communal tensions with one another in the country. However, religious conflict or controversies is one of the opportunistic and eminent conflicts that are and will continue to be a challenge for Ethiopia's peaceful human development and peaceful co-existence.

#### **4.5. Unemployment and poverty**

Nowadays, with new development in technology, economic, and political conditions, unemployment and poverty became a big challenge and influencing the world of work and production. As Pope John Paul II describes this unemployment of intellectuals occurs or increases when the education available is not oriented towards the types of employment or service required by the true needs of society, or when there is less demand for work that requires education, at least professional education, than for manual labor, or when it is less well paid<sup>62</sup>.

Ethiopia, the second most populated country in Africa, has 44 percent below the age of 15 and over 70 percent below the age 30 of its population; and it is among the countries with a growing number of the younger generation<sup>63</sup>. In the country, 84 percent of the youth

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. J. Abbink, *Religion in Public Spaces*, op. cit., p. 269-271.

<sup>61</sup> *Ethiopia's Constitution* of 1994, Art. 11. 3, art. 27. 1-5.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem exercens* (henceforth LE.), (14 Sep. 1981), no. 1 & 8; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_15051961\\_mater.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_15051961_mater.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Ethiopian Public Health Institute (henceforth: EPHI), *Ethiopia Mini Demographic and Health Survey 2019*, Addis Ababa, 2021, p. 12.

live in rural areas<sup>64</sup>. And generally, those who get the coverage of the unique education program with special needs, excluding those talented ones, are less than one percent<sup>65</sup>. The growing number of the young generation is both a good chance and a challenge. When the majority of the young population in the country can get an opportunity, they play an essential role in the rapid development of economic and social life to decline in poverty; they can bring self-sustainability to the Church, and ensure better stability and promotes a healthier society. For the success of all these, it is crucial to meet the basic need of the young people; if not the contrary, peace, progress, and prosperity are held back easily.

Education is the most significant aspect of social and economic growth by advancing young people's multidimensional knowledge and skills, strongly associated with different socioeconomic lifestyles, income, and productivity. However, in the history of Ethiopia, the majority of its population has not benefited from formal education and training, which is affected the Adigrat Diocese's youth. According to the report of USAID, 20 million youth have not been taught basic skills such as literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, decision-making, and rational analysis, especially in rural areas. Approximately, in the country, three million primary school-aged children and over 20 million youth are outside of the formal school system, and the majority of out-of-school youth have had no education at all (84% in rural areas; 33% in urban areas), and approximately over 88% of the Adigrat Diocesan population live in the rural area<sup>66</sup>. The Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia (ACBE) in the Pastoral Letter *The Church We Want to be*, criticize the lack of opportunities in education and unfortunately of getting well-remunerated employment after the youth completed their studies. They noted that "there are not many opportunities for them of a sound secondary and tertiary education and no perspective of getting a well remunerated employment after their studies are completed"<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Health (henceforth: FDREMH), *National Reproductive Health Strategy 2006 – 2015*, Addis Ababa, 2006, p. 24.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Culture, *Federal Republic of Ethiopia: Nation Youth Policy*, Addis Ababa, 2004, p. 13.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. USAID, *Youth in Development: Realizing the Demographic Opportunity*, Washington DC, 2012, p. 16.

<sup>67</sup> ACBE, *The Church We Want to be*: op. cit., no. 44, p. 20.

However, Ethiopia has shown good economic progress recently, followed by the movement to reduce poverty, dramatically improved the education system, and increased its gross enrolment ratios (GER). Ethiopia strived to enhance and change the lives of its people through different programs and policies that have reduced child mortality and improved educational accessibility by building schools in rural and urban areas. While the lives of many have changed, the majority of the country's population still lives in extreme poverty<sup>68</sup>.

From time to time, Ethiopia is growing the number of graduated students from the colleges and universities run by private and government. Nevertheless, the quality of the education system matters. Ethiopia has the most significant urban unemployment rate at 50%, and there is the majority of young people under-employment in rural areas, where nearly 85% of the population resides<sup>69</sup>. Although, Ethiopia has the most prominent young population, generally, it is a poor country primarily due to the high levels of unemployment and lack of creativity but a rich country of natural resources. The Holy Father Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde*, emphasizes the issue of employment that nowadays is an urgent social issue because of the lack of jobs for young people: position gives dignity to the person, and unemployment is a plague on society<sup>70</sup>.

The growing young population is changing the structure of the Tigray, where the Diocese of Adigrat is situated. At the same time, students who have completed college and universities have minimal capacity, knowledge, skills, and capabilities. They are not trained as needed, and cannot be inventive. They are the present and the future working generation. They completed without adequate development and job opportunities in the Tigray region as well as in the country. There is high unemployment among youngsters, who established a high percentage of the population. The situation of immensely growing

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. S. Megquier and K. Belohlav, *Ethiopia's Key: Young People and the Demographic Dividend*, in: "Population Reference Bureau", December 2014, p. 1; available at: <https://www.prb.org/resources/ethiopias-key-young-people-and-the-demographic-dividend/>, [accessed: 22.11.2017].

<sup>69</sup> Cf. USAID, *Youth in Development*, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>70</sup> Francis, Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde* (henceforth: PC.), Rome, 8 December 2020, no. 6; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap\\_20201208\\_patris-corde.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20201208_patris-corde.html), [accessed: 07.03.2021].

youth unemployment in undeveloped and less-developed countries is disturbing, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, which faces the highest level (70%) of youth working poverty rate globally. Ethiopia, the whole African continent in general, has full of natural resources, economic potential, and global ambition. However, the technical and vocational education and training in Ethiopia are minimal, which could be a good opportunity to help the young generation to be creative in their specific talents<sup>71</sup>.

The unemployment of young people is increasing nationally, particularly in Tigray, both in proportion and level. The growing number of youth unemployed in the diocese made them unstable, unrest, and despairing because youngsters are exposed to possess low skills, earn lower incomes and face fewer employment opportunities than their adult counterparts. The unemployed, underserved, and low-income youth become especially vulnerable to terrorism, particularly those with high levels of anguish. Furthermore, youth unemployment plays a significant role in amplifying the incidence of corruption, public perceptions of government ineffectiveness, and the absence of a strict rule of law and justice. Also, the growing number of unemployed young people plays a great role in accelerating security problems in Ethiopia<sup>72</sup>.

Due to unemployment, young people migrated within the country, continent, and even out of Africa. Especially the youngsters of the Adigrat Diocese, they became dependent on their parents after completing their studies, mainly migrating to Arab countries. As a result of unemployment, stress and restiveness have tremendous potential for radicalization, conflict, and political violence. Girls entered into prostitution. Boys mostly became unethical, immortal, rebels, and youth bulge related to violence and social unrest.

Nowadays, unemployment and job security are unceasingly threatening ordinary people in developed countries but are already causing problems and risking less-developed countries, particularly Ethiopia. Even young people who have quality education and are

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. A. Adelaja and J. George, *Is Youth Unemployment Related to Domestic Terrorism?*, in: "Perspectives on Terrorism", Vol. 14, No. 5 (October 2020), p. 41; available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26940038>, [accessed: 14.02.2022].

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 47-50.

highly specialized cannot look to the future confidently<sup>73</sup>. Consequently, they mainly migrated to find job security and confidently look to the future.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, the young people who are employed feel respected, got dignity, equality, and freedom of the individual. But on the contrary, unemployed youngsters are perceived and categorized by society as marginalized and feel unwanted. So, unemployed youth are affected not only by both material and economic needs, but also morally devastated because with unemployment comes a loss of human dignity, deteriorating self-worth, and potentially deadly consequences. It touches all levels of society's basic structures: family, community, religion, and nation<sup>74</sup>. Furthermore, the unemployed young generations of the diocese, who have never developed a work ethic, are suffering from emotional depression. The continuously resulting crime, drugs, and violence pose a rising threat to urban living<sup>75</sup>.

Poverty is also another big issue resulting from different factors. In Tigray, many young people live in poverty: not only because of “unemployment” but also as a result of the socio-economic and political situation, which includes a lack of proper education or education chances and a lack of job opportunities or the desire to work a different kind of work without disdain. In the country, over 80% of the population lives in poverty, and they are dependent on farms and livestock, which are in most parts affected by drought<sup>76</sup>.

In Tigray, many people live in poverty. Due to that, organizations and individual people are involved in economic development. It is the same in the whole country, mainly among young people. Many times people try to give reasons for poverty and describe it. Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphela give four reasons why poverty is significant: “First, the damage it inflicts upon individuals who must endure it; Second, the sheer inefficiency in economic terms; Third, the consequences for any society where poverty is

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 78-81.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. J. A. Górká, *Youth Ministry in the Face of Unemployment: A Historical-Critical Study of the Development of the Church and its Concern for Your Formation and Employment in Wmanza (Tanzania)*, Morogoro, 2017, p. 14-16.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. USAID, *Youth in Development: Realizing the Demographic Opportunity*, Washington DC, 2012, p. 16; see also: Cf. A. Adelaja and J. George, *Is Youth Unemployment Related to Domestic Terrorism?*, in: “Perspectives on Terrorism”, Vol. 14, No. 5 (October 2020), p. 41; available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26940038>, [accessed: 14.02.2022].

also the manifestation of great inequality; Fourth, the fact that poverty in many societies is itself symptomatic of deeper malaise”<sup>77</sup>. It must also be added that in Ethiopia, the historical-political role plays a vital role in understanding poverty among Ethiopians and not fighting poverty. As a result, it becomes even more apparent that poverty has significant physical, spiritual, and psychological influences on people and pushed them to be migrated. Therefore, young people also migrate due to political instability and cannot practice their faith easily where they go, which is the topic that will be discussed below.

#### **4.6. Political instability, internal-displacement, and migration**

The teaching of the Catholic Church regarding political instability, internally displaced persons (IDP), migrants, and refugees is based on the premises of the Holy Scripture. In both the Old and the New Testaments, examples describe the tragedy of people escaping persecution and oppression. For instance, the Israelites escaped from Egypt and then wandered for 40 years in the desert (cf. Jos. 5:6; Num. 13-14); Jesus Christ, Mary, and Joseph escaped to Egypt (cf. Mt. 2:13-23). The Gospel of St. Matthew, where they could not find a safe place, described, “For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me” (25:35). According to the teaching of Pope John Paul II, the Church always considers the problem of illegal migrants from the standpoint of Christ, who died to gather together the dispersed children of God (cf. Jn. 11:52), to rehabilitate the marginalized and to bring close those who are distant, to integrate all within a communion that is not based on ethnic, cultural or social membership, but on the common desire to accept God’s word and to seek justice<sup>78</sup>.

In addition to the above, Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium* describes the dramatic situation of victims of human trafficking and exhorts all countries to a generous openness which, rather than fearing the loss of local identity, will

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<sup>77</sup> F. Wilson and M. Ramphela, *Uprooting Poverty: The South African Challenge*, Cape Town, 1989, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Message for World Migration Day on “Undocumented Migrants”*, Vatican, 25 July 1995, no. 3; [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/migration/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_25071995\\_undocumented\\_migrants.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/migration/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_25071995_undocumented_migrants.html), [accessed: 29.05.2022].

prove capable of creating new forms of cultural synthesis. And he teaches all Christians should embrace with affection and respect Muslim immigrants to our countries in the same way that we hope and ask to be received and respected in countries of Islamic tradition<sup>79</sup>. Furthermore, Pope Francis emphasized that migrations are a sign of our times and on the other hand, they “often reveal failures and shortcomings on the part of States and the international community”<sup>80</sup>. He said the Church operates across borders and stands as the Mother to all: to love Jesus Christ, to adore and love Him, particularly in the poorest and most abandoned; among these are migrants and refugees who are trying to escape difficult living conditions and dangers of every kind<sup>81</sup>.

The people of Ethiopia, particularly the religious and political leaders, must know that peace is one of the fundamental factors for human life’s holistic growth, transformation, happiness, and prosperity. A person has the freedom of movement, residence, and all the rights to life. Because “Life in its fullness is the height of peace”<sup>82</sup>. Peace only can reign through maintaining and embracing dialogue and reconciliation. Violence and war are the solutions to oppression, destruction, under-development, misery, and disintegration because it helps the oppressors have power and strength. It benefits the elite and those overseas who manufacture military equipment, which is another form of exploitation of the developing countries<sup>83</sup>.

In Ethiopia, politicians who are envious of power, elites, those who manufacture military equipment, and oppressors have no conscience to feel the sorrow of the poor and

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (henceforth: EG.), Rome, 2013, no. 210 & 253; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html), [accessed: June 01, 2019].

<sup>80</sup> Francis, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2014)*, Vatican, 5 August 2013; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130805\\_world-migrants-day.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20130805_world-migrants-day.html), [accessed: 29.05.2022].

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Francis, *Message for the 101<sup>st</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2015)*, Vatican, 3 September 2014; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco\\_20140903\\_world-migrants-day-2015.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20140903_world-migrants-day-2015.html), [accessed: 29.05.2022].

<sup>82</sup> Benedict XVI, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace of 1 January 2013*, Vatican, 8 De. 2012, no. 1; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20121208\\_xlvi-world-day-peace.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20121208_xlvi-world-day-peace.html), [accessed: 19.07.2021].

<sup>83</sup> Cf. T. Byrne, *Integral Development: Development of the Whole Person, A Handbook for Christians*, Ndola, 1983, p. 32.

innocents who suffer injustice. Those who think and feel about the suffering of innocent people are those who “non-violent promoters of justice have realized that the people who suffer most from war and violence are the innocent poor and the oppressed”<sup>84</sup>. Also, the most significant number of young people in Ethiopia are unproductive. Pope Francis is concerned about the dangerous consequences of a family without work, and those most exposed to difficulties, instabilities, tensions, conflicts, estrangement, hostilities, and even breaks up<sup>85</sup>.

However, the globe is marked by its positive and negative aspects and the continuous violent conflicts and threats of war. Furthermore, peace is endangered by the various forms of terrorism and international crime of fundamentalism and fanaticism, which distort the true nature of religion, which is called to foster fellowship and reconciliation among people. For every human person’s entire, happy and successful life, peace is an essential aspiration, as well as a fundamental moral principle, namely, the duty and right to an integral social and communitarian development, which is part of God’s plan for humanity because peace is God’s gift for the human person<sup>86</sup>.

However, conflict and organized political violence have been and are central features of Ethiopia. Ethiopia has made a significant achievement in peace and stability in the last two decades. This partly shows progress in some critical dimensions of invulnerability, especially in demographics and development, from which the youngsters of the diocese are partly benefited. Since 1991, Ethiopia has been ruled under the constitution established based on ethnic federalism. These also caused long-lasting conflict, unrest, and civil war. Additionally, the federal arrangement generated new conflicts in local areas among different ethnicities. Furthermore, in the country, the reappearance of famine is stagnantly the leading cause of food uncertainty. Therefore, from time to time, Ethiopia faces significant internal displacement. Mehari Taddele Maru<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. PC. 6.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace of 1 January 2013*, op. cit., no. 1.

<sup>87</sup> Prof. Mehari Taddele Maru is currently a Part-time Professor at the School of Transnational Governance and Migration Policy Centre at the European University Institute.



observes three essential factors that contribute to the causes and consequences of internal displacement: the ethnic federal structure, the persistent threat of famine, and ethnic conflicts; he said that both famine and ethnic federalism (as the outcome and aggravating factors of ethnic conflicts) often result in population displacement<sup>88</sup>.

In the history of Ethiopia, internal displacement has continued extensively, and is caused by the four categories of causes of internal displacement: natural disaster-induced displacement (NDID), conflict-induced displacement (CID), development-induced displacement (DID), and man-made disaster-induced displacement (MDID). However, NDID, CID, and MDID are still the leading cause of IDPs and migration<sup>89</sup>. Documents about ancient Ethiopian history also show that internal displacement has caused much human life because of political and religious instability. In the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim el-Ghazi, surname Gran, or the left-handed, invaded Northern Ethiopia and destroyed monasteries, killed Christians, and much displacement followed<sup>90</sup>. Perhaps a significant period relating to internal displacement was during the reign of Emperor Menilik II (1889- 1913) expanded his territory by power and, occupied Oromia, Harar, and Ogaden<sup>91</sup>.

