

CHAPTER 15

THE PLACE OF THE CHURCH IN POLITICS: THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH OF AUCHI DIOCESE

Leonard ANETEKHAI, Thomas Blessing OYODE & Peter
Oluwatosin BALOGUN

Introduction

The Church, by her very nature, is constituted and instituted to engage the world in dialogue; to have constant interface with every sphere of human endeavours. The incarnation of Christ, the Son of God made man, is a paradigm for interpreting and explaining the very nature and significance of this encounter. Christ himself gave the Church a mandate to go into the world and make disciples of all nations in Matthew 28:19-20. The Lord also said in John 18:36 that his kingdom is not of this world. In both instances of the bible, here cited, Jesus declares and confirms his universal power and authority over all of God's creation as the Messiah while at the same time distancing himself from the way mundane power and authority are understood and exercised. One point is abundantly clear, however. Jesus intended and willed that as fruit of the new creation, all those who would come to believe in God through him would be constituted into a new community through baptism. These would constitute a new people, a new

government, and a new world order within the world and they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to spread the new and authentic moral teaching and conduct which is rooted in the Christian faith. In short, Jesus spent his earthly ministry helping his disciples to understand that for men and women of every time and age to be saved, the Christian community must continually go out of itself, encounter the world and convert it by being faithful to the identity, the Christian moral conduct and teaching which is to be celebrated perpetually at the Eucharistic table (Schnackenburg, 1965).

Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to reappraise the Church's role in politics. It is important to note that the Church's relation to the world of politics is as old as the very origin of the Church itself. For this reason, an adumbration of the Church's relation with the world of politics shall be presented with some notes on a specific conceptual evolution in the course of the Church's history.

The paper takes the diocese of Auchi as its context for evaluating the role of the Church in politics today. It argues that the Church's role in politics is as vast as politics itself and submits that, to play this role effectively, the Church must, as a matter of urgency, be more prophetic by promoting cultural conversion and by developing a plan for the integral formation and education of the human person both as active and passive political subjects. It specifies certain ways by which the diocese of Auchi can play its role in politics, noting that when these are carried out in dialogue and collaboration with the State, the result would be the integral development of the human person and the promotion of human dignity.

At this juncture, we shall clarify the use of "local church" as seen in the above title. This is because of an existing theological debate about whether it is more appropriate to use "local church" or "particular church" in describing a constitutive section of the universal Church of Christ of which the Pope is the Head (Rahner & Ratzinger, 1962). The debate is not unconnected with the attempt to understand the very nature of the Church as a mystical and visible-juridical reality (Oyode,

2021). De Lubac (1949), for example, uses “particular church” in reference to the church headed by a bishop and uses “local church” for describing a grouping of the church along socio-cultural lines. This would mean that a distinction between “local church” and “particular church” hangs on the view that the former is for socio-cultural groupings (Asian continent for example) while the latter is for ecclesiological-theological groupings (a diocese for example). In fact, they could be used interchangeably since some particular churches (dioceses and their equivalents) are created considering socio-cultural homogeneity; some particular churches are local churches but not all local churches are particular churches.

This distinction is a subject of a long theological development. We can trace it to New Testament’s *Koinonia* by which the early Church community shared everything in common thereby preserving their Christian unity and identity (Acts 2, 42-45; 8, 1-14; 1 Corinthians 11, 18-26; Romans 16,5, and Didache 10:6). While this unity existed the Church continued to grow and spread in structure from Jerusalem to Antioch and to Philippi. This was followed by the Fathers’ references to a community (*ekklesia*) headed by a bishop (*episkopos*) as a visible sign of unity as seen in the Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans (Smyr, 8:1-2). Ignatius also sees unity with the bishop as a correlate of unity with God in his Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph, 4:2). The same view is shared by Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses*, 3, 3, 1-3), Tertullian (*De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 20, 8) and Cyprian (Epistle 63:13). They agree that wherever the bishop is gathered with the community there is the local church and for Cyprian, all the bishops in their local churches share in the one universal episcopacy (Epistle 55:24; 48:3). Note should be taken that this paper deliberately avoids the theological fact that the Eucharist is equally a real sign of unity and communion for the Church; its focus here is on the theological development of the “local church” and “particular church” debate.

