

# FAMILY AS THE CHURCH IN MINIATURE: A PANACEA TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN CHRISTIAN FAMILIES IN AFRICA

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**ABSTRACT.** Observably, many African Christians, on church-going days, put on reverend moods and are kind towards one another, both at home and at the Church premises. It is not uncommon that these same Christians are violent the rest of the week, treating members of their families unkindly. This shows how much the church is revered as a holy institution. This is the problem of sacred-secular dichotomy; between the church and worshipping days versus away from the church and non-worshipping days. Therefore, we argue that if the human institution –the family, is understood as God’s own instituted basic unit of the church and therefore holy, peace will prevail among its members. The approach applies the principle of *analogia entis* to argue that the human family is God’s family in the same manner we speak of the church as the Family of God since both are prefigured in God’s eternal plan. In this research, the anthropological data is gathered by non-probability sampling.

Keywords: violence, women, family, Africa, spirituality.

## Introduction

It is noted that sub-Saharan Africa is rapidly converting to Christianity. Pew Research Center (PEW) 2010 researched Religion and Public Life and found that roughly nine in ten people in many African countries they surveyed reported that religion was vital in their lives.<sup>2</sup> Religion and civilisation should be expected

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<sup>2</sup> Mahoney, A. “Religion in families, 1999–2009: A relational spirituality framework” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72, (2010): 805-827 also cf. Vaaler, M. L., Ellison C. G., & Powers, D. A. “Religious influences on the risk of marital dissolution. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 71, (2009): 917-934. Also confer with Takyi, B. K. “Religion and women’s health in Ghana: Insights into HIV/AIDs preventive and protective behaviour.” *Social Science & Medicine*, 56, (2003): 1221-1234.

to pacify hostile mentality and bring about social tranquillity, yet the reverse is true. Isn't it a paradox that as societies become more religious and educated, the more they become hostile towards their species and creation? Isn't it a paradox, too, that as we advance technologically, we use technology to invent more sophisticated weapons of mass destruction than ever before? It has been reported that the world's superpowers, the US, Britain, China, North Korea and Russia, have developed nuclear weapons whose capacity for destruction is much more than witnessed during the Nagasaki and Hiroshima incidents seventy years ago. Despite its advancement in Biblical studies, isn't it also unfortunate that the church still uses the Holy Scriptures to endorse gender discrimination, a recipe for domestic violence? This pegs the question: How would families profess Christianity, a religion that advocates for peace and love, still experience Domestic Violence (DV)? What is missing in the Christian teachings or values that, if discovered and included, would curb this social menace?

Employing the principle of *analogia entis*, this paper hypothesises that if the Human Family is understood as an *Ecclesia in Miniature* prefigured in God's eternal plan, Human Family should experience tranquillity like that which exists in the Holy Trinity. This trajectory is premised on human social institutions being prototypes of eternal divine mysteries, and ecclesia, crafted after the Trinitarian order, provides an example of family tranquillity.

## **1.0 Domestic Violence**

### **1.1 Definition and forms of Domestic Violence**

The Cambridge dictionary defines violence as "actions or words that are intended to hurt people." In connection with that, the World Health Organization (WHO) defines Domestic violence as "acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours."<sup>3</sup> Further, the World Bank defines Domestic violence as "all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim."<sup>4</sup> It is also referred to as Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).

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<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization, 2013; Global and Regional Estimates of Violence against Women: Prevalence and Health Effects of Intimate Partner Violence and Non-Partner Sexual Violence. *World Health Organization* [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf). Accessed on 24/05/2018.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank 2005. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialsustainability/brief/violence-against-women-and-girls> Accessed on 16/01/2018.

“Zero violence 254 walk” defines DV as “the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behaviour as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, DV may include physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse.<sup>6</sup> It further notes the varying faces DV bears. Some of these faces are obvious, while others are subtle and secrete. Such noticeable physical injuries resulting from DV would include, among many others: Second Degree Burns, Third-degree burns, Hot water scalding, Broken bones, Bruised body parts and Sexual abuse.<sup>7</sup> It further documents other forms of DV in Kenyan families, such as

child marriage; female genital mutilation; (forced) marriage; forced wife inheritance; interference from in-laws; sexual violence within marriage; virginity testing; widow cleansing; damage of property; defilement; depriving the applicant of or hindering the applicant from access to or a reasonable share of the facilities associated with the applicant’s place of residence; economic abuse; emotional or psychological abuse; forcible entry into the applicant’s residence where the parties do not share the same residence; harassment; incest; intimidation; physical abuse; sexual abuse; stalking; verbal abuse; or any other conduct against a person, where such conduct harms or may cause imminent harm to the safety, health, or well-being of the person.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.2 Causes

In many Christian families where DV is experienced, causes may include: financial misappropriation and constraints, alcoholism and drug abuse, withdrawal of conjugal privileges and rights, religious pride and judging others as not saved well enough, miscommunication or lack of it, misunderstanding, mistrust, suspicion, hatred and even other forms of disagreement and selfish interest. According to Majawa, “the root cause of irreconcilable differences in the Church and society is the failure to listen from the heart and the indifference caused by sin.”<sup>9</sup> This is also true of family conflicts. Such an attitude caused by

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.zeroviolence254.org/16-sobering-kenyan-domestic-violence-statistics>. Accessed on 16/01/2018.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.zeroviolence254.org/16-sobering-kenyan-domestic-violence-statistics>. Accessed on 16/01/2018.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., (Rephrased and reformatted).

