



# African

## CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY:

*Memories And Mission For The 21st Century*

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

NOTRE DAME GLOBAL GATEWAY, ROME

VIA OSTILIA, 15

MARCH 22-25, 2017



UNIVERSITY OF  
NOTRE DAME

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March 22, 2017

Dear Colleague,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Notre Dame Global Gateway in Rome for our conference on "African Christian Theology: Memories and Mission for the 21st Century." This conference is designed to take stock of where we have been in African theology, to see what has been achieved, and to look ahead to where we are going.

During our all-too-brief time together, we will take up three major goals: 1) identifying pressing current questions in African society, church, and theology; 2) engendering intergenerational conversation within the African theological community; and 3) building bridges between the academy and the Church, both within Africa and with the global Church. To address these issues, we have brought together an impressive cross-section of African theologians, international scholars of religion and society, Church leaders, knowledgeable lay men and women in the Church, and other scholars from a broad spectrum of African societies and beyond to take a fresh look at African theology and its nature, methods, relationships, and contributions to African churches and societies.

This week, we gather in Rome in the hope that our efforts will have a universal appeal to the worldwide *Catholica*. This is to say, it is our hope that the present conference will contribute in some ways to clarifying what the issues are for theology and the Church in Africa and in what ways the African churches can continue to contribute to the clarification of the Faith from an African perspective—for Africa, for the rest of the world, and for the Church.

Finally, I would like to express my particular thanks for the support of many organizations and individuals whose generosity has made it possible for us to gather for this truly unique and exciting event, especially the Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture and Notre Dame International. A warm welcome to everyone joining us for this conference; I look forward to spending time in conversation and reflection with you in the days ahead!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paulinus I. Odozor, CSSp." with a large initial "P" and a flourish.

**Rev. Paulinus I. Odozor, CSSp, Th.D., S.T.D.**

*Associate Professor of Christian Ethics, the Theology of World Church, and African Studies; Fellow, Kellogg Institute of International Studies; Faculty Advisory Committee Member, Center for Ethics and Culture*

# Brief Introduction to the Conference

African Christian theology emerged as a formal branch of study in the Catholic Church in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century when several African priests, trained in Rome and various European universities, began to approach the Faith as “African Christians,” not merely the “consumers” of a Eurocentric understanding of the Christian Faith. One of the initial works to come out of this new movement, *Des Prêtres noirs s’interrogent*, attempted to respond to “the assumption that Africa represented a cultural and religious *tabula rasa* for the implantation of a Christian civilization from Europe.”<sup>1</sup> They insisted that African self-worth must be respected and that “room must be made for African genius and contribution in the establishment of the *Catholica*, not only among the peoples of Africa...but in the wider world as a whole.”<sup>2</sup>

African theology, like the African church, is no longer begging merely to be heard or to be recognized. Encouraged by the openings afforded all theologies in the Church by the Second Vatican Council and by the two African synods, as well as with the active encouragement of Popes Paul VI and St. John Paul II, African theology has come into its own and witnessed a great and unprecedented flowering. African theology has largely coalesced around the theme of inculturation and has gone on to probe, interrogate, and dialogue with realities both in and outside the African churches with regard to morality, worship, dogma, scripture, pastoral activities, evangelization, interreligious dialogue, etc. It has also continued to engage African societies at various levels: political, social, and economic.

Life in Africa is much more complex than in the days of *Des Prêtres noirs s’interrogent*, and African theology is now influenced by and open to concerns other than those of African Traditional Religion. Colonial independence, wars and violent conflicts in post-independence Africa, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the massive and continued impoverishment of a large section of African societies, the emergence of the internet and social media, the rise of fundamentalist and militant Islam, and the expansion of Pentecostalism have fundamentally altered the African landscape; similarly, globalization, the worldwide sexual revolution, and the simultaneous rise of the Church in the Southern Hemisphere and its contraction in many Western countries have changed the way the African church thinks about itself and its place in the world.