Later as each local church community spread, bishops were assisted by the *presbyter*, a Greek word for *elder* which would later be used to refer to the priest. These became liturgical collaborators with

the bishop as the latter grew to become more of an administrator and a civil judge in relation to the Roman State largely influenced by the Edict of Milan (also known as the Edict of Constantine) in the fourth century. The local church began to assume the status of an administrative portion of the church more than a sacramental unit. In the *Decretum Gratiani*, for example, Gratian uses *parochia*, *ecclesia*, and *civitas* to refer to one and the same ecclesial territory under the authority of a bishop (C. 9 q. 2 c. 3) which is today known as a diocese.

As the Church sought to project itself as a visible and perfect juridical society (Oyode, 2021), with the need to define the relationship between the Pope and the diocesan bishop, the terms *particular church* or *local church* became more recurrent in catholic ecclesiastical register. Interestingly, after the development of the *schemas* of the Council of Trent, the term *particular church* was dropped in the last draft of *Pastor Aeternus* (Denzinger & Schönmetzer, 1965) primarily to strengthen Church unity.

As already noted, both terms could be used interchangeably. This is what we find in the documents of the Second Vatican Council (Flannery, 1996). *Lumen Gentium* uses the term, particular Church in reference to a diocese while *Ad Gentes* uses it in reference to all “the churches in a given region or social context” (Beal et al, 2010, p. 504). The Code of Canon Law uses “particular Church” in reference to a diocese and its equivalents (Canons 368, 372). However, it could be added at this point that the debate rests against an even broader theological oscillation between *societal ecclesiology* and the *ecclesiology of communion*. The latter seeks to project the church more as a community constituted by the Eucharistic mystery while the former emphasises more of a visible, juridical society of governance. To this, *Communio Notio* of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (1992) has a response.

Another reason is that using particular Church would tend to mean that it is not a part of the universal Church of Christ whereas without the universal Church the local or particular Church ceases to

exist. It is thus a matter of fostering ecclesial unity. Above all, the particular Church is a full realization of the universal Church, the Church of Christ. This is because of the presence of the Word of God, the Sacraments (especially the Holy Eucharist), the Bishop, the faithful (including Priests and Religious) and, ultimately, the action of the Holy Spirit (Canon 369).

Having attempted a clarification of the use of “local church” in this paper, let us now take a cursory look at the diocese of Auchi as local church/particular church in terms of its history and demography.

A Concise Overview of Auchi Diocese

It is to be noted from the outset that the source for this section is the *2021 Diocesan Diary and Directory* of Auchi Diocese.

History: the history of Auchi diocese is traced to 1884, beginning from Agenebode where the Catholic Missionaries first arrived from Lokoja. Agenebode is also recorded as the birth place of the first Parish in Auchi diocese, erected in 1897 with Fr. Peter Piotin becoming the first Parish Priest. The diocese was also host to the first Major Seminary in Nigeria, the Saint Martins Seminary, Ivhianokpodi in 1908 but it was later moved to Asaba in 1927 and later transferred to Benin City in 1938. All the while the present day Auchi diocese was simply a part of the Asaba/Benin Vicariate under Bishop Broderick and Bishop Leo Taylor who was later succeeded by Bishop Patrick Joseph Kelly in the year 1938. Bishop Kelly was succeeded by Bishop Patrick Ekpu who was ordained in 1971 as Bishop of Benin City diocese. It was during the episcopacy of Archbishop Patrick Ekpu that the diocese of Auchi was erected by Pope St. John Paul II in Rome on November 6, 2002. The Episcopal ordination of the first and current Bishop of Auchi diocese, Most Rev. Dr. Gabriel G.G. Dunia took place on February 22, 2003 at the Saint Vincent Pro-Cathedral (now Immaculate Conception Cathedral), Auchi.

