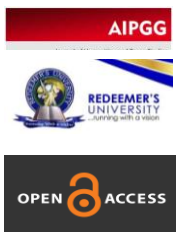


Religion, parents and children in Nigerian peace education: A Roman Catholic behavioral parent training curriculum

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Abstract:

Worldwide, 120 million girls are violated; 90% by family members, boyfriends/husbands, or known persons. In Nigeria: A) 1 out of 4 girls; 10% of boys are victims yet only 5 out of 100 children who report receive support. B) Poverty, social norms and cultural beliefs keep 10.5 million children of 5-14 years out-of-school. In Africa, the Catholic Church educates over 19 million children in 45,088 primary schools. As a Catholic priest, for the past 25 years, I have dealt with multiple cases of teenage pregnancy, physical child abuse and children out-of-school in Guinea Conakry, Mexico, and Nigeria. Therefore, given the Churches response to Clergy children sex abuse based on reporting cases, I propose a Behaviour Parent Training Lessons (BPTLs) as a holistic way of minimising children abuse. BPTLs transform poor parenting cultures—social norms and community beliefs that derive violence against children. It makes parenting semi-public and semi-professional.

Keywords: Religion, Catholic, Church, Peace-education, Parent, Lessons

Introduction

Conceptualisation of terms

Justice means the virtue that enables and sustains right relations in communities as intended by God: it seeks right relations between God and creatures; wants to ensure that each person, particularly children, accesses basic human needs and opportunities essential for human flourishing; and it pursues right relations between human beings and the environment.

Peace means the satisfaction that comes from the harmony and well-being that Christians experience in life. God grants this peace through Christ who “made peace through the blood of his cross,” but that humans strive to attain this peace with fellow human beings and the environment.¹

Eucharist, the Greek *eucharistia*, is “to give thanks”. The Catholic Church in Vatican II states, the Eucharist is “a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of

¹Colossians 1:20the New Jerusalem Bible

charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is eaten, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us".²

Violence against Children in the world: The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) presents a gloomy picture of violence against children: 120 million girls are violated; 90% by family members, boyfriends/husbands, or known persons.³ Child neglect and violence drive children into crimes such that between 2005 and 2020 over 93,000 children were recruited into armed conflict.⁴ In Nigeria, UNICEF reports on child protection: A) 1 out of 4 girls; 10% of boys are victims yet only 5 out of 100 children who report receive support. B) Poverty, social norms and cultural beliefs keep 10.5 million children of 5-14 years out-of-school and getting them back into schools poses an enormous challenge.⁵

The Roman Catholic Church and children: The Church is almost 18% of the world's population: 1.3 billion, a geographical spread of Catholics per 100 inhabitants is 63.7 in Americas, 39.7 in Europe, 26.3 in Oceania and 19.4 in Africa.⁶ Additionally, in Africa alone, the Church has over 74,000 religious sisters and over 46,000 priests operating 7,274 hospitals and clinics, and it is educating over 19 million children in 45,088 primary schools.⁷ In these places, children should feel free, but they are violated at times even by the clergy. Therefore, a resolution to child insecurity in the Church demands urgent attention.

Personal experience: My 25 years of experience from Africa, Latin America and Europe as a Catholic priest exposes me to parents and children complaints of abuse and neglect issues. On the one hand, some parents say, children today: Do not like house work but they like free money; get pregnant as teenagers; do not like to go to school; some go to school but do not want to study; many fail exams; some are involved in drug abuse; many enjoy telling lies; some go about aimlessly, they come home late at nights; many do not listen or obey their parents; and many are just stubborn. On the other hand, some children

² Catholic Church, Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness Pope Paul VI (December 4, 1963), accessed July 10, 2018,

https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

³ UNICEF, "Sexual Violence Against Children," UNICEF for every child 75, accessed July 10, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/protection/sexual-violence-against-children>.

⁴ UNICEF, "Child Protection, Children Recruited by Armed Forces," accessed October 14, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/protection/children-recruited-by-armed-forces>.

⁵ UNICEF, "Child Protection," UNICEF for Every Child 75, Nigeria, accessed October 7, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/child-protection>.

⁶ Gian Paolo Salvini, "Mission," Church Numbers in the World, last modified September 28, 2020, <https://www.laciviltacattolica.com/church-numbers-in-the-world/>.

⁷ Tagle, Cardinal, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, in responding to Pope Francis establishing an emergency fund for COVID-19 victims at the Pontifical Mission Societies, he gave this statistics, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://zenit.org/articles/pope-creates-emergency-fund-to-aid-coronavirus-victims/>.

complain about parents who: Do not pay school fees on time; cook food late at night; do not listen to them; do not care about what matters to them; and beat them or insult them at will. I have also dealt with multiple cases of teenage pregnancy, physical child abuse and children who are out-of-school in Guinea Conakry, Mexico, and Nigeria. These have challenged me to reflect and research for three years on child abuse, parenthood and childhood conflict. Therefore, given the Churches response to Clergy children sex abuse based on reporting cases, I design a Catholic Behaviour Parent Training Lessons (BPTLs) curriculum as a holistic way of minimising children abuse: A Nigerian Christian-family peace-education programme for First Holy Communion (FHC).

BPTLs Based on the Roman Catholic Church's Justice, Peace, and the Eucharist

Why BPTLs? We remember that what derives children abuse is social norms, violent discipline, gender-based violence, and community superstitious beliefs. Thus, the curriculum of the BPTLs I design here assume that parents acquire socially parenting attributes/skills, social norms, that can also be modified through training and practices. As indeed, parenting educators accept that parenting attributes/skills are learned in childhood and replicated later in life.⁸Accordingly, BPTLs aim at breaking the cycles of poor parenting cultures across generations, enables parents to become sensitive to poor parenting attitudes and actions, highlights consequences of poor attitudes and actions for children, and presents parents with a better parenting culture. BPTLs have received positive evaluations from parents of diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds in the United States: African Americans, Latinos, and Asians American parents, as well as from parents in Japan, China (Hong Kong), Germany, Switzerland, Norway, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.⁹ Hence, the evidence that attitudes and skills learned from these lessons have far-reaching socio-cultural appeal.

In this article: given the above background, I present the curriculum of Agberagba's book¹⁰ on Catholic BPTLs. More importantly, this curriculum incorporates the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child. I divide this article into six sections in accordance with the Churches' teachings: Justice and the Eucharist I, justice and the nature of God in the family, peace and the Eucharist, justice and the Eucharist II, social justice and the Eucharist, and I elaborate on the implementation challenges.