<sup>9</sup> Clement Majawa, “The Dialectical Method of Augustine and Pelagius: Lessons for Peacebuilding Processes in Africa.” *African Ecclesial Review*, Vol. 59, Nos. 1 & 2, March-June 2017: 82.

our sinful nature aims at achieving selfish motives. In the absence of trust and conscious awareness of one's sinfulness, families and society at large cannot realise peace or development.

Besides the above, in the history of the church, it has been noted that Christians have interpreted some scriptural texts masculinely to demean women. They have used such scriptures to justify the molestation of women.

### ***1.3 Prevalence of Domestic Violence in Families***

Taking DV from the perspective of how women are treated in families in Africa, Pope Benedict XVI notes that although in some communities in Africa, women have been accorded opportunities just like their counterparts –men, “There are still too many practices that debase and degrade women in the name of ancestral tradition.”<sup>10</sup>

“Zero Violence 254 Initiative” campaign in Kenya notes the alarmingly high rates of Domestic Violence, albeit the unreported incidences.<sup>11</sup> According to the “The Daily Nation”<sup>12</sup> “Statistics indicate that 42 per cent of Kenyans have been affected by domestic violence....”<sup>13</sup> Many of these victims did not seek legal redress, nor did they report the incidences. This, therefore, means that the percentage could be higher.

The World Health Organization<sup>14</sup> reports that Domestic violence is a problem everywhere. The survey shows that 35% of women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence. The UN Woman<sup>15</sup> Indicates that up to 70% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime from an intimate partner.

Studies conducted in Kenya, albeit statistics showing that Kenya is 80% Christian –according to National Census 2009, have all documented high levels of female abuse by their intimate partners.<sup>16</sup> A pastor's wife teaching at a theological

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<sup>10</sup> *Africae Munus*, Article no. 56.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.zeroviolence254.org/16-sobering-kenyan-domestic-violence-statistics>. Accessed on 16/01/2018.

<sup>12</sup> Daily Nation. Wednesday, 16 March 2016. Daily Nation. Wednesday, 16 March 2016. - Search (bing.com)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.zeroviolence254.org/16-sobering-kenyan-domestic-violence-statistics>. Accessed on 16/01/2018.

<sup>14</sup> World Health Organization, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> UN Women 2016; Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women. [www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures](http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures). Accessed on 16/01/2018.

<sup>16</sup> Jewkes, R., Levin, J. B., & Penn-Kekana, L. “Gender inequalities, intimate partner violence and HIV preventive practices: Findings of a South African cross-sectional Study”. *Social Science & Medicine*, 56, (2003): 125-134. Cf. Kimani, M. Taking on violence against women in Africa: International norms, local activism start to alter laws, attitudes. *Africa Renewal*, 21, (2007): 4-22

college in Nairobi sought divorce from her cruel husband, who served as a parish priest. The wife claimed that although her husband did not physically assault her, he was quarrelsome and threatened to kill her with her daughter. He demanded sex by force.<sup>17</sup> In another different incident, a pastor reported an incident where a Church elder's wife ran to his house half-naked, pursued by her Christian husband in the middle of the night, brandishing a machete ready to kill her.<sup>18</sup>

Due to cultural orientations, many of the male victims of DV do not come out to the public to report the aggression. The few cases that have captured the Kenyan Media in the recent past have caused the victims social stigma. In a survey among Christian families in Nyeri, it was observed that patriarchal structures made men shy off from reporting incidences of violence.<sup>19</sup> According to a survey carried out in 2015 concerning DV against men, it was found that men-battering is more rampant among Christian families than in non-Christian families. For example, it was established that DV was rare among Muslim families.<sup>20</sup>

#### ***1.4 Reasons for the perpetration of Domestic Violence***

Among reasons advanced for the perpetration and perpetuation of this vice, especially in families in general, include illiteracy, ignorance by victims and insensitivity of law enforcers. It is argued that victims of DV are not aware of existing legal structures for redress. "Access to Justice Report" conducted by the UN<sup>21</sup> notes that high illiteracy levels prevented active victim protection. Regarding ignorance of the existing legal framework, reports indicate that the victim protection system is weak and worsened by high levels of legal illiteracy in the country, especially among GBV survivors. The "Zero violence 254" initiative notes that many of the victims of DV do not even know that all forms of DV are punishable crimes in a court of law. Due to their unawareness of their rights, they have become silent sufferers.

Lastly, according to Kenya Domestic Household Survey, despite awareness of existing laws and literacy, only 5% of the survivors of DV in 2014 reported incidents of violence and were willing to go to court. The remaining 95% did not want to take up the matter with law enforcement organs, citing the insensitivity of law enforcement as the reason.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Informant Q1 (identity concealed for their integrity, dignity and confidentiality).

<sup>18</sup> This information was captured in a Church service at St. Philips -Jericho Nairobi as the Pastor of the Church made an application of his sermon.

<sup>19</sup> David, Kariuki Mwangi, "Causes and Effects of Domestic Violence on Married Men of Anglican Church of Kenya: Ruruguti Deanery, Nyeri County -Kenya", an MTh thesis presented to St. Paul's University 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Kariuki quotes Kubai, 2014.

<sup>21</sup> UN Women 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Kenya Domestic Household Survey (KDHS) 2014.