Demography: The overall population of Auchi diocese as of 2021 is put at nine hundred and twenty-one thousand out of which the Catholic population is one hundred and twenty thousand. The total number of priests is ninety-eight with one of them retired. These enjoy the collaboration of numerous Men and Women Religious, Catechists and Seminarians in the service of the People of God found in thirty-three Parishes, twenty-five Mass Centres, 2 Mission Stations and 4 Chaplaincies.

Part of the pastoral activities of the Missionaries was to establish institutions such as schools and hospitals and many of these, spread across Etsako East, Etsako Central, Etsako West, Owan and Akoko-Edo. Some of them still exist in the present-day Auchi diocese with many of them being forcefully seized by the Nigerian government in 1973. In 2008 the diocese of Auchi established a Minor Seminary on the same spot where the Saint Martins Major Seminary was before it was moved to Asaba; it is called Immaculate Conception Minor Seminary, Ivhianokpodi. There are, as of 2021, 10 Secondary Schools, twenty-seven Nursery/Primary Schools, 4 Pastoral Institutions, 3 Medical Institutions, 1 Charity Home and 1 Vocational Institution spread across the diocese.

The Church and Politics in the *mens ecclesiae*: Distinctions and Synthesis

Having noted above that at some points in the Church's history there were attempts to project the Church as a perfect juridical society, with its own laws and independent structures of governance, just like the State, it is clear that the Catholic Church which is the real and mystical Body of Christ with all its spiritual and sacramental elements, does not only transcend history but is also immersed in history with all its human and corporal elements. Consequently, the Church is both the Mystical Body of Christ just as much as it is a juridically organised social community (Dalla Torre, 2007, Oyode, 2021). This is explained by the mystery of the Incarnation itself as taught by St. Paul (1

Corinthians 12,27; Ephesians 1,23; Colossians 1,24) and as explained in *Lumen Gentium*. At the same time, the Church and the human society are two distinct realities. It is precisely for this reason that the Church will continue to seek ways of relating itself to politics without losing her identity. In addition, any study of the Church's role in politics must be based on a clear understanding of Catholic ecclesiology and the function of the state/government (Esbeck, 1986).

Defining politics in the 21st century can be said to be an arduous task because, as a social science concept, its meaning continues to evolve according to time and place as well as according to the viewpoints of political scientists. Etymologically, the term dates back to ancient Greece's use of *polis* in reference to the city-state, the centre of governance at the time. However, the "city-state" as a concept soon gave way to the concept of state. Politics was then basically understood as the art of organising the city-state or the state (using a modern concept). For some it is the exercise of power (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995) or the power to make decisions; the struggle for the allocation of power and resources (Heywood, 1997). The State, thus, has become a key feature in any study of politics such that "Church-State" could almost mean the same thing as "Church-Politics". As we shall soon see, they do not mean exactly the same thing. Meanwhile, since this paper is not strictly about "Church-State" relations we would not delve into the models of "Church-State" relations as proposed by some authors (Huttington, 1996; Ferarri, 2013).

Since politics is a social concept it also involves group relations that could as well bring about conflict of interests either among members of the same State or between the State and other social groups such as other country-states, Nations, the International Community and the Church. This is why politics is as much about conflict resolution as it is about harmonious arbitration, agreements, consensus and conventions (Bentley et al, 1995). It suffices to say that power and decision-making are interrelated; power is the ability to influence people through command and sanctions. From the foregoing, we may define politics as every human endeavour undertaken by the State in

the exercise of legitimate power and authority using the instruments of the law for the ordering of societal goods in service of the common good and interests of its members.

In the context of Political Science and Public Administration, the use of the term state as an entity of government and socio-political relations is amply clear. Political theory studies indicate that the State is a paradigm of a political community (Entrikin, 1999; Goodhart, 2007). They underscore the fact that man chose to live in a civic community with other beings as citizens who entrust authority to certain leaders (a government) to whom they are subjects and from whom they expect accountability. Thus there exists a mutual exchange of rights and obligations between the government/state and the citizens.

