

Intellectual Apostolate in Africa

What are the essential features of the intellectual apostolate in Africa?

Introduction

We learn from the 34th CG that the intellectual apostolate is an “intellectual dimension of the apostolate of the Jesuits” (d.16). But, the question about its content remains valid. For instance, when I was preparing this text, I asked the members of my community in Ottawa, for their understanding of the intellectual apostolate. We had an interesting debate. For some, the intellectual apostolate concerns only the Jesuits working in universities because of their teaching, research and publications. For others, the intellectual apostolate is about everything related to education, to university and to the socio-professional training centers. For others again, the intellectual apostolate is characterized by elitism.

We believe that, we must broaden our vision of things as did Father Arrupe in his letter on the intellectual apostolate (1976). He merely says, by intellectual apostolate, “I covered both the apostolate of intellectual activities and ministry to intellectuals. I think the pursuit of science, research, reflection, literature and art, but also, many tasks of training and education, publishing... And speaking of "intellectual", I think of thinkers, researchers, scholars, artists, too, but not least the professionals, whose activity is specifically intellectual, and youth who are engaged intellectually (...)”¹.

This explicit and integrative detail helps to assert that, the intellectual apostolate in Africa can be situated in all colleges, institutes of philosophy, theology and social centers, where research, theological reflections and publications are sometimes conducted in collaboration with non-Jesuits. Knowing that the characteristics of this apostolate vary from one apostolic field to another, from one country to another, from one continent to another, we decided to focus our discussion on how the Jesuits of Africa try, somehow, to exercise this apostolate in their different ministries. What are the defining qualities of the intellectual apostolate in Africa?

Our approach is to describe the African context, where the exercise of this apostolate is mainly related to social, cultural and political issues; to show how we exercise this apostolate and, finally, to identify some challenges in this ministry in the African continent. Let us start by the “composition of the milieu”, as we are taught by the Spiritual Exercises; and then, we will specify the place of the intellectual apostolate in Africa.

1. The Social and political context of the intellectual apostolate

The diversity of Africa does not allow us to make a general statement on the African continent. However, some challenges remain common to all African countries: the mismanagement of resources, political instability and social disorientation. The fate of the continent is clear: “Africa has practically become an irrelevant appendix, often forgotten and neglected” (*Ecclesia in Africa*, no. 40). In this context, education,

reflections, and social analysis of the major ethical issues related to the continent are challenges to the mission of the Church and the Society of Jesus in Africa.

But some positive changes are taking place. Politically, there is an awareness of African leaders of their responsibility to prevent and resolve conflicts. Also, the creation of the African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), has been considered as a sign of the willingness of the African leaders to lift Africa out of poverty and marginalization. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is, according to the *Instrumentum Laboris*, (2009), "a tool that Africa has developed to assess its efforts as well as the economics in a democratic culture", (No. 8).

In terms of religion, the undeniable support of religious leaders to projects promoting peace and justice, the fight against corruption is a heartening sign. Moreover, it is in these projects, that people are basically living a dialogue between Christians, Muslims, followers of traditional religion and others. To the question of theological reflection on inculturation, Benin theologian Alfonso Quenum observed some commendable efforts. He was pleased that, "we begin to realize that inculturation can not be reduced to dancing in Church and, it can no longer be an Africanism pittance or a time of collective emotional release. The joy and legitimacy cannot neglect the nobility of the sacred rights of interiority, which can permit to face the self"².

Given these positive developments, we do not delude ourselves, the challenges of Africa are many: poverty, the AIDS pandemic, political instability and various forms of oppression. The issues of the African Synod of 1994, sixteen years ago, must be brought back into the current context: "How could one proclaim Christ on that immense continent if one forgets, that this is one of the poorest regions of the world? How could anyone fail to consider the history of suffering of a land, where many nations are still struggling with hunger, war, racial and tribal tensions, political instability and the violation of human rights? All this constitutes a challenge for evangelization" (E.A, no.51), and a conducive environment for an intellectual apostolate, whose ultimate goal is to understand the roots of visible and invisible suffering of the people.

This is the context in which our Companions are working in Africa. The intellectual dimension of their ministries lies in the analysis of the cultural situation, in the reflection on the ethical issues and educational projects. It is a work of social analysis of unjust structures and an exploration of the practical requirement of divine compassion and solidarity. These scientific researches aim to release the old continent of all forms of oppression. If the term "praxis" is used to indicate the interaction between theory and practice in the service of human liberation; then, we can say that, the intellectual apostolate belongs to the Jesuit praxis as its cognitive dimension. It is an exercise of intelligence in the light of faith, hope and love.