In 2003 and 2004, the University of Notre Dame in its various units—the Department of Theology, the Institute for Church Life, Notre Dame Student Government—and in collaboration with various groups outside the university—the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), the Symposium of the Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), the Conference of Women Religious of Nigeria, the Catholic Women’s Organization of Nigeria, the Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria, Spiritan International School of Theology, Enugu, and the Catholic Institute of West Africa—hosted a two-part conference (at Notre Dame and in Nigeria) in response to the publication of the pastoral letter of the USCCB titled “A Call to Solidarity with Africa.” This effort gave rise to a number of enduring initiatives in the African churches and in African theology. The present conference is, in a way, a continuation of that work begun more than a decade ago.

<sup>1</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture Upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa* (Cumbria, UK: Regnum Books, 1999), p. 349 <sup>2</sup> Bediako, *Theology and Identity*, p. 348.

# Wednesday, March 22, 2017

- 7:30 a.m.**                    **Mass**  
ROOM 410
- 9:00 a.m.**                    **Opening Prayer & Introductions**  
WALSH AULA  
  
**Francis Cardinal Arinze, Fr. Paulinus Odozor, CSSp, and J. Matthew Ashley**
- 9:15–10:15 a.m.**        **Session 1: African Theology: Past, Present, and Future**  
*Session Chair: J. Matthew Ashley (University of Notre Dame)*  
WALSH AULA  
  
**Fr. Bede Ukwuije, CSSp (Spiritan Generalate)**  
“African Catholic Theology, Then and Now: Issues, Challenges and Ongoing Concerns”  
  
**M. Shawn Copeland (Boston College)**  
“African Theology in the Diaspora: Its Contributions to Catholic & Christian Theology”
- 10:15–10:30 a.m.**        **Discussion**  
WALSH AULA
- 10:30–11:00 a.m.**        **Break**  
COURTYARD
- 11:00–11:45 a.m.**        **Session 2: African Theology: Foundations, Memories, and Contributions**  
*Session Chair: Ryan Madison (University of Notre Dame)*  
WALSH AULA  
  
**Bishop Tharcisse Tshibangu (Emeritus, Diocese of Mbuji-Mayi, Democratic Republic of Congo)**  
“Memories of the Emergence and Evolution of Theology in the Modern African Church”  
  
**Fr. James C. Okoye, CSSp (Duquesne University)**  
“Scriptural Memories of the Church in Africa: A Historical/Theological Journey into the Scriptural Revolution in Recent African Christianity”
- 11:45–12:00 p.m.**        **Discussion**  
WALSH AULA
- 12:00–2:00 p.m.**        **Lunch**

*Thursday, March 23, 2017*

- 2:00–3:00 p.m.**     **Session 3: Scripture in the African Church**  
*Session Chair: Fr. John Fogarty, CSSp (Spiritan Generalate)*  
WALSH AULA
- Fr. Paulin Poucota (Catholic University of Central Africa)**  
“Reading the Bible in African Contexts:  
Theologies of Scriptural Interpretation in Africa”
- Sr. Jerome Obiorah (University of Nigeria Nsukka)**  
“Scriptural Formation in the African Churches: How Can the African Church  
Ensure a Truly Well Versed People of the Book?”
- Sr. Josée Ngalula (Saint Eugène de Mazenod Institute)**  
“Scripture, Preaching and Catechesis in African Catholicism”
- 3:00–3:15 p.m.**     **Discussion**  
WALSH AULA
- 3:15–3:45 p.m.**     **Break**  
COURTYARD
- 3:45–4:55 p.m.**     **Session 4: African Theology: The Question of God**  
*Session Chair: Dianne Pinderhughes (University of Notre Dame)*  
WALSH AULA
- Fr. Charles Nyamiti (Catholic University of Eastern Africa)**  
“Christological Memories of the Church in Africa:  
The Question of God in African Theology”
- Fr. Bonaventure Ugwu, CSSp (Spiritan International School of Theology)**  
“The Holy Spirit in Current African Theology and Pastoral Practice:  
An Evaluation and a Critique”
- Fr. John Egbulefu, CCE (Pontifical Urban University)**  
“Proposals towards a New Understanding of the Trinity in Africa”
- 4:55–5:10 p.m.**     **Discussion**  
WALSH AULA
- 5:10 p.m.**            **Conference Adjourns for the Day**