On the other hand, *mens ecclesiae* favours the use of a more general and broad based concept which is the *political community*. The Church initially saw the State as a specific form of the political community with which it related. However, with the emergence of humanism and the renaissance movement, the State began to assume absolute power to the detriment of religious authority and, consequently, Church authority by which God and the Natural Law were of no consequence. Nevertheless, the State as a sovereign entity also began to experience a decline as a result of tilting towards the interdependence of States in order to confront challenges that took on a global nature and needed unified forces to surmount. This perhaps explains the plethora of researches on the demise of the nation-state system ((Fukuyama, 1992; Huntington, 1996; Wriston, 1992). Examples of such challenges include the World War II, the Industrial Revolution and globalisation. Within States too, there were fragmentations and cultural delineations with the emergence of federalism (Dalla Torre, 2007) and nationalism. For this reason of the rise and decline of the State, the Church chose to use the term *political community*.

There are ample researches in systematic theology on the meaning and nature of the Church (Bouyer, 2011; Congar, 1965;

Haffner, 2007; Kasper 1989; Saldanha, 2014). To our mind, Ratzinger's *Introduction to Christianity* (1979) and *Called to Communion, Understanding the Church Today* (1996), would make this list of references less weighty if not cited. In specific relation to politics, secular Greek used the term *ekklesia* to refer to an assembly of citizens of the Ancient Greek city states for periodic meetings, especially in Athens, where public affairs and secular businesses were conducted (Caudle, 2020). This is a contrast to the New Testament understanding of the term as an *assembly of believers*, a liturgical community of believers (Reken, 1999; Oyode, 2021).

The Church understands and teaches that her role in politics is essentially to protect the dignity of the human person. Since the primary purpose of politics is the common good of the citizens (Dajur, 2019), the Church's place in politics would be to ensure that the common identity of each individual is protected beyond politics. This is crystal in the magisterium of the Second Vatican Council. In *Gaudium et Spes* the Fathers of the Council, noting the cultural, political and economic changes that have taken place in the course of history, asserted the need to protect the exercise of rights and duties within "the life of the political community" (para 73). In this document, it would be seen that in places where the word "state" could have been easily used, the words "political community" are used instead. It also talks about the relationship between the political community and the Church highlighting a clear distinction of the role Christians should play both as individuals and as a group guided by the dictate of a clear conscience. Then it reiterated the role of pastors in guiding citizens to play their role in the political community in the name of the Church (para 76). It is important to note here that the document does not make use of the concept of politics which has a rather broader understanding and application even in political science.

For a synthesis of the conciliar understanding of the Church's role in politics, the concluding section of *Gaudium et Spes* is copiously cited below:

All those dedicated to the ministry of God's word must use the ways and means proper to the Gospel which in great many respects differ from the means proper to the earthly city...There are, indeed, close links between earthly things and those elements of man's condition which transcend the world. The Church herself makes use of temporal things, insofar as her own mission requires it. She, for her part, does not place her trust in the privileges offered by civil authority. She will even give up the exercise of certain rights which have been legitimately acquired, if it becomes clear that their use will cast doubt on the sincerity of her witness or that new ways of life demand new methods. It is only right, however, that at all times and in all places, the Church should have true freedom to preach the faith, to teach her social doctrine, to exercise her role freely among men, and also to pass moral judgment in those matters which regard public order when the fundamental rights of a person or the salvation of souls require it. In this, she should make use of all the means – but only those – which accord with the Gospel and which correspond to the general good according to the diversity of times and circumstances. (para 76).

The Church's own description of her role in the political community is clear. It should be restated, nevertheless, that the use of the term was necessary to define the Church's relations with supra-State organisations like the UN, AU, EU and other International Organisations which are not States in the strict understanding of the concept. This point allows the use of "Church and politics" in a loose sense; a sense in which politics may be understood as whatever happens within a given sovereign State while "Church and political community" would be whatever occurs between the Church and the State as well as other supra-State or multi-State organisations. Of course, the Church also teaches that the Apostolic See and the Diocese are moral persons

constituted by divine law independent of the political community and can enter into relations and sign concordats and treaties with State and International Organisations (Canon 113 CIC). Nevertheless, “Church-politics” is inseparable (Kasomo & Naila, 2013) for the integral development of the human person and the salvation of souls.