⁸Stephen J. Bavolek and North Carolina Asheville, "The Nurturing Parenting Programs: Evidence-Based Programs for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect," 16th ed. (Family Development Resources, Inc. January 1, 2014), accessed December 21, 2020, <https://www.nurturingparenting.com/images/cmsfiles/npw16final12-20-2013.pdf>. and Matthew R. Sanders, "Triple P - Positive Parenting Program as a Public Health Approach to Strengthening Parenting," *Journal of Family Psychology* 22, 3 (2008): 506-517.

⁹Sanders, "Triple P."

¹⁰ John Agberagba, *First Holy Communion—A Christian-Family Peacebuilding: Lessons for Children, Biological and God-parents*(Makurdi: Aboki Publishers, 2019).

1. *Justice and the Eucharist I*

The Law of the Church states, “the most august sacrament is the blessed Eucharist, in which Christ the Lord himself is contained, offered and received, and by which the Church continually lives and grows.”¹¹The eating of the Body and drinking of the Blood of Christ for the first time is what we call First Holy Communion (FHC). The Eucharist is pivotal in the practice of Gospel justice as the Church teaches its faithful during Mass for the Progress of People in the Roman Missal that participants encounter the God who has given “all people one common origin” and whose will be to “gather them as one family in [himself]”. In the Eucharist, participants are called to share “the good things [God] gives us” so that we “may secure justice and equality for every human society built on love [the greatest justice] and peace.”¹²Hence, I would argue that injustice concerning human beings, particularly, children abuse and neglect becomes a false argument that they do not matter, they do not need to be loved, and they can be forgotten. Likewise, Aquinas seems to agree that to treat a person unjustly, particularly children in my view, is to dishonour them, to deny their dignity as human beings; and in light of that denial, they can be harmed and deprived of the basic necessities of life that are due to them.¹³Indeed, Wadell submits that the work of justice is to rearrange the world according to the purpose of God, the power of the Eucharist is to remind participants that their hearts too must be purified, transformed, and rearranged by God.¹⁴Hence, parents as first teachers, they must teach and practice this justice in the family.

Furthermore, the Church’s social tradition of justice is based on the understanding of a common humanity. John XXIII in his social encyclical insists that humans are created in community for solidarity and it is this solidarity that they need to protect: a kinship they have with people everywhere.¹⁵ Therefore, justice will be impossible unless we agree that all men and women are brothers and sisters, not outsiders or strangers but members of the family of God. How else would it be, that his body will remain whole, when participants are divided in their human unity; children are abused and neglected. Hence, I argue that child abuse is dehumanising for all of us, not only for the abused children, but also children-predators—they are also dehumanised—behaving less than true creatures of God. Thus, FHC time should promote quality parenting so that many children will no longer receive substandard forms of parental care that

¹¹ Catholic Church, “Code of Canon Law 96,” in *The Code of Canon Law: New Revised English Translation*, (Nigeria: St Paul Publications, 1997), 897.

¹² Catholic Church, Roman Missal, *The Roman Missal, for Use of the Holy See and the Dioceses of the Bishops’ conferences of Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Zimbabwe*, (Nairobi: Pauline’s Publications Africa, 2011), 1112.

¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 5 Vol, trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1274/1981), No. II-II:72, 1.

¹⁴ Paul Wadell, “Justice: Pastoral-Liturgical Tradition,” in the *Collegetown Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Carroll Stuhlmueller, (Collegetown, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 517.

¹⁵ Pope John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra, Christianity and Social Progress*, (Roma: Vatican, 1961).

teaches discriminatory social values and beliefs that impede children's healthy development, but also produces potential abusers for the future. Hence, Part one of the lessons "Christian obligations for parents"¹⁶ as Aquinas argues on fundamental rule of justice, we harm no one and fulfil our obligations to all, has the following:¹⁷

Learning outcomes

Successful participating families will:

1. Critically recognise that all the 500 languages in Nigeria are created by God, parents are children's first teachers, family conflict, and family meeting;
2. Creatively practice positive reactions to family conflict, and regular family meetings;
3. Collaboratively analyse the origin of races, family conflict, need for family meetings, and articles 1, 2, 5, and 6 of the Convention of the right of the child;
4. Synthesise five family values in accordance with the 10 Commandments, and construct a family shrine.

Teaching and learning methods

Collaborative activities:

Icebreaker dance:

- Participants simulate their Baptism (origin of Christians): in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and then say the name of an animal of their choice while dancing the way that animal does.¹⁸

Hand battle:

- Participants in pairs on a straight line, simulate hand battle for the groups to experiment conflict and their socialised reactions.¹⁹

Parents' lack of respect for children:

- Participants dramatize a mother refusing to listen to a daughter's concern and a father refusing to take his son to a football game. Then discuss if this shows concern to children's needs.²⁰

¹⁶ Agberagba, *First Holy Communion*, 4.

¹⁷ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II: 100, 5.

¹⁸ Agberagba, *First Holy Communion*, 4.

¹⁹ Agberagba, 10.

²⁰ Agberagba, 15.

Collaborative analysis

All races form God's family, participants answer:

- Where is the origin of the Tiv, Idoma, Igbo, Hausa, Fulani, etc. of Nigeria?²¹

Family regular meetings, participants answer:

- Do you have regular family meetings and prayer times?
- Do you allow children and adults, women and men, to speak freely without threats or intimidation in your family meetings?²²

The Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC), participants discuss:

- When do you—parents consider children as no-longer children? When do you—children consider yourselves no-long children? Read and analyse CRC 1: the age for child-hood.
- Are children of all races, sex, gender, and religion acceptable in your family? Are children of the poor and the rich equal in your community? Read and analyse CRC 2: children's equality and equity.
- Can rich/poor parents, both, fulfil the rights of a child? Is it good for poor parents to send their children to live with their rich relatives? Read and analyse CRC 5: rights and duties of parents towards their children.²³

Reflections:

All races form God's family:

- Input that the Body and Blood of Christ that Christian eat and drink is for all the children of God! If we look for earthly origin, we can say we have a father and mother from a place and time, but a creature of the created world. However, if we look for a deeper origin of our essence then we say we all come from God, Creator of all life.²⁴

Parents are children's first teachers:²⁵

- Input that children expect their parents to lead by example: practice what they preach; walk the walk; follow through on their promises; and do what they say they will do.²⁶

²¹ Agberagba, 4-5.

²² Agberagba, 13.

²³ Agberagba, 16-17.