In addition to the above, the military Derg regime (1974-1991) took over by revolt from the previous ruling monarchy that had been in power since the 1930s. Afterward, “the oppression resulted in detentions, torture and even brutal killings. The conflict within the country caused many people to leave”<sup>92</sup>. Furthermore, many people were displaced and were taken involuntarily from one place to another, particularly to the Southern part of Ethiopia. The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998-2000) also caused another displacement (over 420,000 people were displaced in Tigray and Afar due to the Ethiopia-

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. Mehari T. Maru, *Causes, Dynamics, and Consequences of Internal Displacement in Ethiopia*, Berlin, May 2017, p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 10, 13-14.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. A. H. M. John & E. Monroe, *A History of Ethiopia*, Oxford, 1965, p. 81-87.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Mehari T. Maru, *Causes, Dynamics, and Consequences of Internal Displacement in Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>92</sup> IOM, *Enabling a better understanding of migration flows (and its root-causes) from Ethiopia towards Europe*, Geneva, April 2017, p. 10.

Eritrea war in 1998)<sup>93</sup>, and migration flows, even though its flows were much lesser in scale than the prior one.

Today, Ethiopia faces significant internal displacement and records the third-highest number of new displacements in 2018 globally, with 3,191,000 IDPs identified. Furthermore, in 2019, an estimated 191,995 IDPs were displaced. A significant portion of these displacements is conflict-induced, primarily related to ethnic and border-based disputes<sup>94</sup>. Additionally, on November 4, 2020, a war erupted between the Tigray regional government and the Ethiopian Federal government. This war erupted due to the political and ideological differences between the parties. Consequently, according to the data collected through emergency site assessment (ESA), the number of IDPs increased to 4.17 million throughout the country in June 2021; and over 2.1 million IDPs were displaced in Tigray, Afar, and Amhara regions<sup>95</sup>, as well as approximately 1.2 million people, are displaced from the western zone of Tigray to other parts of Tigray, while more than 70,000 people are displaced to Sudan<sup>96</sup>.

Besides the profoundly shocking number of DPs, unavoidably, internal displacement denied the most basic human rights. The dangerous conditions under which IDPs strive to survive are only surrounded by challenges, which are undoubtedly practical about freedom of movement and residence and rights to life, livelihood, health, education, property, etc. Furthermore, according to human rights, not only freedom of movement and residence are worries of the people, but also the freedom to stay in a place where one wants to be, and internal displacement affects people to be relocated in contradiction to their will.

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<sup>93</sup> Mehari T. Maru, *Causes, Dynamics, and Consequences of Internal Displacement in Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 14

<sup>94</sup> Cf. International Organization for Migration (IOM), *ETHIOPIA NATIONAL DISPLACEMENT REPORT 9: Site Assessment Round 26 & Village Assessment Survey Round 9: June — July 2021*, Addis Ababa, 24 September 2021, p. i-ii; available at: <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/ethiopia-%E2%80%94national-displacement-report-9-june-%E2%80%94july-2021>, [accessed: 29 September 2021].

<sup>95</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Ethiopia - Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update Situation Report*, 2 Dec 2021; available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-northern-ethiopia-humanitarian-update-situation-report-2-dec-2021>, [accessed: 03 December 2021]

Guaranteeing a person's freedom and right of movement and residence thus affords safety in denial of involuntary displacement and illegal removal<sup>97</sup>.

Furthermore, migration is another dangerous and significant challenge in the Diocese of Adigrat, as well as throughout the country. The reasons and tendencies of involuntary migrations are good to understand with the Push-Pull framework: while pull factors refer to drivers of mobility such as looking for better chances, better income, and growing demand for labor in developed economic rivalry; and push elements, by contrast, include threats to life, conflicts, persecution, famine, and drought, and artificial and natural disasters. Because of push factors, IDPs and refugees become under the group of involuntary migration. As a consequence, migration displays two broad forms: displacement and mobility. Displacement happens when migrants cannot control the circumstances and are required to move because of the condition<sup>98</sup>. The poor, particularly the young generations, prefer to face the challenges of mistreatment and enslavement abroad than to live in poverty in their country. This has resulted in a tremendous social problem for the Adigrat Diocese. Families are forced to deplete their assets to send their children abroad. They are exposed to human trafficking. Migration is linked to human trafficking and the dispersion of children, who often spill over to become street children and are prone to be trafficked and abused.

In history, migration has been part of human beings. It is one of the most essential and crucial elements of human existence. However, in the host countries despite the positive experiences offered and gained, migrants are accompanied by various kinds of challenges. For instance, social, economic, political, cultural, and language problems, marginalization by the host society, and limited or lack of freedom of movement are some of the challenges to mention. Especially in some countries no right and freedom of worship and cherish Christianity like in the Arab countries as well as marginalization among

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<sup>97</sup> Cf. Mehari T. Maru, *Causes, Dynamics, and Consequences of Internal Displacement in Ethiopia*, op. cit., p. 6

<sup>98</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Christians too. They face many accidents on the way<sup>99</sup>. As a consequence of marginalization, migrants who were active members of the Church remain inactive; those who have not yet known Christ and His Gospel have no chance to know Him and follow. So, it requires service of communion through pastoral care and for its fruitful achievement, it is helpful to update the traditional structures of taking care of migrants and refugees by setting them models that respond better to the new circumstances where different peoples and cultures interact with one another because they need to find their place in the communities, groups, and families of the followers of Christ<sup>100</sup>.

Therefore, the main factor of IDPs and migration is political instability. Pope Benedict XVI emphasizes that: “Civil and political authorities before all others have a grave responsibility to work for peace. They are the first called to resolve the numerous conflicts causing bloodshed in our human family, beginning with that privileged region in God’s plan”<sup>101</sup>. This shows that civil leaders and politicians are responsible for seeking peaceful resolutions by embracing dialogue and reconciliation to solve political, economic, and social challenges and safeguard all human beings without distinction and isolation. So, unemployment, IDPs, poverty, human trafficking, and migration are ever-increasing, and as a consequence, the culture, traditions, and spiritual transformation are weakening and perishing. In addition, nationwide labor migration is always from rural to urban, looking for better income and paying jobs. Nowadays, international migration is widespread; many young people have left their country, Ethiopia, and are working in African countries, America, Europe, and Asia.

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<sup>99</sup> Cf. W. Necel, *New Evangelization and Migration Today*, in: D. Cichy (ed.), *Mission of the Church and Human Migration*, Warszawa, 2014, p. 251-252.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees *Migration and the New Evangelization 2012*, Vatican, 21 September 2011; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/migration/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20110921\\_world-migrants-day.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/migration/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20110921_world-migrants-day.html), [accessed: 24 February 2022].

<sup>101</sup> Benedict XVI, Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See *Sala Regia, Vaticana*, 7 January 2013; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2013/january/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20130107\\_corpo-diplomatico.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2013/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20130107_corpo-diplomatico.html), [accessed: 19.07.2021].

#### 4.7. Influence of children's right

The family, a community of persons, has special attention to the children by developing a profound esteem for their personal dignity and great respect. The generous concern for the rights of their children is the crown of their marriage. Therefore, it is the right of the family to bring up children in accordance with the family's own traditions, religious and cultural values, with the necessary instruments, means, and institutions<sup>102</sup>. However, the rearing of children has its background and is influenced by the culture, tradition, politics, religious teachings, and society's attitudes in the Diocese of Adigrat, as well as in the whole country. According to African cultural views, the primary purpose of marriage is to produce children, and children are the seal and glory of marriage and they belong to the community<sup>103</sup>. Also, among the Tigrayan communities, in Ethiopian multi-culture in general, children belong not only to parents and close relatives but also to the community. Everyone is responsible for caring for and safeguarding the children. Consequently, anyone of the community members can correct and discipline it. Among Tigrayan communities, children are taught obedience and respect towards their parents and other older people, which helps them to acquire various kinds of social status and to increase responsibilities that assist them as they grow older. They may be able to participate and share in the physical, economic, social and religious lives of their family as well as in the society<sup>104</sup>.

When children break moral law in the Tigrayan community, they were corrected by the first person who sees them, and the parents feel shame for their child breaking the moral law. Nobody complains about the correction or punishment that was taken<sup>105</sup>. In past decades many things changed, and challenges and threats appeared that affect the children's physical and emotional spheres. Organizations and individuals severely conduct

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* (henceforth: FC.), Rome, 1981, no. 14, 26 & 46; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>103</sup> Cf. J. S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, Nairobi, 1986, p. 108-109.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 108-109.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 176-179.

to breach childrens well-being or even treat the child not as human beings but as goods to sell. Hence, in today's world, taking into account all the dangers, suffering, and damage that children face, conventions and laws have been introduced safeguard children's rights, dignity, and self-esteem to secure all children's rights to survive, grow and develop, within the context of physical, emotional and social well-being of each child's total potential capacity<sup>106</sup>.

Following conventions and laws introduced, new trends appeared that had never existed in the culture of the Tigrayan community. The ties of the communities weaken very much, and the joint responsibility of the children is disappearing. The community was responsible for education, enabling, and shaping the young generation. But, nowadays, the bondage between neighbors, parents, children, and the elderly is very loose. Youngsters rarely accompany their parents on Sundays going to Mass, and obedience to their parents and respect for the elders is becoming valueless. The children's right is supposed to strengthen the custom and traditional bondages of the community. But it influenced the social values and appeared as a threat to the community and the schools. So, the parents began to have a different mentality and approach toward the teachers in the school and anyone who talked to their children. Therefore, the system of disciplining children, religious education, and formation for the young generation are at risk among the societies in the diocese. Religious education and formation guidance is centered only in the parishes. There is a need to assist parents in the formation and disciplining of children.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter recalled the challenges that affected the Christians in the Diocese of Adigrat. The challenges mentioned are becoming a spiritual danger for Catholics today, particularly young people. Social media plays a role in spreading various kinds of information and becomes means to the other challenges affecting the lives of Christians. Pieces of information either strengthen the relationship between the communities or

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<sup>106</sup> M. Butrymowicz, *Children's Rights in International Law*, in: E. Osewska & J. Stala (eds.), *The Contemporary Family: Local and European Perspectives*, Krakow, 2015, 125-126.

disintegrate them. Thus, information should always be correct, accurate, and complete because it helps build up and spread Christian values among communities and enables them to defend the truth. If social media is used correctly, it can be a means of spiritual growth, excellent service to all people, and a path for evangelization according to the mission of the Church and the plan of God through making Jesus Christ the center of the young generation's daily life.

The young people are living in a world where secularism is spreading, religious pluralism is in progress from time to time, unemployment is increasing and poverty is blossoming. Politicians are not able to bring peace to their citizens and as a consequence displacement and migration are affecting the lives of the youth. The new human rights of children are influencing the life of parents. The Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese is living where is a great number of young generations. There are great opportunities and possibilities where there is the majority of the youngest population. The Church can play a great role in helping young people to see their opportunities and possibilities through discovering their talents. Therefore, the Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese needs to give the young generation special attention to be effective in a particular way through youth pastoral ministry, the topic which will be discussed in the next chapter.

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **PERSPECTIVES FOR MORE EFFECTIVE YOUTH PASTORAL MINISTRY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter articulates to answer the question: What can be done among the young people of Adigrat Diocese through youth pastoral ministry? This question aid in proposing recommendations and how to act effectively. Nowadays, young people live in a world gripped by crisis, and at the same time, some opportunities can give hope. So, here we shall discuss and focus on what should be done to be effective in youth pastoral ministries in the Catholic Church of Adigrat. The Assembly of the Catholic Bishops of Ethiopia (ACBE) writes “It is of no use to declare rhetorically that the youth are the hope for tomorrow if they do not have much hope in the present”<sup>1</sup>. This shows that young people are the present and the future of society. The young generation needs to have a suitable foundation to prepare well and be the hope of the future. They need to get a base where they can exercise their talents while still, they are young. It is the present that gives hope to the young people and shows the situation of the future and how it will be in their hands. So, it is important to see the future of the young people at present time by giving them a chance and being close to them and guiding them. Therefore, this chapter will try to show the practical solution to be effective youth pastoral ministry among young generation.

### **5.1. Listening and identifying the specific needs of the young people**

There are different cultures in the world. Young people especially have their own distinct culture from adults and welcome modern culture with open arms. As a result, they are its highest communicators and its greatest victims. Furthermore, there is also a universal youth culture, with its symbols, myths, rituals, fashion, language, and value system with

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<sup>1</sup> ACBE, *The Church We Want to be: Elements for a Common Vision of the Pastoral Action of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, 2002, no. 44, p. 20.



an affinity of values, ideals, interests, and behavior patterns among young people throughout the world<sup>2</sup>. For this reason, the young people of the Adigrat Diocese are living where so many ideas and temptations are communicating. Thus, listening is necessary to draw vital lessons for pastoral ministries and work with young people.

Listening in communication is the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages. Listening has its own processes and stages.

1. Receiving (hearing). It is giving attention and intentional focus on hearing a speaker's message.
2. Understanding (learning). It is the way to learn the meaning of the message, and symbols we have seen and heard which is not always easy. It is the way to decide what the message means.
3. Remembering (recalling). Remembering is important in listening to be effective in its mission to accomplish the message and it is better to be selective. If not our listening does not have meaning.
4. Evaluating (judging). This stage requires one to be an active listener. Active listeners can weigh evidence and categories facts from the message or opinion.
5. Responding (answering or feedback). It is a reaction to the message. It can be emotional and intellectual<sup>3</sup>.

The youth pastoral ministers of the Adigrat Diocese, as the disciples of Jesus Christ, to be effective and successful in their ministry is important to cultivate the skills of listening. Because the practice of listening to one's heart helps young people pay attention to activities and situations that give them life and promote love<sup>4</sup>. "The practice of listening allows space for the young generation's hearts to speak, to make known their fears or hopes or loves. Any practice that facilitates the expression of emotion is potentially important for

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 106-108, 114.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. B Tyagi, *Listening : An Important Skill and Its Various Aspects*, in: "The Criterion An International Journal in English", (Issue 12, p.1-8, 2013), p. 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. D. F. White, *Practicing discernment with youth: a transformative youth ministry approach*, Eugene,2005, p. 89.

youth ministry”<sup>5</sup>. This shows that listening to and making the young generation express their emotion requires an approach with mutual love and respectful facilitation.

Therefore, the most fundamental one is listening. Because identifying the specific needs of young people should be balanced by seeking ideas from different identifiable groups of the young generation by listening with patience and love<sup>6</sup>. The reason is that each group, such as middle-class groups, upper-class groups, the gangs that are involved with drugs and crime, the group in cities and rural. Their characteristics, needs, challenges, and signs of life and death are not the same for all the classes that youth ministers need to consider to evangelize the young generation effectively<sup>7</sup>.

Listening with love and patience opens the doorway of faith for the audience, just as Jesus Christ did for those who came to meet him in person; for instance, when Jairus came to ask for help with his sick daughter (cf. Mk. 5:21-24, 35-43). Moreover, a listening style of teaching reflects the patience and steady example of Jesus Christ, the master catechist, and minister. He listened carefully to the people who came to him and heard what they said with their words and their hearts and lives<sup>8</sup>. Because listening is concerned with cultivating lives grounded not out of fear or obsession but in the love of God and neighbor<sup>9</sup>.

Listening is an essential art to practice, which is more than simply hearing. It opens the heart that makes possible closeness. It requires genuine spiritual encounters to help and occur the fitting gesture and words that show the listeners or ministers are more than simply bystanders. Furthermore, through such respectful and compassionate listening, all Christians can enter the path of proper growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God’s love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives, additionally, listening represents a source of hope for every people<sup>10</sup>. Therefore,

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. R. J. McCarty (gen. ed.) with L. Delgatto [et. al.], *The Vision of Catholic Youth Ministry: Fundamentals, Theory, and Practice*, op. cit., p.168.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. B. Huebsch, *Jesus the Master Catechist: Twelve Lessons from Jesus on Being a Catechist*, op. cit., p. 77-83.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. D. F. White, *Practicing discernment with youth: a transformative youth ministry approach*, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. EG. 108 & 171.

listening is the first and most important in youth pastoral ministry to be an effective and influential companion of young people and helps in faith to involve young people in activities in the parishes of the diocese, the topic that will be discussed below.