2. Intellectual Apostolate in Context

In the African context we have presented, the intellectual apostolate is characterized by the diversity of cultures. The social work and the educational institutions of the Society

of Jesus in Africa are both results of research and analysis of societal problems and responses to social issues. They have a dimension that is both practical and intellectual, and their goal is to help the "souls" to find answers to their questions and their anguish, as the following examples will demonstrate:

2.1. Center of Research and Action for Peace (CERAP)

The Center for Research and Action for Peace (CERAP) embarked on an intellectual apostolate fundamentally linked to the socio-political and cultural context. It is in a cultural environment of a country territorially divided, in a climate of protracted civil war and a general atmosphere of insecurity, that CERAP was initiated in 2002, in the Ivory Coast. These circumstances were not harmful; rather, they were inevitably the soil, in which, it was relevant to do something with realism for the great divine service and for the greater universal good.

The socio-political context of West Africa requires a research and action for peace. Thus, CERAP appears as the place, where the Society of Jesus, in West Africa, educates men and women, *"the servants of the truth and the national common good, men and women of reflection and judgment; capable of bringing a new vision of living and freeing our people of its tensions and its regional, ethnocentric prejudices»*³.

2.2. Institute of Dignity and Human Rights (DIHR)

Facing issues of violence, insecurity and peace, the process of reflection and research entrusted CERAP a mission of restoring the sense of human dignity in Africa. This has been done by DIHR. It provides training to human rights, politics (conflict management) and economic (sustainable development). All these training programs are called "Governance and Good Governance". Since October 2004, DIHR organises university courses in partnership with the University of Cocody (Ivory Coast), culminating in a Graduate Diploma (DESS) in human rights and conflict management and peace. These courses require 300 hours of lectures, 4 months of internship and a seminar paper of 70 to 100 pages.

Since 2005, the Minister of Higher Education of the Ivory Coast has recognized DIHR as a Higher Institution of Education⁴. This status allows it to organize scientific symposiums and some international research programs, like the one led by the University of Leiden in (Belgium) in association with the North-western University (USA), CODESRIA universities and other partners of the South.

2.3. Social Centers in Africa and African Jesuit AIDS Network (AJAN)

Like the Social Center CEPAS (DRC), the Hakimani Center and the "Peace Studies" Program (Nairobi, Kenya), the Jesuit Institute in South Africa, the Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection (Zambia-Malawi), etc., we must recognize that, beyond the first educational mission, they conduct research, publications and organize discussions on relevant issues of the time, major social issues, peace, reconciliation, etc..

The African Jesuit AIDS Network also conducts reflections and researches through conferences, formal and informal meetings, publications on the AIDS pandemic and its impact on African society. The director of this project does not hesitate to encourage some African Jesuits to undertake research on issues related to the AIDS pandemic in Africa. He went further to sign a publishing contract in French with “*Les Éditions du CERAP*”. In this contract, “*Les Éditions du CERAP*” is responsible for publishing, advertising and dispatching the results of all research and papers within the field of AIDS pandemic.

Beyond the financial limits of this collaboration between AJAN and CERAP, the number of AJAN’s publications indicates that there is a highly intellectual apostolate. The mission of AJAN throughout this intellectual work is to demystify the stigma of AIDS in the society and to help people to have a more human approach to the disease.

2.4. The collaboration of Jesuit institutions with national universities

We also think that collaboration in scientific research and training among Jesuit institutions, national and private universities in Africa is a place where an intellectual apostolate can be done. We can give, as an example, the magnificent work done by our fellow Jesuits at the Social Science and Management department at the Catholic University of Yaounde- Cameroon. This department is "assigned" to the Company (Society) in West Africa, where Jesuits and lay people are working together for the training of Africans.

In other countries, some Jesuits are called to play a scientific role in the national universities. Courses and lectures are often given without a formal commitment on the part of the Company (Society). All these activities show that, the Jesuit collaboration in national and educational institutions remains a challenge to the intellectual apostolate in Africa.

2.5. Jesuits’ Publications in Africa

In addition to the review of African Assistancy, *Afrika Yetu*, the institutes of philosophy, theology and other learning centres, all have, at least, one journal that publishes scientific pastoral reflections on all aspects of life. These journals provide to Jesuits the opportunity to research and publish. Allow me to mention here that the various reviews: *Congo-Afrique*, *Telem*, *Débats – Courrier d’Afrique de l’Ouest*, *Hakimani: Jesuit Journal of Social Justice in Eastern Africa*, *Jesuit mission in Asia-Africa - Madagascar*, the newsletter of the Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection, and many others in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish media are research and reflection on social issues in Africa and worldwide. The purpose of these reviews is to provide their readers with analysis and thoughts on the major issues that cross the contemporary world. However, beyond the intentions and commendable productions, these journals, sometimes, experience a lifetime more or less longer because of a lack of financial and people

resources. There may be responsible and skilled staff for this work, but there are always difficulties of every kind.

