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**SOCIAL MEDIA AS MEANS OF EVANGELIZATION:
A Case Study of Youth Apostolate in the Parish of Our
Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-Kouka, Kara - Togo.**

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of
the Requirements for the Ecclesiastical Degree
of Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology.

NAIROBI 2022

Student's Declaration

I, here undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work reflecting my personal reading, scientific research and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology. It has never been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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As the supervisor of this long essay, I approve it for submission and examination by the Tangaza University College.

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Date:

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my parents, and to Fr. Lambert Tchassante, SVD my spiritual father who always avails himself for me and helps me spiritually and morally. The work is also dedicated to my religious family The Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) for their love and support, and all religious men and women who dedicate their lives for the sake of the Gospel. In a special way I also dedicate this work to my Spiritual directress Sr. Teresa Karwitha Nkanatha, OP who helps me spiritually and morally with her prayers and words of encouragements and to all my friends.

Epigraph

“Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!” (Pope Francis: *Christus vivit N° 1*)

“Dear young people, let yourselves be taken over by the light of Christ, and spread that light wherever you are.” (St. John Paul II: *17th World Youth Day N°5*)

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Abbreviations

AM	<i>Africae munus</i>
DV	<i>Dei Verbum</i>
EA	<i>Ecclesia in Africa</i>
EN	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i>
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i>
IM	<i>Inter Mirifica</i>
Is	Isaiah
JEC	<i>Jeunesse Estudiantine Catholique</i>
LM	<i>Lumen Gentium</i>
NDL	<i>Notre Dame de Lourdes (Our Lady of Lourdes)</i>
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
SVD	<i>Societas Verbi Divini</i> (Society of the Divine Word or Divine Word Missionaries)
USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
YCA	Youths Catholic Adult
YSC	Youths Serving Christ

General Introduction

1. Background to the Study

In our pastoral experience at St. Mary Immaculate parish of Mihang'o – Nairobi, I was confronted with the effectiveness of the social media in the evangelization work among the youths. When the covid - 19 pandemic came, and the governments decreed the total lockdown in many countries and the churches were all closed, we were all confused and disoriented; the churches were closed, and there was no way of gathering Christians for mass and spiritual activities. So, from this experience, I asked myself how can the Church evangelize the youths who are the future of the Church in this situation of total lockdown. I tried to see how the parishioners especially the youths can be reached out to since there is no more gathering and celebration of the Eucharist in the parish? To these questions, “a new way of evangelizing using the social media” came as a response. So, I thought of the importance of the social media in the evangelization work in the contemporary world and especially in the environment of the youths. Thinking of the evangelization in this lockdown situation, I resolved to undertake research on the use of social media as means of evangelization among the youths: A case study of Youths Apostolate in the Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka, Kara - Togo.

2. Statement of the Problem

As a church that cares for the future of the faith of her children, the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka has a priority in carrying out the apostolate of the youths. This commitment of the parish is reflected in the way the young generation of the parish is transformed and participates in the life of the parish. However, in the experience, one could

see that there is a weak and inactive participation of the youths in the parish especially in the context of spiritual activities. So, with this pandemic situation, I was confronted with this question: How can the Catholic Church easily fulfil the mandate given to her by the Lord Jesus Christ: “Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation” (Mark 16:15). In this contemporary world by using social media in her evangelization work among the youths of the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka? Therefore, the concern of this research is about how to empower the youths and improve their participation in the church through the social media.

3. Purpose of the Study

This work aimed at analyzing critically in order to understand the Youth Apostolate in the parish, evaluating the Apostolate and see its strengths, challenges and the way forward to improve the evangelization among the youths. The work also aimed at understanding how youth apostolate contributes to the transformation of the society and then showing that the social media are the potential and most practical means of evangelization among the youths in the contemporary world and specifically in Our Lady of Lourdes’ Parish of Guérin-kouka in the diocese of Kara (Togo).

4. Objectives of the Study

- i. To present the effective programs for Youth Apostolate;
- ii. To expose the challenges of the youths today;
- iii. To analyse the use of social media and their effectiveness in evangelisation.
- iv. To suggest some pastoral recommendations for the growth of youth apostolate.

5. Research Questions

- i. What are the activities of Youth Apostolate in the Catholic parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka?
- ii. Why the participation of the youth in the activities of the parish is not active?

- iii. How does the Church handle the apostolate of Youth in the society?
- iv. What can be done to transform the life of youth in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, in the families and in the society?

6. Justification of the Study

The research in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka has shown that there is less and less participation of youth in the activities of the parish and that there is a bad testimony on the moral life of the youth of the parish in the society. It is noted that youths are not anymore influenced by the teachings of the Church and have lost interest in spiritual activities of the parish. Therefore, this research suggests some strategies, plans and programs for youth apostolate in order to remediate these challenges and concerns noted.

7. Scope and Limitations of the Study

This research was carried out in the diocese of Kara in Togo, in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka. The research focused on the social media and the evangelization of the youths where the emphasis was put on Youth Apostolate. The research did not reach all the social classes and generations of the faithful of the Catholic Church of Guérin-kouka.

8. Research Methodology

This research was carried out using the pastoral cycle method. It comprises four (4) stages: insertion, social analyses, theological reflection and then pastoral recommendations and action. The stage of Insertion is knowing what is happening in the reality of the youths and the evangelization: this helped us to get a clear picture of the youth evangelization in Our Lady of Lourdes. This stage was followed by the social analysis where we tried to understand the reason behind what is happening by using question such as: why is it happening? How does it affect youth apostolate and the evangelization among the youth? In the theological reflection, we bring out what the Word of God, the Magisterium and the

Teachings of the Church say about the problem. In the last part of the research which is pastoral recommendations and actions, we responded to the questions raised by giving suggestions and way forward for effective youth apostolate in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-Kouka.

9. Structure of the Study

The research is divided in four chapters following the four steps of the pastoral cycle method. We have a general introduction of the research followed by the first chapter, presenting the catholic parish of Guérin-kouka; the historical and geographical description of the parish, the activities of youth apostolate; this is followed by a short conclusion. The second chapter highlights the challenges faced by the youths of Our Lady of Lourdes: what are their difficulties in living their faith and what are the challenges faced in carrying out the apostolate of youth. The third chapter focuses on the teachings of the Church on youths and social media and the Evangelization on young people in the contemporary world; here we gave the view of the Church's teachings, the Word of God and the Magisterium of the Church: It is a theological reflection of the research. The fourth chapter focuses on planning and implementing an effective and influential way of evangelization among youths through social media that will be able to transform young people in the contemporary Church. Our research is closed with a general conclusion which is the synthesis of the whole work.

Chapter I

Youth Apostolate in Our Lady of Lourdes' Parish

1.0. Introduction

This chapter presents youth apostolate in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes. It gives the situation of the parish in her early days and her geographical location in the diocese of Kara, youth group in the parish, and also exhibits their activities in the parish. The last part of this chapter deals with the opinions and observations of the youths in evangelization and the activities of the parish in the context of youth apostolate.

1.1. Historical Presentation of the Parish

History is the source of the informations that make us be more informed of the past of events and its present in order to preview the future. The presentation of the history of the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-Kouka reconnects us to its early days and how it has gone through decade to this date.

1.1.1. The Diocese of Kara (Togo)

The Roman Catholic diocese of Kara is established diocese from the diocese of Sokode on 01st of July 1994. It is one of the seven dioceses of Togo. It is situated in the northern part of the country. The first bishop was Ernest Patili Assi from July 1, 1994 –

February 16, 1996. The second was bishop Ignace Baguibassa Sambar-Talkena from November 30, 1996 to January 7, 2009. The current bishop of the diocese of Kara is Mgr. Jacques Danka Longa since January 7, 2009. It is to be noted that bishop Jacques Danka had previously been Coadjutor Bishop of the diocese (2008-2009) with Bakpessi as the first Bishop.¹ The diocese has over 30 parishes and is predominated by the diocesan priests in the centre and the missionaries in the rural zones. The population of the diocese is estimated at 86,4350 inhabitants with 166,000 catholics (19.2%). The diocese has 177 priests (82 diocesans and 35 religious). The diocese counts 35 parishes and among them the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka.²

1.1.2. The Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-Kouka

The parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-Kouka is today one of the biggest parishes of the Diocese of Kara, it is situated in the western part of the diocese with 2,046 km² and with a population of about 120,725 inhabitants. The parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-Kouka became parish in 1953, before this it was an outstation of the then parish of Bassari today Bassar. The history of the parish is divided into two main periods: the period of the evangelization done by the SMA (Society of African Missions) from 1935 to 1974 and the period of evangelization done by the SVD (Society of the Divine Word) from 1974 up to date.³

The first contact of the SMA missionaries with the place was on 14th of March 1934, when Fr. Kennis, SMA accompanied Mr. Lutz who was a french doctor helping the population at that time for the sake of their physical wellbeing. It is to be noted that the

¹ <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dkart.html> (consulted on 10/06/ 2021 at 07:45AM).

² <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/diocese/dkart.html> (consulted on 10/06/ 2021 at 07:45AM).

³ Personal notes from the interview with Mr. TEHOUL Sévérin, format vice president of PPC.

mission only started a year after the visit with the medical doctor. So, on 14th of March 1935, when Fr. Kennis, SMA, was going to Mango (North of Togo) accompanied by Fr. Boursin, they spent the night at Guérin-Kouka where they celebrated the Mass the following day and also administered the sacrament of baptism. In November of the same year, they chose a place where the first chapel was to be built but it was Fr. Jean D. who will be the founder of the parish. So, Fr. Jean D. is known today as the founder of the parish of our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-Kouka. He was the parish priest from 1953 to 1954. During his evangelization work, he looked for helpers; he appointed Mr. Jean Tiyadja as the catechist of the young and new parish to run the activities of the new mission. So, in 1953, Our Lady of Lourdes became the main outstation of the district and so Fr. Dauphin had more responsibility in building up the new parish. After a year of work in the new parish of Guérin – kouka, he was called to some responsibilities in Sokode and would be replaced by Fr. Albert Reif, SMA who worked from 1954-1964. But during this time, he was not staying at the parish so all these ten years, the parish remained without a permanent pastor.⁴ Looking at the situation of the parish, the bishop of that time Mgr. Chrétien Bakpessi, who was the bishop of the diocese of Sokode asked for the help of the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD) who are the pioneers of the Catholic evangelization in Togo.