## **2.0 Existing Proposed Solutions**

### **2.1 Conscientisation:**

“Zero Violence 254” initiative posits that if victims of Domestic Violence were conscientious of their rights and made aware that there exists a legal law like “Protection Against Domestic Violence”, an Act that protects every individual human person, this vice would be minimised. Therefore, its vision is to “create awareness of the ‘Protection Against Domestic Violence Act, ensuring that victims of this vice know their full rights in case there is an emergence of these acts again.”<sup>23</sup>

### **2.2 Establishment of legal structures**

The “Zero Violence 254” initiative appreciates the fact that Kenya has established a legal framework against all forms of violence, which include “The sexual Offences Act (2006); Employment Act (2007); Prohibition of FGM Act (2011); Counter Trafficking in Persons Act (2010); Protection Against Domestic Violence Act; Gazettement of Sexual Offences Medical Treatment Regulation and PRC Form; and the Victims Protection Act.”<sup>24</sup> However, it notes that the insensitivity of law enforcers – delayed processes for justice, corruption in legal corridors, cultural prejudices, and many other factors has made many victims not seek legal redress, hence the need to establish functional legal structures.

### **2.3 Hermeneutical and Catechetical approach**

Majora, in the article “The Dialectical Method of Augustine and Pelagius: Lessons for Peacebuilding Processes in Africa”, echoes the concerns of Pope Paul II in observing that peacebuilding, although it has been discussed in many ways, it lacks approaches that are informative, formative and transformative in approach. He argues that this is only possible if the approach employs a “catechetical and pastoral approach that employs Christian values, African peacebuilding processes and the Church, society and educational institutions.”<sup>25</sup> As if to underscore the reason why insurgent groups in Africa are not going away despite the effort done by international governments, Majawa posits that it is because there lacks an appropriate peacebuilding strategy based on catechesis and spirituality that is founded on the concept of the Church in Africa

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.zeroviolenace254.org/16-sobering-kenyan-domestic-violence-statistics>. Accessed on 16/01/2018.

<sup>24</sup> *Kenyan Woman*

<sup>25</sup> Majora, 2017: 63.

as a Family of God.<sup>26</sup> He further notes that “This is also a contributing factor to tensions and divorce in contemporary Christian communities and marriage, respectively.”<sup>27</sup>

Majora, approaching the solution to violence in general from a Christian theological point of view, postulates that for a family to realise peace, justice and development, there has to be a conscious awareness of the fact that all are sinners and need forgiveness and the grace of God.<sup>28</sup> Thus, besides developing trust among members of a family or society, it is imperative that members also accept that they are sinners and appreciate others’ faults and divergent views in love. Such an attitude will foster love, trust and faithfulness in the family and reduce Domestic Violence.

Biblical scholars, using Post-Colonial hermeneutics especially, the hermeneutics of suspicion over that Biblical texts that portray women as inferior and not created in the image of God like their counterpart –men, or in general, those scriptural texts that do not affirm and enhance the life of humanity should be regarded as not being the divinely inspired word of God and should be ignored.<sup>29</sup>

#### ***2.4 Critique of existing Solutions***

The fact that the “Zero Violence 254” initiative appreciates the fact that Kenya has established a legal framework against all forms of violence begs the question: if legal literacy or conscientisation of victims on the existence of legal systems were the solutions to any forms of violence, why is it that according to surveys carried out by the “Access to Justice Report” by UN Women in 2015, 72% of the survivors seen in the facilities in 2014, only 5% were willing to go to court and the rest were unwilling to pursue justice?

Secondly, why is it that victims of domestic violence and any other forms of violence from regions that are considered literate (as demonstrated here below and possibly aware of existing laws) are reported to be unwilling to report the incidences and seek legal redress?

In 2013 - The Kenya Police Service received 3,596 defilement cases. Out of this, 913 cases were of rape, 242 cases of incest and 124 cases of sodomy.

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<sup>26</sup> Majora, 2017: 63.

<sup>27</sup> Majora, 2017: 63.

<sup>28</sup> Majora, 2017: 82.

<sup>29</sup> Lydia Mwaniki, “Reading Paul Sympathetically: From a Hermeneutic of Suspicion to a Hermeneutic of Reconstruction (1Corinthians 11:1-16)” *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa*, 19, No. 2. (December 2013:21-36) and also confer with John M. Kiboi, “From Post-Colonial Hermeneutics of Suspicion to a Dialectical Theology of Instantaneous and Progressive Divine Revelation”, *African Christian Studies*, Vol. 31, Number 4, (December 2015):31.

It is also reported that 5,143 cases of Gender Based Violence (GBV) come from 131 regions across Kenya. Of these regions, it is noted that the worst regions as far as physical violence against women is concerned are: Western (51.6%); Nyanza (49.5%); Nairobi (46.1%); Eastern (40.6%); Central (32.8%); Rift Valley (32.4%); Coast (27.4%); North Eastern (12.1%); With regards to sexual violence against women, records indicate that: Western (25.3%); Nyanza (19.4%); Nairobi (21.8%); Eastern (12.9); Rift Valley (9.7); Coast (9.1); Central (8.7); North Eastern (0.4 per cent).<sup>30</sup>

According to the Kenya Bureau of Statistics, the National population census of 2019, regions with the high illiteracy index are Turkana (Northern - 82%), Wajir (North-Eastern - 76%), Garissa (North-Eastern - 74%), Mandera (North-Eastern - 70%) and Marsabit (North-Eastern - 68%).<sup>31</sup> Note the drop in Domestic Violence with the drop in education levels.