## **5.2. Involving young people in activities of the Church**

According to Pope John Paul II, there is hope in youth, for they belong to the future and they are the future of the Church. Hence, pastoral activities should be the priority in implementing the mission of the ecclesial community in young people for the future belongs to them<sup>11</sup>. Besides that, according to Pope Francis, young people are not just the future of our world. They are the present of the future, helping to enrich it because they are no longer children. They stand on two feet as adults do, but unlike adults, whose feet are parallel, they always have one foot forward, ready to set out, to spring ahead. Always racing onward. To talk about young people is to talk about the promise and to talk about joy. Young people have so much strength; they are able to look ahead with hope, hold the key to the future, and they have a powerful desire to experience the present moment, to make the most of the opportunities life offers. Furthermore, God's word asks them to enjoy the present, not simply to prepare for the future (cf. Mt. 6:34). So, the present helps them to be open to the future, yet still capable of learning something from the experience of others in times that are changing dramatically<sup>12</sup>.

The young population of the Adigrat Diocese is an unbelievable asset and an unused resource for positive change and growth. For positive development and progress, it is essential to change the old thoughts and systems and realize practically that all baptized are equal in the Church because, according to "biblical anthropology, we are all equal before God"<sup>13</sup>. The Church is a community of persons in faith, and young people are the children of God that live in the same community. As the youngsters are welcomed,

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. DA. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. CV. 16, 64, 134-149, & 174.

<sup>13</sup> H. Knoetze, *Analyzing Transformational Development as Engagement with African Millennials*, in: "International Review of Mission" Vol. 107, Number 2, 2018, p. 484.

involved, and interested by the community, they can realize and understand their particular gifts, talents, and needs, which gives them freedom and space to encounter Jesus Christ.

Observing the system of the Church and looking at its activities, even though the Mother Church has the ambition of fully conscious and active participation by all the faithful, which is the right and obligation of all the faithful because of their Baptism, practically little succeeded yet<sup>14</sup>. It especially reveals little attention to the role of young people as agents in the mission of the Church in the diocese.

The presence and involvement of the young generation in all activities of the Church is a gift to the entire community. Leaders must involve young people authentically and avoid isolating youth in all activities, especially in community liturgy, which is integral to fostering the communal faith identity of the young generation<sup>15</sup>. The vibrancy that young people add to the liturgy is a great sign of hope for the community. The youth can impact by creating a sense of welcome and inspiration for all community members regardless of age<sup>16</sup>.

One of the functions of the Church's activity is financial assistance. This extension of financial support is accomplished through the collection of tithes, a share of mass offerings, and other forms of charity. The young generation is essential to involve in giving, that is through what the parents decided to give is good to divide among the family members with their youngsters and give. It is also good to arrange for the young people to participate in collecting the offertory in the Church. These help them understand their duty in the Church and learn how they can dedicate themselves. The young people's success in life, spiritual growth, and deepening of faith depend on how they are welcomed, inspired, involved, taught, get treatment, and assisted and trained by different kinds of formation and continuous courses, which will be addressed below.

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. A. Flannery (ed.), Second Vatican Council Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (henceforth: SC.), New York, 1981, no. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. R. J. McCarty (gen. ed.) with L. Delgatto [et. al.], *The Vision of Catholic Youth Ministry: Fundamentals, Theory, and Practice*, op. cit., 2013, p. 167.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 169.

### 5.3. Provide continuous and concrete courses

Transformation is a lifelong process that seeks daily accompaniment. Continuous courses are essential for forming and deepening the young generation's faith to help them be with Jesus Christ (cf. Mk. 3: 13-19). The courses aim to develop a more profound and concrete relationship, communion, and friendship with the savior Jesus Christ. The system must target to help renew the participant's life compared with the situation of the time. A teaching that is deeper than the teaching given before would be beneficial.

If the Catholic Church of Adigrat is to succeed and prosper, it must offer young people a spiritually challenging and world-shaping vision that meets their hunger for the chance to participate in a worthy adventure by providing continuous courses<sup>17</sup>. As the Holy Father John Paul II emphasizes in the earthly pilgrim life, young people look for someone who knows how to speak with them about the problems which make them worry. They need someone who understands them and proposes solutions, values, and perspectives that brighten their future. This is possible through continuous commitment of the Church to young people. The essential focus must be on elements of a pedagogical and methodological order that can in no way fail to acknowledge that pastoral care of the various vocations is a primary duty in the ongoing courses<sup>18</sup>.

The coordinators of the diocese is essential to realizing that the ongoing courses must contain relatively new content and particular methods. It develops as a harmonious and vital process rooted in the teaching provided previously and calls for adaptations, updating, and modifications, but without sharp breaks in continuity. Its aim is the promotion of a general and integral process of constant growth, deepening all aspects of

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<sup>17</sup> USCCB, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, op. cit., p.10.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Message for the XXXII World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, Vatican, 18 October 1994, no. 2-3; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/vocations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_18101994\\_world-day-for-vocations.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/vocations/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_18101994_world-day-for-vocations.html), [accessed: 04.03.2022].

human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral formation, and ensuring active and harmonious integration based on religious charity<sup>19</sup>.

As the young generation becomes more welcomed, inspired, trained, and motivated, religious leaders, youth ministers, and leaders can facilitate more theoretical and practical formation and courses. Theoretical and empirical approaches are essential to assist youth in seeing and understanding the broader picture and lifting them out of the immediacy and closeness of concrete experience, making them feel that they are part of a process where they are experiencing growth, enthusiasm, etc., and motivation also grows and transform. So, besides the continuous courses, it should be essential to include talks and readings that will help youth obtain a more systematic formation and training<sup>20</sup>. Similarly, profound evangelization and catechesis programs must be given continuously to the young generation.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, it is not always easy to attract and inspire youth. The methodology and approach of young people's encounters can be an effective strategy for involving and initiating young people and beginning youth groups. It is essential to cooperate with the youth chaplain and parish priest. Because the whole Christians have their contribution and responsibility in the spiritual transformation of youth, and for its effectiveness is vital to have a specialized committee to take on responsibility for these encounters. The committee is good to include married couples and adults who have had experience with youth work and tasks. The members must have a liberating vision that avoids sentimentalism and manipulation of the young generation. Additionally, besides the encounter strategy, it is beneficial to include leadership training for the same purpose in the diocese. Such courses can involve youth, locate potential leaders, train them in leadership skills, and build supportive structures to guarantee evangelization and catechesis process continuity for its constructive, success and fruitfulness of the Catholic Church in

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (henceforth: PDV.), Rome, 1992, no. 71; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031992\\_pastores-dabo-vobis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html), [11 March, 2019].

<sup>20</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 156-157.

the Adigrat Diocese<sup>21</sup>. These courses must include Bible sharing among young people, youth leadership, service around the church, ethics, and moralities. These can bring them closer to Jesus Christ and help them grow spiritually. This topic is the discussion that follows.

#### **5.4. Provide the richness of the Person of Christ among young people**

Christ loves young people and wants to bring them closer to Himself. The young people need to have a profound spiritual experience to fulfill what Jesus Christ says to them (cf. Jn. 2) through their vocation of ordination or marriage, religious and consecrated life. The Church is not ashamed of its youth and never objected to its ideas or language. Instead, the Church's door is always open to young people. The Church believes that the ministry of the New Evangelization and its call for transformation and conversion cannot be achieved without the participation of young people. Therefore, "The Christian community is called to make possible the meeting of the young person with Jesus, making itself the mediator of the call and the teacher of the response which he awaits. It has the mission of bringing young people to the discovery of their personal call to be Church"<sup>22</sup>.

The young people of the Adigrat Diocese have a strong desire and aspiration to be ambassadors of the Word of God and missionaries in their personal lives. In this fast-paced and changing world, even though there is a different endeavor, the young people of the diocese, have not received enough spiritual building-up to assess the threats, the challenges, and the trials they face in light of their faith yet. The Holy Father John Paul II notes that what is needed is a Church for young people who will know how to speak to their hearts and enkindle, comfort, and inspire enthusiasm in it with the joy of the Gospel and the strength of the Eucharist. It is important, that a Church knows how to invite and welcome the person who seeks a purpose and commits his whole existence. A Church that is not

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 158-159.

<sup>22</sup> John Paul II, *Message for the XXXVII World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, Vatican, 18 Oct. 1994, no. 3; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/vocations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_18101994\\_world-day-for-vocations.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/vocations/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_18101994_world-day-for-vocations.html), [accessed: 04 March 2022].

afraid to require much, after having given much; which does not fear asking young people an effort of a noble and authentic adventure such as the following of the Gospel<sup>23</sup>.

In the diocese, effective youth catechesis is vital to present to young people the richness of the person of Jesus Christ. Because the ministry of catechesis helps youth enrich and expand their understanding of the Scriptures and the sacred tradition and their application to life today. The youngsters of the diocese need to live more faithfully as disciples of Jesus Christ in their daily lives, primarily through a life of prayer, justice, and loving service<sup>24</sup>. Effective youth catechesis in the parishes engages young people in an ever-deepening understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. It assists them in applying His teaching to their lives, as well as by engaging them in a systematic study of the Scriptures and Catholic doctrine involving them in prayer and worship and fostering their participation in justice and service. Our efforts in the parishes will help them take their rightful place as young disciples for the Reign of God<sup>25</sup>. Hence, the first and foremost thing to do is that the youth ministers should teach about Jesus Christ, but not first about the Church, the pope, the Scriptures, or even morality. These latter things are all meant to elaborate the deeper reality behind our faith – the very person of Jesus Christ<sup>26</sup>.

Nowadays, the mentality of secularism, the attitude of anti-religious, and religious pluralism are spreading, and religions should be awakened and highlighted the importance of the spiritual and centrality of the Person of Jesus Christ. The young people's spiritual peace is the most important to control their daily lives. However, youth in Ethiopia, the Diocese of Adigrat in particular, feel a lack of spiritual peace. Many young people are in crisis because they lack concrete faith, which is practical and lasting life-giving. George Boran stresses: "Today, there is a search for a religious experience which gives meaning to life and brings back the joy of living. [...] There is a search for a spirituality that gives

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<sup>23</sup> John Paul II, *Message for the XXXII World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, op. cit., no. 2.

<sup>24</sup> USCCB, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. R. J. McCarty (gen. ed.) with L. Delgatto [et. al.], *The Vision of Catholic Youth Ministry: Fundamentals, Theory, and Practice*, op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. B. Huebsch, *Jesus the Master Catechist: Twelve Lessons from Jesus on Being a Catechist*, New London, 2015, p. 67.



unity to life and helps people to concentrate and get in touch with their centre”<sup>27</sup>. This shows that people are enthusiastic and strive for a meaningful life, which needs a new approach and methodology to answer the challenges young people face in their daily lives. Therefore, the main goal of presenting the richness of the Person of Christ among young people is to help and put them in contact with the Person and message of Jesus Christ. Then, the methodology and strategy used to facilitate the personal encounter of young people with the person and message of Jesus Christ must take into account their psychology and culture<sup>28</sup>.

The Holy Father Pope Francis invited all Christians to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least to open our hearts for the Lord to encounter us and ask us to do this daily. Because every step towards Jesus Christ helps to realize that he is always there waiting with open arms<sup>29</sup>. The Lord never excluded anyone from the joy brought by himself<sup>30</sup>. Hence, in the Diocese of Adigrat, there is a traditional adoration program for all Christians. In addition, it is essential to introduce a regular weekly adoration program with a reflection for young people without any contradiction with the typical Sunday adoration program to enable them to have personal experiences and encounters with Jesus Christ. Besides, this provides the richness of the Person of Jesus Christ among all Christians. The Word of God and the Seven Sacraments are the main channels to be discussed below.

#### **5.4.1. The Word of God**

Pope Benedict XVI, in his Post-synodal Apostolic exhortation *Verbum domini*, on the Word of God in the life and mission of the Church, noted that all authentic and living Christian spirituality is based on the Word of God, proclaimed, accepted, celebrated, and meditated upon in the Church. For this reason, the holy Father stated its importance that

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<sup>27</sup> G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 161.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 162-163.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. EG. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete in Domino* (henceforth: GD.), Rome, 1975, no. III, p. 4; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_exh\\_19750509\\_gaudete-in-domino.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19750509_gaudete-in-domino.html), [accessed: March 8, 2022].

the People of God be properly taught and trained to approach the sacred Scriptures in relation to the Church's living Tradition and to recognize in them the very Word of God. In the Diocese of Adigrat, fostering such an approach in the faithful is very important from the standpoint of the spiritual life<sup>31</sup>. Besides, it is important to see what we refer to when we use the expression the 'Word of God'. Taken in a subjective sense, we may say that the Word of God refers to any place where one finds God speaking to His people. When we think about the place of the Word of God, what immediately comes to our mind is the Bible. But the Word of God cannot be reduced to a book. Paul Béré took the idea of Post-synodal Apostolic exhortation *Verbum domini* and tried to show us the expression and clarify what the 'Word of God' stands for or refers to. He noted that God speaks through various channels: Jesus Christ, Scripture, Tradition, cosmos, and conscience<sup>32</sup>.

- 1. Jesus Christ:** In the proper sense, Jesus is the Word made flesh (cf. Jn. 1:1ff). Not only does he reveals by his words and deeds what God has long been telling us (cf. Heb. 1:1ff), but he also explains in human terms, by his whole life, the mystery of God. Through Jesus Christ, we hear God speaking. Because Jesus is the Wisdom of God incarnate, he is his eternal Word who became a mortal man. So that God, who spoke in the past, continues to converse with His people, the Church, which is the spouse of his beloved Son<sup>33</sup>.
- 2. Scripture:** Jesus Christ made possible access to God's word through those who followed Him, listened to Him, experienced His salvific power in His compassionate ministry, and through the written word of the witnesses who lived with Him (cf. 1 Jn. 1:1-4). Hence, the Scripture is the vital path to provide the richness of the person of Jesus Christ among all Christians and through Him to God<sup>34</sup>. Scripture, the written Word of God, is translated into the regional

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. VD. 17 & 121.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. P. Béré, *Scripture Studies and African Theology: A Critical Overview from an Old Testament Perspective*, in: A. E. Orobator (ed.), *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*, New York, 2016, p. 126-129.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. A. Flannery, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei verbum*, New York, 1981, no. 8; Benedict XVI, *Angelus* (St Peter's Square, 4 January 2009).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. VD. 17-19.

language, Tigrigna, a language spoken in Tigray where the Adigrat Diocese is found. As a result, the majority of young people in the diocese can read, speak, and understand. In present times, there is also easy access to different translations of Biblical text and audio prepared for Christians to read and listen to. The challenge is how to distinguish its authenticity, even though it is helpful for those who are faithful and genuine ones who use it well. For this reason, the young people are in need of guidance.