In Jun 1974, the SVD missionaries from then Zaïre, now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), arrived in the diocese of Sokode and were given parish responsibilities in the diocese. Fr. Franz Bosold, SVD was sent to work in the parish of St. Martin in Bassari (Bassar), Fr. William de Jong, SVD, was sent to the Parish of St. Therese of the Child Jesus in Kabou and then Fr. Gerard Van der Heijdt, SVD, came to replace Fr. Albert Reif, SMA in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka. The arrival of the Divine Word Missionaries initiated the second phase of missionary and pastoral activities which lasts up

⁴ Records of the history of the parish in the parish priest's office.

to date. In 1975, Fr. Gerard H. left the parish due to health problems and was replaced by Fr. William de Jong who will be expelled from the country in 1976 due to political reasons. So, the parish remained from 1976 to 1979 without a pastor and was put under the care of the priests of Bassar. It is during this time that the work of the catechist became more important and prominent in the evangelization endeavour of the parish. In September 1979, a new priest: Fr. Marian Schwark, SVD, was sent to the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin – kouka. With the help of the bishop Mgr. Chrétien Bakpessi, Fr. Marian Schwark, SVD was able to bring the sisters of St. Catherine of Alexandre in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes to take care of the social needs of the parish. In January 18th, 1996, the parish gave some portion of land for the new parish of St. Kizito of Kpatchilé which was an outstation of the parish up to that date.⁵ Today the parish of our Lady of Lourdes is still under the pastoral care of the SVD missionaries and has an estimated population of 120,720 inhabitants with 19 outstations and one catholic school.

1.1.3. The Beginning of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka Parish

According to Fr. Karl Müller, SVD, it is Fr. Nikolaus Schönig, SVD, who came first to Guérin-kouka on 27th of April 1910.⁶ He was appointed the Apostolic Prefect of Missions in Togo on 20th March 1910; so, he travelled to the Northern part of Togo in order to discover the realities of the country and open it to the first evangelization. He was impressed by the land in the northern part of the region of Kara current day Diocese of Kara.⁷ So, from there begun the mission work of the Divine Word Missionaries in this region which later became the diocese of Kara. The Divine Word Missionaries engaged in the evangelization

⁵ Personal notes from the interview with Fr. Marian SCHWARK, SVD, parish priest from 1979 - 1984.

⁶ Müller Karl, *Geschichte der Katholischen Kirche in Togo*, (Kaldenkirchen Steyler,1958), p. 207.

⁷ Müller Karl, *Geschichte der Katholischen Kirche in Togo*, (Kaldenkirchen Steyler,1958), p. 207.

work in the Northern part of Togo for many years. When the SVD Fathers came to the new mission ground in Guérin-kouka, they were warmly welcomed by the population. Like Fr. Marian Schwark, SVD said: “With some rare exceptions, the people of Guérin-kouka are inoffensive, they are welcoming and opened to the formation.”⁸ He added that the rumours that people say about the savagery of the people of Guérin-Kouka is just a relative point of view, it is not the real picture of the people of the place. The mission was growing well in Guérin-kouka, but unfortunately this evolution of the mission was to be disrupted by the first World War which obliged the departure of the SVD missionaries from Togo in 1918.

In the records of the SMA Fathers, we read that when Guérin-Kouka became the main outstation in 1953 with the first missionary residing in the place. Fr. Dauphin, SMA, who was the first missionary wrote in the messenger of the African Missions in May/ June 1954: “The first Christmas at Guérin-kouka with my dear Konkombas ...! Before the midnight, they were already with their arrows and other staff in their hands and with all their things for the war because my dear Konkombas (people of Guérin-kouka) are warriors and at the same time pastors.”⁹ So, in some words we can say that the mission has not been easy with the first missionaries in Guérin-kouka, they faced challenges based on the cultures and the belief of the people but the missionaries did not abandon the work of evangelization. They dedicated themselves to the sowing of the Word of God in the hearts of people. In the Messenger of the African Missions of May/June 1954, Fr. Dauphin, SMA expressed his will, love and dedication for the evangelization of the people of Guérin-kouka saying: “I always think about the conversion of my beloved Konkomba: they are not always easy, but nobles, sincere and right like their arrows. The Word of God: Peace to all men of good will!

⁸ Personal notes from the interview with Fr. Marian SCHWARK, SVD, parish priest from 1979 - 1984. (12/06/2021)

⁹ The messenger of the African Missions (SNA Magazine) Mai/June 1954, p.45.

Concerns them also.”¹⁰ The missionaries worked in Guérin-kouka and built the chapel but after many years, they did not get catechumens and this many times did not give them courage to continue the work with zeal. In the records of the parish, there was a time when Fr. Müller said that the chapel has existed in Guérin-kouka for more than twenty (20) years but we almost do not talk of catechumens. In 1953, Fr. Dauphin who is known today as the founder of the parish of Guérin-kouka, built a chapel bigger than the number of the Christians and also a nice parish house. But the SMA missionaries soon left the young parish and the SVD missionaries then came to take over the mission in 1974. They have been working in the parish since then up to date.

1.1.4. Evangelization Period

The evangelization work in the parish of our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka has not been an easy task for the first missionaries. From the part of the population, the missionaries were well welcomed with respect and consideration but there were some kinds of reservation that kept the population a bit distant from the missionaries because the population saw the missionaries as colonialists. With courage and hope, the missionaries did not give up the apostolic service. With the help of the local authorities; Mrs. Tchare, Oudine and Gnodja, the population was able to open up to the missionaries.¹¹ When they first came, it was necessary to put up structures that will help in the work of evangelization, so the chapel and the mission house were built with the means of that time.

At the beginning of the evangelization, the first missionaries were somehow discouraged by the political situation of the country at the time and this affected the social work that was being undertaken by the Church. Many things were burnt down and this did

¹⁰ The messenger of the African Missions:(SMA Magazine) Mai/June 1954, p.45.

¹¹ *Paroisse Notre Dame de Lourdes de Guérin Kouka, jubile de diama,1953 - 2013*, p. 19.

not help in the building of the connection between the population and the missionaries because it was through the distribution of cloths, basic needs and medicines that many people used to come to see the missionaries and then have some time for the sharing of the Word of God. The first evangelization in the parish was done through the social work that used to attract many people to the mission house. In the records of the parish, it is written that it was through social work such as the medical care and food stuff assistance that the first missionaries of the parish were able to gather the people and also to gain their trust. The social work of the first missionaries played an important role in the evangelization period. In fact, it is exactly the evaluation of the fruits of the evangelization through the social work that the SVD missionaries invited the sisters of St. Catherine of Alexandria from Germany to come and assist them in the mission. It must be noted that the presence of the sisters in the mission has really helped during the evangelization period and is still helping because today one can easily see the great presence of the sisters in the social work of the parish especially in the area of health.

1.1.5. Present Challenges of Evangelization in Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka Parish

In our world of today, one of the challenges faced by parishes is the financial autonomy and self-sufficiency. The parish, is in a semi-rural area, there are no sources of income to help the population, so most of the time, many people leave the place in order to get better jobs or education in the urban areas. The other challenge is that most of the sponsors of the parish are not from the place, they are workers who come and go. Hence, this state of affairs affects the smooth development and continuation of the parish projects. At times, the temporary parishioners may initiate a project but when they leave and new comers take

over, they may decide to change or terminate the initial project due to their financial abilities.¹²

The other challenge that affects the development of the parish is the commitment of the parishioners. People in the parish are not committed in the works of the parish. The lack of personnel has been a problem in the parish, there are no leaders because the youth leave the place for studies and for jobs. So, those who were to be vibrant leaders, are gone and then the responsibility is given to the elders who do not have the same mentality of the contemporary world; frequently, there are conflicts of generation in the groups and in the pastoral council especially when the parish priest is young.¹³

With the growing of the town, there are new churches that are also seen as a threat to the parish because many leave the Catholic Church and join the new churches. It is to be observed that the territory is too large for one parish only, so it is a great challenge for the priest to reach everybody and also for the faithful living far from the parish to participate in all the activities of the parish.¹⁴ Also, there have been many changes of parish priests in the last decades; so in some ways, this does not help the parishioners because most of the parish priests who come, have a different vision and this directly or indirectly affects activities of the parish. As Fr. Marian Schwark, SVD rightly said: “So many changes of parish priests and lack of stability can affect the evolution of the parish.”¹⁵

¹² Personal notes from the interview with Mr. Sévérin Tehoul. (24/06/2021)

¹³ Personal notes from the interview with Fr. Lambert Tchassante, SVD, parish priest from 2009 - 2014. (20/05/2021)

¹⁴ Personal notes from the discussion with Fr. Ludovic Amouzou, SVD, parish priest from 2016 up to date. (25/05/2021)

¹⁵ *Paroisse Notre Dame de Lourdes de Guérin Kouka, jubile de diama, 1953 - 2013*, p. 14.

1.2. Structural Presentation of Youth Group in the Parish

The apostolate of the youth in the parish is divided into two in order to make the work easier for both the leaders and the youth. There are two main groups in the parish, the group of the youth from high school comprised of those from 18 to 24 years old and the group of the youth from 25 to 35 years. This division is done based on the realities that they face.

1.2.1. Youth Group

This group of youth most of the time is more animated, it is the vibrant organisation in the parish and it is centred on the formation of faith of the young people who are the future of the parish and of the Church at large. Since it is about youth, we can say that this apostolate is a program for life, it helps youth to build their future in the light of their faith in the Church. In this group, is found most of the aspirants to religious and priestly lives.

In the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka, most of the members of the vocational group are found there. They are those who are more agitated in the choice of the person they want to be in the future; so, forming the vocational group with them, the work of orientation is made easier. The apostolate with this group most of the time is all about how to help them discern and make right decisions in their life. In their ordinary program of the apostolate of this group of youth in the parish there is focus especially on the sharing of the vocation stories and also the teaching of the social doctrine of the Church and a more deepened catechetical instruction.

1.2.2. Young Catholic Adults Group: Y.C.A.

The Y.C.A. is a vibrant group in the parish, they take part in almost all the activities of the parish. Most of these youths are at the university level and since there is no university in Guérin-kouka, their apostolate is neither permanent nor continuous in the parish, it only happens when they are on vacations. This does not mean that during the rest of the year, the

parish does not work in that apostolate. In fact, the parish works hard during the whole year because during the year, there are youths in the parish and most of them have finished their first degree and are looking for employment. So, the apostolate is more focused on how to help them get settled in life and also how to deal with jobless situation in life.

In Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka, the apostolate of the Y.C.A. is about capacitating youths to be independent and also creative in their lives. They are also helped to develop the skills they have gained in school. The apostolate with the Y.C.A. is all about workshops and formation of the youth in the faith of the Church. In the church of Togo, the group of the youth is generally called J.E.C “*Jeunesse Estudiantine Catholique*” which can be translated as Catholic Youth Students; this includes all the two groups of youth. This group is very important in the life of the Parish.

1.3. Description of Youth Apostolate

Evangelii Nuntiandi in its N° 72 on youth ministry explains that circumstances invite us to make special mention of the young. Their increasing number and growing presence in society and likewise the problems assailing them should awaken in every one the desire to offer them with zeal and intelligence the Gospel ideal as something to be known and lived. And on the other hand, young people who are well trained in faith and prayer must become more and more the apostles of youth. The Church counts greatly on their contribution, and we ourselves have often manifested our full confidence in them (EN 72).