²⁴ Agberagba, 4-7.

²⁵ Agberagba, 7-10.

²⁶ James Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th ed., (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 40.

Parents teach children positive reactions to conflict:

- Reflect on the reality that we do not have to react violently to conflict; we are better off reacting peacefully.²⁷

Families hold regular meetings discusses how:²⁸

- Families meet regularly to discuss the following questions: What are we doing well? What are we not doing well? What are we learning from family events? How can we do things better?²⁹

Parents respect children like Jesus teaches:³⁰

Jesus says "let children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the Kingdom."³¹

Families live by Christian values:³²

- Input on the fact that the 10 Commandments of God, Exodus 20:1-7; Romans 3:21-26, are a source for Christian values and the fact that values drive commitment to life. Values promote strong feelings of personal worth, hard-work, high levels of family faithfulness, reduce stress and tension, and encourage teamwork in the family.³³

Families need a prayer shrine in the home:³⁴

- Input on the need for family prayer and a Christian shrine in the home.

Communication synthesis:

- Each family creates five unique home values concerning worship, work, honesty, discipline, studies, etc. in accordance with the 10 Commandments of God. Each rule has privileges for obedience and consequences for disobedience.
- Each family creates a family shrine with a particular saint, icon/images, prayer and posture material, etc. at home and brings a picture of it to the next meeting.³⁵

Assessment plan:

Given a rubric of totally disagree, disagree, agree, somewhat agree, and totally agree: participants answer pre/post session evaluation about who is the first

²⁷ Agberagba, 10-12.

²⁸ Agberagba, 12-14.

²⁹ Kouzes and Ponsner, *Leadership*, 213.

³⁰ Agberagba, 15-17.

³¹ Luke 18:6.

³² Agberagba, *First Holy Communion*, 17-20.

³³ Kouzes and Ponsner, *Leadership*, 62.

³⁴ Agberagba, 21-22.

³⁵ Agberagba, 20-21.

teacher for children, a home need for prayer shrine and Christian home rules, children's right to question their parents, and who is their neighbour. Participants are encouraged to elaborate on their answers especially in the post-session evaluation.³⁶Successful participants in this section go on to plan family self-care and integrate God, Jesus Christ, as a mentor for the family leading to God's justice in our human nature.

2. Justice and the nature of God in the family

Justice is derived from the nature of God and in the dignity of human beings. Firstly, the Sacred Scriptures strongly suggest that justice is essentially God's nature, such that being and the nature of God, creation is essentially revealed through acts of justice. God brings order from desolation: light and darkness, morning and evening, land and water, etc.³⁷In Exodus, the gifts of the covenant and the Law are God's act of justice. God provides for the well-being and safety of the people of Israel.³⁸Secondly, Israel needs to, practice discipline, respond with obedience to the commandments and laws.³⁹God facilitates justice, hence, for Christians, God's acts of justice continue until its summit in the birth, death, and the resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ. Wadell comments that this awareness of the unbridgeable gap between God's goodness and ours should inform our thanksgiving and gratitude (Eucharistic action) necessary to enrich, deepen, and sustain our justice towards others.⁴⁰Indeed, that only those who listen and know that they owe all their being to God can truly be just. It implies listening carefully to children to determine their needs and fulfil them.

Moreover, the Catholic social teaching on justice also holds that because humans have inherent rights as creatures of God, we owe to ensure that these rights are respected as a matter of justice. For example, the Catholic Canon Law teaches that "children have rights to physical, social, cultural, moral and religious upbringing" implying that parents have the duty to provide this upbringing.⁴¹ These children's rights precede justice as we only understand what we owe children when we understand why we owe them anything at all. Thus, it is because children have rights that we have duties to them in justice. Hence, the Catholic social teaching insist that we do not only have the obligation not to infringe on the rights of others, but more importantly in a positive way, that we have an obligation to ensure that those rights are not being denied.⁴² In this way, the responsibility of justice is both to respect the rights of children and facilitate their good health, education, and hard-work. Therefore, Part Two of

³⁶ Agberagba, 3.

³⁷ Genesis 1.

³⁸Exodus 19:3-6; 20:2.

³⁹Exodus 19:5; 20:1-17.

⁴⁰ Wadell, "Justice," 519.

⁴¹ Canon Law 1136.

⁴² Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, Peace on Earth, (Rome: Vatican, 1963), Nos. 31-32.

the lessons "Parents are facilitators of children's growth"⁴³ consists of the following:

Learning outcomes

Successful participating families will be able to:

1. Critically review how to fraternally correct, listen to, facilitate hard-work in, children;
2. Creatively practice fraternal correction, listening to, facilitating hard-work in, children;
3. Collaboratively theorise fraternal correction of, listening to, facilitating hard-work in, children;
4. Communicatively plan fraternal correction of, listening to, facilitating hard-work in, children.

Teaching and learning methods

Collaborative activities

Family stand-up:

- Families practice cooperative stand-up in a circle face-to-face and back-to-back in pairs. They do this under the direction of a facilitator; then they discuss if the teacher directed them fraternally or not.⁴⁴

The sweaty chair:

- Three people, side-by-side, the two-outside talk to the middle one at the same time; her/his response is observed. Then there is a one-on-one talk; all participants discuss how the middle person coped while listening to two people speaking at the same time and on a one-on-one session.⁴⁵

Playing animal noises:

- A simulation, calling an animal name to participants and they making the noise that the animal makes: To have fun and demonstrate to parents that children learn playing. Then they discuss: Who enjoyed the play? Why yes/no?⁴⁶

Your work:

- Parents list their God's given gifts to use in the family, Church, society, business, and community.

⁴³ Agberagba, *First Holy Communion*, 28.

⁴⁴ Agberagba, 28-29.

⁴⁵ Agberagba, 30.

⁴⁶ Agberagba, 35.