Judging from the statics above, the rate of violence seems to decrease with a decrease in the level of literacy; compared to Western and North Eastern. If, according to the “Zero Violence 254” initiative, conscientisation of the masses is the solution to domestic violence, why is it that according to the statistics by KDHS, regions with a higher rate of literacy and with better infrastructure as listed above are leading in GBV?

According to Devries et al., studies have shown that women are mainly violated or abused in a relationship, despite the substantial gains made in education, health and political arenas.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the effort by the Kenya government to put in place a legal framework to address the vice, for instance, there are eight laws that address GBV issues, starting with the supreme law, which is the Constitution of Kenya 2010, all forms of violence are still witnessed. This then demonstrates the ineffectiveness of conscientisation theory and the establishment of legal structures as a solution to curbing DV in families.

Hermeneutics of suspicion and catechesis as a solution to DV is challenged when we consider it from the perspective of Levitt et al., who notes that 24 % of the United States Christian women who have suffered domestic violence have justified the act by use of the language of submission and male leadership in marriage as being cited by their religion.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> These statistics have been derived from “Kenya Domestic Household Survey (KDHS) 2014.

<sup>31</sup> <https://victormatara.com/most-educated-counties-in-kenya/> accessed on 11/05/2022 at 03:29 EAT.

<sup>32</sup> Devries, K. M., Mak, J. Y. T., García-Moreno, C., Petzold, M., Child, J. C., Falder, G., Watts, C. H. Global health: “The global prevalence of intimate partner violence against women”, *Science*, 340, (2013): 1527-1528

<sup>33</sup> Levitt, Heidi M., Rebecca Todd Swanger, and Jenny B. Butler. 2008; Male Perpetrators’ Perspectives on Intimate Partner Violence, Religion, and Masculinity. *Sex Roles* 58: 435



It is for the reasons that conscientisation and establishment of legal frameworks have not improved the situation of Domestic Violence, nor has hermeneutic and catechesis, that we propose a new approach; the analogy of the Human Family as a Church in Miniature.

### **3.0 Family as Church in Miniature: A Panacea to Domestic Violence in Christian Families**

#### **3.1 The Principle of *Analogia entis***

The Roman Catholic Church in the “Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith” identifies *sin* as the root cause for all forms of oppression when it states: “... the most radical form of slavery is slavery to sin. Other forms of slavery find their deepest root in slavery to sin.”<sup>34</sup> For this reason, an attempt should be made to liberate humankind from sin, and all forms of oppression shall be liberated. Attempting to use conscientisation (functional approach) is like addressing the symptoms and leaving the root of the problem unaddressed. Consequently, due to our fallen state, we have failed to recognise the fact that family, though a human institution, was instituted by God Himself patterned on the union and communion of the Holy Trinity. Human institutions are a reflection of what is in heaven. Jesus teaches us to pray, “May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” If we were able to recognise this fact, we would respect members of the family or the institution of the family. It is for this reason that we are proposing likening the Human family to the ecclesia and to the Holy Trinity by the principle of *analogia entis*.

At this point, we propose that if the principle of *analogia entis* is applied by Christian families in looking at the institution of family, then the problem shall be remedied. The argument is based on the fact that, observably, many Christians appear to revere Church premises and days of worship. On Sundays, many families suspend aggression towards each other, and they reverently walk to church. Hence our argument is that if the institution of the family is seen in the light of the ecclesia, the institution of the family will be regarded with reverence.

According to the principle of *analogia entis*, God provides humanity with the gift of reason to use to infer from created order the existence of God and His will. This has always happened through the General revelation (cf. Rom. 1:20). The Church has already used the unity of the African family to explain the concept of the “Church as the family of God”. I.e., the unity of the African family is a revelation of God’s nature of existence in His immanent Trinity as family.

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<sup>34</sup> Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: Instruction on Certain Aspects of the “Theology of Liberation”, Translation: Vatican Polyglot Press, IV: 2, 1984.

In the principle of *analogia entis*, the language used is just but analogous. The justification for this principle is based on the argument that even in the Bible and in the church, the language of analogy is used.<sup>35</sup> Such mysteries as the union in marriage can also be used to explain the divine union in the Holy Trinity, with the union of the Holy Trinity being the ultimate superior union that informs the expected union in marriage.

Before we apply the analogy of likening the human family to the church, it is essential to explain the meaning of the church, its origin and the fact that it was prefigured in eternity in the mind of God.

### **3.2 The Meaning, Origin and Adumbration of the Church in the Old Testament**

The English word church is derived from the Greek *Kyriakos*, which means thing or place pertaining to the Lord. Another Greek equivalent which seems to emphasise the aspect of people rather than the place is *ekklesia*. *Ekklesia* derives from the root word *ekkaleo* (I call from, or I convoke). This word from secular Greek usage referred to the assembly of people (*demos*). It is in this sense that the word is used in Acts 19, 32, 39, and 41.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the word church could mean place or assembly of people.