3. **Tradition:** The concept of Tradition points first of all to the soul of a community. The Tradition has a double understanding in the Church: the tradition that passed from the apostles (cf. 1 Cor. 11:2; 22 Thes. 2:15, 3:6; 2 Tim. 2:2), and the ecclesiastical tradition, which carries with it the effort made by various communities to make the Gospel message their own and let it transform and recreate its cultures<sup>35</sup>. As Pope Benedict XVI noted, the word of God is that word preached by the Apostles in obedience to the command of the Risen Jesus (cf. Mk 16:15) and handed on in the Church's living Tradition. Finally, the word of God, attested and divinely inspired, is sacred Scripture, the Old and New Testaments<sup>36</sup>. Therefore, the living Tradition enables the Church to grow through time in the understanding of the truth revealed in the Scripture. Because it is the living Tradition of the Church that makes us adequately understand Sacred Scripture as the Word of God<sup>37</sup>.
4. **Cosmos:** As the Scripture tells us everything that exists does not exist by chance but it is the will and part of God's plan, at whose center is the invitation to partake, in Christ, in the divine life. Creation is born of the Logos and indelibly bears the mark of the creative Reason which orders and directs it. Furthermore, the Holy Scripture teaches us to acknowledge the Creator by contemplating his creation (cf. Wis. 13:5; Rom 1:19-20). Because contemplating the cosmos from

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, New York, 1994, p. 63; Cf. P. Béré, *Scripture Studies and African Theology: A Critical Overview from an Old Testament Perspective*, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. VD. 7.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. DV. 8 & 17.

the perspective of salvation history, we come to realize the unique and singular position occupied by humans in creation (cf. Gen. 1:27)<sup>38</sup>. Pope Francis in his Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* called it 'our common home' because it "is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us"<sup>39</sup>. It is natural to share the situation of life with our sisters and our mother open her arms to embrace us saying you are my son or daughter whom I loved (cf. Mk. 9:7). Therefore, nature is God's handiwork and speaks on God's behalf (cf. Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:19-20)<sup>40</sup>.

- 5. Conscience:** Pope Benedict XVI stated that the creation history of human beings: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27), this enables us to acknowledge the precious gifts that are given to human being by God: the value of our body, the gift of reason, freedom and conscience. Additionally, the holy Father said we discover the 'natural law', which is also called conscience<sup>41</sup>. Therefore, human conscience should not be forgotten as we explore places where God's voice can be heard<sup>42</sup>.

Hence, in the Diocese of Adigrat, providing the richness of Jesus Christ through the Word of God among all Christians, the young people in particular, "help to promote formation, prayer, and knowledge of the Bible in accordance with the Church's faith"<sup>43</sup>. Therefore, in order to achieve providing the richness of the person Jesus Christ in the Adigrat Diocese's pastoral activities, all Christians, particularly youth chaplains, and catechists need to receive suitable training. As Pope Benedict XVI noted, it is essential to give attention to the "biblical apostolate, which is a very valuable means to that end, as the

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. VD. 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> LS. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. P. Béré, *Scripture Studies and African Theology: A Critical Overview from an Old Testament Perspective*, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. VD. 9.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. CCC. 1778; P. Béré, *Scripture Studies and African Theology: A Critical Overview from an Old Testament Perspective*, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>43</sup> VD. 73.

Church's experience has shown"<sup>44</sup>. Thus, the more we grow in our personal relationship with the Word of God, the more we shall realize that Jesus Christ is calling us to holiness in and through the definitive choices by which we respond to his love in our lives, taking up tasks and ministries which help to build the Church. So, in the diocese, all Christians must grow in their relationship with the Word of God, not only because of their Baptism but also in accordance with their call to various states in life<sup>45</sup>.

In addition to that, the Word of God is the base of all authentic Christian spirituality because it is the source of the Church's mission<sup>46</sup>. Pope John Paul II writes "If our faith truly welcomes the word of God, it will lead to a radical "yes" on the part of the believer to Jesus Christ, who is the full and definitive Word of God to the world (cf. Heb. 1:1ff.)"<sup>47</sup>. Therefore, in the Diocese of Adigrat, it is important for the Word of God to be the center in the pastoral care of the Church's life: in the activities of Christian communities, in parishes, associations, and movements, to foster a personal encounter with Christ, who gives himself to us in his Word<sup>48</sup>. In the diocese, all should be taught to seek Christ in faithful meditation on the Word of God and in active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially the Eucharist. Prayerful familiarity and meditative reading of the Word of God, the breaking of the Word through homilies, a humble and loving listening to God who speaks, are among the most important to be taught. Because it is by the light and with the strength of the Word of God that one's own vocation can be carried out. Hence, the pastoral ministers of the diocese must teach the Christians how to approach the Word of God and listen to it as it really is, it brings us into contact with God himself, God speaking to us. It brings us into contact with Christ, the Word of God, the truth, who is at the same time both the way and the life (cf. Jn. 14:6)<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> VD. 75.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. VD. 77.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. VD. 86 & 92.

<sup>47</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (henceforth: PDV.), Rome, 1992, no. 53; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_25031992\\_pastores-dabo-vobis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html), [11 March, 2019].

<sup>48</sup> Cf. VD. 73 & 94.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. PDV. 45 & 47.

#### 5.4.2. The Sacraments as the greatest opportunity for the pastoral care

To make a difference in the lives of young people and to present the richness of Jesus Christ among them, the Sacraments play the greatest role and they are a good and the main path. When the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, the constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* stated that the liturgy is the summit and source of the Church's activity, it went on to speak of worship as communion in holiness, a renewal of the covenant, a mediation of grace, and glorification of God. These statements pertaining to the sacraments in a special way. Hence, for well-disposed members of the faithful, the liturgy, the Sacraments, and Sacramentals sanctify every event of their lives with the divine grace which flows from the paschal mystery of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. So, the Sacraments of the Church are the fruit of the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross<sup>50</sup>.

Jesus Christ established the Sacraments of the new law, to give life and aid to grow in faith. The Seven Sacraments touch all the stages and all the important moments of Christian life from birth to death that makes a resemblance between the stages of natural life and the stages of spiritual life. They give birth and increase, healing and mission to the Christian's life of faith<sup>51</sup>. The Sacraments are called "the Sacraments of faith"<sup>52</sup>. Because they are instituted for the purpose of "sanctifying men, to build up the Body of Christ, and finally, to give worship to God"<sup>53</sup>. The major theological and pastoral characteristic of Catholicism is its commitment to the principle of sacramentality. It is Christ through the Sacraments who is present among the Christians. Because, for Christians, the point of a sacramental encounter with God is the humanity of Jesus Christ, the primordial or primal sacrament<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. SC. 10.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. CCC. 1210.

<sup>52</sup> SC. 59.

<sup>53</sup> CCC. 1123.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 787.

Taken in the more specific sense as those finite realities through which God is communicated to the Church and through which the Church responds to God's self-communication, Sacraments are directly ecclesiological in character. Because their immediate context is the Church. The Sacraments are signs which proclaim faith, signs which express worship, signs of the unity of the Church, signs of Christ's presence, and ultimately of God the Father. Hence, Jesus Christ's presence is signified in every Sacrament. Receiving the Sacraments makes to relate anew to God and Christ, immediately relating the recipient to the Church. It is Jesus Christ who is encountered in the Sacraments. It is Christ who acts in the Sacraments. It is Christ's worship of the Father that is expressed in the Sacraments. Thus, Jesus Christ is the Sacrament; the Seven Sacraments are manifestations of His presence and saving activity on our behalf. We do not encounter Jesus Christ directly, but in the Church, which is his Body. Although it is Jesus Christ who is present and active in every sacramental celebration, it is the Church that makes that celebration available and mediates his presence and saving action<sup>55</sup>.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, the biggest pastoral struggle is also the greatest pastoral opportunity in the service of the people. The Christians, even those who have little relation with the Church, never fail to come seeking sacraments, particularly for baptism or marriage. Even though not as numerous as in previous years, they still come to the parish priest asking for sacraments. Their idea of what they are asking for, may vary from their understanding of baptism or marriage. It is essential to welcome them with open arms and love, no matter how limited their faith or understanding of what they are asking. No matter how weak their connection or how seemingly shallow their motivation. In the ministries of the Church, Sacraments are essential opportunities and the greatest possibility of conversation, conversion, and transformation. It is a special occasion to accompany the faithful from preparation to the celebration of the Sacraments as well as to give the deepest care from birth to death. It requires a wholehearted willingness to walk with them until they are ready to celebrate the Sacraments with full understanding and be accompanied by

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 788-791.

a clear definition of what readiness looks like. Sacraments are not the principles that control the cheque of Christians until they fulfill their duties in the Church but they are the mysteries of the Church and the path to salvation<sup>56</sup>.

The Adigrat Catholic Church through its sacramental structure, like the Universal Church, brings to all its members the Seven Sacraments for spiritual life. Sacraments are the way and means of grace that Christ gave us so that sanctifying grace can flow to and reach our souls. Thus, Sacraments are essential possibilities to give care for those who understand them and to seek those who are not in good connection with the Sacraments according to the teaching of the Catholic Church<sup>57</sup>. Sacraments are the outward signs instituted by Christ to give grace to the soul. What this means is that the Sacraments are not just mere signs; they do not merely signify Divine grace, but in virtue of their Divine institution, they cause that grace in the souls of those who receive them<sup>58</sup>. The Seven Sacraments are divided into three groups: the Sacraments of Christian initiation, the Sacraments of healing, and the Sacraments at the service of communion and the mission of the faithful<sup>59</sup>.

#### **5.4.2.1. The Sacraments of Christian Initiation**

The first three Sacraments are called the Sacraments of Christian initiation. These Sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, and the Eucharist. These Sacraments constitute unity because they lay the foundation of every Christian life. The faithful share in the divine nature given to human beings through the grace of Christ and bears a certain likeness to the origin, development, and nourishing of natural life. Every Christian is born anew by Baptism, strengthened by the sacrament of Confirmation, and receives the food of eternal life in the Eucharist<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. J. Mallon, *Divine Renovation: Bringing your parish from maintenance to mission*, New London, 2014, p. 197-198.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. L. D'Angelo, *Come Home...The Door is open: an invitation to reconciliation*, Meriden, 1982, p. 138-139.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. CCC. 1131-1134.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. CCC. 1211.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. CCC. 1212; see also: Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, *Directory for Catechesis*, Vatican, 2020, no. 70, p. 61-62.



In the Diocese of Adigrat, the participation of the community in the process of catechesis of Christian initiation is important. Because catechesis is an ongoing, life-long process in which the whole parish has a part. Hence, the whole community must take responsibility to be more effective in the Christian initiation and continuing education of all its members, both young and old. In the ministry of pastoral care, Sacraments become the responsibility not only of religious educators but of the whole community. It challenges all of the several ministries within the parish to become more deliberate in their support of the growth of faith of parishioners of every age<sup>61</sup>.

The Sacrament of Baptism is the base of the whole Christian life, the gateway of life in the Spirit, and the door that gives access to the other Sacraments. According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, through baptism, we are freed from sin and reborn as sons and daughters of God, become members of Christ, incorporated into the Church, and made sharers in the mission of the Church<sup>62</sup>. As St. Gregory of Nyssa also taught “Baptism is the expiation of sins, the remission of crimes, the cause of renovation and regeneration”<sup>63</sup>. Baptism is the first Sacrament that brings grace to souls for the first moment that is so vital for salvation<sup>64</sup>. It is necessary if a person is to enter the Kingdom of Heaven because Jesus Christ said: “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit” (Jn. 3:5).

Jesus Christ told his disciples to “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28: 19-20). Hence, the Church has a great task to participate in the mission of Christ by going, baptizing, and teaching the Sacraments of faith among the community of believers<sup>65</sup>. Pastoral action nourishes the faith of the baptized and helps them in the Christian life’s

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, New York, 2001, p. 173.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. CCC. 1213.

<sup>63</sup> *An Introduction To The Catholic Teaching On The Sacraments*, <https://stmaryscaldwell.com/sacraments>, [accessed: 17.10.2022].

<sup>64</sup> Cf. CCC. 1131-1134; see also: Cf. L. D’Angelo, *Come Home...The Door is open: an invitation to reconciliation*, op. cit., p. 139.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. J. Mallon, *Divine Renovation: Bringing your parish from maintenance to mission*, op. cit., p. 198-199.

ongoing process of conversion. In the Church, the baptized, moved always by the Spirit, nourished by the Sacraments, by prayer and by the practice of charity, and assisted by multiple forms of ongoing education in the faith, seek to realize the desire of Christ: “Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt. 5:48)<sup>66</sup>.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, there are no catechumens and the Christians are mostly aware of the baptism of infants. Some Christians baptize immediately when the mother would have recovered from childbirth and is able to go to church. But others keep the tradition of Leviticus 12 and if a woman gives birth to a son bring the child to baptize on the 40<sup>th</sup> day or if she gives birth to a daughter then bring the child to be baptized on the 80<sup>th</sup> day. The concept of this tradition needs deep instruction through catechesis. The concept of Lev. 12 in the Old Testament is much different from the concept of baptism in the New Testament. Childbirth does not make a woman unclean. Childbirth is one of the main goals of marriage. In many parishes of the diocese, baptism happens either before mass, after mass, or other time privately. As a result, many Catholics perceive baptism as a private rite of passage for the biological family and for many, has become primarily a celebration of the biological family, a time of thanksgiving for the arrival of a child and an embrace, to some extent, of the faith as some kind of mysterious good. For some of those who have little connection with the parishes and come for baptism, it is nothing more than these<sup>67</sup>.

As Father James Mallon writes “at the heart of baptism is membership in the Church. It is not private, and following Jesus does come with all kinds of strings attached”<sup>68</sup>. Through baptism, a child becomes a member of Christ and is integrated into the community of Christians. Baptism is a good opportunity for all the baptized to renew their baptismal vows. With proper assistance, then, it is possible to joyfully baptize a child or children. The family benefits by making their profession of faith standing before and with the community instead of baptizing a child either before or after the mass only with

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. DfC. no. 35, p. 44.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. J. Mallon, *Divine Renovation: Bringing your parish from maintenance to mission*, op. cit., p. 221-222.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

their family members<sup>69</sup>. Therefore, the Diocese of Adigrat must work to adopt and implement a working model to deal with these realities and apply outlined principles in all parishes. After the Sacrament of baptism, the Christian initiation is followed by the Sacrament of confirmation.

Confirmation is the sacrament through which the Holy Spirit comes to make a person a strong, perfect Christian, and an ambassador of Christ. It also enables a person to profess faith and strengthens against the dangers of salvation<sup>70</sup>. The Catholic Church of Adigrat Diocese is Geez Rite. In the Geez Rite, the first three Sacraments of Christian initiation are administered together without separating them. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) has never separated them and has viewed them together<sup>71</sup>. Nowadays, in the Catholic Church of Adigrat, the sacraments of baptism and confirmation are viewed together. The three Sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and holy orders confer, in addition to grace, a sacramental character or ‘indelible seal’ by which the Christian is set apart to share in Christ’s eternal priesthood. Thus, these sacraments can never be repeated<sup>72</sup>. The Catholic Church of Adigrat considers that the same oil of chrism is given with baptism and the one who is already baptized receives the Holy Spirit. Considering that the post-baptismal rite that was reserved for the bishop is canceled. When the bishop visits a parish, he reminds them that they have already received the same chrism of confirmation during the baptism and recite the general renewal prayer.

However, the cancelation of the post-baptismal rite that was reserved for the bishop weakened the catechetical process and the bishop’s pastoral ministry in the parishes. The person received the Holy Spirit under the responsibility of the parents and godparents. So, the gentle slap of the bishop to a person reminds him or her that he or she is standing from that moment by himself or herself by taking responsibility to be the ambassador of Jesus Christ and to make followers of Christ. Therefore, catechesis is an ongoing, lifelong

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 221-226.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 816.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. CCC. 1121.

process in which the whole parish has a part. It is essential, therefore, that the catechesis of confirmation and its specific ministry post-baptismal rite be organized in the parishes, which is an opportunity for the bishop's pastoral visit to encourage the faithful. It is a chance to make the whole community more effectively responsible for the Christian initiation and continuing education of all its members<sup>73</sup>. Hence, the Diocese of Adigrat must give attention to the pastoral need for the Sacrament of Confirmation and its effective need, which is specifically the act of the Universal Church. Because as a continuation and/or ratification of the Christian's baptismal commitment, confirmation expresses the essential missionary character of the Church and its nature as the Temple of the Holy Spirit<sup>74</sup>. Additionally, confirmation is the completion of initiation into the life of the Church and brings about the perfection of baptismal grace. The Holy Spirit was received at baptism and has been always present in the life of the Christian. This biblical and ancient understanding of the Sacrament of Confirmation is much more prevalent today<sup>75</sup>. During the Christian initiation, the Sacrament of confirmation was followed by the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The council of Trent taught that the Eucharist is not simply one of the sacraments but is preeminent among them because Christ is present in the Eucharist even before the Sacrament is used<sup>76</sup>. The Holy Fathers of the Second Vatican Council additionally stated that the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life"<sup>77</sup>. The Holy Eucharist completes the Sacraments of the Christian initiation and it is a means to participate with the whole community in the Lord's own sacrifice. Receiving the first Holy Communion with and among the whole community signifies the child's communion with the adult Church and incorporates them more fully into the worshipping community<sup>78</sup>. Hence, the Eucharist following the sacrament of baptism is necessary if a person is to enter

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<sup>73</sup> Cf. J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, op. cit., p. 87-88, 173-178.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 819.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, op. cit., p. 218-219.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 820.