- Parents, mention their work/business and explain why they are doing it.
- Parents explain how hard they do both manual and intellectual work?⁴⁷

Children's work:⁴⁸

Parents help children answer the following questions:

- What mission in life obsesses you my child?
- What is your dream about work?
- What is your burning passion?⁴⁹

Critical discuss

Participants discuss the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC):

- Do you believe that children have a right to privacy, honour and reputation? Do you believe parents are right to insult/belittle children? Read and analyse CRC 16: children's right to privacy, honour and reputation;
- Is it right for children to be selling on the streets and doing heavy duty work? Read and analyse CRC 32: children's right to protection from economic exploitation and hazardous work;
- Do you know of children using Cannabis, Tramadol, Codeine, etc.? Read and analyse CRC 33: children's right to protection from drug abuse;
- Do you agree with child marriage? Read and analyse CRC 34: children's right to protection from forced marriage, sexual exploitation, prostitution and pornography;
- Do you believe that children can be witches? Read and analyse CRC 35 & 36: children's protection against child trafficking and prejudices;
- Do you believe that if you spare the cane you will spoil the child? Read and analyse CRC 28 & 37: children's right concerning corporal, inhuman and degrading punishments.⁵⁰

Reflections:⁵¹

Reflections are presented on the following topics to participants:

- Parent correct children fraternally;
- Parents listen to children, it's divine;
- Parents educate their children, including in play;
- Parents provide an enabling environment for children to do things well in the family, do good things in society and seek justice in the world.⁵²

⁴⁷ Agberagba, 36-39.

⁴⁸ Agberagba, 40.

⁴⁹ Kouzes and Ponsner, *Leadership*, 70.

⁵⁰ Agberagba, *First Holy Communion*, 32-34.

⁵¹ Agberagba, 28-44.

- Parents help children believe in, and practice, hard-work;
- Parents help children form and practice discipline.

Communication synthesis, participants:

- Design their timetable/commitment for a disciplined life: the discipline of visiting the sick, watching good videos, smiling and showing good face, greetings, praying, sleeping and waking up on time, etc.
- Practice how to say no politely, how to politely greet others.⁵³

Assessment plan:

Given a rubric of totally disagree, disagree, agree, somewhat agree, and totally agree; participants answer pre/post session evaluation questions on whether children can humanly develop without parents, children should obey parents without questions, good spiritual life does not need planning, good parents decide the carers of their children and that children can learn how to work hard without the help of their parents/mentor. Participants are encouraged to elaborate on their answers especially in the post-session evaluation.⁵⁴ Successful participants in this section build models for parents empowering children with skills in team activities, perseverance, how to handle losses and not just wins, hard-work, and project planning. This section leads naturally to a discussion about peace and the Eucharist.

3. Peace and the Eucharist

From a peace perspective, the Church offers itself at the Eucharist as a gift of unity and peace on earth: The Mass of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ states, "Grant your church, we pray, that gifts of unity and peace, whose signs are to be seen in mystery in the offerings we present."⁵⁵ Similarly, the Mass for the family states that "we offer you, Lord, the sacrifice of conciliation, humbly asking that you may establish our families firmly in your grace and your peace."⁵⁶ It is the Holy Spirit through words and actions that mediates God's peace in the Eucharist and the family.

In the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT) two words, eucharistic in nature, help Christians understand God's peace in community. First in the OT, peace from the Hebrew word is *shalom* which refers to the harmony that an individual may experience in relationship with self, society and God in a properly ordered manner. *Shalom* is God's synergic (peace) that an individual Christian may receive⁵⁷ or seek and pursue.⁵⁸ While it is true that God grants us

⁵² Kouzes and Ponsner, *The Leadership*, 120.

⁵³ Agberagba, *First Holy Communion*, 45-47.

⁵⁴ Agberagba, 28.

⁵⁵ Catholic Church, *Roman Missal*, 478.

⁵⁶ Catholic Church, *Roman Missal*, 1083.

⁵⁷ Psalm 85:8-9.

⁵⁸ Psalm 34:14.

peace, what we do also matters for living in peace or lack of it. The upright walk in peace,⁵⁹ but the wicked “do not know the way of peace.”⁶⁰ As Launderville suggests, peace is the consequence of one’s right ordered relationship with self, others, nature and God.⁶¹ However, for Christians, this initiative starts with God, His gift of life, rather than what one constructs through correct procedures and plans. This peace, God expresses as wholeness: economic prosperity, safety, military and political security, and cultural security.⁶² Hence in situations of child abuse and neglect; children know no peace. Second, in the NT the word for peace is a Greek word *eirene* that has multiple-meanings like the Hebrew *shalom*. Peace in the NT also has the holistic concept of well-being found as physical health,⁶³ economic prosperity,⁶⁴ military security,⁶⁵ political stability,⁶⁶ spiritual unity,⁶⁷ and or eschatological salvation.⁶⁸ Indeed, Tambasco shows that *shalom* and *eirene* can be used as a greeting, a farewell, a blessing, a statement of fact, a prayer, a virtue, a hope for the future and so on with self, others and creation.⁶⁹ Hence, Eucharistic peace starts from the family home just as the Eucharist too starts from the house Church, the family.

Furthermore, we find more than half of the Gospel’s references in the NT to *eirene* (peace) in the Gospel of Luke. Luke describes Jesus Christ as the “Prince of Peace” at the resurrection and the apparition stories such that when Christ uses the traditional Jewish greeting “Peace be with you.”⁷⁰ It has a deeper meaning, more than the peace we can bring about ourselves, that is, He gives a peace that the world cannot give: “Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you.”⁷¹ Thus, peace is a gift and Catholics celebrate it during the Eucharist, however, believers do not remain passive; rather, the Eucharist is the setting where the habits and practices of peace are learned. Christians discover during the Eucharist God’s rules for life. Thus, Wadell asserts that during the Eucharist, Christians live their lives in the power of the memory of Jesus who refuses to let enmity prevail over humanity and instead insists that love (the greatest justice) is stronger than

⁵⁹Isaiah 57:2.

⁶⁰Isaiah 59:8.

⁶¹ Dale Launderville, “Peace: Old Testament,” in the *Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Carroll Stuhlmueller, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press), 710.

⁶²Leviticus 26:3-8.

⁶³Mark 5:34.

⁶⁴Luke 11:21.

⁶⁵Luke 14:32.

⁶⁶Act of the Apostle 12:20.

⁶⁷Ephesians 4:3.

⁶⁸Luke 2:29.

⁶⁹ Anthony Tambasco, “Peace: New Testament,” in the *Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Carroll Stuhlmueller, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press), 711.

⁷⁰Luke 24:36.