1.3.1. The Spiritual Formation of the Youth

The spiritual formation of the youth is one of the principal focuses of the parish. The parish dedicates herself to the formation of the faith of the youth. Every Saturday afternoon, the group always has meeting in which spiritual formations is given. The leaders of the group always get someone with the approval of the parish priest to come and give a talk on a topic of their choice. The annual budget of the parish includes the formation of the youth

who are the future of the parish. In fact, most of the time, 05-10% of the budget of the parish is dedicated to the formation of the youth. They participate in the meetings organized by the diocese; they have spiritual recollection every two months and yearly the parish organizes the annual retreat for them. The youth are also involved in other movements and groups in the parish where they also get some insight in the teachings and life of the Church.

Youths actively participate in the liturgical life of the parish. In the liturgical celebrations of the parish, most of the activities are run by the youth. The youth are in charge of the readings during mass, both in french and local language (Konkomba). Some of the youth also took the challenge to be helping the catechist in the translation of the homily of the celebrant during masses. The youth have a great interest in animating the adoration once a month; they always organize it well with the guidance of their chaplain. There are many youths in the choir of the parish, they sing in the liturgical celebrations. Some of the youth from the first group are also Mass servers; they help at the altar service during Masses.

1.3.2. The Social and Family Life of the Youth

In general, it is observed that the social life of the youth is in line with the teachings of the church. This can be the fruits of the cultural formation in the families. The education received by the youth in the family is very important in living their faith. Youths are well inserted in the society and are good example of Christians in the area where almost 45% of the population is not Christian.

The youth of the parish have a good relationship with the youth of the other denominations. In fact, they always organize once a semester a day of talks and games with all the youths of the Guérin-kouka. During this meeting, one can see the good relationship between the catholics and other denominations in Guérin-kouka. So, looking at this attitude of the social life of the Catholic youth, one can easily say that this is from the education received from the family and that is true. The good family life of the youth is reflected in

their social life. In general, the Catholic youth of our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka have a good moral conduct in the society.¹⁶ In our interviews, there is a sense in which the general view on the life of the youth of our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka is positive. The youth conduct themselves according to the teachings of the Church but there is still room for improvement.

1.3.3. Challenges of Youths Living their Faith.

It is well realized that in our contemporary world, the living out of faith as Christians by the youth has more challenges than ever. In this world which is hesitant and even opposed to embracing Christian virtues, the youth are the most vulnerable group. They are more exposed to the influence of the contemporary world and technology than other generations of the society. Technology in itself is a good and valuable instrument for the formation of the youth but its side-effects do not help youth to live well their faith. Youth of today's world are more exposed to temptation and distraction than ever. They are surrounded by information that can easily drag them out of their faith if they do not have a strong foundation in the Church's teachings and a good relationship with the Lord.

Briefly, one can say that technology is one of the challenges that do not help youth to live their faith. Technology and the developments of the means of communication serve as "double-edged sword" which contribute to the challenges that the youth have in living their faith. In fact, the contemporary world is full of fake news and wrong informations that can easily influence the faith of the youth. The contemporary world also brings about the migration and movement of the youths to the cities looking for better life.

¹⁶ Summary of personal note of the interview with Mr. Noël Pouyan, youth leader. (16/05/2021)

1.3.4. Youth on Evangelization

The apostolate of the youth is always a good thing and also challenging because the youth have a different view of the world and are more immersed into the contemporary world to the extent that the contextualization of the Gospel is the key element to be carefully observed. The youth with their education and formation, have different opinions and observations on the evangelization.

1.3.4.1. Opinions of the Youth on Evangelization

In the post synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World *Evangelii nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI identifies evangelization as the *raison d'être* of the Church. He wrote “Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ’s sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection” (EN 14).

In the interview conducted in the parish, most of the youths have the opinion that the evangelization work of the present time in the parish is not taking into consideration most of the needs of the youths. They are of the opinion that the parish is doing her best in the proclamation of the Good News among the youth but there is still room for improvement and creativity. Almost 95% of the interviewees opined that the evangelization work in the parish can be done better with the means of communication and most especially in this current situation of the world with the Covid - 19. The youth held that mass media is the most efficacious means to reach many youths in the parish. The analyses and interviews show that 97% of the youth access their phone more than 75 times a day and by using the media for evangelization, the youth will be more evangelized and involved more in the life of the parish.

1.3.4.2. The Observation of Youth on Evangelization

Often time, those who are engaged in the evangelization may not get time to observe well what they are doing. So, the question was asked to the youth about what they have observed on the evangelization work in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka. The youth said that the evangelization is going on well in the parish, the missionaries are able to preach the Word of God to the people, they are helping the society to live the commandments and the teachings according to the Divine Will of God. They observed that the pastoral activities of the parish are well organized and always involve all the parishioners. The youth are grateful for what the missionaries are doing in the parish and for the society of Guérin-kouka. The youth observed that the evangelization work is easy for the missionaries because the people of Guérin-kouka in their culture are used to the invisible god in their traditional religion; so, talking of the invisible God, it will not be something that they will not understand and most especially for the youth who have both the traditional and modern educations.

In the interviews and observation, one can say that the youth apostolate is well run in the parish but there is still room for improvement in the evangelization of the youth. Nowadays, in the Church the terminology “new evangelization” has prevailed since its popularisation by Pope John Paul II who clearly elucidated that it does not mean a re-evangelisation but rather an evangelization with new ardour, new methods, and new expression while remaining faithful to the deposit of faith. And this exactly what is needed in the context of youth ministry no matter the socio-economic context, for youths are opened and excited by new ways and manners which attract them more.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we looked at the historical and geographical situations of the parish of our Lady of Lourdes and we saw that the development of the parish has in a real sense three phases: the period of SVD missionaries, the period of SMA missionaries and then the period of the SVD missionaries who came back to the parish in 1974 after some years of absence which was taken over by the SMA missionaries. The researchers also presented the two main groups of the youths in the parish whereby it is observed that the first group's youths are permanent in the parish and the youths of the second group are not permanent in the parish and they migrate to the city for further studies and also for better jobs.

Chapter II

Analysis of the Challenges of Youth Apostolate

2.0. Introduction

This chapter deals with the analysis of the challenges faced by the youth and their apostolate in the society in general and in particular in the life of the youth of Our Lady of Lourdes' Parish of Guérin-kouka. The challenges are analysed based on the observations of the researcher and the interview conducted with the parishioners. It also makes use of the available diocesan materials on Youth Apostolate to enrich the study.

2.1. Some Contemporary Challenges Faced by Youth

The contemporary world is full of challenges that most of the youths are confronted with their daily life and at times they are unable to avoid them. This section presents some of the challenges.

2.1.1. Unemployment

Togo as a country has 4% rate of unemployment since 2020.¹⁷ Guérin-kouka is a small town of the northern part of Togo and there are few opportunities for the young people who after years of formation and education find themselves without a job. In the parish, most of the youth after their first degree, come back home and do not have any job to do or to

¹⁷ <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/TGO/togo/unemployment-rate>. Consulted on 06 / 08 / 2021.

continue the education because of lack of financial support. In the interview, the researcher was able to identify some causes of the problem of unemployment in the region:

An insufficiently flexible labor market and excessively high labor costs, by this the youth meant that the administrative rules are too heavy and restrictive and this makes the life difficult for the youth, for example the dismissal procedure from the job is not well done or followed and during the work the overly strict legislation on employment contracts. so one can say that these rigidities in the labor market prevent the necessary adjustments between labor supply and demand, which generates unemployment among the youth.

In the interview, the majority of the respondents are of the view that the situation of unemployment is too high in the region and most especially among the youths of the parish. Mr. Tehoul Severin who is one of the respondents said that: “in the past one could get a job with good salary without going far in his/her studies but today, one spends all the money for studies and at the end there is no job to get back the money spend”.¹⁸ In the same line, some are pessimists and think that school does not help anymore because they see many graduated youths in the parish without jobs; so, for these respondents, school is the best teeth who steals from you but you do not know, it steals your time and money that you will not get it back.¹⁹ The interesting point made by Mr. François Gbandi is that many youths do not have an adequate professional formation so when they finish their education, they cannot start anything on their own, they remain dependent on the government to provide for them the job.²⁰ According to “*Centre de développement de l’OCDE (2017)*”, the social support networks for young people are essentially limited to the family circle, primarily immediate kinship. Young people have relatively little knowledge and a rather negative view of

¹⁸ Interview through WhatsApp with Mr. Tehoul Séverin, on 01/09/2021.

¹⁹ Personal notes from the discussion with the group of Christian couples on 29/05/2021.

²⁰ Interview through WhatsApp with Mr. François Gbandi, former catechist, on 01/09/2021.

associations and support groups that exist in their community. As a result, many do not join or actively participate.²¹ In the analyses and interview done in the Parish of Guérin-kouka, one can confirm without fear of contradiction that problem exists and that is one of the sources of the high rate of unemployment. As a follow-up, the researcher consulted some business owner and they said that it is because of the lack trust in the youths of the contemporary world. Many prefer that the family member runs the business than an alien like Mr. Moaminou affirm that youths are not trustworthy: “I prefer giving all my wealth to my relatives than the person I do not know or who is not from my family because in my absence, he will not remember to take care of my children”.²² This affects the poor youths.

2.1.2. Sexually Transmitted Diseases

The youth of the contemporary world are influenced by the immoral life in their sexuality and therefore this brings many problems to them. They contract diseases such as HIV/AIDS, syphilis and gonorrhoea because they do not have education on sexuality. In the interview conducted with youth from the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, it is observed that most of them are of the opinion that sex is a taboo in the African cultures and so they (youth) do not have the chance to talk with their parents on the sexuality in order to get some ideas on how to go about their sexual life to avoid diseases.

The creation of awareness among youth on sexuality can help to fight against these sexually transmitted diseases in the contemporary society and most especially among the youth. The reports of the interview on the sexual education show that more than 85% of the youths are of the opinion that the Church is not doing much in the sexual education of the youth so that is why many of them get into this situation of getting a sexually transmitted

²¹ <https://www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/Examen-du-bien-etre-et-des-politiques-de-la-jeunesse-au-Togo.pdf>. Consulted on 30/08/2021.

²² Interview through WhatsApp with Mr. Moaminou Lamidi, a business owner in Guérin-kouka, on 03/09/2021.

disease. But the priest in charge of the youth apostolate contradicts that by saying that the problem is not from the parish but from the youth who are not ready to listen and change their way of life in order to live in accordance with the teachings of the church. He continues saying that the youth rely too much on the contraceptives, they do not see that there can be failures in the contraceptives and also can give them other problems such as cancer.

Some of the elders of the parish were interviewed on the sexual education of youth and its contribution in eradicating sexually transmitted diseases in the society and almost 99% of them hold that there is a failure in the education from the family; they said that in the past the youths could not go out without the permission of the parents and also could not have intimate relationship without the approval of the parents of both parties but in the contemporary society, it is only when there is a problem that parents will get to know that these young people are in a relationship. So, for them, the proliferation of the sexually transmitted diseases is in part due to the sexual education received in the family.