<sup>77</sup> LG. 11.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. CCC. 1322-1323; J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, op. cit., p. 94 & 96.

the kingdom of Heaven because Christ said “whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day” (Jn. 6:54). The first specific celebration of the Sacrament leaves special memorable occasion on the person. In their life, all Christians remember some special things, particularly regarding confirmation and the first Holy Communion.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his Post-synodal Apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, describes that the Sacrament of charity, the Holy Eucharist is the gift that Jesus Christ makes of himself, thus revealing to us God’s infinite love for every man and woman. In the sacrament of the altar, the Lord truly becomes food for us, to satisfy our hunger for truth and freedom, meets us, and becomes our companion along the way. Since only the truth can make us free (cf. Jn. 8:32), Christ becomes for us the food of truth. Jesus Christ is the Truth in person, drawing the world to himself. In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus shows us in particular the truth about love which is the very essence of God<sup>79</sup>. Therefore, above all “the Eucharist is the great school of love”<sup>80</sup>.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, when children reach the age of seven, they prepare for the first Holy Communion. Mostly because of the geographical distances, there is very little interaction or involvement of the parents during the preparation. Their children are “about being ready to live out full membership in the Church”<sup>81</sup>. Hence, it is important to arrange programs where parents accompany their children and pay close attention to the celebration day of the first Holy Communion. Besides that, the preparation period for the first Holy Communion is an essential opportunity in pastoral ministries to remind the communities that the first Communion is a Sacrament of Initiation. Like Baptism and Confirmation, it is celebrated by the entire Church, represented by the local parish. It is an essential opportunity to teach about matter and form and retell the story of the Last Supper. Because the Eucharist is the Sacrament of Communion and a powerful sacrament of God’s

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* (henceforth: SCa.), Rome, 2007, no. 1-2; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20070222\\_sacramentum-caritatis.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html), [accessed: 05.05.2018].

<sup>80</sup> Benedict XVI, *Message to the youth of the world on the occasion of the 22<sup>nd</sup> World Youth Day*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>81</sup> J. Mallon, *Divine Renovation: Bringing your parish from maintenance to mission*, op. cit., p. 220.

great love, it celebrates the oneness of all people in Christ and with one another. As communicants, Christians are no longer young or old, rich or poor, but as Christ's body and God's people, they are indivisible. Hence, the Eucharist is rightly called Communion<sup>82</sup>.

Jesus Christ founded the Church and instituted the Eucharist. He is present in the Eucharist in a sacrificial way in the Holy Mass. The Eucharist is the living bread that gives eternal life (Jn. 6:51-57). Thus, the life of the Church is in the Sacraments, particularly the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist<sup>83</sup>. In the Diocese of Adigrat, it was not long ago; commonly, everyone believed in the Church's teaching and desired to go to church. In previous times, at least one from the family must attend Holy Mass on Sundays<sup>84</sup>. Nowadays, it is not such serious among the families of the diocese. The parishes are good at preparing the children for Holy Communion. Apart from the fact that there is no serious follow-up after the first Holy Communion, keeping the Sunday obligation is essential. As Pope Benedict XVI elaborates, "the life of faith is endangered when we lose the desire to share in the celebration of the Eucharist and its commemoration of the paschal victory"<sup>85</sup>. In the Catholic Church of Adigrat, such situations need to be given attention and to be taken as an opportunity to deepen the faith of the Christians regarding "the Lord's Day is the lord of days"<sup>86</sup> through continuous catechesis for "the Eucharist is the sacrament of our redemption. It is the sacrament of the Bridegroom and of the Bride"<sup>87</sup>.

#### **5.4.2.2. The Sacraments of Healing**

Through the Sacraments of Christian initiation, we are initiated into the Christian community and receive the new life of Christ. However, initiation is only the beginning of the process. The process has many ups and downs that come from the interior and exterior

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<sup>82</sup> Cf. J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, op. cit., p. 93-98..

<sup>83</sup> Cf. CCC. 1324-1327.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, op. cit., p. 187.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Sca. 73.

<sup>86</sup> DD. 2.

<sup>87</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic letter *Mulieris dignitatem*, Rome, 1988, no. 26; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_letters/1988/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apl\\_19880815\\_mulieris-dignitatem.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html), [accessed: 07.11.2019].

weaknesses of human beings. Because we are not already fully mature in Christ by the reality of having been initiated by the Sacrament of Christian initiation. As the Scripture teaches, the invitation to a Christian existence is a call to perfection: “be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt. 5:48). God’s will is for everyone to be sanctified (cf. 1 Thes. 4:3; Eph. 1:4), and to become as saints (cf. Eph. 5:3). Jesus Christ taught us to love God with all our mind, soul, heart, and strength as ourselves (cf. Mk. 12:30) in order to inherit the Kingdom of God in Heaven. Human beings are weak. Thus, we all are prone to sin and vulnerable to illness, physical incapacity, and finally death. Therefore, the Sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick are celebrated by the Church as a sign and instrument of God’s and of Christ’s abiding healing power<sup>88</sup>.

The sacramentality and originality of the Sacrament of Penance are in John 20: 22-23, which records the words of the Risen Lord appeared, He had breathed on them and said: “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained” (see also: Mt. 16: 19; 18:18). This text is entirely consistent with Jesus’ abiding concern about sin and His readiness to forgive and to heal (e.g. Mt. 9: 2-8; Mk. 2: 5-12; Lk. 5: 20-26), where He cured the paralytic at Capernaum is mentioned of the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sins is also prominent in the preaching of the Apostles (cf. Act. 2:38; 5: 43; 13: 38; 26: 18)<sup>89</sup>. Penance is closely connected with reconciliation, for reconciliation with God, with oneself, and with others implies overcoming that radical break, which is sin. Therefore, the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation is for those whose bond with Church, and ultimately with God and Christ, has been weakened, or even severed by sin<sup>90</sup>. However, it is not a strict requirement to avail oneself of the sacrament of confession if one remains free of mortal sin. Nevertheless

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. CCC. 1420; and R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 835.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 835-837.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic exhortation *Reconciliation and Penance* (henceforth: RaP.), Rome, 1984, no. 4; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_02121984\\_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_02121984_reconciliatio-et-paenitentia.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

strongly recommended by the Church for it helps us to form our conscience, fight against evil tendencies, let ourselves be healed by Christ, and progress in the life of the Spirit<sup>91</sup>.

The term and concept of penance are very complex. As Pope John Paul II notes, penance means the inmost change of heart under the influence of the Word of God and in the perspective of the Kingdom (cf. Mt. 4:17; Mk. 1: 15). It is also changing one's life in harmony with the change of heart (cf. Lk. 3:8). It is one's whole existence that becomes penitential, that means, directed toward a continuous striving for what is better. But doing penance means something authentic and effective only if it is translated into deeds and acts of penance. It is an effort to overcome in oneself what is of the flesh so that what is spiritual may prevail (cf. 1 Cor. 3: 1-20). Penance is a continual effort to rise from the things of here below on earth to the things of above in Heaven, where Christ is (cf. Col. 3: 1f). Therefore, Penance is a conversion that passes from the heart to deeds and then to the Christian's whole life. It also means repentance. Then, reconciliation to be complete necessarily requires liberation from sin, and personal conversion is the necessary path to harmony between individuals<sup>92</sup>. Because it is the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation that prepares the way for each individual, even those weighed down with great faults. In this sacrament, each person can uniquely experience mercy, that is, the love which is more powerful than sin<sup>93</sup>.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, the participation of young people in Sunday's Mass is so far so good though some never go for Mass. However, their interest in the sacrament of penance is not much compared to the elderly. The elderly know, understand, and believe better the power of prayer and the effect of sin than the young people. The youth question the private confession of the priest, which is the influence of Protestantism but not based on an understanding of the doctrine and teaching of the Catholic Church. They have the enthusiasm to know and discuss the meaning of life, the mystery of faith, and the teaching

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<sup>91</sup> Cf. CCC.1458; M. J. Zia, *The Enduring Faith and Timeless Truths of Fulton Sheen*, Cincinnati, 2015, p. 41.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. RaP. 4 & 26.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical letter *Dives in misericordia* (henceforth: DiM.), Rome, 1980, no. 13; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_30111980\\_dives-in-misericordia.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30111980_dives-in-misericordia.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].



of the Church deeply. At the same time, they want to practice the teaching of the Protestants and their activity in the Catholic Church<sup>94</sup>. As a result, there is a loss of the necessary reverence for the Sacrament of Penance and they receive the Holy Communion without attending to the Sacrament of Confession.

Besides, Louise D'Angelo<sup>95</sup> said that it is amazing to discover how many people cannot be honest with themselves regarding virtue and religion and he appealed to every one of us to be honest with ourselves<sup>96</sup>. All human beings have faults and weaknesses. It is hard to see personal errors and spiritual necessity when one becomes dishonest with oneself. This makes it lukewarm, and it is hard to be corrected. One of the excellent characteristics of spiritual transformation is the ability to discover one's own faults and weaknesses. Once a person finds personal faults and defects, he or she is capable of having close unification with God and never stop discovering more faults and weaknesses, and never cease to do penance for personal sin, which is the path to progress and perfection<sup>97</sup>.

As human beings, we do not need to escape from our humanity in order to share in God's divinity. Rather, it is in and through humanity that we can receive divine grace and advance toward heavenly glory. Through the sacrament of confession, our whole self can be restored to communion with God through the mediation of another whole self-configured to be a dispenser of God's mercy through priestly ordination<sup>98</sup>. Therefore, in the Diocese of Adigrat, first of all, the ministers of the Church need to provide catechesis on penance and reconciliation. Its source must be based on the richness of the biblical teaching, particularly the New Testament, on the need to rebuild the covenant with God in Christ the Redeemer and Reconciler through its value of conversion. For this reason, the catechists of the diocese should explain to the Christians the concept and terms adapted to the faithful's various ages. For a balanced spiritual and pastoral orientation, it is important

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<sup>94</sup> Cf. L. D'Angelo, *Come Home...The Door is open: an invitation to reconciliation*, Meriden, 1982, p. 45-46.

<sup>95</sup> Louise D'Angelo is founder of the Maryheart Crusaders, an approved national lay group that seeks to reunite fallen-away Catholics and stimulate lukewarm Catholics toward a fuller spiritual life.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. L. D'Angelo, *Come Home...The Door is open: an invitation to reconciliation*, op. cit., p. 45-48.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. M. J. Zia, *The Enduring Faith and Timeless Truths of Fulton Sheen*, op. cit., p. 42-43.

for the diocese to teach the faithful to make use of the sacrament of penance for venial sins also. The frequent use of the sacrament of confession strengthens the awareness that even minor sins offend God and harm the Church, the body of Christ. Above all, it should be emphasized that the grace proper to the sacramental celebration has great remedial power and help to remove the very roots of sins<sup>99</sup>. Hence, in the Diocese of Adigrat, the preparation of the young generation for the first reconciliation is a good opportunity in pastoral care to teach and help them how to keep the Sacrament of Penance in its appropriate place in the lives of today's Catholics<sup>100</sup>.

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, which is also called Extreme unction, is for those whose bond with God and the Church has been weakened by illness or physical incapacity. The origin of this sacrament is in James 5: 14-16. Although in this part of the letter, is not mentioned in the other part of the New Testament about the anointing of the sick as a sacred rite<sup>101</sup>. The purpose of this sacrament is to heal and to restore not only moral and/or physical health but also to restore the spiritual health of the sick person to full communion with the Church to participate once again in the life and mission of the Church. Besides that, the sacrament is the sacrament of conversion and reconciliation<sup>102</sup>.

However, in the Diocese of Adigrat, the Christians are not comfortable with this sacrament. When someone mentions calling the priest for the sick, the patient and those around the person immediately think that the person is going to die. The people do not take it as the sacrament of healing, restoration, conversion, and reconciliation. They do not consider dual benefits before and after death, especially physical and spiritual healing here on earth before death. Even if the person dies the sacrament of anointing of the sick helps to be reconciled with His Savior from the wound of sin. Hence, the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is a good opportunity in pastoral care. It gives the opportunity to provide for the sick and the community of faithful to think about the things above and the

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<sup>99</sup> Cf. RaP. 26 & 32.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. J. Dunlap, *Practical Catechesis: Visions and Tasks for Catechetical Leaders*, op. cit., p. 101-108.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 843-844.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. RaP. 27.

weakness and limitations of human life. It is important that the pastoral ministers of the diocese to realize that it is a chance to deal with the sick person's sense of isolation, concerning the family and relatives that are affected by the illness and provide words of consolation in fidelity to Christ's command to visit the sick (cf. Mt. 25: 36)<sup>103</sup>.

In the sacraments of healing "Jesus is disclosed in these sacraments as one who heals and forgives, and the Church is disclosed as a healing and forgiving community, as the sacrament of the healing and forgiving Lord. The Church is also the Penitent Church, ever bathing the feet of Christ with its tears and hearing his words, "Neither do I condemn you" (Jn. 8:11)"<sup>104</sup>. Therefore, the pastoral ministers of the Adigrat Diocese need to teach that the sacraments of Penance and Anointing of the Sick are the sacraments of healing, restorative, conversion, and reconciliation physically and spiritually.

#### **5.4.2.3. The Sacraments at the service of communion and the mission of the Church**

The common vocation and the official call of all Christians in the Church come through the sacraments of Christian initiation, particularly through baptism. The first three sacraments confer the necessary grace needed for life according to the Spirit during this life as pilgrims on the way toward the homeland in heaven<sup>105</sup>. The basic call of all Christians is rooted in baptism. Because they are incorporated into Christ through baptism. They are all bound to pursue in their own special way to participate in the one priesthood of Christ<sup>106</sup>.

As Mary Carol Kendzia noted there are two kinds of vocation in the lives of Christians, namely: *primary vocation* and *secondary vocation*. The *primary vocation* of Christians is the first call to belong to the people of God: to accept Jesus as Lord, to become a disciple, and to participate in the salvation plan of Jesus Christ, being a witness in their daily life and preaching the Good News. The *secondary vocation* is the way Christians live

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. CCC. 1499-1532, 847-848.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 836.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. CCC. 1533.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. M. Dolan, *Partnership in Lay Spirituality: Religious and Laity find new ways*, Dublin, 2007, p.48-49.

out the primary vocation<sup>107</sup>. The primary vocation, as the Second Vatican Council stated, is the call of all people to a life of holiness. They are bound to pursue holiness and the perfect fulfillment of their proper state. The second vocation is a call to live as Christians in its corresponding commitment and service that is celebrated as a sacrament: one is the sacrament of matrimony; the other is the sacrament of Holy Orders. There has long been a tendency in the Church to apply the term vocation only to Holy Orders and religious life<sup>108</sup>. The Christians in the Adigrat Diocese have the same tendency still today. Society always expects their child after reaching the age of adulthood either to be married or ordained. But mostly, the people do not consider marriage as a vocation or call to service and commitment.

However, St. Paul gives us a broader notion of vocation or calling. He said that all had been called to fellowship with Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:9), for He “died for all so that those who live might no longer live for themselves” (2 Cor. 5:15). Hence, it can be said that all people have a vocation, a call from God to share in the redemption and eternal life Jesus came to bring<sup>109</sup>. When the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council write “all humanity is called to belong to the new people of God”<sup>110</sup> confirmed the conviction of St. Paul. Christ loves young people and wants to bring them closer to himself. The young people need to have profound knowledge and spiritual experience to fulfill what Christ says (cf. Jn. 2) in the service and mission of the Church through the holy marriage, ordination to the priesthood, or religious life.