⁷¹John 14:27.

hatred and peace more promising than division.⁷² This is well presented in the Church's liturgy in the Mass of Reconciliation I: "We celebrate the memorial of your Son Jesus Christ, who is our Passover and our surest peace."⁷³ However, the peace that Jesus gives Christians is the sign of a "sword."⁷⁴ It is necessary for Christians to trust, to struggle, to work, to persevere in the Spirit in order that the peace of God will triumph one day. In fact, on that day it is our imagination and intention that "love and truth will meet, justice and peace will embrace."⁷⁵ Therefore, "the Kingdom of God will be justice, peace and joy, and these will be the fruits of the Holy Spirit"⁷⁶ and "God will be all in all."⁷⁷ This duality of peace as a gift and perseverance requires that families work with the Holy Spirit for peace especially with regards to children's well-being. Therefore, Part Three of the lessons, "Families are the gift of the Holy Spirit"⁷⁸ consists of the following:

Learning outcomes

Successful participating families will be able to:

1. Critically discuss the seven gifts/the face of the Holy Spirit, the union between spouses, and children's rights as gifts of the Holy Spirit;
2. Creatively construct their Christian Home Rules, role-play the Holy Spirit, and employ the Holy Spirit in imagination/intentional prayer;
3. Collaboratively diagnose the role of the Holy Spirit in the family through the Convention on the Right of the Child, home rules, and intentional prayer;
4. Communicatively draft/design their Christian Home Rules in accordance with community life.

Teaching and learning methods

Collaborative activities

Catch the Cat by the tail:

- Role-play the actions of the Holy Spirit in a physical exercise.⁷⁹

⁷²Paul Wadell, "Peace: Pastoral-Liturgical Tradition," in the *Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Carroll Stuhlmueller, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 714.

⁷³ *Catholic Roman Missal*, 666.

⁷⁴Matthew 10:34.

⁷⁵Psalm 85:11.

⁷⁶Romans 14:17.

⁷⁷1 Corinthians 15:28.

⁷⁸ Agberagba, *First Holy Communion*, 51-56.

⁷⁹ Agberagba, 52.

Critical discuss

Introduction:

- Do you like receiving gifts? How do you feel when you receive gifts? What do you do with the gifts you receive?⁸⁰

The Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC), participants discuss the following questions:

- Is information about social, spiritual, and moral well-being freely available in your family? Do you monitor what information your children get? Read and analyse CRC 17: children's right to information and protection from material injurious to their well-being;
- Who is more important in bringing up children, the father or the mother? Who should keep children in case of separation? Read and analyse CRC 18: parents' decisions concerning children must be in the best interest of a child;
- Are parents free to insult or belittle children? When there is abuse of a child to whom should we report? Read and analyse CRC 19: children's right to protection from neglect and abuse;
- Do girls and boys have equal rights to education? Read and analyse CRC 28: girls' and boys' right to equal education;
- Do children have a right to freedom of expression? Read and analyse CRC 12: children's right to freedom of expression;
- Are children free to say what they believe, feel, and or think? Read and analyse CRC 13-14: children's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; and
- Do children have a right to freedom of peaceful associations? Read and analyse CRC 15: children's right to freedom of peaceful associations.⁸¹

Reflections:⁸²

- The Holy Spirit is God's gift for family unity;
- The Holy Spirit is God's gift for life;
- The Seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and children's rights;
- Gifts of the Holy Spirit are also Christian Rules in the family;
- A gift of the Holy Spirit is also imagination/intentional prayer.

Communication synthesis, participating families:

- Practice intentional prayer on how to help a child improve his/her studies.
- Draft a Christian Home Rule on topics: curfew, chores, smoking, telephone, money, school behaviour/grades, etc.⁸³

⁸⁰ Agberagba, 51.

⁸¹ Agberagba, 56-59.

⁸² Agberagba, 51-63.

Assessment plan:

Given a rubric of totally disagree, disagree, agree, somewhat agree, and totally agree: participants answer pre/post session evaluation on whether parents who do not practice their faith but send their children to church fulfil their Christian obligation; are children free to join peaceful associations without the permission of their parents; is there any need for a Christian home rules in the family; do we see/feel the Holy Spirit; and is imagination/intentional prayers useful? Participants are encouraged to elaborate on their answers especially in the post-session evaluation.⁸⁴ Successful participants in this section construct and set limits to children's behaviour, but respect their rights, and the family finds a mentor in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables Christian practice justice for all human beings in the Eucharist that we examine next.

4. Justice and the Eucharist II

Justice in the Eucharist, Aquinas teaches that it is for the sake of community, it works to preserve the conditions for both individual and communal well-being by establishing at least a rough equality among people of life.⁸⁵ In fact, the Church in its social teaching holds that one's personal good is not above the common good, but fundamentally linked to it though distinct they are not separable.⁸⁶ Thus, common needs can override an individual's immediate needs; individuals may have to give up some of their goods for redistribution to others to establish a common well-being for all. Hence, past or present Christians understand Communion in God to be living for the common good. In this sense, Leo XIII maintains that the role of the state here is to ensure that every person has access to the basic needs of life in society.⁸⁷ By implication, the Church, like the State, and God, has a responsibility to ensure justice, respect for children's rights, and the vulnerable members of society.

Hence, Wadell comments that Catholic social tradition teaches then that justice seeks human flourishing and a just human community is what makes it possible for all members to grow to full status before God. Thus, if injustice, child abuse, becomes an affront on God's plan in the world, the most radical transformative power of justice, the Eucharist, is to regulate the world according to God's plan—the flourishing of the well-being of all human beings.⁸⁸ Hence, in the Eucharist, we learn to make decisions based on the will of God. Additionally, in the Catholic teaching Christian justice does not accept our sense of impossibility and it rejects any notion that justice is not possible—Christians are always

⁸³ Agberagba, 60-61.

⁸⁴ Agberagba, 50.

⁸⁵ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II:66, 7.

⁸⁶ Catholic Church, Vatican II, *Guadium et Spes*, the Church in the Modern World, (Rome: Vatican Press, 1965), No. 71.

⁸⁷ Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novorum*, On the Condition of Labour, (Rome: Vatican Press, 1891), Nos. 48, 52 and 54.

⁸⁸ Wadell, "Justice," 518.

hospitable.⁸⁹ Christian justice believes that the world can be remade according to God's plan where children are not abused or neglected and families live in Holy Communion. Therefore, Part Four of the lessons, "Families live the Holy Communion"⁹⁰ consists of the following:

Learning outcomes

Successful participating families will be able to:

1. Critically discuss that families live in Holy Communion: parents lead by examples, give children a good name, provide children with basic needs, and families take good decisions, avoid bad decisions, respect the environment, and pray together;
2. Creatively practice, good leadership by showing hospitality to others, family prayer, family recycling, giving children good names, and practice decision making by restating the decision to make First Holy Communion (FHC);
3. Collaboratively analyse the advantages and disadvantages of, making FHC; having a good name or a bad name, how the Holy Communion enroot and incorporates us in Christ, being hospitable to others, and praying together in the family;
4. Communicatively families design their prayer timetable and first draft of Christian Home Contract in accordance with community life.