Apart from these difficulties, the desire to publish among African Jesuits is like a spring that never dries up. A true collaboration with other researchers and publishers would face the challenge of publication. Allow me to mention, by way of example, the collaboration between "Les Éditions du CERAP" and the Institute of History, Art and African Archaeology (IHAA) in Abidjan. This Institute comprised mainly of historians of the Ivory Coast. They had project researches and publications on the history of their country. They believed that through history telling, it is possible to build a united community. CERAP was engaged in this project and it pledged not to collaborate in the research field, but in the publication of the results. This intellectual collaboration has produced more than five books devoted primarily to history, geography, anthropology and sociology of the Ivory Coast. These historians wanted to continue the project with Tele-production on the archaeological sites of the country. But, CERAP could not go further because of its resource limitations.

Concerning libraries and documentation centers, let us mention that libraries or documentation centers as places, where cultures and civilizations meet. In most African provinces, there are documentation centers open to researchers in all categories. Jesuit Libraries in Kinshasa, Nairobi, Abidjan and others enable Africans access to information that is necessary for research and reflection. As an example CERAP, through its Center of documentation, supports more than one thousand subscribers. But, there is still a need of providing more libraries.

2.6. Training Program and Educational Institute

The institutes of theology, of philosophy and social centers are places of culture, where "head and heart" are formed. Despite the commendable work already being done, we feel that, there is still a gap between the intellectual and the impact thereof on the actual lives of African people. It is for this reason, that our training institutions should become centers of culture where, according to Pascal, where "there is reason, there is also the heart."

In the second Synod of African Bishops, (from 4 to 25 October 2009), Professor Raymond Aloyse Ndiaye (Senegal) had challenged the bishops on the fact that, the ignorance of some African leaders was one of the causes of conflict in Africa: "If the conflict in Africa lasts so long, it is because they are run by politicians, without culture and without heart; they are concerned about the safeguard of their personal interests rather than promoting peace." This is how ignorance induces contempt for human rights, religious manipulation, and embezzlement of public funds, intolerance and violence. Basically, the challenge that exists, according to Professor Ndiaye, is the formation of African political leaders of tomorrow. This is also a challenge for the intellectual apostolate.

In order that the Jesuit educational institutions may meet their original purpose, they should not be limited to teaching, research and the accumulation of knowledge; they must train the heart. This area of training is the intellectual apostolate. It is a question of giving to men and women the core values of society, beyond mere scientific and technical knowledge. Thus, CERAP could create a School of Moral and Political Sciences of West Africa (ESMPAO), whose objective would be to train future managers and leaders responsible for the private business structures in Africa. This school would focus on a broad general education in the economic, social, political and historical domains.

Conclusion

Today, the universality of the Jesuit mission, as attested to by the 35th General Congregation, invites all the Jesuits who work in local or special circumstances, not to forget "the greater universal good" and act "like a universal body with a universal mission, while taking account of the radical diversity of their situations" (GC 35th, d.2 n.20). How do we live out this universality? How to support research projects and publications of the African Jesuit? How can we cooperate in projects of intellectual, human and spiritual education in Africa?

In summary, we believe and hope that, the Jesuit solidarity creates an international network of support for educational projects, research and publications. This network would include Jesuit scholars of all nationalities. This would be an apostolate of "borders", a meeting place between Africa and the rest of the world, the workplace of solidarity between Jesuits and, finally, a place of dialogue for world cultures.

Abstract

The intellectual apostolate in Africa can be situated in all colleges, institutes of philosophy, theology and social centers, where research, theological reflections and publications are sometimes conducted in collaboration with non-Jesuits. This dimension of our mission in Africa lies in the analysis of the cultural situation, in the reflection on the ethical issues and educational projects. It is a work of social analysis of unjust structures and an exploration of the practical requirement of divine compassion and solidarity. These scientific researches aim to release the old continent of all forms of oppression. It is an exercise of intelligence in the light of faith, hope and love.

In fact, the formation of Jesuits for the intellectual apostolate remains a priority in Africa. The Society spares no effort to support this ministry. But, we must recognize that in Africa, the shortage of staff and facilities cannot be hidden, especially, in the area of publications and scientific research. Even if the intellectual apostolate takes place gradually over the continent, it must, at first glance, face the challenge of training men and women capable of conducting discussions, research and analysis of the "signs of the times", in order to anticipate and prevent human and ecological disasters. It is the responsibility of the Major Superiors to prepare a "cultivated and selected core of people" for the intellectual apostolate in Africa.

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¹ ARRUPE Pedro, « L'apostolat intellectuel », dans *Écrits pour évangéliser*. Paris : Desclée de Brouwer, 1985, p.197-198. The translation is ours.

² Alphonse Quenum, « Jésus-Christ. Bonne Nouvelle pour l'Afrique » dans Joseph Ndi-Okalla et Mgr Antoine Ntalou, (éds.), *D'un synode africain à l'autre. Réception synodale et perspectives d'avenir : Église et société en Afrique*. Paris : Éditions Karthala, 2007, pp. 33-55. The translation is ours.

³ Conférence Épiscopale de Guinée, « Relire le sens d'un cheminement démocratique », décembre 1998, p. 38.

⁴ National status: (Order No. 489/MES/DESUP, October, 6, 2005).