Therefore, the Catholic Church of Adigrat Diocese must help young people in discovering how they can live and discern their vocation to holiness. Young people need to know themselves and be honest about their dreams and capabilities. Such kind of assessment gives the youth clues about what kind of secondary vocation may be theirs.

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<sup>107</sup> M. C. Kendzia, *Catholic Update guide to Vocations*, Cincinnati, 2012, p.1-8.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. LG. 39-42; also cf. M. Dolan, *Partnership in Lay Spirituality: Religious and Laity find new ways*, op. cit., p. 48; R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 851; M. C. Kendzia, *Catholic Update guide to Vocations*, Cincinnati, 2012, p. ix.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. M. C. Kendzia, *Catholic Update guide to Vocations*, op. cit., p. ix.

<sup>110</sup> LG. 13.

There are a number of paths toward the goal of union with God. Our call will be manifest when we become like Jesus: compassionate, forgiving, loving, and healing toward others<sup>111</sup>.

According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, the Sacraments of the Holy Orders are the Sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus it is the Sacrament of apostolic ministry. It includes three degrees: episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate. The one who receives this Sacrament is only a baptized man to feed the Church by the Word and grace of God. Because the Lord Jesus chose men to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry (cf. Mk. 3:14-19; Lk. 6:12-16; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 2 Tim. 1:6; Titus 1:5-9)<sup>112</sup>. The sacraments of holy orders “configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ’s instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church”<sup>113</sup>.

As Pope John II states, in Christ, priesthood is linked with his Sacrifice, his self-giving to the Father, and precisely because it is without limit, that self-giving gives rise in us human beings subject to numerous limitations to the need to turn to God in an ever more mature way and with a constant, ever more profound, conversion<sup>114</sup>. Thus, the Sacrament of orders is intended to give to the Church the pastors who, besides being teachers and guides, are called to be witnesses and workers of unity, builders of the family of God, and defenders and preservers of the communion of this family against the sources of division and dispersion<sup>115</sup>. For this reason, a man is ordained to be a face, a presence, a voice in the name, and with the authority of Jesus Christ who is always one with the Father and the

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<sup>111</sup> Cf. M. C. Kendzia, *Catholic Update guide to Vocations*, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. CCC. 1535-1536, 1577; LG. 11; Cf. M. C. Kendzia, *Catholic Update guide to Vocations*, op. cit., p.30-41.

<sup>113</sup> CCC. 1581.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. RH. 21.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. RaP. 27.

Holy Spirit<sup>116</sup>. Thus, he is the one who offers a sacrifice to God on behalf of himself and others<sup>117</sup>

However, there are different challenges to the Holy orders in the Diocese of Adigrat. These includes:

- a. Clericalism. It is a feeling of superiority, making decisions alone and giving orders<sup>118</sup>.
- b. Secularism: The catastrophic impact of the rapid, uncontrollable, and unpredictable social and cultural changes that are taking place in our modern society, which is affecting our priestly life<sup>119</sup>.
- c. Materialism. The Catholic faith of many people is nowadays being challenged by the proliferation of new religious movements, some of which tend to fundamentalism while others seem to propose a spirituality without God<sup>120</sup>.
- d. Addictions. Common forms of addiction among Holy Orders are alcohol, smoking, internet, social media, games, sexual act, pornography, and others.
- e. Anti-Clerical Atmosphere: Today the approach towards holy orders is a little different than the earlier times when it was respected and honored. In this isolated position, the priest must take the words of Our Lord to hear: “If you belonged to the world, the world would know you for its own and love you; it is because you do not belong to the world that the world hates you” ( Jn. 15:19)<sup>121</sup>.

The vocation to the Holy Orders has declined in the Diocese of Adigrat. Its reason can be attributed to several causes. The Second Vatican Council reminded people that it’s

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<sup>116</sup> Cf. T. Lane, *Priesthood: Changeless & Changing*, Dublin, 2005, p. 40.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. M. J. Zia, *The Enduring Faith and Timeless Truths of Fulton Sheen*, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. EG. 102; Francis, *Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae*, Tuesday, 13 Dec. 2016; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2016/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie\\_20161213\\_people-discarded.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2016/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20161213_people-discarded.html), [accessed: 14.11.2021]; see also: *5 Of the many times Pope Francis has warned against clericalism*, <https://aleteia.org/2018/08/23/5-of-the-many-times-pope-francis-has-railed-against-clericalism/>, [accessed: 14.11.2021].

<sup>119</sup> Cf. EG. 65 & 68.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. EG. 63; PDV. 7.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. M. C. Kendzia, *Catholic Update guide to Vocations*, op. cit., p.42.

not simply priests who have a vocation: everyone has a baptismal call. Catholics today see more than one way to follow the disciples of Jesus Christ. This may have led to less of a desire for the priesthood and religious life. The second cause may be a lack of desire for a long-term commitment. The third cause may be the lack of testimonial life of the priests and religious brothers and sisters. Finally, there is a decline in the respect given to celibacy, which today is seen more as a negative than as a positive, that is, a way of loving many people freely and deeply<sup>122</sup>.

Therefore, the priests and religious brothers and sisters in the diocese of Adigrat must be distinguished for a similar fidelity to their vocation, in view of the indelible character that the sacrament of Orders stamps on their souls. It is important every one of us must always keep in mind the truth that every initiative serves true renewal in the Church and helps to bring the authentic light that is Christ insofar as the initiative is based on adequate awareness of the individual Christian's vocation. It is based on adequate awareness of responsibility for this singular, unique, and unrepeatable grace by which each Christian in the community of the People of God builds up the Body of Christ. This principle is the key rule for the whole of Christianity to practice apostolic and pastoral ministry, the practice of interior and of social life must with due proportion be applied to the whole of humanity and to each human being. All those who are ordained particularly to the Holy Orders must be faithful to this principle<sup>123</sup>.

Besides the Sacrament of Holy Orders, Matrimony is also one of the Sacraments instituted for the service of communion and the mission of the Church. The Sacrament of marriage is established by the will of the Creator (cf. Gen.1-2). It is rooted in the creation narrative in Genesis: "The Lord God said: It is not good for the man to be alone. [...] a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body" (2: 18, 24). The Lord blesses their union and orders them to "be fertile and multiply" (1: 28). The covenant that a man and a woman, who are baptized, establish

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<sup>122</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 41-42.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. RH. 21.

between themselves a partnership of the whole life, by its nature is ordered toward the good of the spouses, procreation, and education of offspring<sup>124</sup>. As Pope John Paul II notes, the Sacrament of matrimony, the exaltation of human love under the action of grace, is a sign of the love of Christ for the church. But it is also a sign of the victory which Christ grants to couples in resisting the forces which deform and destroy love, so that, the family born from this sacrament may be a sign also of the reconciled and reconciling Church for a world reconciled in all its structures and institutions<sup>125</sup>. Thus, marriage is the foundation of the family.

Pope Benedict XVI writes, “by the power of the sacrament, the marriage bond is intrinsically linked to the Eucharistic unity of Christ the Bridegroom and his Bride, the Church (cf. Eph. 5:31-32). The mutual consent that husband and wife exchange in Christ, which establishes them as a community of life and love, also has a Eucharistic dimension”<sup>126</sup>. Hence, the marriage bond builds the family’s foundation as a community of people. Also, as Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio* noted: “The celebration of the sacrament of marriage is the basic moment of the faith of the couple. This sacrament, in essence, is the proclamation in the Church of the Good News concerning married love. It is the word of God that reveals and fulfills the wise and loving plan of God for the married couple, giving them a mysterious and real share in the very love with which God Himself loves humanity”<sup>127</sup>. Therefore, marriage is the gate to establish a new family relationship extending the web of the kinship of the clan in any society, and building the Church, the people of God.

In the Diocese of Adigrat, there are various threats to marriage in our society. These includes:

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. CCC. 1601-1605; R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 852; GS. 47-52; FC. 3.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. RaP. 27.

<sup>126</sup> Sca. 27.

<sup>127</sup> John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (henceforth: FC.), Rome, 1981, no. 51; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_19811122\\_familiaris-consortio.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].



1. Poverty and economic challenges. Poverty forces husbands or wives to migrate within countries, neighboring countries, or abroad, especially to the Arab world. This creates cracks in the marriage bond.
2. Contraception. Instead of using natural planning, the intentional placing of a material obstacle to the conception of a child: e.g., using a contraceptive pill, an intrauterine device, contraceptive foam, and a condom is wrong<sup>128</sup>. Hence, the name ‘contraception,’ means ‘against conception’. The fact that the Gospel message has a great bearing on human sexuality and its relationship to new life. Since a baptized man and woman are called to married life, Christ’s call to communion is an invitation to the whole person without any obstacle<sup>129</sup>.
3. Divorce (cf. Mt. 5:31-32, 19:6). God’s plan for marriage persists, and struggling couples are urged to turn to Lord for help. Because the vow of Marriage is a lifetime and requires faithfulness. Divorce has several reasons: infidelity, working in different areas and staying alone for a long time to mention some.
4. Cohabitation outside marriage. This violates the purpose of marriage<sup>130</sup>.
5. Civil marriage. According to the Church’s teaching, any marriage agreement in civil law is taken and considered simply as a civil contract, but not acceptable as a sacramental marriage and not allowed to receive any sacrament until it is fulfilled in the Church. However, western civilization and the mentality of reformation and liberation have influenced the Catholic Churches in Africa, and it is a new threat in the Diocese of Adigrat. Due to that, civil marriage is becoming popular, which is only a guarantee for material and exterior equality.

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<sup>128</sup> Cf. R. P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, op. cit., p. 982-992; Paul VI, Encyclical letter *Humanae vitae* (henceforth: HV.), Rome, 1968, no. 14; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_25071968\\_humanae-vitae.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html), [accessed: 17.11.2019].

<sup>129</sup> Cf. M. J. Zia, *The Enduring Faith and Timeless Truths of Fulton Sheen*, op. cit., p. 94-102.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. M. C. Kendzia, *Catholic Update guide to Vocations*, op. cit., p.28.

This dramatically impacts pastoral activities, sacramental life, and spiritual growth of faithful and practice of their faith<sup>131</sup>.

Therefore, the couples in the Adigrat Diocese are in need of special ongoing formation. Pope John Paul II writes, “married people must be distinguished for fidelity to their vocation, as is demanded by the indissoluble nature of the sacramental institution of marriage”<sup>132</sup>. This shows that marriage by its indissoluble nature is a sign of the relationship between Christ and the Church. The pastoral ministers must present the richness of Christ in the family and should give continuous formation for the couples. Married couples are an important witness to faith and fidelity that provides a powerful counterpoint to a society that increasingly favors short-term solutions and quick fixes. If the vocation of the young people is marriage, make sure they are prepared to make a commitment that will last for a lifetime<sup>133</sup>. Because marriage is a place of a loving community and it is important to help married people to illustrate in broad terms how to translate this love into everyday life and live it in a practical way<sup>134</sup>. This experience gives them an opportunity to help their youth to discover their individual personal talents they have, the theme that will be discussed below.

### **5.5. Provide different opportunities where the youth can explore their talents**

Every human being has personal gifts and talents that are given by God, the Creator. No one is successful and good at everything, but everyone is good and successful at something and can develop their skills. Especially young people are necessary to be good at something and to discover their specific talents, they need exceptional guidance, help, and a leader. Parents are the first supporters and scouts of young people’s abilities and help them see, understand and embrace their talents. The parents can play a significant role in

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<sup>131</sup> Cf. International Theological Commission, *Propositions on the doctrine of Christian marriage*, [https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_1977\\_sacramento-matrimonio\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1977_sacramento-matrimonio_en.html), [accessed: 21..5.2022].

<sup>132</sup> RH. 21.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. M. C. Kendzia, *Catholic Update guide to Vocations*, op. cit., p. 24 & 28.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. J. Dominian, *Living Love: Restoring hope in in the Church*, op. cit., p. 73-77.

identifying the specific skills and gifts of their youth; as well as they can give sufficient reasons and proposals for teachers for utilizing those abilities, and such information can assist teachers in how to help and teach the young people to be effective in their talents<sup>135</sup>.

However, most parents in the Adigrat Diocese, Ethiopia in general, are not educated and have no knowledgeable experience to assess the talents of their young people. The Church is a community of Christians, and they live in the parish. Parishes are the home and center of the Christian faith, action, and hope of communities. So, the parish community has a unique role in organizing and promoting programs for the young generation that help them recognize their specific talents. In parishes, youth need to have different programs and opportunities to use their abilities and gifts to express their faith through meaningful roles that they bring to the parish community youthfulness, energy, vitality, hopefulness, and vision<sup>136</sup>.

The Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI invites young people to commit themselves in their daily life to cultivate their talents, not only to obtain a social position but also to help others to grow; develop their capacities, not only to become more competitive and productive but to be witnesses of charity to make an effort to acquire religious knowledge that will help them to carry out their mission in a responsible way; and to carefully study the social doctrine of the Church so that its principles may inspire and guide their action in the world<sup>137</sup>.

It is vital to promote flexible and adaptable programs according to a specific age group of young people that “address the changing needs and life situations of today’s young people and their families within a particular community”<sup>138</sup>. Different motives hold young generations from living the truth of their age in boundless adherence to Christ, and they are at risk of losing out on authentic growth. But there are many expectations, and the desire

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<sup>135</sup> Cf. FC. 36-37.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. USCCB, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, op. cit., p.12-13.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Message to the Youth of the World on the occasion of the 22nd World Youth Day*, Vatican, 27 January 2007; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20070127\\_youth.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/youth/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20070127_youth.html), [accessed: 26 October 2019].

<sup>138</sup> USCCB, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, op. cit., p. 2555.

to give meaning to its existence remains strong in the heart of every new generation. In these regards and during their journey, youngsters look for someone who knows how to help them and propose solutions, values, and perspectives that are worth staking their future on<sup>139</sup>.

Therefore, the commitment of the Church to young people is essential and must give attention to discovering what is new, authentic, beautiful, and the hidden talents that manifest themselves in the young generation. The youth can have the talent to be good musicians, good athletes, the ability to be a singer, administrators, organizers, etc. Parents and youth chaplains need to assist to see the less obvious gifts and help young people see and appreciate their own specific abilities. Lessons, training, practical exercises, clubs, extracurricular activities, field trips, and organized youth activities can provide opportunities that spark talents. Hence, the Christian community of the diocese needs to play a significant role in its pastoral administration. It is important to cooperate with the government and communities to organize and make the parishes the center where young people can explore their abilities through various opportunities that promote the holistic growth of young generations. Applying this requires a particular approach and recognition of the young people to know them and identify their specific needs, the topic that will be addressed below.

## **5.6. Presenting pastoral care for the youth with recognition**

One of the most important in youth ministry is knowing how to start a conversation. Pastoral care always begins with a discussion, and “conversation begins with recognition”<sup>140</sup>. When youth ministers recognize their listeners, their hearts may feel welcomed and recognized, consequently they become ready to understand their teaching.

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<sup>139</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Message for the XXXII World Day of Prayer for Vocations*, op. cit., no. 2.

<sup>140</sup> T. Radcliffe, *Pastoral Care in the Global Village*, in: T. G. Grenham (ed.), *Pastoral Ministry for Today: ‘Who Do You Say That I Am?’* Conference Papers 2008, Dublin, 2009, p. 29.

Recognition is the way of identifying, accepting, and acknowledging the person, which is influential in conversation.

Pastoral care is a ministry among religious communities to a person who is in needs of face to face relationships. This ministry comes from a genuine concern, care, and mutual responsibility for each person<sup>141</sup>. In youth ministry the component of pastoral care is an invitation to return to pastoring, to that ongoing process of caring deeply for young people, confronting them honestly when necessary, meeting them where they are, and showing them the rich possibilities of human wholeness. It is an invitation to conversion in a holistic sense and compassionate presence. Nowadays, the ministers and leaders of the Catholic Church of Adigrat Diocese are challenged to surround the young generation with the new approach and systems<sup>142</sup>.