In the Septuagint (LXX), *ekklesia* refers to an assembly convened for religious purposes, e.g. worship (Deut. 23, 2-3; 3Kings 8,5,14,22; Ps 21, 22, 26), and especially the assembly on Mount Sinai where Israel was established as God's holy people and received his law. This, therefore, means that Israel was convoked by God himself as his people. The Word *ekklesia* is often used to translate the Hebrew word *qahal* or its derivatives. In the Septuagint, *qahal* was sometimes translated by other words, especially synagogue, which often translates *edah*, i.e. a "gathering."<sup>37</sup>

If *ekklesia* is a convocation of people as used in *edah* and *qahal*, then it is clear that whenever God called people to worship him, it was a form of the ecclesia. If we understand the church in this sense, then we can trace such convocations and gatherings in various significant events in which God gathered people or called them into being for the purpose of worshipping him right up to the time of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. According to Nyamiti, "From its

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<sup>35</sup> For example, when Jesus teaches his disciples to pray to God, referring to God as "Our Father ...." The church refers to Jesus as the "Lion of Judah", or 'Rock of ages. All these are by analogy. Therefore, since Jesus himself and the church have used analogy, then we too are justified in applying it to divinely revealed truths.

<sup>36</sup> Charles Nyamiti, *Some Contemporary Models of African Ecclesiology: A Critical Assessment in the Light of Biblical and Church Teaching*, CUEA Publication, Nairobi 2007, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Nyamiti, 2007: 3.

origin, humankind was called to live in community (Gen 1, 27p 2, 18)...and to live in friendship with God (Gen2, 8-25)."<sup>38</sup> He further states, "The process of the formation of God's people started with the election of Abraham, with whom God made a covenant (Gen. ch. 15 and 17)... and during the Exodus of Israelites from Egypt...."<sup>39</sup> Following the repeated breakage of the covenants by Israelites as chosen people, the prophets who were sent to renew the covenants foretold that "in the future, only the faithful and holy remnants of Israel would benefit from the divine promise... This prophecy was reaffirmed in the centuries following the Babylonian Exile and nourished the messianic hopes of the Israelites...."<sup>40</sup> He further connects these promises/prophecies to the inauguration of the church in the New Testament. He says, "The founding of the Church by Jesus Christ in the New Testament was the fulfillment of the prophecy."<sup>41</sup>

Worth noting as a significant point at which God convoked a people to be set apart is during Noah's floods in Gen 6. This was a form of *qahal* in that, through Noah, a convocation was made, and after the floods subsided, they worshipped God (cf. Gen 8:20).

Further recognition of vestiges of the ecclesia is notable in the calling of humankind into existence in the Garden of Eden. God called the first human from non-existence into existence so that they could worship Him. The first human family formed the first worshipping community (cf. Gen. 4).

### ***3.3 Church and Human Family Pre-figured in Heavenly Trinitarian Union***

Fogliacco warns against using earthly categories univocally to apply to God's divine realities. For example, according to Fogliacco, the Trinity is not a family, although the Bible uses familial terms such as Father and Son. His position is that such use of familial terms should be understood as an analogy. He explains that "the Son originates from the Father through generation, but not in the way human or animal offspring originate from their parents. Nor is the Holy Spirit the wife of the Father, which would make the Spirit the mother of the Son."<sup>42</sup>

Although Fogliacco warns against the univocal application of earthly categories to heavenly mysteries, it is true that there are familial relationships in the Godhead. In the Holy Trinity, we have the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These relationships imply that the Father is the Father to the Son and that the Son is Son to the Father. Already this is the archetype of a family on which the earthly human families are modelled.

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<sup>38</sup> Nyamiti, 2007: 4.

<sup>39</sup> Nyamiti, 2007: 4.

<sup>40</sup> Nyamiti, 2007: 4.

<sup>41</sup> Nyamiti, 2007: 4.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted by Nyamiti, 2007, p. 118.

The sub-title above presupposes that the church has its foundations in the Heavenly Trinity, as reiterated by the first African Synod – of the Roman Catholic Church. It states, “The Church-as-Family has its origins in the Blessed Trinity at the depths of which the Holy Spirit is the bond of communion.”<sup>43</sup> In regard to this understanding, Idara explains, “Thus the Church-as-Family of God is rooted in the relations that characterise the Trinity –love and communion.”<sup>44</sup> He further quotes the Synodal assembly to bolster his argument. The Synod fathers had stated: “Mystery of the love in the Triune God is the origin, model and purpose of the Church, a mystery which finds suitable expression for Africa in the image of the Church-as Family.”<sup>45</sup> Based on this understanding, Idara concludes, “Therefore, the family of God’s children [the Church] is born from above (cf. John 3:1-21) with one God as the creator of all (cf. Eph 4:6).”<sup>46</sup>

Through the principle of *analogia entis*, one can use the relationship in an African family to understand the nature of ecclesia in the Trinity. One of the relationships in the African family is that of ancestor-descendant in which the parent is an ancestor to the child, and the child is an ancestor to the parent. Using this analogy, Nyamiti explains the Trinitarian familial relationships using African ancestorship. He declares that “... God the Father is, analogically speaking, the Ancestor and Ancestress of his Son, and this latter is his true Descendant.”<sup>47</sup>

In the Trinitarian family, just like in the human family, there is filial love. The Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father. Out of this love, “... the Father and the Son communicate the Holy Spirit to each other in token of their mutual sanctity as well.”<sup>48</sup>

As an ancestor or ancestress would expect of the descendant an oblation, in the Holy Trinity, the Son offers a pneumatic oblation to the Father as an act of love, and in return, as it is expected of the ancestor to reciprocate the descendant’s act of love, the Father send the Holy Spirit as an act of love too to the Son. This act of offering an oblation of the Holy Spirit to the Father and

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<sup>43</sup> First African Synod, “Message of the Synod,” no. 20, quoted in Otu Idara, “The Church in Africa as Family and Trinitarian Communion: Insights from Bernard Lonergan” *African Ecclesial Review*, Vol. 56, no. 4 December (2014): 334.