Teaching and learning methods

Collaborative activities

A living a legacy discuss questions:

- Who are Church historical persons that you admire?
- What do you admire about them and what do you do from their example?
- What do you imagine were their relationships?

After discuss a follow up question:

- Do you as a parent believe that you children can give your life example as you have done?⁹¹

Given good and bad name stickers to persons per time:

- How does it feel to be named negatively?
- How does it feel to be named positively?
- How does it feel to be named "Communicant"?⁹²

⁸⁹Pope PaulVI, "Octogesima Adveniensi, Apostolic Letter," 1971, accessed October 10, 2018, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_p-vi_apl_19710514_octogesima-adveniensi.html, No. 37.

⁹⁰ Agberagba, *First Holy Communion*, 70-86.

⁹¹ Agberagba, 70.

Critical discuss

The Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC):

- Do you believe that single mother's children should not bear their fathers' name? Follow-up: What when a child is called a bastard? Read CRC 8: children's right to a good name and proper identity.
- Does your family go for regular medical check-ups? Do your children have proper clothing? Do your children sleep on a proper bed? Read CRC 24: on children's right to basic needs.
- Do you believe a child in care of others should be treated differently (going to a substandard school) from the children of the care-giver? Read CRC 25 & 27: on children's right to proper care and education in all circumstances.
- What is a decision? How do you go about making a decision? What is the importance of taking a decision?
- How did you decide that your child was going to make First Holy Communion? How did you decide that you were going to be a God-parent?
- Are you recycling water, food, and clothes in your family? Are you buying plastic bags or recycling bags? Are you burning plastic bottles and bags?⁹³

Reflections:⁹⁴

- Children's needs and rights help living in communion with God;
- Holy Communion is living in communion with God;
- Advantages of good decisions; disadvantages of bad decisions; always show hospitality; promote solidarity and fraternal living; Christian respect for the environment;
- Christian contract for living in communion with God;
- Prayer life is a family journey for living in communion with God.

Communicative synthesis, participating families:

- Design their Christian Home Contract.
- Design their family prayer timetable.⁹⁵

Assessment plan:

Given a rubric of totally disagree, disagree, agree, somewhat agree, and totally agree; participants answer pre/post session evaluation on whether parents take leadership by example seriously, and insult/give bad names to children; individual prayer is better than communal prayer; living a good Christian life today is harder than in the past. Participants are encouraged to elaborate on

⁹² Agberagba, 70-71.

⁹³ Agberagba, 72-84.

⁹⁴ Agberagba, 70-86.

⁹⁵ Agberagba, 84-86.

their answers especially in the post-session evaluation.⁹⁶Successful parents in this section build skills to teach children that being kind and responsible, practicing time management and self-care, and respect for the mother earth are all living in communion with God. Indeed, this leads us to social justice and the Eucharist in the bigger family, society.

5. Social justice and the Eucharist

The Church teaches that human justice is less than God's justice thus humans practice injustice which is itself less than true humanity as created by God. That is why injustice dehumanises us, however, the Church sees problems and possibilities. For example, the abuse and neglect of children is a human injustice yet there is a resolution. Hence, it teaches three kinds of justices that address injustice: commutative justice (CJ), distributive justice (DJ) and social justice (SJ). CJ is sometimes called "restorative" justice that deals with relationships between members of a community. Restorative justice regulates interactions between persons, especially exchanges, contracts, or agreements. This form of justice seeks to restore the imbalance in a relationship of injustice seeking equilibrium through some form of recompense.⁹⁷

Distributive Justice (DJ) deals with the relationship between organised society and its members. DJ insists on the equitable distribution of goods, benefits, and societal burdens. DJ tends to seek that all persons receive their share of the common good in society. In fact, it is DJ that describes how constitutive authorities of society: governments have to allocate goods and resources so that all persons receive their due. This justice "distributes" economic, political, and cultural goods of a community in such a way as to enable an equitable participation of each person in the life of the society. In cases of unjust distribution of goods, opportunities, and services, it is the task of DJ to restructure the patterns of distribution to attain equilibrium for the sake of the common good.⁹⁸ Hence, the work of DJ is often corrective: remedying injustice through the reconfiguration of the flow of goods and opportunities in a society. Indeed, Pius XI describes social justice as the set of moral principles that we need to inform economic, political and social structures if they are to serve instead of hinder the common good.⁹⁹ From the New Testament, Harrill comments that, according to the Gospel of Luke, the Church is optimistic and has the ability to ameliorate social injustice while awaiting the coming of the reign of God.¹⁰⁰ Hence, the Church has the mission to minimise/eliminate the possibility of child abuse and neglect in the world.

⁹⁶ Agberagba, 69.

⁹⁷ Wadell, "Justice," 518.

⁹⁸ Wadell, 518-519.

⁹⁹ Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*, On the Reconstructing the Social Order, (Rome: Vatican Press), No. 88.

¹⁰⁰ Albert J. Harrill, "Justice: New Testament," in the *Collegeville Pastoral Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Carroll Stuhlmueller, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press), 515.

There is a relationship between DJ and SJ inasmuch as SJ affects the necessary order for DJ. In other words, SJ makes DJ possible because it structures the institutions of society so that the demands of DJ can be met. SJ also proscribes how individuals relate to the community. Hence, DJ focuses on the relation of society and individuality, and SJ focuses on what each person owes the common good. Indeed, the task of SJ and DJ is fundamentally to seek, listen, pray for and act to ensure a just balance between individuals needs and community needs for maintaining peace in the world. Thus, the Church needs to empower families on its mission to witness SJ in society. Therefore, Part Five of the lessons, "Families, witnesses of the Holy Spirit"¹⁰¹ consists of the following:

Learning outcomes

Successful participating families will be able to:

- Critically discuss Apostolic Mission, creative listening, children's rights, and silent prayer—meditation;
- Creatively/collaboratively practice Apostolic Mission—join a Church society; creative listening; and silent prayer;
- Communicatively synthesis their Christian Home Contract and sign it for good community life.

Teaching and learning methods

Collaborative activities

Accessing community needs:

Participants discuss in twos and share in the plenary group the following questions one after the other:

- What necessity have you discovered in your Christian community?
- Which families attend to these needs?
- Is it good that only certain families attend to these needs?¹⁰²

Creative listening:

Participants in pairs practice destructive listening followed by active listening on any subject of their choice. Then discussion questions:

- How did you feel when you were not listened to?
- How did you feel when you were listened to?¹⁰³

Conduct a Holy Spirit Open-day with a child:¹⁰⁴

Parents practice one-on-one dialogue with a child on the following questions:

- How are you, my child, preparing for First Holy Communion?
- What can you do to improve on this preparation?