The Role of Auchi Diocese in Nigeria’s Politics: Towards an Integral Development of the Human Person

The role of Auchi diocese in politics would rather be according to *mens ecclesiae* as enunciated in *Gaudium et Spes*. Also the dignity of the human person and the salvation of souls should be the bases of her role in politics as proposed in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2005). Her role is to proclaim the reign of God’s Kingdom here on earth with a clear distinction between ends that are *this-worldly* and those that are *other-worldly* (Egbulefu, 2019; Okafor, 2019; Oyode, 2017). To achieve this end, the diocese of Auchi would use spiritual means and only use mundane means if and only when they are necessary to attain salvation. Such means include, among others, the teaching of the faith through preaching and catechesis and through a concrete application of the four principles of the Church’s Social Teaching/Doctrine (the dignity of the human person, subsidiarity, the common good, and solidarity) while taking into consideration the changing circumstances of the times. The diocese of Auchi needs to ensure that politics serves the proper ends enunciated in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*: “the full growth of each of its members, called to cooperate steadfastly for the attainment of the common good, under the impulse of their natural inclinations towards what is good and true.” (para 384). These could be applied in the following specific but not exhaustive ways.

Education and Formation: the diocese of Auchi has made commendable strides in education and formation of young minds not to mention her Priests and Religious. It would be good that government makes a dispassionate assessment of this milestone and consider a

return of the Church's Catholic schools to the diocese for as, Ede argues, the development of a country "is dependent on its educational achievement." (2017, 184). The diocese of Auchi needs to continue to play her role in politics by being ever more faithful to Catholic Christian education which rigorously harmonises both human and Christian qualities in the individual through character formation (Maritain, 1943) by which the physical, moral and intellectual capacities are integrally developed. For this reason, Okafor, citing Scriptures and the Magisterium, holds that religious education should not be a mere appendix to the curriculum as "the Catholic school goes where the Church goes." (2019, pp. 204-205). Parents' involvement in this project should be reinforced by a deepened awareness that education goes *pari passu* with procreation so as to place their children in positions of responsible leadership in the society (Beal et al., 2010).

With the young well formed in mind and in character, the mind becomes fertile for further formation and education in responsible citizenship and in political participation which the diocese can embark upon more than ever before. Paths of leadership and political formation for youths, men and women may be explored by the diocese, bearing in mind that a major dearth to Nigeria's political development is lack of formidable leadership (Achebe, 1983). Participation in politics should be seen by the faithful as a practice of the virtues of piety, justice and fortitude; we cannot pray for the coming of God's Kingdom and the reign of His Will if we are not ready to work out what we pray for; there should be progress from *lex credendi* to a concrete *modus agendi*. Thus the Church is tasked with ensuring that every person plays a responsibly Christian role in national development following the dictates of Church teaching (Gaudium et Spes, para 75; Ad Gentes, para 15). This should also include disabusing the minds of the faithful that politics is sinful and unchristian as against the understanding that politics is man's participation in God's plan of ordering the world in justice, peace and love.

Leadership and political formation, *inter alia*, should focus a premium of attention on the youths especially as the vibrancy and talent

of an average Afemai youth has never been doubt or in want. Our cultural history also gives credence to the value of youth in Nigeria's socio-political development (Talbot, 1969; Ajayi, 1965). Conscience formation in responsible leadership, selflessness and accountability cannot be overemphasised. One area that seems to be long abandoned is the area of cultural formation in African laws and customs. The diocese could include this in her educational development plan. There could also be political education of the Clergy through seminars and workshops since they are key actors in educating the laity through preaching and teaching.