<sup>44</sup> Idara, 334.

<sup>45</sup> First African Synod, “Propositions,” no. 8, quoted in Otu Idara, “The Church in Africa as Family and Trinitarian Communion: Insights from Bernard Lonergan” *African Ecclesial Review*, Vol. 56, no. 4 December (2014): 334

<sup>46</sup> Otu Idara, “The Church in Africa as Family and Trinitarian Communion: Insights from Bernard Lonergan” *African Ecclesial Review*, Vol. 56, no. 4 December (2014): 334.

<sup>47</sup> Charles Nyamiti, *Jesus Christ, the Ancestor of Humankind: Methodological and Trinitarian Foundations*, CUEA Press, Nairobi, 2005, p. 73.

<sup>48</sup> Charles Nyamiti, *Jesus Christ, the Ancestor of Humankind: Methodological and Trinitarian Foundations*, CUEA Press, Nairobi, 2005, p. 72.

the Father reciprocating with the same is an act of common worship in the Godhead. All these activities are *mission ad intra*.

In these acts of oblations and aspirations, we perceive the perfect form of worship taking place in the heavenly realm. Thus, in this heavenly holy Trinity exists a complete ecclesia, an archetype of the earthly ecclesia. The worship taking place in the heavenly holy Trinity is the archetype of worship expected in the earthly human family as the basic unit of the earthly ecclesia. Thus, within the heavenly Trinity, we have the Trinitarian family and Trinitarian ecclesia, which form the archetype for the earthly family and earthly ecclesia. The relationship between the heavenly ecclesial family and the earthly ecclesial family is that the heavenly family is an archetype of the earthly ecclesia, and the earthly human family is a facsimile of the heavenly ecclesia.

Thus, the church can be said to have been prefigured in eternity in the mind of God, i.e. God conceived the idea of the church in eternity. From eternity when God conceived it to the time it (Church) was born on the day of Pentecost (with its vestiges in the Old Testament events as already illustrated), it can be spoken of as a gestation period. Magesa notes that "According to the patristic writers, the Church originated from the pierced side of Jesus Christ on the Cross."<sup>49</sup> In other words, "it was through the paschal event that the Church was born."<sup>50</sup> According to Cardinal J. Ratzinger, "John's testimony about the effects of the spear thrust (John 19, 34f) suggests this view, if it is true that the blood and water symbolise...the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist, which are the sources of the life of the Church."<sup>51</sup> According to Magesa, Pentecost day was for the church like an official birthday.<sup>52</sup>

Idara posits that understanding the Trinity from the *ad intra*-life of the triune God (immanent Trinity) can shed light in terms of understanding the church as the family of God, specifically with regards to the bond of communion between and among the three divine persons."<sup>53</sup> He concludes that Trinitarian communion is an "archetype for the ecclesial community, that is, the Church-as-Family of God modeled on the bond of communion between the three divine

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<sup>49</sup> L. Magesa, "African Ecclesiologies", in Virginia Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah (eds.), *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, NY (Orbis), 2000, p. 73 quoted in Charles Nyamiti (ibid.), p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> L. Magesa, "African Ecclesiologies", in Virginia Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah (eds.), *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, NY (Orbis), 2000, p. 73 quoted in Charles Nyamiti (ibid.), p. 17.

<sup>51</sup> Cardinal J. Ratzinger, *Voici quell est Notre Dieu*, Paris, 2001, p. 185 quoted in Charles Nyamiti, *Some Contemporary Models of African Ecclesiology: A Critical Assessment in the Light of Biblical and Church Teachings*, Vol. 3 CUEA Publications, 2007, p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> L. Magesa, "African Ecclesiologies", in Virginia Fabella and R.S. Sugirtharajah (eds.), *Dictionary of Third World Theologies*, NY (Orbis), 2000, p. 73 quoted in Charles Nyamiti (ibid.), p. 17.

<sup>53</sup> Otu Idara, "The Church in Africa as Family and Trinitarian Communion: Insights from Bernard Lonergan" *African Ecclesial Review*, Vol. 56, no. 4 December (2014): 335.

persons.”<sup>54</sup> He goes further to state, “The mutual interpenetration.<sup>55</sup> of the divine persons is a vital component of Trinitarian theology.”<sup>56</sup>

The nature of the mutual interpenetration of the persons of the Trinity (perichoresis) “captures the Christian doctrine that the three divine persons dwell mutually within each other, draw life from one another, and are what they are by relations to one another.”<sup>57</sup> This is the nature of the church in the holy Trinity. Therefore, we conclude that in the same way the church is born from above, so is the human institution of the family.

#### **4.0 The Ecclesia Understood as Family of God and Family understood as ecclesia**

##### **4.1 Church as Family of God on Earth**

Fogliacco recognises the existence of interrelationship between the human family and the heavenly Trinitarian family in the fact that,

The family is a perfect image of the divine being as the fountainhead of being, as the mystery of eternal generation and eternal spiration, as an overflowing source of intra divine life.’ This is because, among other forms of society, the family is a generative community’ whose members originate from within it. As a generative principle, the family is the origin of all other communities. It is the life that reproduces itself. Here, more than anywhere else, ‘being’ stands revealed as the source of being..., as fullness that overflows its boundaries and communicates itself to the other.” Moreover, the notion of relation is inseparable from the family –so much so that in the English language, the members of a family ‘are called not only relatives but, quite simply, ‘relations.’<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Otu Idara, “The Church in Africa as Family and Trinitarian Communion: Insights from Bernard Lonergan” *African Ecclesial Review*, Vol. 56, no. 4 December (2014): 340.