Mr. Tehoul Severin said that according to him: “the main determinants of the sexually transmitted diseases are: high sexual activity among the youth, multiple sexual partners; the non-perception of the risk and the denial of the disease; poverty and the extreme economic and financial vulnerability of women; the extreme mobility of sex workers in the sub-region; the extension of financially vulnerable groups such as young girl, bar waitresses, apprentice seamstresses and hairdressers; high illiteracy among women; very low use of condoms among young people; strong internal migration.”²³

2.1.3. Pregnancies and Abortion

Statistics in Togo show that many young ladies are experiencing the unwanted pregnancies and most of the time since they do not want it, they then try to do away with it

²³ Personal notes from the interview done on 20/05/2021.

by aborting it. According to official information from the Ministry of Education, the rate of teenage pregnancies in schools remains high. 1,222 cases were recorded between September 2020 and March 2021.²⁴ So, many of the youth who are from the school and also university are most challenged with the pregnancies and with the difficulties of life and the fear of taking care of the child, they end up aborting the pregnancy. *Late last year and early this year 2021*, the Directorate of Education Planning conducted a survey in collaboration with UNICEF and the World Bank. At the end, it is observed that most unwanted pregnancies are recorded in public high schools.²⁵ Most of these young ladies have boyfriends who are also students and most of them do not have means to take care of the child and also the unreadiness to become a father, they take a decision that is not good for their life and also against the human right and the teachings of the church.

In the interview, over 75% of the youths' respondents said that they use drugs and other traditional instruments or means to terminate the pregnancies for fear of being rejected by the family, friends and relatives. Some lady confessed that during the process one can collapse or even die. So, analyzing the situation, Mr. Timoukal who is a director of one school said that lady opt for abortion for the fear of rejections from the society or not getting married to the owner of the pregnancy and also dropping school, but that is not the only reason, they want to continue life as youths concluded the director Timoukal.²⁶ Mr. Ali Affou from the (HP: "*Hopital Prefectoral*" that is the District Hospital) in respond to the question on the effects of abortion on the academic life of ladies in Guérin-kouka said: it is not only in Guérin-kouka that the abortion has negative effects on the academic life of ladies

²⁴ <https://www.republicoftogo.com/Toutes-les-rubriques/Societe/Toujours-trop-de-grossesses-precoces>. Consulted on 08/08/ 2021.

²⁵ <https://www.republicoftogo.com/Toutes-les-rubriques/Societe/Toujours-trop-de-grossesses-precoces>. Consulted on 08/08/ 2021.

²⁶ Summary of the interview with Mr. Timoukal, the director of CEG Kouka II, on 24/06/2021.

who do it but everywhere; in Guérin-kouka he added, it is clear to note that the abortion affects the psychological and emotional life of the victim. This is reflected in the poor performance in school because the cognitive of the person is also affected in some ways.²⁷

These pregnancies and abortions have a strong link with the sexual education, most of the cultures in Togo and especial in Guérin-kouka do not talk of the sex in the families. So, the children are somehow exposed to all kind of sextual immorality and have no idea of the danger. So, the work of the youth apostolate in the parish is to play the role that the parent in most cases do not play at how in the sexual education of the youth and children. In the interview with the youths, most of them said that the reason why they do abortion is not only that they cannot take care of the child but also that they can be banished by the parent so with the fear to be banished or chased from the family, they opt most of the time to abort the pregnancy.²⁸

2.1.3. Marriage

The marriage is supposed to be consensual; this type of marriage refers to the union of two people different sex who love each other and agree to live together. Among the youths the researcher interviewed on the consensual marriage, 95% of them did not really know this definition of type of marriage and this bring to mind that they do not really know what marriage is. This explains why many of them easily get married because they meet and the pregnancy came in and there is no way of aborting so they are obliged to live together and this most of the time does not last long because there is never peace in the house. In connection with this, the question was asked to Mr. Tehoul Séverin on the cause of failures in marriages of the contemporary world and he said that the marriage in its nature

²⁷ Personal notes from the interview with Mr. Ali, the Director of the District Hospital, on 24/06/2021.

²⁸ Summary of the 4th interview with the Youths of Our Lady of Guérin-kouka, on 13/06/2021.

is a union aimed at consolidating links between families, clans and society but with the type of marriage the young people go into because of sexual revolution does not really fulfil the goal of marriage and this affects their life because they break up after a short time.²⁹

When one analyses the marriage among the youths in Guérin-kouka, it is obvious to say that the marriage is just as simple as meeting the opposite sex today and the next time is marriage. There is no proper time of journeying together to know each other. In the interview with Mr. Gbandi François, he answered to the question on the causes of marriage failures among youths in the parish by saying that in his opinion, there is a failure on the part of the Catechesis given to the youths, the youths are not well taught the value of marriage and what it entails. This goes in the same line with what Youths said earlier on the sexual education given in the parish, there is a room for the improvement of the catechesis with the youths on sexuality and marriage. There is a need of preparing the youths on the marital life from the catechesis and also in the Youth Apostolate.

2.2. Sources of the Challenges of Youth Apostolate

The human being is a social being and there are many influences coming from the environment in which one lives. In the same line, the youth apostolate has many challenges based on the realities of the social life of the youth.

2.2.1. Cultural and Companionship Influence

It is said that human being is nature and nurture, meaning he/she is made of the nature and the society. As a social being, there are always influences of the society that contribute to the identity of the person. In this line of understanding, one can say that the youth living in the society are influenced by the culture and the friend they have. The culture teaches

²⁹ 3rd interview with Mr. Tehoul Sévérin on 12/06/2021.

values of life that helps youth to growth in life, in the Youth Apostolate of Our Lady of Lourdes, the influence of the culture has a very important impact on the growth of the youth. Many at time, they try to use the tradition solutions to solve the challenges they face in the contemporary world and in many cases this does not help.

In the interview conducted and also the observations done with youth in the parish, it is evident to say that youth culture is a dynamic culture and it is full of good things that can be negative if care is not taken in the way they are used. The youth culture is a culture of music, modern fashions, electronic gadgets and social media, among others. These things are good but if misused they become danger to the youth. The culture of the youth is somehow hybrid because there is a great influence from the western culture which the elders see as not compatible to the traditional culture so it brings a conflict among the generations.

2.2.2. Negative Attitude Towards Youth: Generational Conflict

In the contemporary world, Youth cannot be easily defined and explained. The Youth of the contemporary world and the changes of the 21st century are leading us towards a radical metamorphosis of the younger generation. The behavior, the education, and the aspirations of the young people of today is different if not totally new from the past generation. The Youth today have a strong desire to enjoy freedom in every circumstance. With this in mind, one can argued that this aspiration for independence directly generates an infinite number of conflicts between youths and adults who have a different type of education with less freedom. In the parish of our lady of Lourdes, one can witness a conflict of opinions, different ideas, problems in a family, which consequently gives rise to a lot of arguments between the parents and the youths.

From the interview conducted with the leaders of the Youth Apostolate in the Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka, one can say without contradiction that this is the most challenging obstacle the Youth Apostolate faces in the parish. The youths are seen

with a negative image and personality. There is a conflict of generations in the society where by the elders think that the educated youth do not give them the due respect and also show themselves to be more intelligent than the parents. With this situation, many youths end up not completing their education in schools and Universities because the parents refused to sponsor the education to show the youth that they cannot go without the elders.

There is a negative attitude from the other members of the parish towards the youth and this many at times brings conflict between the youth and the elders or the other members of the parish. This most of the time is based on the life style the youth live in the parish, their way of dressing, their hair cut styles and other things. The youths in the parish are judged by the elders and other members of the parish. There is no room for counselling the youths but most of the time, the youth experiment the judgemental attitudes of the other members of the parish. The life style of the youths is seen as immoral and irresponsible; with their behaviours, the youths are seen as irresponsible members of the parish. In the analyses of the causes of this conflict between the generations, the researcher discovered that it starts from the families and this conclusion of the researcher is confirmed by what Mr. Tehoul Séverin said exposed as cause of the conflict between youths and elders and especially in the families: “There is a divergence sometimes concerning studies, their future profession, questions of love or simply the choice of friends in the society.”³⁰

2.2.3. Lack of Planning and Inadequate Approach to Youth Apostolate

The youth ministry is an important apostolate in the life of the Church because it takes into consideration the present and the future of the Church, it deals with the wellbeing of the christians and specially the youth. In our interview conducted with the youth of Our Lady of Lourdes’ Parish of Guérin-kouka, the opinion of the youth is that they are not well recognized in the parish as it was supposed to be. Over 60% of the youths interviewed are

³⁰ Notes from the 2nd interview with Mr. Tehoul Séverin, 08/06/2021.

of the opinion that the Youth Apostolate is not well organized and does not take into consideration the reality of the youth's life.

The life of the Youth is intrinsically connected to the life of the Church. When one looks at the way the parish approaches the Youth apostolate and what the respondents of the interview said, it is clear that the parish most of the time does not have an appropriate approach to the Youth Ministry. With the traditional mentality that put different between generations, youths are always put at the second plan. Mr. Tehoul Séverin said that in his opinion, the parish is using the exclusive congregational approach and this does not make youths participate in the activities of the parish.³¹ 28% of the youths interviewed are of the view that the parish does not count them as part of the parishioners in most of the activities they would have loved to participate in.

The other point that can be mentioned is that there is a problem of methodology because the context of the youths of Guérin-kouka is different from the other realities one can find in other parishes. So, the method must be contextual as to meet the local realities of those involved. For Mr. Noël Pouyan, the way the youth ministry is being carried out is not adequate and does not respond to the real needs of the youths of the Parish.³² The goals of the youths are not in line with the method the pastoral agents use, so, this does not make effect on the life of the youth. To understand well this situation, the researcher asked the opinion of Mr. François Gbandi who is the catechist and also involved in the activities of the parish and he said that the youth ministry frankly speaking is left to the personal initiatives of the leaders, so there seems to be no appropriate method, there is lack of vision and with this, the goals of the youths will never be met in this Apostolate. He continued that the priests are less involved in the activities of the youth so they do not understand well their

³¹ Notes from the 3rd interview with Mr. Tehoul Séverin, 14/06/2021.

³² Mr. Noël Pouyan, the form Youths President of the Parish, 16/05/2021.

situations and so cannot use appropriate method and approach to make impact on their lives. Mr. Cyril Aklesso who is the diocesan youth coordinator said that in the diocese the Apostolate of youth is vibrant like in the other dioceses of Togo and that the only parishes that do the good work of youth apostolate are the parishes run by the Salesians because they understood youths and read the signs of time and are responding to the needs of the youths with adequate approach.³³

Conclusion

This chapter talks of the challenges of youths of the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes and from the analyses, one can say that there are many challenges faced by youths in the contemporary world and this is due to the orientation in the education and also the lack of professionalism and of planning and inadequate approach to Youth Apostolate, the popular negative attitude towards youths and the peer influences. This chapter presented the challenges of youth apostolate in the parish, so, in order to have a fruitful youth apostolate, the following chapter will present the teachings of the Church on youth apostolate.

³³ Notes from the interview with Fr. Epiphany B., the diocesan chaplain of Youths Apostolate.