Jesus Christ's mission always starts with recognition, for instance, Nathanael under the fig tree (Jn. 1:43-51); Zacchaeus on the tree (Lk. 19: 1-10); Mary in the garden (Jn. 20: 11-18); and because he recognized them, then they recognized him in return<sup>143</sup>. Recognition offers respect for each other and opens a way for compassionate friendship because "friendship allows us both to discover who we are with each other"<sup>144</sup>. Many young people feel uncomfortable and wounded in the diocese by the youth ministers' failure to grant that recognition. They feel invisible or only seen from the outside because many young generations root their identities in families that are broken. Their parents may be single or living with serial partners. To recognize these young people is to identify the relationships that they have that help to know where to begin with, their fidelities that define their lives, as well as it helps to find and identify concerns, topics, and aspirations that they both share and yet which they perceive differently. Because the first stage of

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<sup>141</sup> Cf. P. E. Johnson, *A Theology of Pastoral Care*, in: "Journal of Religion and Health", Jan., 1964, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 171; available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27504625>, [accessed: 28 January 2021].

<sup>142</sup> Cf. R. J. McCarty (ed.) with L. Delgatto [et. al.], *The Vision of Catholic Youth Ministry: Fundamentals, Theory, and Practice*, op. cit., p. 145.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. T. Radcliffe, *Pastoral Care in the Global Village*, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

pastoral care is conversation and conversation are based on recognition and includes the beginning where the young people are<sup>145</sup>.

## 5.7. Identifying new effective models

In youth ministry, adopting some specific and practical models help to reach out to the young generation through the vehicle of youth pastoral ministry. Implementing some models is the pathway to learning the state of young people, taking part in their daily involvements and experiences, distinguishing the problems they face in their different activities, and seeking solutions together. Hence, youth pastoral ministers “must keep in mind that the primary task of ministry directed to youth – young children, adolescents, and young adults, was to expose youth to the process of evangelization, and, in sharing of evangelical values associated with Catholic traditions and values”<sup>146</sup>.

Among different models for youth ministry, three models for evangelizing young people today are identified: The Traditional Deductive Model (TDM), Modern Deductive Model (MDM), and the Transforming Inductive Model (TIM)<sup>147</sup>. By its methodological characteristics, the TDM is a top-down approach, and the information tends to follow a hierarchical structure, circulating downwards from those in charge. Little information flows in the opposite direction as well as its system of catechesis is a questions-and-answers model. Its approach begins with doctrine or the Bible and attempts to connect with life and concrete situations, who have different backgrounds of culture, knowledge, and capacity. Some are country folk, others are students, and others are workers. Those who use this methodological approach fail to see the need for adaptation to different cultures and realities<sup>148</sup>. So, youth ministry, as traditionally organized today, has also suffered the impact of social, political, and new technological changes<sup>149</sup>.

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<sup>145</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 28-30.

<sup>146</sup> J. A. Górká, *Youth Ministry in the Face of Unemployment: A Historical-Critical Study of the Development of the Church and its Concern for Youth Formation and Employment in Mwanza (Tanzania)*, Morogoro, 2017, p. 324.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 122-127.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. EG. 105.

The Modern Deductive Model (MDM) is mainly identified (although not exclusively) with the apostolic movements and is more in tune with modern culture than the traditional model, but still is a ‘top-down’ methodological approach. It has two types of movements: weekend encounter movements that adults coordinate with the help of some young people, and international movements that have their central activities on the organization of weekend encounters or youth programs, and have a more ample proposal for the formation and follow-up of young people<sup>150</sup>. Transforming the Inductive Model (TIM) starts with reality, with life situations, with substantial involvement of Christians, and only then brings in theory, principles, doctrine, and the Word of God; that means beginning with facts and formulation generalizations from these finds, is the most important and fruitful at present times<sup>151</sup>. This method helps to understand the situation on the ground and how to apply the solution through the process of *observe-judge-act*, which is the method of a Belgian priest, Father Joseph Cardijn<sup>152</sup>. However, nowadays, the first two models have no answer in youth ministries for the new challenges of modern culture. Because these models start with theory, principles, doctrine, the abstract, and the Word of God before bringing into the reality of the surrounding world, this cannot attract young people. Nevertheless, these models are still present in many sectors of the Church today<sup>153</sup>. And the Adigrat Catholic diocese is one of the many that follows the old teaching system for the young.

The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Ethiopia (CBCE) firmly emphasizes that the youth and children ministry, as traditionally organized, is suffering the impact of modern culture and social changes<sup>154</sup>. Thus, as Pope Francis notes, youth often fail to find responses to their concerns, needs, problems, and hurts in the usual structures. The youth ministers and catechists find it hard to listen patiently to the young generation, appreciate their

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<sup>150</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 127-138.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 138-153.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. J. A. Górka, *Youth Ministry in the Face of Unemployment*, op. cit., p. 329.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. G. Boran, *The Pastoral Challenges of a New Age*, op. cit., p. 122, 127 & 138.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. CBCE, *Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat Pastoral Commission: ECC – ECS Strategical Plan 2017 – 2021*, Addis Ababa, 2016, 21.

concerns and demands, and speak to them in a language they can understand<sup>155</sup>. Hence, adopting new models and strengthening Catholic Action movements in the Diocese of Adigrat is useful.

## **5.8. Strengthening Catholic Action Movements**

In this study, the effort is to reach out to the young generation in the pastoral ministry in the Diocese of Adigrat. Therefore, the Catholic Church of Adigrat should focus widely and keep in mind that the primary task of ministry directed to the young generation (young children, adolescents, and young adults) was to expose them to the process of evangelization, and in sharing of evangelical values associated with Catholic traditions and values. Thus, it is important to give attention to the following movements.

### **5.8.1. The Catholic Action Movements**

Pope Pius XI, in his Encyclical *Mens nostra*, endorsed and encouraged Catholic Action Movements (CAM) so that the Christian people to strengthened their faith and increase their piety and perfection. The faithful reform their private and public morals in the most joyful fruit of peace and pardon obtained from God through the practice of spiritual exercises. Because there is a tremendous power of bringing peace to human persons and of carrying them upwards to the holiness of life. Then, Catholic Action was encouraged by Pope Pius XI, in 1929, to be made with due care and diligence as a response to the Christians who are in so much need of spiritual graces<sup>156</sup>.

The Catholic Action movement showing progress and still moving ahead, Pope John Paul II reassures the pastors of the Church to accompany the movement's work of discernment with guidance and, encourage the CAMs might grow in Church communion

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. EG. 105.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Pius XI, Encyclical *Mens nostra* (henceforth: MN), Rome, 1929, no. 1-4; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19291220\\_mens-nostra.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19291220_mens-nostra.html), [accessed: March 22, 2022].



and mission<sup>157</sup>. The CAM is a call to everyone: pastors, clergy, men and women religious, and lay people to keep watching over the personal manner of life and make sure that we are practically the Lord's laborers. It is a way everyone gives happy, generous, and prompt responses to the impulse of the Holy Spirit and to the voice of Christ, who is giving us a particularly urgent invitation at this moment. This is to be enriched in dignity, spirituality, mission, and responsibility in flourishing the movements in the life and mission of the Church; and in fuller and more meaningful participation in the development of society. CAM aims to help everyone to come closer to the Lord every day because they ought to associate themselves with the saving mission of the Lord Jesus Christ; carrying forth the Gospel of Christ, the source of hope for humanity and the renewal of society. The movement leads to the transformation of the surroundings and society as well as the fruit and sign of every other transformation in this regard<sup>158</sup>.

In addition to the above, Pope Benedict XVI appreciated and encouraged to persevere the CAM in the service to the Church and the members to live to the full of their charism, which consists in taking on the apostolic aim of the Church in its entirety and called all to renew their commitment to walking on the way of holiness, keeping up their intense life of prayer, encouraging and respecting personal practices of faith and making the most of the riches of each one, with the guidance of their priest-chaplains and those in charge who can teach ecclesial and social co-responsibility. The Holy Father notes the importance to adopt and share the pastoral decisions of the dioceses and parishes, fostering opportunities for meeting and sincere collaboration with the other members of the ecclesial community<sup>159</sup>.

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<sup>157</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, (henceforth: CL.), Rome 1988, no. 31; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_exh\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html), [accessed: 16.07.2018].

<sup>158</sup> Cf. CL. 2, 28-31, & 62; see also: LG. 37.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, *Message on the Occasion of the sixth Ordinary Assembly of the International Forum of Catholic Action*, 10 August 2012, available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/pont-messages/2012/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20120810\\_fiac.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/pont-messages/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20120810_fiac.html), [accessed: March 29, 2022].

In the Diocese of Adigrat, the Catholic Action movements are going on in various ways. Because the field of Catholic Action is exceptionally vast and excludes nothing, which pertains to the divine mission of the Church, and in the Catholic Action movement, everyone works for personal sanctification, at the same time, for the spreading and growth of the Kingdom of God in individuals, families, and society. And according to personal capacity for the wellbeing of ones neighbor by the propagation of revealed truth, by the exercise of Christian virtue and by the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy<sup>160</sup>.

Nowadays, the challenges and problems of modern social life of the society in the diocese need a prompt and definite solution, and everyone must understand the various ways to solve and get solutions and know-how to put them into practice those solutions. The Catholic Action movements play a significant role in restoration, aiming to unite with the primary duty to teach, to point out the correct way to follow, to propose the means to be used, to admonish, and paternally exhort; and in as much as it offers to restore all things in Christ, constitutes an authentic apostolate for the honor and glory of Christ Himself<sup>161</sup>. Therefore, strengthening and continuous monitoring of the movements in the diocese are helpful.

### **5.8.2. The Young Catholic Workers**

The Young Catholic Workers (YCW) or Young Christian Workers (YCW) is an organization that was founded by the Belgian priest Father Joseph Cardijn (later Cardinal) in 1924 to address the needs of young working people or the young Christian Workers. The intention and belief of the founder of this organization are to be in the hands of the young people themselves, by them, for them, among them. The purpose is to serve, educate and represent young working-class groups, and since the 1950s, the YCW spread all over the

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<sup>160</sup> Cf. Pius X, Encyclical on Catholic Action in Italy to the bishops of Italy *Il Fermo proposito* (henceforth: IFP.), Rome, June 11, 1905, no. 3; available at: [https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-x\\_enc\\_11061905\\_il-fermo-proposito.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11061905_il-fermo-proposito.html), [accessed: March 22, 2022].

<sup>161</sup> Cf. IFP, no. 1 & 11.

world<sup>162</sup>. And in the Diocese of Adigrat, in all dioceses of Ethiopia in general, is one of the active movements of YCW.

The YCW of Ethiopia, through its progress and active participation at the 9<sup>th</sup> International Coordination of the YCW (ICYCW) congress that was held in Seoul, South Korea, from 19 August to 1 September 2016, Berhanu Sinamo, an Ethiopian teacher, was elected as the new president of the ICYCW<sup>163</sup>. Besides that, Ethiopia hosted the 10<sup>th</sup> congress of the ICYCW between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2021 under the theme ‘In search of a better life, Migration of Young people Seeking a New Beginning’<sup>164</sup>.

Nowadays, the situation of young people’s lives is indicating that facing terrible challenges in social life and contradiction with their faith. Human trafficking and migration are significant challenges in Africa, Ethiopia in particular. The YCW can play an important role in reducing these challenges and other problems. Youth ministers in the diocese of Adigrat must have the courage to face and answer these realities. It is essential to realize the age, work situation, the influence of social life, the environment, loneliness, despair, and so on. The present condition of young people increases the challenge of unemployment, violence, poverty, bringing up children, lack of home, or unable to found a home.

The young Catholics, in the Diocese of Adigrat as well as in the whole country, can contribute a lot to resolving the problem among themselves through sharing their daily experiences and seeking solutions together for the difficulties they face at work, at home, among their friends, and in their neighborhood by adopting the new practical methods of

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<sup>162</sup> <http://www.cijoc.org/joseph-cardijn-and-the-three-truths/>, [accessed: March 25, 2022].

<sup>163</sup> Cf. *Young Ethiopian is first African chosen as President of ICYCW*, in: [http://www.archivioradiovaticana.va/storico/2016/09/08/young\\_ethiopian\\_is\\_first\\_african\\_chosen\\_as\\_president\\_of\\_icycw/en-1256663](http://www.archivioradiovaticana.va/storico/2016/09/08/young_ethiopian_is_first_african_chosen_as_president_of_icycw/en-1256663), (posted: 2016-09-08 14:30:00); [accessed: March 31, 2022]; *Ethiopian president for ICYCW*, in: <http://cardijn.info/ethiopian-president-for-icycw/>, posted: September 17, 2016; [accessed: March 30, 2022].

<sup>164</sup> Cf. *ETHIOPIA: Ethiopia has hosted the International Congress of Young Christian workers (ICYCW)*, in: <http://amecea.blogspot.com/2021/07/ethiopia-ethiopia-has-hosted.html>, posted: 30th July 2021; [accessed: March 31, 2022].

Father Cardijn for the accurate formative results of pastoral ministry with young Christians<sup>165</sup>.

The YCW is an organization that was instituted to assist young people. It is the process of general formation that helps young people to encounter the living Jesus Christ in their daily life of each young people. In all parishes of the Catholic Diocese of Adigrat, therefore, it is essential to approach the young people to help them to be closer to the Lord. In such a way they can promote the teaching of the Church by making use of today's technologies and logical reasoning in support of their growth in faith and the Church. Similarly, there is also a necessity to organize the Catholic Church structures at all levels and ages for young people in a friendly manner. So that, the young generations can build confidence, trust and own the Church because the young Catholics can contribute a lot as much as they can to the service and evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church in the diocese among the other believers.

### **5.8.3. The Young Catholic Students**

The Young Catholic Students (YCS) is a second youth group movement inspired by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn's efforts and his Three Step Methods of observe (see)–judge–act with the positive suggestion, enthusiastic reception, and encouragement of Pius XI<sup>166</sup>. The aim of the International Young Catholic Students (IYCS) movement is to transform “society starting from self-transformation and at the same time educate and train leaders not only for today but also for tomorrow”<sup>167</sup>.

The primary objectives of the YCS that emphasizes by Jack A. Górka<sup>168</sup> are:

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<sup>165</sup> Cf. J. A. Górka, *Youth Ministry in the Face of Unemployment*, op. cit., p. 328-332.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 332.

<sup>167</sup> IYCS, *Students for peace building and conflict resolution: IYCS African training manual*, IYCS Pan-African 2007-2011, p.2.

<sup>168</sup> Father Jack A. Górka (PhD) is a Lecturer, Consultant and Researcher in Theology; Specialized in Youth Ministry and Catechetics. He is currently Lecturer at the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, as well as the Director of Quality Assurance at the Jordan University College in Morogoro, Tanzania.

*First*, encourage and promote the establishment of a student apostolate body through the realization that there is a specific need for such service;

*Second*, enact this responsibility by letting students themselves seek and/or create communities within which they might find a place for positive action through a social vision that is aligned, congruent compliant, and in keeping with teachings of Catholic Church spiritual beliefs and values;

*Third*, promote global solidarity among young students around the world who search for equitable social order;

And *fourth*, encourage students to access and implement new resources pedagogies, and methodologies to integrate their Catholic faith with their intellectual and social life<sup>169</sup>.

The YCS movement was introduced to all college and university Catholic students in Ethiopia. The university and college students play their role in evangelization, spreading Catholic spirituality, and serving the Church in several ways. These are the students who will soon be joining various fields of work and fostering the moral values of the Catholic Church and will be living at YCW. Ethiopia is a country of diverse culture and the students shall play a magnificent role in witnessing unity in diversity and peacebuilding on their campuses, among communities, and in their future workplaces. Thus, all the dioceses are expected to contribute to forming the young people who contribute to this diverse culture to build the country's common good of the Church and state.

There are various movements of young people in each parish in the Diocese of Adigrat, but they are not solid and well-organized as needed. Therefore, regarding the spiritual transformation of young people it is helpful to apply the following recommendations:

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<sup>169</sup> J. A. Górká, *Youth Ministry in the Face of Unemployment*, op. cit., p. 333.