<sup>55</sup> The Council of Florence (1441 CE) declared that “The Father is wholly in the Son and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Son is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is wholly in the Father and wholly in the Son” (cf. Dezingher, H. *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, tran. Roy J. Deferrari, Washington: Loreto Publications, 2004, p. 1331. Quoted in Otu Idara, “The Church in Africa as Family and Trinitarian Communion: Insights from Bernard Lonergan” *African Ecclesial Review*, Vol. 56, no. 4 December (2014): 336). This doctrinal teaching is called perichoresis.

<sup>56</sup> Otu Idara, 2014: 335.

<sup>57</sup> Lacuna, M. *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*, New York: Harper Collins, 1991, p. 271 in Otu Idara, “The Church in Africa as Family and Trinitarian Communion: Insights from Bernard Lonergan” *African Ecclesial Review*, Vol. 56, no. 4 December (2014): 336.

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Nyamiti, 2007, p. 119.

However, our presentation of the church as the Family of God on earth has to be analogical. We have to illustrate the familial relationships in the Godhead before we turn to show how the earthly church as the family of God is patterned after the divine Trinitarian relationships. Fogliacco notes that "...unlike the God of non-Christian religions and the one known by philosophy, the Christian God is Father who gives life to a Son who is 'Other' than himself. 'In turn, Father and Son together give their being and life, and what emerges from this inner communication is a second 'Other', the Holy Spirit."<sup>59</sup> He then concludes that "the Christian God is specifically 'a dynamic mystery of inner communication...' here is the typically Christian image of God as community-in-diversity."<sup>60</sup>

In a human family, members are consanguineously related, i.e. by blood, and through procreation, new members originate.<sup>61</sup> Besides relations emanating from consanguinity and procreation as means of increasing membership of family, there are relationships that also emanate from a variety of mutual relations. The church, as the family of God, has vertical and horizontal relations.

(1)The Christian faithful are vertically related to God and horizontally to one another through divine grace, just as family members are related through blood ties; (2) new Church members originate within the Church through Baptism, just as new members in a family originate within that family through procreation; (3) Baptism links the ecclesial members vertically to each divine Persons and horizontally to each other in the church.<sup>62</sup>

Fogliacco notes that

although the similarity between consanguineous ties and relations through grace is striking, one should not forget that through grace, God communicates himself to us and, as a consequence, grace enables us to participate in the very life of the Trinitarian Persons. Therefore, if relations in a human family create links based on biological (consanguineous) ties, 'grace creates a bond between Christians and the three divine persons, and between one Christian and another, that is based on theological similarity, namely, the Holy Spirit and the love infused by him.'<sup>63</sup>

Based on the foregoing understanding, Fogliacco concludes that 'the communion and intimacy that exists –or ought to exist –among the members of the church far surpasses the love that flows among the members of any human society, family included.

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<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Nyamiti, 2007, p. 120.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in Nyamiti, 2007, p. 120.

<sup>61</sup> Fogliacco quoted by Nyamiti, 2007, p. 122.

<sup>62</sup> Fogliacco quoted by Nyamiti, 2007, p. 122.

<sup>63</sup> Fogliacco quoted by Nyamiti, 2007, p. 122.

#### **4.2 Trinitarian Family as Archetype of Human Family**

Christ teaches his disciples to pray, “May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Is it not in God’s will that human institutions reflect the heavenly settings? Therefore, is it not Christ’s wish that the human family on earth replicates the heavenly family? If whatever happens on earth is a facsimile of what goes on in heaven, then the human family can be spoken of as a type of the heavenly family – of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. John Paul II describes the family as a Church in the following words: “We must examine the many profound bonds linking the Church and the Christian family and establishing the family as the church in miniature in such a way that in its own way the family is a living image and historical representation of the mystery of the Church.”<sup>64</sup> Thus, inasmuch as we may liken the church to the human family, the human family can also be likened to the divine mystery (Church); this is by the principle of *nexus mysteriorum*. This, therefore, makes the human family sacred, although fallen. I.e. both the human family and the church as the family of God on earth are rooted in the Holy Trinity as a family and ecclesia.

Therefore, the family as a small church is hereby exhorted by Pope Paul II to root its endeavour to achieve peace both in the families and in the world in genuine prayers and fasting. He states, “Prayer entails conversion of heart on our part. Prayer is the way to true peace, true unity and true reconciliation in our life.”<sup>65</sup> Thus, the human family as a sacred and divine mystery instituted by God and called into being by God Himself at creation can be spoken of as the church in miniature, which is definitively holy and also progressively becoming holy in the same manner we speak of the church. The family’s holiness here is based on the fact that it is God himself who has called it into being. It thus derives its holiness from God, whom He Himself is holy. God intended it to be the fundamental unity of the church, the archetype of the church which was later to be inaugurated by Jesus.

If in the heavenly family, the persons of the Holy Trinity are mutually intertwined with each other, bound by the code of love, the Holy Spirit, this is an example of what should be in regard to the human family and the church. As Nyamiti notes, “The love of Christ for his Church is the model according to which husbands ought to love their wives.”<sup>66</sup> Christ gives his life for the church, and therefore, in the same manner, husbands are expected to sacrifice for their

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<sup>64</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 74 (1984), no. 49 in Otu Idara, “The Church in Africa as Family and Trinitarian Communion: Insights from Bernard Lonergan” *African Ecclesial Review*, Vol. 56, no. 4 December (2014): 331.