Chapter III:

Church Teaching on Youth Apostolate

3.0. Introduction

This chapter deals with the biblical understanding of the youth apostolate, the teachings of the Church of the Apostolate of Youth, and their evangelization using social media. This theological reflection will evolve the documents of the Church, the apostolic exhortation, the encyclicals, and other documents to elaborate well on the position of the church on the evangelization of the Youth in the contemporary world and the effectiveness of the mass media in the Apostolate with youth.

3.1. Youth Evangelization from the Scriptures, the Tradition, and the Magisterium

The evangelization of the young population has always been one of the main preoccupations of the Church. The youth are the future of the Church, they are the insurance of the continuation of the faith.

3.1.1. From the Scriptures

The scriptures are the inspired Word of God and they always touch all the classes of the society. The Word of God is meant to transform both children, youths, and adults so that they may respond faithfully to the will of God.

3.1.1.1. From the First Testament (Old Testament)

Reading the Old Testament, one can notify that in the history of Israel, God used many of the young people to show His love and favour to the chosen nation. Youth were seen as the object of the presence of God's Mercy and favours to the people of Israel. Through the young people, God did many things for Israel, He taught them the right way and actions; the moral conduct in society and the world. God used the young people as His instrument of conversion or evangelization if one can say so to bring Israel closer to him. Looking at the story of Joseph as recorded in Genesis 41, one can say that God used the young Joseph to convert the whole family. In this passage, the faithfulness of Joseph and the fact that God did not forsake him are emphasized to bring the Israel people to understand that the just is always rewarded by God for his perseverance in life.

In the Old Testament, one can say that the youths are the guarantee of the covenant between God and his people. They are seen in many instances where they are chosen to carry out a particular mission among the people of God. In Genesis 32, one reads the choice of the young Jacob by God to carry out a mission and after being chosen, his name was changed to Israel as written in Genesis 32: 28-29. It is in this same line as already mentioned that Joseph who was the youngest was chosen among his brothers to save his family from famine and as it is said in chapter 46 of the book of Genesis, the adventures of Joseph have important consequences on the history of Israel.

The election of David, the Call of Jeremiah and so many other cases in the Old Testament shows that the young population is always at heart in the mission of God among His people. In the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, the prophet promises the king that God will destroy his enemies and this will be the sign that his oracle is a true one: the young woman has conceived and will bear a son whose name ... This, once again is a sign of the importance of the young in the salvific work of God. This child will bring the peace of God among the

people of God. Children and young people always played important role in the history of salvation in the Bible.

3.1.1.2. From the Second Testament (New Testament)

When one looks closely into the teachings of Jesus Christ, one can say that there is an important value given to the youth. The life of the youth is full of a bright future and many blessings. There is a particular interest regarding the evangelization of the youth. In the teachings of Jesus and also in the pastoral letters. St. Paul gave great responsibility to Timothy and taught him the good conduct of a good disciple of Christ. In 1Tim 4:12, Paul gives words of encouragement and strength to the young man put as the head of the community. The life of Jesus as a youth also was a full dedication to the work of God. As recorded in Luke 2: 41-52 young Jesus was found by his parents in the house of God teaching the elders.

To assure the continuation of the faith, the apostles and other disciples always involved the young ones in the pastoral work. In 1Jn 2:14, one can see that the presence of youths was at the heart of the evangelization work of John. Young people were encouraged to follow the commandments of God and live a good life of moral standard. In his letter to Titus, Paul advised him to encourage the youths to be more prudent in their lives (cf, Tit:2:6). One can say then that the youth apostolate has always been part of the evangelization work of the disciples of Christ. They are called to be of good reputations in the communities and learn from the elders the good way of practicing faith and having a good social life. In his first letter to Peter, he invites young people to be humble and respect the elders, he explained to them that by being humble and respectful to the elders, they are in good communion with God (cf, 1Pet:5:5-6).

In the sacred scriptures, several people were called to serve God in their youth; like David, Timothy, Daniel, Jeremiah, and many others. God has a purpose and plan for each

young person in life. So, young people do not have to wait until they are older to do God's will or the work of God. That is why the evangelization of Youth is important so that they can see that they are part of the work of God and must participate fully in it. The young person who follows God will avoid many mistakes throughout his/her life. God gives wisdom and understanding to young people who fear him and seek to know more about his word. The Bible is full of good teachings to help young people in all situations of life.

3.1.2. The Tradition and the Magisterium

In the line with what was taught by Jesus and the apostles, the Catholic Church also gives some teachings based on the signs of time. The Fathers of the Church always give guidelines for evangelization. With a special concern for the formation and evangelization of the young people in the contemporary world, the Church always organizes formations and teachings to help the youths to live their faith in the contemporary world. In the African continent, there are some encyclicals and apostolic and pastoral letters that are written to help in evangelization.

3.1.2.1. Ecclesia in Africa

Ecclesia in Africa is the first document of the African synod that took place in Rome under the convocation of St. John Paul II. It lasted from 10th April to 8th May 1994 and the theme was: "The church in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission toward the year 2000." So, the synod Fathers had many expectations regarding the evangelization work in the continent; to do a good evangelization work, the challenges need to be identified and in *Ecclesia in Africa*, it is clear that the bishops had in mind many things that needed to be done to improve the evangelization work in the continent. In the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, one reads: "The Bishops of Africa are faced with two fundamental questions. How must the Church carry out her evangelizing mission as the Year 2000

approaches? How can African Christians become ever more faithful witnesses to the Lord Jesus? To provide adequate responses to these questions the bishops, both before and during the Special Assembly, examined the major challenges that the ecclesial community in Africa must face today” (n° 46). With this in mind, it is clear that evangelization is an important and crucial preoccupation of the pastors of the Church in Africa. In this evangelization work, the target most of the time is the young population which is the future of the Church and also the Society at large. The Church must form the people of God to be good leaders in the society, the laity must be involved in the evangelization with responsibility and this is only possible with the formation of the young ones in the light of the Gospel. In its n° 54, the magisterium document says: The last question must be asked:

Has the Church in Africa sufficiently formed the lay faithful, enabling them to assume competently their civic responsibilities and to consider socio-political problems in the light of the Gospel and of faith in God? [...] Christians must be formed to live the social implications of the Gospel in such a way that their witness will become a prophetic challenge to whatever hinders the true good of the men and women of Africa and every other continent. (EA,54).

The formation has been of great importance for the evangelization of the continent; it is in this line that the Church as a family of God in Africa will grow. In this understanding, the synod said that the great and first role of evangelization in Africa is to build the family of God. The Pope emphasized the apostolate of the youth as the future of the Church in Africa and also in the world. He said a special care must be given to the youths. In n°93 of the document, one read: “The pastoral care of youth must clearly be a part of the overall pastoral plan of Dioceses and parishes so that young people will be enabled to discover very early on the value of the gift of self, an essential means for the person to reach maturity” (EA,93)

This pastoral care that the pope has mentioned must be implemented in the parish of Our Lady of Guérin-kouka so that young people may be well-formed and given special attention to help them face the challenges of contemporary life. The church must empower

the young people to be confident in themselves and to be autonomous, they must be formed to develop their society and their country. The pope said that the Church must work hard to restore the hope in the young people and help them to regain the confidence and trust they lost in their cultures, economies, and politics. “The economic situation of poverty has a particularly negative impact on the young. They embark on adult life with very little enthusiasm for a present riddled with frustrations and they look with still less hope to a future which to them seems sad and sombre” (EA115).

The Roman Pontiff also invited young people to build their future and one of the countries: “But at the same time I also wish to appeal to the youth: Dear young people, the Synod asks you to take in hand the development of your countries, to love the culture of your people, and to work for its renewal with fidelity to your cultural heritage, through a sharpening of your scientific and technical expertise, and above all through the witness of your Christian faith” (EA 115). This is the work the Apostolate of youths in Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka must do or incorporate in the pastoral work. Youths must be helped to gain that confidence and trust in themselves and also good impressions concerning their cultures, economies and then work hard to improve what needs to be improved.

3.1.2.2. *Africae Munus*

The Catholic Church in her work of promoting the Peace and Justice of God on earth does things in her evangelization work. Some documents have been written and published by the Church to help in the building of the peaceful and just World. One of them is the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Benedict XVI on the *Church in Africa* in service to justice, peace, and reconciliation in the continent. Pope Benedict XVI called all the African churches to work on many points to make the continent the Kingdom of God on earth. In the many points and plans, the Roman pontiff has mentioned in his document, there is a concern for the formation and evangelization of the young population in Africa.

He said that the African population is young and that this is the gift from God, so the leaders must help these youths to grow in the faith of the Church; the love of Christ must govern the relationship of the pastors with the young population, it is in this love that they will come to know Jesus Christ: “Young people should be loved, esteemed and respected. “Whatever their possible ambiguities, [they] have a profound longing for those genuine values which find their fullness in Christ. [...]If Christ is presented to young people as he is, they experience him as an answer that is convincing and they can accept his message, even when it is demanding and bears the mark of the Cross.” (AM 60).

In the pastoral work of the Church, the young population which is the future of the society must be formed to be involved in all the activities of the Society and of the Church. The Pope has been inspired by the Rule of Benedict said that particular attention should be given to the youth in the evangelization work: “...So we should make every effort to involve young people directly in the life of society and the Church, so that they do not fall prey to feelings of frustration and rejection in the face of their inability to shape their future, especially in those situations where young people are vulnerable due to lack of education, unemployment, political exploitation and various kinds of addiction.”(AM 62) the young people must be listened to and helped so that they may give their contribution to society by putting their talents at the service of the Society and the Church.

In the last part of the section that concerns youths, Pope Benedict XVI invited them to avoid falling into temptations of this contemporary world; the Holy father also encouraged the young Africans to place their trust in Jesus Christ as their master and Lord:

I encourage you to place Jesus Christ at the centre of your lives through prayer, but also through the study of sacred Scripture, frequent recourse to the sacraments, formation in the Church’s social teaching, and your active and enthusiastic participation in ecclesial groups and movements. Cultivate a yearning for fraternity, justice, and peace. The future is in the hands of those who find powerful reasons to live and to hope. If you want it, the future is in your hands, because the gifts that the Lord has bestowed upon each one of you, strengthened by your encounter with Christ, can bring genuine hope to the world (AM 63).

Here it is a call also to those in charge of the youth apostolate to guide and help them to develop that will to read the Word of God and also help them to understand and put into practice what they read. It is in this spirit that the young people will promote fraternity, justice, and peace in the society, in the country, in the continent, and in the world at large and this will give hope to all for a better future.

3.2. Social Media in Youth Evangelization

Within the Church's evangelization in the world, there is, of course, communication, which can be enhanced by the media, especially the mass media. Seeing in these vehicles the opportunity to supply the need to expand the scope of its message, Vatican II also produces the *Inter Mirifica* decree to help in the use of mass media in evangelization.