Mass Media: Not unconnected to education are the media of social communications. This can be said to be the public relations engine of the diocesan curia in salubrious collaboration with the bishop's Chancery. A seminal study of the role of the print media in evangelisation in Auchi has been carried out by Egielewa (2018). It suffices to say that the various media of communication adopted by the diocese should continue to explore pathways for increased political consciousness among the people and influencing public opinion for development in Afemai land by revealing the truth of the gospel and by speaking out from a feeling of love for the salvation of souls, according to the teaching of Vatican II's *Inter Mirifica*.

As a corollary, the diocese of Auchi would continue its constant dialogue with government and traditional leaders. The diocese has maintained a notable history of robust dialogue and collaboration with the government from the wake of the Fourth Republic when Lucky Igbinedion was Governor of Edo State up to this present dispensation of Governor Godwin Obaseki. Bishop Gabriel Dunia has engaged each dispensation in ensuring peace, security and socio-economic development across Edo State through several meetings, conferences and seminars in the last twenty years. He has also been unflinchingly committed to the fight against kidnapping and other security challenges in collaboration with the State government. The bishop also participates in some boards and committees of education thereby contributing to policy formulation and execution in the State.

Structures of socio-economic development: Since politics is about the development of the human society by providing legitimate means for the self-actualisation of each man and woman, it is imperative to note the laudable projects and programmes that the diocese of Auchi has put in place through its social arm, the Justice Development and Peace/Caritas Commission (JDPC) without prejudice to the fact that the structures of schools, hospitals and a nursing college are also means of economic boost for the people in Edo North and beyond.

The Church's commitment to socio-economic development is as old as her very origins (Oyode, 2017). According to the author, through JDPC Auchi, the diocese of Auchi has been working to ensconce justice, peace and development in Edo North via social charity. He noted that town hall meetings, workshops, sensitisation and election monitoring have taken place in the last 20 years supported by USAID, CIDA and DFID. He added that poverty alleviation projects which have been carried out in Akoko-Edo and Owan "in collaboration with Sustainable Mechanism for Improving Livelihood and Household Empowerment (SMILE)...of the Catholic Relief Service (CRS)...empower the most vulnerable households in areas of Health, Nutrition, Shelter, Household Economic Strengthening, Protection and Psychosocial Support." (2017, pp. 62-63). The JDPC also provides micro finance schemes and legal services. Some authors have provided a more detailed understanding of the importance of collaboration between government and the Church in human socio-economic development (Ani et al., 2015).

Thinking along the *via negativa*, the role of Auchi diocese in politics is not to be one that contributes to the already existing political tensions in the country. Nigeria's unity has become increasingly fragile and volatile and its national cohesion is progressively more under threat partly because some politicians tend to manipulate the country's religious sentiments to their advantage. Sometimes, such manipulations could be in the form of financial incentives and enticements for some priests and religious who become susceptible to inducement and manipulation especially during election campaigns. Playing a role in

politics is not also to involve using the pulpit to pursue partisan political ends. The diocese of Auchi is to remain neutral and impartial in political matters and ensure that whatever political opinion is held should be held in conscience and in the promotion of truth and justice especially when it calls for the defence of the rights of the Church and the promotion of the common good. This is a matter of duty (Canon 287 CIC).

From the foregoing, it can be said that the role of the Church in politics is, above all, witnessing to the gospel of Christ, the Anointed One, whose mandate for all believers, especially pastors is to proclaim the good news to the poor, freedom for prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind and freedom for the oppressed (Luke 4:18). This imperative, which is more urgent than ever before, should set the diocese on a pedestal to effectively carry out its prophetic function of witnessing to hope for the people. When the people lose hope in politicians in their communities, their Parishes and the entire diocese should give them a shoulder and an abode of succour.