<sup>65</sup> John Paul II, “Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation,” *Ecclesia in Africa*, Vatican, 1995, no. 111 quoted in Majawa, 2017, p. 75.

<sup>66</sup> Nyamiti, 2007, p. 9.



wives or family, for that matter. He further notes, “The ecclesial functions are given ‘to knit God’s holy people (the Church) together for the work of service to build up the Body of Christ until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect Man fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself”<sup>67</sup> (Eph. 4, 11-13). Nyamiti further notes that “If these live by the truth in love, they will ‘grow completely into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole Body is fitted and joined together...” (Eph. 4, 15-16).<sup>68</sup>

In the same manner, the church, as the Family of God on earth, ought to live a life that has no forms of exclusion as they are one people of God and children of God the Father (Eph 4:1-6), without any ethnic or sexual/gender distinctions, the human family should be spoken of. In the same way, the church is a family of God who shares in the same heavenly call (Heb. 3:1, 12) as they are a household of Christ (Heb 3:6), as the human family should be. Otu Idara declares that “Here Paul is referring to the Church as a spiritual family that transcends blood ties and race to embrace all persons who share a common faith in Christ.”<sup>69</sup> The Church as a Family of God is complete in that it has Christ himself as their High Priest, who is already interceding for them in heaven (Heb 5:1-10; 9: 11-11). As such, as we speak of the church as a Family of God that ought to have respect for everyone and love for (fellow believers),<sup>70</sup> the same should be said of the human family since they both are born from heaven.

### ***4.3 Family as Ecclesia; A Panacea to Domestic Violence in Christian Families***

In the “Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World”, the fathers of the church note the importance and role of the family in shaping the behaviour and therefore the peaceful co-existence of humanity both now and in future. It states,

The family is the ‘sanctuary of life and a vital cell of society and of the church. It is here that ‘the features of a people take shape; it is here that its members acquire basic teachings. They learn to love inasmuch as they are unconditionally loved, they learn respect for others inasmuch as they are respected, and they learn to know the face of God inasmuch as they receive a first revelation of it

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<sup>67</sup> Nyamiti, 2007, p. 9.

<sup>68</sup> Nyamiti, 2007, p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, Acta Apostolicae Sedis 74 (1984), no. 49 in Otu Idara, “The Church in Africa as Family and Trinitarian Communion: Insights from Bernard Lonergan” *African Ecclesial Review*, Vol. 56, no. 4 December (2014): 330.

<sup>70</sup> Nyamiti, 2007, p. 9-12.

from a father and a mother full of attention in their regard. Whenever these real experiences are lacking, society as a whole suffers violence and becomes, in turn, the progenitor of more violence.<sup>71</sup>

Pope Benedict XVI goes further to note that “The Family is the best setting for learning and applying the culture of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation.”<sup>72</sup> He states,

In healthy family life, we experience some of the fundamental elements of peace: justice and love between brothers and sisters, the role of authority expressed by parents, and loving concern for the members who are weaker because of youth, sickness or old age, mutual help in the necessities of life, readiness to accept others and, if necessary, to forgive them. For this reason, the family is the first and indispensable teacher of peace.<sup>73</sup>

If we can understand the human family as a basic unit of the church from which basic foundations of virtues are inculcated in human beings and that at this level, people’s characters are formed, then our concerted effort to change society and alleviate the problem of Domestic Violence should shift from the argument that by establishing laws and conscientisation of victims could minimise Domestic Violence in families and redirect them towards recognition of the family as a holy institution.

## Conclusion

*Thus, if Earthly ecclesia is patterned after the heavenly Trinitarian ecclesia and Earthly human family is patterned after the heavenly Trinitarian family, then Ecclesia is Family of God, and Human Family is Ecclesia in Miniature. Now, if Human Family is Ecclesia in Miniature, then Ecclesia in Miniature (i.e. Human Family) is the Family of God too and therefore sacred and holy.*

This conclusion is premised on the argument that in the same manner, the church is a family of God on earth as it is a replica of the heavenly holy Trinity, which is a family of God (*mission ad intra*), so to the earthly human family is a replica of the heavenly holy Trinity as a family in heaven. Therefore, whatever is

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<sup>71</sup> CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the church and in the world (31 May 2004), 13: AAS 96 (2004), 682. In *Africa’s Commitment: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Africae Munus* of his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, Article no. 42. (Henceforth simply referred to as *Africae Munus*).

<sup>72</sup> *Africae Munus*, Article no. 43.

<sup>73</sup> *Africae Munus*, Article no. 43.

said of the Trinity as ecclesia whose attributes include unity, love and mutual interpenetration of the three persons of the Godhead, and what can be said of the church's unity, love, peace, holiness should be said of the human family as it replicates the heavenly Holy Trinity as a Church and of the church on earth. Just as the church as the Family of God on earth ought to live a life that has no forms of exclusion, sexual and gender discrimination or violence, so to the human family with God as the head and Christ as the saviour and the Holy Spirit as sanctifier. Therefore, understanding the human family as the ecclesia in miniature leads to it being respected and revered as it is God's *mission ad extra*.

Since many Africans South of the Sahara are either converting to Christianity or are Christians and Christians revere sacred spaces and institutions, understanding the human family as ecclesia (sacred institution) will reduce the rate of Domestic Violence.

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