3.2.1. Ethics of Social Media

Social media as well all other things that one uses in life must be guided with wisdom and ethics to make it a good instrument for the person and also for the society. In the case of the internet, many ethics lessons are provided by the Catholic Church to help humanity use well the internet as the gift of God for the good of all. In the documents of the Church on social communications, there are always guidelines to help the society use well the internet with good moral behavior. In "the fundamental ethical principle is this: The human person and the human communities are the end and measure of the use of the media of social communication; communication should be by persons to persons for the integral development of persons".³⁴

Social media must promote solidarity and peace in the world, it must be truthful to society. Social media must be guided by moral laws to fulfill their mandate of bringing

³⁴ Ethics in Internet, pontifical council for social communications, N° 3.

people together in the same community of children of God. Whenever one used social media, he/she must ask this ethical question: “is whether this is contributing to authentic human development and helping individuals and peoples to be true to their transcendent destiny.”³⁵ Internet must not be used to manipulate, dominate or create divisions in society, but must help in the construction of a peaceful and united society governed by solidarity. Privacy and human dignity must always be put in the first place in any use of social media, reverence must be given to the human person who is the image of God. Social media must not hinder the freedom, dignity, and privacy of anybody in society. The moral law must always guide the use of social media as the teachings of the Church say; “all users of the internet are obliged to use it in an informed, disciplined way, for morally good purpose.”³⁶

3.2.2. Social Media and Evangelization

In her mission mandate, the Church is called to carry out the message of Christ to all the corners of the world. With the development of the world, the means and ways of communicating have improved and the Church in the modern world cannot preach the Good News without the use of social media. Social Media are the fastest and modern means of transmitting the message of Christ to the world.

3.2.2.1. The Teachings of the Church on Social Media

The Church recognizes that social media can help in the proclamation of the Word of God but this can also compromise evangelization. Despite still making restrictions and calling attention to the “right use” of these means, the Church promotes a change of position concerning the subject, giving more openness to its use, for the spread of the Word and the apostolate. The *Inter Mirifica* decree establishes World Social Communications Day to give

³⁵ Ethics in Internet, pontifical council for social communications, N° 1.

³⁶ Ethics in Internet, pontifical council for social communications, N°15.

more importance to the use of social communication in evangelization. “Moreover, that the varied apostolates of the Church with respect to the media of social communication may be strengthened effectively, each year in every diocese of the world, by the determination of the Bishops, there should be celebrated a day on which the faithful are instructed in their responsibilities in this regard.”³⁷ With this, the Church invites all the agents of evangelization to make use of the modern means of communication to proclaim the Word of God but this with respect and full responsibility to fulfill what is said in the Acts of Apostles: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and give you strength; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the world” (Ac 1: 8). Through the media, Catholics will be witnesses worldwide and can also expand the power and influence of evangelization and be more effective instruments in the contemporary world.

The Catholic Church has dedicated a full day to celebrate “the communication” and in addition to that special day, Vatican II invited all national secretariats to set up under the direction of a special Episcopate Commission, as well as its connection with an international Catholic Association, for the study and increase of the media in the service of the Church in the contemporary world. The Constitution *Dei Verbum* of the Second Vatican Council in its number 9, points out that, for a valid communication, it must be following the Sacred Tradition, the Sacred Scriptures, and the Magisterium of the Church for the simple fact that they are interconnected and united: “Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. [...]. Therefore, both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and

³⁷ Vatican II, *Inter Mirifica*, 4 December, 1964, #18.

venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence” (DV9). One of the initiatives of the Catholic Church present at the Second Vatican Council was precisely to change how to say its doctrine, without interfering in what to say. It was necessary to make his message more accessible and compatible with the contemporary world, maintaining Tradition. According to Pope Paul VI in his message on the 1974 World Day of Communication:

There is the need to set the contemporary vehicles of information and allied services along a line of development which will facilitate the diffusion of the Good News and create a favourable climate for the strengthening of concepts such as the dignity of the human person, justice, universal brotherhood, values which make it easier for a man to understand his true vocation and which at the same time open the way to a constructive dialogue with others and union with God.³⁸

Reading these words of the pope, one can identify that the pope put more emphasis on the essential role of the media which is to facilitate and not to create, nor mutilate concrete values and concepts which the Church is sent to establish in the world and in the hearts of all people.

The Church believes that its task involves employing the means of social communication to announce the Good News of salvation, and to teach people how to use the media properly as recommended by the Second Vatican Council, in 1963. The Catholic church believes that media if properly used, will contribute to the propagation and consolidation of the kingdom of God in our world today. Besides this, the Catholic Church strongly believes that along with traditional means such as witness of life, catechetics, personal contact, popular piety, the liturgy, and similar celebrations, the use of social media is now essential and inevitable evangelization and catechesis of our modern world. The Second Vatican Council’s decree on the means of social communication (*Inter Mirifica*) in 1963 clearly said that: “It is the Church’s birth right to use and own any of the media which are necessary and useful for the formation of Christians and the program of re-

³⁸ Pope Paul VI, *Social Communications and Evangelization in Today’s World*, Message of Word Communications Day 1974.

evangelization and new evangelization in the contemporary world and this must be properly used with the responsibility to bring salvation to humanity” (Cf IM 2). *Communio et Progressio* pointed out that modern media offer new ways of reaching people with the message of the Gospel in the easiest and fastest way; social communication is a gift from God and unites human beings to help them cooperate in the salvific plan of God (Cf CP 2). So, in all, one can say without any contradiction that the Church teaches that social communication is a good instrument for communication and evangelization but this must be used with full responsibility and ethics.

3.2.2.2. *The Impact of Social Media on Evangelization*

As it is stated in *Inter Mirifica*, “The Catholic Church since it was founded by Christ our Lord to bear salvation to all men and thus is obliged to preach the Gospel, considers it one of its duties to announce the Good News of salvation also with the help of the media of social communication and to instruct men in their proper use” (IM 3) This statement shows that social media have a positive impact on evangelization. With social media, the Church can reach many people at the same time. In the current situation of the World with the Covid-19 pandemic, one can see the usefulness of social media in the evangelization of the world. The majority of the youths who are the future of the Church and the society are connected and always use social media in their daily life. So, the Church can touch many of these young people through social media.

In *Africa Munus*, pope Benedict said that: “The Church needs to be increasingly present in the media so as to make them not only a tool for the spread of the Gospel but also for educating the African peoples to reconciliation in truth, and promotion of justice and peace” (A M 145). With this it is clear that the media have a great impact on the evangelization work of the church in all the aspects, they help in the preaching of the Word of God, the education of the people of God, the building of the unity, justice and peace in

the world. There is a great and positive thing on social media: “the new media have made it possible for many people to establish a relationship between faith and technology while creating opportunities for the Gospel to be spread to a greater part of the world and in a much faster way. With responsible use of the new media, the Church will not only continue to exist in the digital age but to proclaim the Gospel more effectively.”³⁹

3.2.2.3. *Advantages and disadvantages of social media in today’s world*

The document *Ethics on Internet states*: “The Internet is the latest and, in many respects, most powerful in a line of media telegraph, telephone, radio, television that for many people have progressively eliminated time and space as obstacles to communication during the last century and a half. It has enormous consequences for individuals, nations, and the world.”⁴⁰ This statement shows that social media have their advantages and also their disadvantages. It all depends on how one uses them. The advantages of social media depend on how it is used and for which purpose it is being used. There are many opportunities of advantage that are seen in the use of social communication: with social media, there is a building of community, there is the establishment of new relationships. In the document *Ethics in Communications*, the pontifical Council for social Communications said that the “internet lends itself equally well to active participation and passive absorption into a narcissistic, self-referential world of stimuli with near-narcotic effects. It can be used to break down the isolation of individuals and groups or to deepen it.”⁴¹ Social media can help in many pans such as economic whereby the advertisements and business are done

³⁹ Anne Kiragu, Beatrice N., Gladys O., Josette S., Teresa M., *New Media For Everyone*, Nairobi, Paulines publications Africa,2013, p53.

⁴⁰ *Ethics in Internet*, pontifical council for social communications, N° 2.

⁴¹ *Ethics in Internet*, pontifical council for social communications, N° 7.

through internet communications, it can also be used in the educational field like that is the case in the current moment in this pandemic situation. Internet is also used for religious work: evangelization is done through social media in this contemporary world. Social media can be used to build a good and united community in society: The Internet can make an enormously valuable contribution to human life. “It can foster prosperity and peace, intellectual and aesthetic growth, mutual understanding among peoples and nations on a global scale.”⁴²

Social media is a two edges sword: it has also the negative aspect if not well used or if the use is abused. The document of *the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church* stated that: “in the word of media the intrinsic difficulties of communications are often exacerbated by ideology, the desire for profit and political control, rivalry and conflicts between groups, and other social evils.”⁴³ With the internet today, many politicians can manipulate society, there are many scams in the world whereby many people with bad intentions steal from others. The internet affects also children and their education; they are distracted and there is more contact with social gadgets than with human beings. Society at large in many ways is losing the solidarity and also the communion and giving way to individualism and solitary life or society. In the book, titled: *New Media for Everyone*, the authors said that in the religious aspect the New Media can be evil by “ignoring or marginalizing religious ideas and experience, or by treating religion with contempt, or by favoring religious views that conform to secular tastes.”⁴⁴

⁴² Ethics in Internet, pontifical council for social communications, N° 18.

⁴³ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church*, N. 416.

⁴⁴ Anne Kiragu, Beatrice N., Gladys O., Josette S., Teresa M., *New Media For Everyone*, Nairobi, Paulines publications Africa, 2013, p 33.

3.3. Effects of Social Media on the Youths

Social media nowadays are part and parcel of the daily life of the youths. There is an interdependence of the youths on social media. many of them cannot stay a minute or so without touching their phone. Social media help a lot in the education and formation of the youths but at the same time, they have some effects or impact on their life and relationships.

3.3.1. Social Effect of Social Media

Social media are means by which the world has become a global village. Through social communications, youths can establish many relationships in their life. This is a good and great contribution of social media in the life of contemporary youths but as it is said no one can frier eggs without breaking them, so social media have their negative effects. They help in the building of communities and relationships but also bring division if not properly used. Social media help in education and human activities: social media are unavoidable in family communications, in the evangelization work in the Church, in the schools, and looking at the end product, one can say that the formation and education of the youths are different from the traditional education where the social media were not so used. The cultural understanding of the youths is different and this is due in most part to the use of social media.

There are many things that youths do not learn any more from the schools, churches, families but on the internet and most of the time what is given on the internet does not help the young population to reconcile the two worlds because what is on the internet might be from a different culture and context. This brings a conflict in the families and also in the society because of the knowledge of the youths. Social interactions are destroyed because of social media because many are most connected to their devices than to their neighbors. Here the community life is disrupted.

One can say that in the life of contemporary society, social media have facilitated many things; in Africa in general, it is noticed that many people used the mobile phone and as it is rightly said in “*New Media For everyone*”: “the mobile phone is one of the most powerful instruments of communication in Africa. Millions of people are connected to their families, friends, and employers/employees, through mobile phones. Even money can be transferred from one person to the other living far away, through mobile phone.”⁴⁵ Based on the negative effect of social media on society, one can say that the positive impact is more than the negative because social media made life easy for many in society today.