Furthermore on the note of imperative, the diocese of Auchi must embrace and continue to promote cultural conversion. One conspicuous and undeniable way of being a beacon of hope and bastion of support for the men and women of Auchi diocese is for her members to imitate Christ who came to serve and not to be served (Mark 10, 41-45) and emptied himself like a slave (Philippians 2, 5-11). We are speaking of humble service here. If politics is about power, then the Church must teach politicians how to use and exercise power; power is for service because it comes from God alone (John 19, 11). A constant consciousness and practice of the evangelical counsels (obedience, poverty and chastity) would be more than necessary here. Thus, politicians and every member of the society around our Parishes and Church communities would want to see priests who live above board not by some extraordinary and phenomenal way of life but by a simple life of poverty, modesty and simplicity. In other words, while politicians live in affluence at the expense of the people and oppress them with their wealth and resources, the Church's ministers are not to

be perceived to be living in opulence while the members of their Churches are living from hand to mouth. This will only obstruct the Church's prophetic voice and strip her of her authority to be a lighthouse for politicians especially in these times when it matters most.

Conclusion

This essay sought to analyse the place of the Church in politics using the Catholic Diocese of Auchi as the prototype of a local Church. We attempted an analytical delineation of the concept, noting its fluidity in relation to a similar concept which is the particular Church. The justification for this is that theologians and canon lawyers have often found the interchangeable use of both concepts debatable. We were able to show from our analysis that the diocese is the perfect model of a particular/local Church precisely because with the presence of the Bishop, the Vicar of Christ, the presence of the Sacraments and the Word of God, the presence of Christian believers and the presence of the working of the Holy Spirit, the One, Holy, Roman Catholic Church is fully present and active; the diocese is the symbol of the unity that exists between the local/particular Church and the Universal Church Headed by the Pope. Consequent upon the above and drawing from the results of our research, the role of the diocese of Auchi in politics would not be anything short of *mens ecclesiae*; Auchi diocese can play her role of service to politics in Nigeria only within the bounds and limits of the mind of the Church: the protection of the dignity of the human person and the promotion of justice, truth and development. It is our view that, in the twenty years of its existence, the diocese of Auchi has taken the path of collaboration and dialogue with the State as well as the teaching and preaching of the Word of God, human capacity building and infrastructural development as veritable means of bringing the goods of politics to bear on the lives of the people within its jurisdiction and beyond. However, to protect itself from the danger of losing sight of this noble course and to rouse or provoke a cultural

conversion in the society, it must avoid hobnobbing with politicians and remain faithful to the gospel witness of Christ, the Servant Leader.

References

- Achebe, C. (1983). *The trouble with Nigeria*. Fourth Dimension Press.
- Ajayi, J. F. A. (1965). Professional warriors in nineteenth-century Yoruba politics. *Tarikh* 1(1), 72-81.
- Ani, C., Chukwuelobe M., & Nwankwo, A. (2015). Partnership between the state and the church: Contextualising the Nigerian faith-based vehicles as poverty reduction tools in the millenium. *Open Journal of Political Science* 5(2), 58-67. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2015.52006>
- Beal, P. J., Coriden, A. J., & Green, J. T. (2010). *New commentary on the Code of Canon Law, commissioned by the Canon Law Society of America*. Theological Publications in India.
- Bentley, R., Grant, A., & Roberts, D. (1995). *British politics in focus*. Causeway Press.
- Bouyer, L. (2011). *The Church of God, Body of Christ and temple of the Spirit*. Ignatius Press, San Francisco.
- Caudle, T. (2020), The ekklesia as an assembly that evokes response. *Liberty University Journal of Statemanship and Public Policy* 1(1), 1-15.
- Congar, Y. M. (1965). *The mystery of the Church*. Geoffrey Chapman, London.
- Dajur, G.P. (2019). *The Church and politics in a defined margin*. Arise in Grace, Abuja, Nigeria.
- Dalla Torre, G. (2007). *La città sul monte, contributo ad una teoria canonistica sulle relazioni fra Chiesa e Comunità politica*. 3rd ed. Anonima Veritas Editrice.
- De Lubac, H. (1949). *Corpus mysticum: L'Eucharistie et l'église au moyen age*. Aubier.