¹⁰¹ Agberagba, *First Holy Communion*, 94-102.

¹⁰² Agberagba, 93.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Agberagba, 98.

- What suggestion do you have for me to help you improve your preparations?¹⁰⁵

Meditation prayer:

- Participants are led in a form of silent prayer known as *Lectio Divina*—the reading of Sacred Scriptures.¹⁰⁶

Critical discuss

Introduction to Apostolic Mission, participants discuss:

- Who are the past or present missionaries that you admire?
- What do you admire about them?
- What do you do with their examples?¹⁰⁷

The Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC), participants discuss:

- In case of divorce/separation, does a child have the right to decide which parent to go live with? Does any parent have a right to deprive another from seeing his/her child? Read and reflect on CRC 8: the need to respect a child's right to decide on who to stay with.
- Do your children have play and recreational time in your family? Do you take your children to learn dancing, drama, sports, etc.? Do all the children in your home go to school? Do all the children in your home have proper clothing? Read and reflect on CRC 24-27: children's right to good health, education, play, leisure and participation in cultural and artistic life.¹⁰⁸

Reflection input:¹⁰⁹

- Witnessing the Holy Spirit in Apostolic Mission!
- Belonging to a Church society is witnessing to the Holy Spirit!
- Witnessing children's rights and the Holy Spirit!
- Witnessing, family contract and the Holy Spirit!
- Witnessing in silent prayer and the Holy Spirit!

Communicative synthesis

Join a Church society, participants answer:

- List three services that you can offer in the Christian community!
- Which Church society do you belong to?
- Which Church society are you willing to join?

¹⁰⁵ Kouzes and Ponsner, *The Leadership*, 273.

¹⁰⁶ Agberagba, *First Holy Communion*, 103-106.

¹⁰⁷ Agberagba, 93.

¹⁰⁸ Agberagba, 72-73.

¹⁰⁹ Agberagba, 93-102

- Go, inspect all Church societies in your community and join one if you do not belong to any.¹¹⁰

Signing Christian Home Contract:

- A ceremony is organised for each family member to sign the Christian Home Contract that was produced in the last session as a covenant of the Holy Spirit in the family.¹¹¹

Assessment plan:

Given a rubric of totally disagree, disagree, agree, somewhat agree, and totally agree; participants answer pre/post session evaluation on whether all Christians are obliged to join a Christian society to live Apostolic Mission, other cultures/values are meaningless to Christians, children who commit capital crimes should be treated like adults, there is no need for a Christian Home Contract, and silent prayer is only for the Priest and Nuns. Participants are encouraged to elaborate on their answers especially in the post-session evaluation.¹¹² Successful participants in this section appraise that while injustice exists, there are other possibilities: the redistribution of individual and community needs, social justice especially in the case of child abuse and neglect.

6. BPTLs Implementation

It took me three years, 2017-2019, to research and compile these BPTLs. Between June and September 2019, I trained 946 Catechists on these BPTLs as a preparation for FHC in the Diocese of Katsina Ala Benue State, Nigeria. Initially only 500 Catechists subscribed for the training because half of the Diocese was displaced as a result of intra-ethnic crisis. However, once the first batch of Catechists was trained, word got out and many more subscribed so the training had to be extended to accommodate the rest of the Catechists. The Catechists voted this training to be the best since the inception of Katsina Ala Diocese that is only eight years old as of 2019. During the evaluation of the training sessions, 50% of the Catechists gave this training excellent, 40% gave it very good and 10% gave it good. There were no Catechists who gave this training fair. Most of the Catechists agreed that this training will impact positively on their parenting quality, indeed, impact on the quality of parenting in the Diocese.

Nonetheless, my book on parenting lessons has weaknesses in that, it does not treat the subjects of children sexual abuse and bullying. In fact, I did judge them rightly or wrongly to be inappropriate for a FHC BPTLs, but I intend to treat them in another BPTLs for parents with children in Catholic schools. Nevertheless, the main strengths of BPTLs like this one is their potential to prevent children abuse, neglect, and maltreatment before they occur and the rehabilitation of parent participants to these lessons.

¹¹⁰ Agberagba, 96.

¹¹¹ Agberagba, 100-102.

¹¹² Agberagba, 69.

7. *Implementation Challenges*

A BPTLs for FHC in the Church is likely to meet a number of questions and objections. I cannot address all these questions and objections, but I answer some of the most important ones that arose from my training with the 946 Catechists from the Diocese of Katsina Ala.

This is a westernised programme. This concerns in particular children's rights with respect to corporal punishment and children's freedom of speech that are understood to be a promotion of western culturally bias models and thereby demoting the so-called African cultural bias model that permits children to be bitten. In response, I say that this concern is ill-informed as this BPTLs does not present a single best way to raise children and it does not pass judgement on parents' values and traditions, but it attempts to impart information and skills that have been empirically demonstrated to improve children's well-being and development. For example, studies across multiple countries have confirmed that corporal punishment is associated with impairments in children's mental health: anxiety and depression in Hungary,¹¹³ in the USA,¹¹⁴ alcohol and drug use, and general psychological maladjustment in Jamaica.¹¹⁵ The frequent use of corporal punishment has been found to predict self-reported psychological distress among 10–16-year-olds, even at low rates of corporal punishment.¹¹⁶ Finally, mental health problems such as increased depressive symptoms in adulthood are also predicted by levels of corporal punishment experienced in childhood.¹¹⁷ Consequently, from a justice and peace perspective, it is within the Church's preview to teach against corporal punishment.

Moreover, the Synod of Bishops teaches: "action for justice ... in the transformation of the world are a constitutive dimension ... essential to the Church's mission of liberating the human race from every oppressive situation."¹¹⁸ This is not a matter of Western culture being better than African culture; it is a matter of rejecting evil: thou shall not kill. Furthermore, these

¹¹³ J. Csorba et al., "Family and School-related in Depressed Hungarian Children," *European Psychiatry*, 16 (2001):18-26.

¹¹⁴ Stephen Bender et al., "Use of Harsh Physical Discipline and Developmental Outcomes in Adolescence," *Development and Psychopathology*, 19 (2007): 227-242.