- A. Expanding faith-strengthening materials such as books, newspapers, audio and video materials, and consistent and sustainable education programs; Strengthening the mental, psychological, and spiritual development of youth and children; organizing the opportunities for scholarship and education, training, experience sharing programs, and managing programs that bring the young generation closer to God’s Word. Organize Bible study groups at each parish and youth center. The Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese must broaden its social and spiritual teachings (Pope’s messages and the catechism of youth, etc.).
- B. To increase the participation of young people in evangelization, it is essential for similar programs in the parishes to make young people the main actors of the mission and beneficiaries of evangelization and to facilitate young people in the modern ways and means of spreading and using the Gospel.
- C. To strengthen the role of parish pastoral councils. The parish priests’ commissions in the youth of the parish are helpful to enhance the joint service development activities and develop a variety of programs to improve the role of parishioners in youth evangelization and catechism. It is important to encourage active participation and encourage parishioners to support youth apostolic work in matters of employment and faith.

These suggestions will help to be “committed to the principles and values of social justice and peace in its education and policy-oriented work. With over 3.2 million African members, IYCS has focused on students’ empowerment through dialogue, reconciliation, conflict management, and transformation to achieve long-lasting peace and development for the society”<sup>170</sup>. This shows the role of YCS in spreading the principles and values of social justice among the communities and peacebuilding in society.

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<sup>170</sup> IYCS Africa Coordination, *Connecting African Youth for Sustainable Development: Africa YCS Strategic Direction 2020-2023*, Nairobi, p. 3.

#### 5.8.4. The Small Christian Community (SCC)

Small Christian Community (SCC) is well known in the nine countries Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) and is the common expression for the new way of being Church. Besides that, it is important to note that there are various terms are used in other English-speaking African countries such as “Basic [Base] Ecclesial Community” (BEC) or “Basic Christian Communities” (BCC) and is sometimes written as “Ecclesial Base [Basic] Community” (EBC); most French-speaking dioceses use the denomination “Communauté Ecclésiale de Base” (CEB), while other have preferred to say “Petite Communauté Chrétienne” (PCC), or “Communauté Chrétienne de Base” (CCB) or “Communauté Ecclésiale Vivante” (CEV), or “Communauté Ecclésiale Vivante de base” (CEVB). SCC is not well known or has very little recognition outside the African continent; instead, people recognize terms such as “Small Groups,” “Small Prayer groups,” “Small Church Communities,” “Small Faith Communities,” “Small Bible Study Groups,” and so on<sup>171</sup>.

The SCC emerged by the Episcopal Conference of Zaire (today the Democratic Republic of the Congo or DRC) during its 6<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly from 20 November to 2 December 1961, when approved a Pastoral Plan to promote “Living Base Ecclesial Communities”, it is also called “Living Christian Communities” to make the Church more “African” and close to the people, which is the very same year that Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) started in 1961<sup>172</sup>.

The SCC is a way of life through caring, sharing, faith-reflecting, praying, and serving the community. It is a small group that focuses on Scripture, faith sharing and prayer, and service to the greater community, as well as they, discuss their lives in the light of the Gospel and sharing their Christian faith through prayer and service to others<sup>173</sup>. The

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<sup>171</sup> Cf. J. G. Healey, *Building the Church as Family of God: Evaluation of Small Christian Communities in Eastern Africa*, Nairobi, 2013, Footnote part, p. 9-11 & 14.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. E. Chimombo (et. el.) [eds.], *Strengthening the Growth of Small Christian Communities in Africa: A Training Handbook for Facilitators (2<sup>nd</sup> Revised Edition)*, Nairobi, 2018, p.26-27.

SCC was introduced in Ethiopia in 2006 as the way of life for Christian communities. However, its strength mainly depends on the animator in most dioceses. Because everybody did not get its formation and training, all do not understand its role, task, and benefits in the communities. Hence, its foundation is not well organized and established as it is needed and supposed to be in the Diocese of Adigrat. There are associations and women's prayer groups. Ethiopian society, as well as all Africans, has a sense of family and community. The spirit of the SCC is an excellent system to be installed and root Christianity in society's culture because it uses the *See, Judge, and Act* process as part of the pastoral spiral<sup>174</sup>.

Community is a sign of the loving presence of God, and SCC is a place where the community share faith among parents, young people, and children. So, Small Christian Communities (SCCs) are encourage and support by each other and are a sign to all of the loving presence of God, a sign and instrument of the communion of God. The SCC members proclaim the kingdom of God here on earth among themselves, share their gifts, skills, and abilities and support each other in love, which the young people are currently missing. The purpose of SCC is to accomplish the mission of the Church. Strengthening the community's faith and building up family life is essential. The SCCs experience a sense of 'togetherness' because there is part of a large family, where they can feel accepted and share their hopes and fears. A sense of being valued as SCC members gives them a new dignity and feeling of self-worth so that they have more confidence in themselves, and it is one of the most excellent means to evangelize the world through multiplying new groups to spread the good news<sup>175</sup>.

Nowadays, social and moral values are disappearing due to the struggle for economic survival, the effect of technology or social media, and the secularized world. The world is characterized by loneliness and isolation. As a result, disrespect and disagreement are widespread in societies. These are becoming more significant among the communities

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<sup>174</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 53-56.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. M. Dolan, *Partnership in Lay Spirituality: Religious and Laity Find New Ways*, Dublin, 2007, p.92-93.



in the Diocese of Adigrat as well as in the whole country. In these communities, cultural life is transmitted, human life is received, nurtured, initiation into adulthood, marriage, family life is shared, and social bonds are strengthened. Therefore, the parents are called to contribute, encourage and nurture their young people and their children a sense and experience of community spirit. As Christian, they are called to a life of communion, *koinonia*. Therefore, if the communities are “to be people who radiate God’s love, compassion, and mercy and bring the good news to those they meet, they need to experience and receive love, compassion, and mercy as well as sharing these with others”<sup>176</sup>. Hence, developing prayer groups and establishing SCC is helpful in the Diocese of Adigrat.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter tried to show essential ideas or proposals for effective action to be taken locally in the youth pastoral ministry of the diocese. Currently, the young generations live in a world obsessed with various kinds of crises, and yet some chances can give hope, and it is important to build up those opportunities. The young people are the richness of the Church and the state. The present young people are who can/will come the future accountable leaders who can have acceptance by the people if they get attention today to prepare well for tomorrow. This cannot become at one point, but it is a development process through guidance and by showing direction. It is essential to focus on the practical actions that can improve the lives of the young generations. Practical movements help Christians to keep balance in their daily lives.

Practical movements bring Christians together and their goal can achieve through teamwork. The work of pastoral care by nature is teamwork. In all the movements in the community, each member takes responsibility, cares for, loves, prays, and serves the other. The Word of God and the Sacraments are the pillars to provide the richness of the Person of Jesus Christ through various kinds of movements and organize ongoing formations and

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

opportunities where the young generation can discover their talents. This chapter proposes that the Catholic Church of Adigrat Diocese adopt new models in order to handle well its young generation and can able to strengthen the different kinds of movements among the Christian communities through pastoral care. Therefore, the Church in order to achieve its goals needs to apply the following recommendation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations and suggestions have been made based on the research finding.

1. Holistic transformation of youth is foundational for the peaceful co-existence of societies and lasting practical life based on the Gospel teaching in the Church.
2. Transformation must always be appropriate to the youth culture that is to be transformed. No culture is perfect, but all cultures have essential values that are redeemed and used as the basis for social, economic, political, and religious transformation.
3. The fundamental human development of ethics and spirituality without charging into young people's lives, youth will remain self-centered creatures.
4. Promote solid cultural values that will create an essential base to develop a youth community with unprecedented freedom and opportunity.
5. Promote Biblical principles that will create a strong foundation upon which to build a youth community with unique autonomy and occasion.
6. The need for the Church and the state to become involved in cooperate in holistic youth ministry to aid and save young people, and build the Church and nation tomorrow.
7. The Church leaders of the Adigrat Diocese must understand that moral degradation among youth is more than what we can think or imagine. It is no longer seen as a condition or circumstance. It is the way of life.
8. Families must study how youth look at the world, Church, and the entire community.
9. Youth must be taught how to reject and solve the pressure from politicians that mostly make them achieve the evil aims of the politicians.
10. In the Diocese of Adigrat, the focus should be made on the reorientation of cultural and Christian values and training and generating employment.

11. The Catholic Church in Adigrat must focus on economic empowerment among youths. By making it easier for young people to be empowered and training them with the skill of business.
12. Churches must preach about social values, moral and immoral living, and youth. The Church has not given much attention to the effect of weakening social values on the lives of its youth.
13. Provide courses that build vocational and tactical skills.
14. Protect vulnerable youth by giving them special attention. The Church must give them special training and support.
15. The Church must organize with organizations and the government to understand critical youth issues: social values, divorce and separation, various addictions (alcohol, drugs, etc.), teenage sexuality, violence, cultural shift, youth culture, technology, disrespect, hedonism, individualism, secularism, indolence, etc.
16. There is a need to improve the inculcation of Christian values among young people in the Adigrat Diocese, there is a need for enough facilitators, motivators, counselors, mentors, and resource providers. These people should serve the youth under the direct supervision of the Christian Education Coordinator and pastoral ministers.
17. Youth must be instructed on how they can keep themselves in good standing by sheer determination in obedience to their culture and God.
18. The Catholic Church of the Adigrat Diocese needs to train priests in communication technology to guide and teach the young generation the Biblical discipline of social media through pastoral ministry.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

The result of this study demand urgent attention from all concerned, particularly the Church of the Adigrat Diocese and the Ethiopian Catholic Church in general. The most excellent resource any society can have is its human resources. Ethiopia is endowed with this human resource in abundance. The youth in Ethiopia constitute the majority of this human endowment and should not be taken for granted if we are to achieve the security of the society and sustainability of the Church. Disciplined young people are the safety and strength of the community and are the life and hope of the Church. The unethical and immorality are spreading highly and becoming a high level of insecurity and threat to lives. The research, however, has clearly shown that the Church has a vital role in the contemporary world to shape its new policies and direction toward youth. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church, has sufficiently equipped the Church for the task of not only evangelizing but also calling and forming people to the path of moral, spiritual, and intellectual integrity. Therefore, the Church cannot afford to ignore the problems facing the youths in Ethiopia. It must be actively involved in the welfare of its youth. This study explored that the success of young people in Ethiopia is an illusion. Youth pastoral ministry has a minimal lasting impact on youth. If the Catholic Church wants to see the success of youth and the Church's survival, it is essential to rethink youth pastoral ministry. Suppose the Catholic Church wants to see its children have a lasting faith. In that case, it is crucial to renew its approach toward youth in pastoral ministry in Ethiopia, especially in the Adigrat Diocese.

The first chapter has attempted to address significant and essential historical, cultural, and religious backgrounds. The chapter explored the etymological meaning and concept of youth. Ethiopia is a country of diverse cultures, ethnic, and languages. The study shows the beauty of diversity and, at the same time, the challenges that are there. In the Diocese of Adigrat, the people have valuable cultural values. They believe in justice, security, and equality. For these, the study revealed that the first Hijra, or migrants of Islam to Ethiopia's Tigray, are a great testimony. Ethiopians passed and still struggling in

political and economic reform, which highly affected young people's lives. The study revealed that St. Justin de Jacobis (1800-1860), the first canonized missionary of Africa, re-established the Catholic communities in Tigray, where the Adigrat Diocese is, and today's Eritrea, and opened the gate to the other parts of Ethiopia. However, even though no one doubts its leadership role in the country, the Catholic Church does not grow up according to its age. The Ethiopian Catholic Church adopts two Rites: Geez and Latin Rites, which beauty and, at the same time, a challenge.

This research critically examined youth's ethical and spiritual issues in the Diocese of Adigrat. It has discussed the concept and meaning of youth and youth as the stage of self-discovery. The study critically investigated that the period of youth is when a person is open to all kinds of influences and experiences several challenges, which determines a person's future life for good or bad. It also vividly evaluated the cognitive, moral, faith, and vocational developments as primary necessities in youth ministries that need attention for the youth transformation in the Diocese of Adigrat. It outlined that youth is not only a stage of the period but also a state of mind and youth is the precious stage and unique treasure of life. The work also presented the contemporary implications of pastoral ministry with youth that society presents young people with difficulties. It presented helpful perspectives to understand young people.

Chapter two shows youth formation and its components that help youth's ethics and spiritual growth. According to this study, families must be role models in Christian living, service, and respecting social values. The efficacy of the Word of God, love, prayer, education, and perseverance. Only then will their children be distinct, distinguished shining lights to their generations. The family institution is a determinant institution of the youth's psychosocial and spiritual formation. Young people that learn social knowledge and cultural values from their parents advance and develop in society. The work examines and reveals that the Catholic Church must be ready to intervene and accompany young people in their journey of daily lives whenever the welfare of an individual or a particular group is adversely affected by social, economic, or political policies and physical occurrences.

Chapter three evaluates the themes that relate to the relationship between persons and God. The progress of faith depends on the knowledge and understanding of the Scripture, the Tradition of the Catholic Church and the practical life lived, and the specific goal of going out as the disciple of Jesus Christ in the service of each other. The research has shown that God places a high value on youth in the Bible. There are many examples of how youth can share in the creator's activity and make a difference in their generations. God uses youth to share His truth. The researcher presented some Biblical themes that demonstrate how the youth should be formed and the goals of young people's growth in faith. Youth who started well and stayed committed to their God and the godly inheritance never permitted their magnificence position to make them lose sight of their faith. Youth who stand true to the salvation they received to the extent that they are willing to follow Christ even to the point of crucifixion unwaveringly. Youth who were able to live godly lifestyles because they were well cultured by their families, youth pastoral ministers, and society. The Holy Bible and the Tradition of the Catholic Church have everything the youth need for past, present, and future lives to live.

Chapter four focuses on the contemporary challenges of youth in the Diocese of Adigrat and presented in chapter five the possible perspectives to adopt for the effective result in youth pastoral ministries among young people. The recent finding in this research shows that the lifestyle of young people creates multidimensional problems, including the physical, social, mental, spiritual, intellectual, and psychological dimensions of young people's being. The aim of presenting possible perspectives was to improve the understanding of this research at a glance. The recommendations could assist the readers in understanding the role of families, society, and the Church. It will also guide many others interested in researching the role of pastoral care in the personal transformation of youth.

Since this topic concerns the youth, there was the need to go out, make interview the Diocese's priests, families, young people, and children and collect information but it was limited because of the global pandemic restriction of COVID-19 and being in a foreign country, would not allow moving. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct research using

computer techniques. Another limitation outcome of the study conducted is based on the library and some internet sources regarding this research.

Besides the limitations, this work offers a new way of studying the ethical issue in youth transformation and its significance in the Church and the state since the case of the period of youth is the most critical stage in the development of national and religious identity. That is why the study calls for instant attention on the part of the Church and the government to put effort into arranging different opportunities for the formation of youth.

This study will help as a suitable material or instrument for individuals, groups, and the Church so that those interested in YM and lovers of youth empowerment and growth can follow the recommendations of this research and will have a better understanding of the challenges facing the youth morally and thereby develop their abilities to identify and constitute detailed information on the theological, historical and sociological importance of the youth in the social and religious setting. This research is believed to also be insightful and instructive to theological and humanities researchers. Finally, in this work, the secrets behind the growth and development of the Catholic Church of Ethiopia are discovered and presented.

The study reveals the role of pastoral care in the holistic transformation of youth must include transforming the agent of transformation. The emerging model of changing them is not only spiritual but also demands an investment of the person. For instance, rebuilding and transforming relationships and shaping covenantal communities needs investing in relationships.

In conclusion, the results of this work confirm that the Church and the government must not leave the ethical and social issues of youth transformation and its implications in the hands of individuals and parents to handle alone. Many things have been messed up at present due to the government not working with the Church on ethical, social, and human development issues. Therefore, the Church and the state should work together to deal with



the challenges that affect both. Church and state leaders should note that what affects one also affects the other.

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