3.3.2. Psychological Impact of Social Media

Social media use can also negatively affect the psychological aspect of the users, it can distract them in their thoughts, disrupt their sleep and affect their plans and this brings frustrations and disappointments which lead slowly to depression. “Studies have observed links between high levels of social media use and depression or anxiety symptoms. A 2016 study of more than 450 teens found that greater social media use, night-time social media use, and emotional investment in social media, such as feeling upset when prevented from logging on, were each linked with worse sleep quality and higher levels of anxiety and depression.”⁴⁶ So, the intensive use of social media affects the psychology of the people and they lose the meaning of life. This brings social isolation instead of social unity and communion.

Human beings need face-to-face contact to be mentally healthy but with the depression caused by the use of social media, one can say without fear of contradiction that

⁴⁵ Anne Kiragu, Beatrice N., Gladys O., Josette S., Teresa M., *New Media For Everyone*, Nairobi, Paulines publications Africa, 2013, 47.

⁴⁶ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/tween-and-teen-health/in-depth/teens-and-social-media-use/art-20474437> consulted on 20/10/2021.

the psychological effect of social media on youths in the contemporary world. Social media do not help the youths to reduce their stress. Isolation is the other effect of social media and according to “a study at the University of Pennsylvania found that high usage of Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram *increases* rather decreases feelings of loneliness. Conversely, the study found that reducing social media usage can make you feel *less* lonely and isolated and improve your overall wellbeing.”⁴⁷ In short, it can be said that depression, anxiety, and isolation are the most common psychological effects of social media in the life of many especially the youths.

Conclusion

In conclusion, one can say that the teachings of the Church on social communication are of the moral and ethical values whereby the Church recognizes the importance of social communication in the evangelization and also calls the users to be more responsible and use them for the construction of the society and not its destruction. From this chapter, it is evident that social media is part of the daily life of society and especially the young people for the fact that these youths were educated in the world of technology and communication.

⁴⁷ <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/social-media-and-mental-health.htm> consulted on 24/10/2021.

Chapter IV

Pastoral Recommendation and Suggestions

4.0. Introduction

In this study, the focus has been on social media and Youth Apostolate and after the research done on the youth apostolate in the parish of Our Lady of Guérin-kouka, this chapter deals with pastoral recommendations in order to solve the challenges and problems discovered in the research regarding Youth Apostolate.

4.1. Setting a Proper Program for the Apostolate of Youths

For the good of the Apostolate, there must be organization and structures of the program and the qualification of the ministers in order to make the work fruitful and effective.

4.1.1. Framework of Youth Apostolate

The youth apostolate in the parish needs to be reorganized and set these goals, the research saw as important and fundamental for the effectivity of youth ministry as the United States Conference of Catholic bishops said: youth ministry must aim at these goals: “ To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today; to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith

community; to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.”⁴⁸ In the interviews conducted and the work with the youths ministers in the parish, the researcher was able to find out that in the program of the youth ministry of the parish, there are many elements which are lacking in order to make the apostolate effective and fruitful.

There is a need of a new framework in which the comprehensive approach as the United States Conference of Catholic bishops (USCCB) proposed: the youth ministry must use the comprehensive approach whereby many elements of social life are incorporated. In this approach, there is a diversity of programs, community wide programs and family centred programs for the other family; the use of new technology to facilitate communication in program development and implementation.⁴⁹ So, in line with this, the researcher recommends youth ministers of the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes to incorporate these important elements in the program of the ministry to make the apostolate more fruitful and effective. As the USCCB recommended to the church of North America, the researcher is of the view that the comprehensive framework of youth ministry can also be applicable to the youths of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka. The United States Conference of Catholic bishops said that the comprehensive approach: “will provide a framework to the Catholic community to respond to the need of young people and to involve young people in sharing their unique gifts with the larger community.”⁵⁰

The framework of comprehensive ministry is to be used in the Apostolate of Youths in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes because it takes a whole Church. The apostolate with youths must work in communion with the ministry of evangelization, the ministry of Catechesis, in the formation of the community life of the parish and of the family as the

⁴⁸ USCCB, *Reviewing the Vision. A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, pp. 9 - 18.

⁴⁹ USCCB, *Reviewing the Vision. A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, p. 25.

⁵⁰ USCCB, *Reviewing the Vision. A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, p. 26.

domestic church. The USCCB said that the youth ministry must work in order to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission and work of the Catholic faith community and this starts from home because: “young people experience the Catholic community of faith at home, in the parish (especially in youth ministry programs), in the Catholic School, and in other organizations serving youths.”⁵¹ with this it is clear that the youth ministry and family ministry must always work together and there must be a symbiotic relationship between the two. It is therefore a recommendation for the parish of Guérin-kouka to consider creating a good relationship between the pastoral groups in the parish and especially between the family ministry and youth ministry. The parish must be a community of faith where all are at home and in communion with each other in Jesus Christ. So, the parish “should be the place where [young people] are welcome, grow in Jesus Christ and minister side with the adult of the community. In the parish, young people should feel a sense of belonging and acceptance as full-fledged members of the community. Young people are more likely to gain a sense of identity in the community if they are regarded as full-fledged members of the community.”⁵² In the research it was seen that there is a conflict of generation in the parish and there is no real communion and communication between the elders and the young people of the parish, so in order to make the Apostolate of youths in the parish a place of spiritual growth and responsible disciple of Christ, the parish must work hard in order to make young people feel at home whenever they come to the parish as the community of faith.

The future of humanity is in the hands of the youth ministers because they are those forming the future generation and also as *Gaudium et Spes* said “... the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generation with reasons

⁵¹ USCCB, *Reviewing the Vision. A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, p. 11.

⁵² USCCB, *Reviewing the Vision. A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, p. 13.

for living and hoping.” (GS no 31) So, the ministers need to be formed well in order to build and educate well the future generation.

4.1.2. The Formation / Training of the Youth Ministers

It is said that you cannot give what you do not have. In this understanding, it is clear that for the youth ministers of the parish to give a good formation to the youths, they also need to undergo training in which they are empowered in order to help young people. Youth minister must be taught the goals on the apostolate of youths. Most of the time those who work with the youths in the parish are the diocesan seminarians who come for their pastoral year and also the sisters of Saint Catherine of Alexandra, there are no trained ministers of the parish who can take over this work alone if the seminarians and the sisters are not there in the future. So, the researcher gives the recommendation that there should be a good training of the youth or other christians in the parish to take this pastoral work seriously. The research recommends the formation that the Salesians of Don Bosco give in the diocese for the guidance and pastoral work with the youth.

Youth ministers need to be trained in order to: “To empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today; to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community; to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person.”⁵³

4.2. The Education of the Youths

It is often said that the youths are the leaders of tomorrow and that they are the strength of a community. Therefore, it is important to note that the education is what makes the leader. So, youths need to be formed, educated and taught in the line of human

⁵³ USCCB, Reviewing the Vision. *A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, pp 9 - 18.

relationship and the teachings of Christ. They are to follow Christ the Teachers who prepares them and gives them the graces they need in order to serve the mother Church and humanity.

4.2.1. Wholistic Education of Youth

Youth education in the Church is one that takes into consideration all the aspects of human life. The activities done in the Parish of Our Lady of Guérin-kouka must have the aim of building youths in all the aspects as members of the human society; It takes into consideration the human, spiritual as well as the moral education. In line with this, Mark H. Senter II, Wesley Black, Chap Clark, and Malan Nel have the view that “youth worker’s plans are aimed at building relationships and fellowships between the leaders and the youths, as well as among the youths themselves.”⁵⁴ They continued the argument that: “Beyond the fellowship and the trust-building, there has to be teaching and proclamation of the message of Christ.”⁵⁵ So, with this opinion, one can easily understand and say that the formation of youth in the Parish must be holistic. It was observed in the first chapter that this aspect still needs to be worked on in the Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes in order to impact the lives of youths to serve the Church in a more effective way.

The parish is called to educate youths and give them hope as it is clearly expressed in *Gaudium et Spes* N° 4 “At all time the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel... in the language intelligible to every generation responding to the ever-recurring questions that people ask especially about the meaning of life and how to relate to one another”.⁵⁶ Hence, the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka being part of the Catholic Church must implement this in the

⁵⁴ Senter II M. H., Black W., C. Chap and Nel M., *Four views of Youth Ministry and the Church*, p. 47.

⁵⁵ Senter II M. H., Black W., C. Chap and Nel M., *Four views of Youth Ministry and the Church*, p. 47.

⁵⁶ *Gaudium et Spes* N° 4.

apostolate with youths, like the mother Church, the parish must be concerned with the youths and their challenges in life. With Spiritual and Para spiritual activities and teachings, the parish can bring hope and Joy to the young people and help them to be good people in the society and dedicate themselves to the service of the Church. In the wholistic education of youth, *Gaudium et Spes* gives importance to the youth, in line with this, Elena Rastello and Gianni Rolandi are of the view that: *Gaudium et Spes* upholds the importance of intellect, truth and wisdom; the dignity of moral conscience and human freedom which the youth of today are searching for, so as to achieve stability in a challenging and demanding world. The issue of faith and active religious practice referring to Jesus Christ as the model per excellence are clearly drawn on board. Matters of responsibility and active participation in human history are emphasised while the universe and ecological questions are raised for the sake of harmony. The Church, which is the living, visible and also mystical body of Jesus Christ, is actively present in the world and it has to contribute to the wellbeing of all the people of God. The rites of passage of every culture have to evolve towards harmony and holiness leading to a humanity that is the family of God. Since humanity is the author of any culture, the difficulties and duties that may arise from it at any given time have to be faced divinely and scientifically for an appropriate and relevant action.⁵⁷

The education system of Togo is most of the time focused on the intellectual, economic, and human aspect and letting go or overlooks the spiritual aspect of the formation of the young people who are the future of the country. In the Youth Apostolate of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka, all the aspects of the education of youths as human beings and members of the society are to be taken into consideration in order to complement what is lacking in the school and Universities. The education of the youths is not to be done partially but holistically where the intellectual, psychological, moral, economic and spiritual aspects

⁵⁷ E. Rastello and G. Rolandi *Bringing the Church to Youth or Youth to the Church*. p. 18.

are included. So, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Guérin-kouka must incorporate this in the Youth Apostolate program and plan in order to make more impact on the society.

4.2.2. Youth Sexual and Moral Education

As it is seen a holistic education of youths, the Church gives an important attention to the formation of the future leaders. One of the challenges faced by youth apostolate in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-Kouka is the moral and sexual crises. In order to help the youths who are lost in the culture where the moral and sexual education is relative and destroyed by the misunderstanding of human right, the youth apostolate in the parish needs a reorganization in which the education must be the centre and the core element of the apostolate. With the responsibility of building good future leaders and members who can form a harmonious human future society in the future, the apostolate of youths must give special attention to the moral and sexual education of the youths.