¹¹⁵ Angela C. Steely and Ronald P. Rohner, "Relations Among Corporal Punishment, Perceived Parental Acceptance, and Psychological Adjustment in Jamaican Youth," *Cross-Cultural Research*, 40 (2006): 268-286.; Elizabeth T. Gershoff and Susan H. Bitensky, "The Case Against Corporal Punishment of Children: Converging Evidence from Social Research and International Human Rights Law and Implication for U.S.," *Public Policy, Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 13 (2007): 231-271.

¹¹⁶ Heather A. Turner and David Finkelhor, "Corporal Punishment as a Stressor Among Youth," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58 (1996): 155-166.

¹¹⁷ Heather A. Turner and Paul Muller, "Long-term Effects of Child Corporal Punishment on Depressive Symptoms in Young Adults: Potential Moderators and Mediators," *Journal of Family Issues* 25 (2004): 761-782.

¹¹⁸ Catholic Church, Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, (Rome: Vatican Press, 1971), No. 5.

BPTLs help parents examine different cultures to look for cultural best practices that they need to keep or revitalise theirs that may not be practiced today. For example, under lessons 4, “families hold regular meetings,”¹¹⁹ and organise “family open day” meetings to pass-on skills and values, I recommended to the Tiv (from Benue State, Nigeria) people that families could revitalise the Tiv culture of telling stories to children at night that instils values in children. Furthermore, it beholds teachers of these parenting lessons to discover in each culture its values that denounce such practices. For example, I discovered that the Tiv culture’s notion of thou shall not kill considers psychological death more brutal than physical death. The Tiv says that, “Ku dar hembra nyion a ku kpôkpô:” psychological death is more painful than actual death. The abuse and neglect of children is psychological death in Tiv culture.

The BPTLs for FHC come late in children’s life. The implication of BPTLs for FHC is that children are already baptised and raised up in the malpractices that the training lessons intend to correct: prevention is better than cure. Why not make this programme a marriage or pre-baptismal one? Some of the Catechists asked me. In response, I agree with the need to have a children’s focused section in marriage training courses for intending couples. However, the main focus of a marriage course is that intending couples understand themselves as two equal persons getting to live together forever for better or for worse. Moreover, my experience in giving marriage courses is that most intending couples do not want to focus on children’s issues; they are preoccupied with themselves and how to celebrate their marriage. In fact, most intending couples feel that marriage courses are already too long, a period of six months. Therefore, adding children training sessions will further prolong their anxieties. However, a Baptismal training lesson that includes how infants are to be best raised would be the best for children.

Some children will suffer, will not make FHC after taking their doctrinal classes. My proposal implies that children of non-compliant parents will not make FHC even after taking their normal doctrinal lessons. Therefore, it is unfair to children as they lose out: being in communion with Jesus Christ. In my experience as a priest for the past 25 years, the number of parents who are likely to refuse parenting training classes will be small. Again, once BPTLs are established, it seems likely that social/peer pressure will bear on parents as non-attendance might be seen to signal a lack of concern for children’s well-being. On the part of children, just participating in FHC without their parents knowing how best to raise them is not in their best interest. Children who have come to the age of reason, seven years, when they can make FHC deserve to know their rights and they should be learning this under the guidance of their parents. In my experience, most children who make FHC without the participation of their parents usually drop out of Church shortly after the FHC ceremony because the parents do not understand their Christian obligations towards them.

¹¹⁹ Agberagba, *First Holy Communion*, 12-14.

Therefore, it is true that some parents will refuse to attend these lessons for many reasons, e.g., antipathy towards the Church, complacency, laziness, etc. This parental attitude runs deeper than attending BPTLs; as long as the Church gives parents the primary responsibility for rearing their children, some children will always miss out on certain benefits and opportunities in life as a result of their parents' beliefs or actions. Nonetheless, this should not stop the Church from trying to secure the lives of as many children as possible. The question is whether more children will benefit from these BPTLs for FHC than an unconditional FHC to children. If most parents participate in these lessons, then the benefits of BPTLs will certainly outweigh any cost from non-compliance.

Working parents will be over burdened. It is true that these lessons will be time consuming for some working parents, but reducing the lessons will mean less knowledge about good parenting and consequently reduce effectiveness. However, it is also true that some parents might not have a fair chance to complete some of these parent training lessons in order for their children to make FHC. In response, I suggest that the time for the lessons might be modified to suit working parents: training at night and on weekends in the Parish or basic Christian communities. The Church may also offer makeup lessons in person or through DVD or via the Internet for parents who miss a training lesson. In good faith, most barriers to participation can be overcome so that all parents will have a fair chance to complete the training lessons.

Some priests may not subscribe to these BPTLs. In fact, for some of the 946 trained Catechists in the programme, this was their main concern that their Parish priest may not care to implement these BPTLs. In response, it is my experience that once these BPTLs are a policy for a local Church, supervised by the Bishop, most priests will implement them. Additionally, BPTLs be taught to priests as part of ongoing formation programme. This will further enable the participation of more priests in the pastoral units. Nevertheless, it is true that some priests will refuse to implement BPTLs in their pastoral unit for many reasons, e.g., antipathy towards the Church, complacency, laziness, etc. This priestly attitude runs deeper than implementing BPTLs. This has to be factored in as a human failure, the result of some priests' beliefs or actions. Nonetheless, this should not stop the Church from trying to secure the lives of as many children as possible. The question is whether more children will benefit from BPTLs for FHC than an unconditional FHC to children. If most priests participate in implementing these lessons in their pastoral units, then the benefits of BPTLs will certainly outweigh any cost from priestly non-compliance.

Curriculum Implication

The book that I present its curriculum forms a non-intrusive means for enforcing good parenting standards. If the Church publicly trains individuals for parenting then parenting will be transformed from a private and informal activity into a semi-public and semi-professional one. In this way, parenting will be open for constant evaluation and improvement. There will likely be fewer cases of children sex and physical abuse and neglect; fewer foot soldier for

armed groups, and fewer out-of-school children. Thus, the Church will have less worries about child abuse and neglect. Finally, the most important benefit of BPTLs for FHC is that it enables children to enjoy high levels of material, psychological and spiritual well-being according to the capacity of each family.

Further Research

I call on scholars of justice and peace for more investigation into children's insecurity in other Christian Churches, the Muslim Religion and African Traditional Religion based on a research similar to this one:

- Design a BPTLs based on justice and peace in the teachings and the Sacred Books of the Church or Religion; and
- Implementation challenges.

I believe that such studies will aid the establishment of a large body of conceptual and practical bases for BPTLs for children's security in all Religions.

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