- Denzinger, H., & Schönmetzer A. (1965). *Enchiridion symbolorum*. 33rd ed. Herder & Herder.
- Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (1992, May 28). *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of the Church understood as communion*. Vatican.
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_28051992_communionis-notio_en.html.
- Drucker P. (1993). *Post-capitalist society*. New York, Harper.
- Ede, S. O. (2017). The agency of education in national development and the urgency of quality: Stakeholders in the court of posterity. *Encounter Journal of African Life and Religion* 12, 184-211.
- Egbulefu, J. (2019). The Kingdom of God. *Encounter Journal of African Life and Religion* 13, 21-48.
- Egielewa, O. P. (2018). *The print media as a tool for evangelisation in Auchi Diocese/ Nigeria: Contextualisation and Challenges*. LIT Verlag.
- Entrikin, J. N. (1999). Political community, identity and cosmopolitan place. *International Sociology* 14(3), 269-282.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580999014003003>
- Esbeck, H. C. (1986). *Five views of church-state relations in contemporary American thought*. *BYU L. Rev.*, 371-404.
<https://scholarship.law.missouri.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1170&context=facpubs>.
- Ferrari, S. (2013). Models of state–religion relations in Western Europe. Hertzke D. A. (Ed.), *The Future of Religious Freedom: Global Challenges* 202 (pp. 202-214). Oxford University Press.
- Flannery, A. (1996). *Vatican Council II: The conciliar and postconciliar documents*. Liturgical Press.
- Friedberg, A. (1959). *Decretum magistri Gratiani. Corpus Iuris Canonici, Pars Prior*, Graz.
- Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man*. New York, Free Press.

- Goodhart, M. (2007). Europe's democratic deficits through the Looking Glass: The European Union as a challenge for democracy. *Perspectives on Politics* 5(3), 567-579.
- Haffner, P. (2007). *Mystery of the Church*. Gracewing, Norfolk.
- Haralambos, M., & Holborn, M. (1995). *Sociology: Themes and perspectives*. Collins Educational.
- Heywood, A. (1997). *Politics*. London, Macmillan Press.
- Huntington, P. S. (1996). *The clash of civilisations and the remaking of world order*. New York, Simon and Schuster.
- Kasomo, D., & Naila, G.N. (2013). The relationship between church and state. *International Journal of Applied Sociology* 3 (2), pp. 9-18.
- Maritain, J. (1943). *Education at the crossroads*. Yale University Press.
- Okafor, A. C. (2019). Building the Kingdom of God through catholic education: The role of Catholic schools. *Encounter Journal of African Life and Religion* 13, 201-211.
- Oyode, T. B. (2017). Pastoral care for the poor: Exploring new frontiers in Auchi Diocese. In Ogbenika, G. (Ed.), *Our People, Our Faith: The Afemai People in Perspective* (pp. 45-70). Mindex Press.
- _____ (2021). The Church as Mystical Body of Christ: Any need for laws? *Ekpoma Review, Philosophy and Theology Journal of the Seminary of All Saints, Ekpoma*.
<https://www.acjol.org/index.php/ekpoma/article/view/2068/1969>.
- Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004, June 29). *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Vaticana.
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.
- Rahner, K., & Ratzinger, J. (1962). *The Episcopate and the Primacy, Quaestiones Disputate* 4.
https://archive.org/details/episcopateprimac0000rahn_q9f9.
- Ratzinger, J. (1979). *Introduction to christianity*. Seabury Press, New York.
- _____ (1996). *Called to communion, understanding the Church today*. Ignatius Press, San Francisco.

- Reken, V.C.P. (1999). The Church's role in social justice. *Calvin Theological Journal* 34, 198–206.
- Saldanha, P.P. (2014). *The Church, mystery of love and communion*. Urbaniana University Press, Vatican City.
- Schnackenburg, R. (1965). *The Church in the New Testament*. Herder & Herder.
- Talbot, P. A. (1969). *The peoples of Southern Nigeria: A sketch of their history, ethnology and languages with an abstract of the 1921 Census*. Vol. III. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd.
- Tertullian, Q. S. T. (1954). De praescriptione haereticorum. *Tertullian Opera, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*. Brepols.
- Wriston, W. (1992). *The twilight of sovereignty: How the information revolution is transforming our world*. New York. Scribner's.