In the Scriptures, it is clear that the education on sexual morality and general morality among the people of God is of great importance. Therefore, the education and formation of the youths in the parish must be centred on the word of God where the moral values are presented to them in order to help them conduct a good life of sexuality purity and good morality. The apostolate of youths must bring youths to the understanding of a moral and sexual life in line with the teachings of the Church, and this can be achieved through the presentation of the teaching of the Church in the meetings of the youths in the parish. This will help them understand that immorality and sexual immorality are contrary to the commandments of God; in this line, the Youth Ministry must work in order to give a good education to the youth and help them to live and observe well all the commandments of God in order to inherit the kingdom of God one day. The teachings on sexuality will help the youth in the: “understanding the Church’s teaching on sexual morality, understanding the

Church's positive view of sexuality as a gift from God, and understanding the importance of valuing chastity and sexual restraint."⁵⁸

In most African traditional societies, there are laid down rules guiding sexual behaviour, which are both universal and relative in view of cultural diversity. Sexuality is an ethical issue in traditional Africa and is transmitted throughout generation. So, the apostolate of youths in the parish must also take into consideration the moral codes of the culture and always give a reminder to the young people in line with the tradition which also teaches good conducts in sexuality. Since the education starts from the family, there must be a good collaboration between youths Apostolate and family ministry whereby the parents who are the first educators are formed in the line of the Church so that they may give the same education and formation to their children in the families; this will make the work of youth ministers easier.

Religion and morality are said to always go together and that they are inseparable because in a deep sense, morality is part of religion. In African religion and morality, one can see that there is always a connection and this is use to promote good conduct in the communities. In this line, Peter Kasenne said: "In any African society, religion plays an important role in people's conduct. It is the strongest force that unites people into community gives individuals a sense of identity."⁵⁹ The researcher recommends therefor that the african moral values also be taught to the youths in the parish so that the see the real meaning of their life conduct in the communion with the one of the communities and the society. In this sense, the apostolate of youths will make a great impact on the life of youths because it will be promoting also the african cultures which are now been ignored by many

⁵⁸ USCCB, *Reviewing the Vision. A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, p. 32.

⁵⁹ Peter Kasenene, *Religious Ethics in Africa*, p.18.

youths as it was noticed in the research. In the african religious values, there are many positive points on sexual morality: “sex is respected as a channel for procreation, a means to regain the immortality which was lost in the remote past. So, sex is of tremendous religious significance with taboos attached to it.”⁶⁰ By teaching all these things to the youths, the researcher believes that the moral life and sexual life of the youths in the parish will be of a great model and that both christian and cultural values will be promoted for the good conduct of the disciples of Christ.

4.2.3. Religious and Spiritual Education

Guérin-kouka is a town populated by Muslims and Christians and in terms of percentage, one can say that the Islamic religion has the higher percentage and this in one way or the other affect the religious and spiritual identity of the youth in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes. Due to the secularisation of the world and the educations youth receive in the schools and universities, they do not have that confidence to present their religious identity in public. It is observed that in schools, religious courses are removed in order to give respect to other religions or include them in the students’ body. This affects the youths especially those of the parish of Guérin-kouka because in this climate, many of the youths will grow and will not be able even to make a sign of the cross as a Catholic in public.

youth apostolate must restructure the formation programs in order to help in the spiritual education. In this Spiritual education, the youth minister must help them to relate well with themselves, with others in the society and with God their Creator. The formation on religious dialogue and also the interculturality in the context of religions must be part of the program so that the youths of the parish may live a good life as Christians who defend and respect other religions. With this formation, the youth will be rooted in the religious and

⁶⁰ Peter Kasenene, *Religious Ethics in Africa*, p. 57.

human values and then be able to evaluate the behaviour of other youths in the society in order to be influenced by good behaviour. It is with this formation that the youth will be able to assume their spiritual and religious identity in their lives without any fear or shame.

The ministry must be structured in a way to enable youths to take their faith with courage and own it so that they can see the religion as their personal thing which gives them their spiritual and religious identity. The youths' apostolate must focus on the holistic spirituality of the young people as described Mary Elizabeth Morre and Almeda M. Wright, EDS: "Youth Community Organizing (YCO) generally relates three key dimensions of Christian Spiritual formation: *Orthodoxis* ("right beliefs"), *Orthopraxis* ("right actions"), and *Orthokardia* ("right affections")."⁶¹ With this teaching system, youths will be well equipped to live their faith everywhere in their life without fear or shame.

The spiritual and religious education of youths in the parish can also be achieved by the ministry of prayer and worship as the USCCB recommended: "The Ministry of prayer and worship promotes the authentic participation of youths in liturgy, it attends to the diversity of cultures and ages in the assembly, it provides opportunities for creative prayer with adolescents in peer, family, and intergenerational setting."⁶² With this, the researcher thinks that the use of the ministry of prayer in the parish and the involvement of youths of the parish in that spiritual activity will help them grow in their spiritual life and also establish a good relationship in the families, groups and generations. In other words, this can solve the problem of the conflict of generations in the parish as it was seen in the research.

The apostolate of youth must be a moment of education whereby the young people create a good relationship with their Lord, to do so, the USCCB, said that "the story of the

⁶¹ M. E. Morre and A. M. Wright, EDS: "*Children, youth, and Spirituality in a Troubling world*" P. 162.

⁶² USCCB, Reviewing the Vision. *A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, pp. 44 – 47.

disciple of Emmaus should be a guiding image because it presents the relationship between young disciples and their Lord, a relationship characterized by presence, listening, faith sharing, and celebration.”⁶³ It is in this image that the young people will be able to take their responsibility in the Church and give their participation in the life of the parish, community and the Church. So, the image of the disciples of Emmaus brings young people to become missionaries in their tour to go and proclaim the resurrected Christ because “as Jesus sent out the Twelve, and the seventy-two to carry out the mission, today he sends out young people to proclaim the Good News and build the world that is more just, more peaceful and more respectful of human life and creation.”⁶⁴ So, the research is convinced that a good spiritual and religious education will produce dedicated youths in the parish and also missionaries for the Church and this will give new life to the Church because “the Church and the world need the faith, gifts, energy, and fresh ideas of young people.”⁶⁵

Conclusion

In conclusion, youth ministry must work hand in hand with the social media in order to reach many young people as many as possible. Youth ministry in the parish need some rearrangement in order to be more productive. If the parish of Our Lady of Guérin-kouka want to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in our world today; to draw young people to responsible participation in the life, mission, and work of the Catholic faith community; to foster the total personal and spiritual growth of each young person like United States Conference of Catholic bishops said, the framework of youth apostolate needs to be established.

⁶³ USCCB, Reviewing the Vision. *A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, p. 49.

⁶⁴ USCCB, Reviewing the Vision. *A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, p. 50.

⁶⁵ USCCB, Reviewing the Vision. *A framework for Catholic Youth Ministry*, p. 50.

General Conclusion

In this research entitled *Social Media as Means of Evangelization: A Case Study of Youths Apostolate in the Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka, Diocese of Kara-Togo*, the analysis and evaluation were done on the youth apostolate in order to see what is been done and what can be done in order to improve the participation of youths in the parish activities. In other words, the active participation on youths in the life of the parish, the good conducts of youths in the society and the use of social media for the evangelization among the youths were the central points and ideas of the study. The reason been that they are the future of the parish, of the church and of humanity.

The study was able to expose the reality on the ground when it comes to the apostolate of the youth in the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka. The focus is put on the social life of the youths, their participation in the parish and the impact of the youth apostolate in the social life of the youths. In the work, the researcher was able to point out some challenges that the youth are facing in life and how this affects their spiritual life. Most of the challenges are due to the lack of orientation and guide in the education and also lack of creativity in order to become more responsible in the society. The other challenges are brought by the modern life style which in some ways affect negatively the youths because they are not guided well by the apostolate of youth to make good and right choices in life.

The experience of the researcher with the youths of the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka has shown that many youth are more on social media compared to three years ago. It can be said that social media world is growing so fast and especially among the youth. In this contemporary world, there are so many new social media platforms and that almost all use them but, in this work, the researcher only limited to the use of the social media in the youth apostolate. So, one can say that the study is limited in the sense that it did not encompass all the generations and pastoral groups of the parish. This study focuses only on youth apostolate and only in the parish of our Lady of Lourdes of Guérin-kouka. There is a possibility of carrying out interesting research on the family ministry and the social media for example or also extend the research on the youth Apostolate but at the diocesan level. So, one can say that the other limitation of this research is that it is done only at the parish level and this may not really present all the realities of youth Apostolate in regard to the other parishes of the Diocese and of the country at large.

How can we use the social media to evangelize the remoted places of the parish and the Diocese? A new study might focus on reliability in the use of social media in the evangelization in the diocese of Kara. There is still a possibility of doing research on the sharing of faith among youths through social media. In the research it was also seen that the youths are losing the traditional values and social morality which are supposed to contribute to the understanding of the faith and also the inculturation. So, with what is done in this study, the future researchers will be able to carry out studies on the impact of the globalization on the inculturation.

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APPENDIX: Questionnaire

Tangaza University College

Dear Respondent,

I am a student at Tangaza University College, a constituent college of the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Nairobi, Kenya. I am conducting research on:

Social Media as means of Evangelization: A Case Study of Youth Apostolate of Our Lady of Lourdes' Catholic Church Parish, Guérin-kouka, in the Catholic diocese of Kara, Togo.

Your participation in this research through answering the questions in this questionnaire will be highly appreciated and helpful. I promise that any information shared in this questionnaire will be treated as confidential and for academic purposes. Therefore, I kindly request your cooperation and collaboration in this work. Please Kindly respond to the following questions by ticking or writing appropriately in the spaces provided. Below. You can also write more than one (1) answer where appropriate. Please do not write your name on the questionnaires' shirt.

1. What is your gender? Male Female

2. What is your age?

18-22 years 23-27 years

28-32 years 33years & above

3. Are you a baptised Catholic? Yes No

4. For how long have you been in this parish?

Below 5 years 5 -10 year 11 – 15 years 20 years and above

5. What is your level of education?

Master degree Bachelor degree Diploma

Others.....

6. Do you use computer? Yes No

7. Do you use smartphone? Yes No

8. Do you use internet? Yes No

9. If you answer yes to the above, how long have you been using internet?

Below 1 year 1-5 years 5-10 years 10 and above

10. What device do you use to access internet?

Smartphone computer tablet

11. Do you have account on the following platforms? (Please tick all that you have if on the list)

WhatsApp. Facebook Instagram

12. Which one do you prefer and use most? (Please chose only one)

WhatsApp Facebook Instagram

13. How many hours do you use for internet per day?

1-2 hours 3-5hours 6-10hours 10hours and above

WhatsApp,

Facebook

Instagram

14. According to you, which is the most preferred tool to communicate Church matters?

(Please tick one) Face book, Instagram, WhatsApp, Other (please specify)

.....

15. How much time do you spend on Facebook sharing matters of faith?

1-2 hours 3-5 hours 6-8hours 09 and above I don't use

16. How much time do you spend on WhatsApp sharing matters of faith?

1-2 hours 3-5 hours 6-8 hours 09 and above I don't use

17. How much time do you spend on Instagram sharing matters of faith?

1-2 hours 03-5 hours 6-8 hours 9 and above I don't use

18. How much time do you spend on other social media not named above sharing matters of faith?

01-2 hours 3-5 hours 6-8 hours 9 and above I don't use