- 7:30 a.m.**            **Mass**  
ROOM 410
- 9:00–9:45 a.m.**     **Session 5: Dogmatic Concerns in African Christianity**  
*Session Chair: Sr. Veronica Openibo, SHCJ (Society of the Holy Child Jesus Generalate)*  
WALSH AULA
- Fr. Leonard Santedi Kinkupu (Catholic University of Congo)**  
“Some Pressing Dogmatic Questions for African Theology Today”
- Archbishop Berthelemy Adoukonou (Pontifical Council for Culture)**  
“The Anthropological Question in African Theology Today”
- 9:45–10:00 a.m.**     **Discussion**  
WALSH AULA
- 10:00–10:30 a.m.**     **Break**  
COURTYARD
- 10:30–12:10 p.m.**     **Session 6: Pastoral Questions in the African Church**  
*Session Chair: Bishop Mathew Hassan Kukah (Diocese of Sokoto, Nigeria)*  
WALSH AULA
- John Cardinal Onaiyekan (Archdiocese of Abuja, Nigeria)**  
“Ten Pressing Pastoral Issues in the African Church, As I See Them”
- Laurent Cardinal Monsengwo (Archdiocese of Kinshasa,  
Democratic Republic of Congo)**  
“Pastors as Public Theologians: Faith, Politics, and Justice in the African Church”
- Archbishop Buti Thlagale (Archdiocese of Johannesburg, South Africa)**  
“What We Have Learned and What We Are Faced With:  
The Catholic Church in a Post-Apartheid South Africa”
- 12:10–12:25 p.m.**     **Discussion**  
WALSH AULA

*Friday, March 24, 2017*

**12:25–2:00 p.m. Lunch**

**2:00–2:50 p.m. Session 7: Liturgy and Liturgical Theology in the African Church**  
*Session Chair: Fr. Louis Lougen, OMI (Oblate Generalate)*  
WALSH AULA  
**Fr. Elochukwu Uzukwu, CSSp (Duquesne University)**  
“Liturgical Memories of Inculturation in the Church in Africa”  
**Fr. Francois Kabasele (Democritus University of Thrace)**  
“Towards an African Sacramental Theology”

**2:50–3:05 p.m. Discussion**  
WALSH AULA

**3:05–3:30 p.m. Break**  
COURTYARD

**3:30–4:45 p.m. Session 8: Moral Theology: The Question of Values in the African Church**  
*Session Chair: Nwando Achebe (Michigan State University)*  
WALSH AULA  
**Fr. Laurenti Magesa (Catholic University of East Africa/Hekima College)**  
“Ethical Memories of the Church in Africa: Moral Concerns and Inculturated Christian Response”  
**David Clairmont (University of Notre Dame)**  
“Religious Diversity and Christian Spirituality: Comparative Religious Ethics for a Global Church”  
**Fr. Stan Chu Ilo (DePaul University)**  
“Cultural Diversity and Theological Education in the African Church”

**4:45–5:00 p.m. Discussion**  
WALSH AULA

**5:00 p.m. Conference Adjourns for the Day**

**7:30 a.m. Mass**  
ROOM 410

**9:00–10:05 a.m. Session 9: The Church as Evangelizing Agent in Africa**  
*Session Chair: John Cavadini (University of Notre Dame)*  
WALSH AULA  
**Fr. Luke Ijezie (Catholic Institute of West Africa)**  
“Biblical Fundamentalism and Its Influence on Contemporary African Theology”  
**Obiageli Nzenwa (Independent Human Resources Consultant, Abuja)**  
“Fueling Our Faith and Reclaiming Our Faithful”  
**J. Matthew Ashley (University of Notre Dame)**  
“Ignatian Influence on the Spirituality of Pope Francis and Its Relevance to the Leadership Style in the Global Church”

**10:05–10:30 a.m. Discussion**  
WALSH AULA

**10:30–11:00 a.m. Break**  
COURTYARD

**11:00–12:15 p.m. Session 10: Family and Faith in Africa**  
*Session Chair: Fr. Emmanuel Katongole (University of Notre Dame)*  
WALSH AULA  
**Nontando Hadebe (St. Augustine College, South Africa)**  
“Memories of Women, Gender, and Theology in the African Church”  
**Aïcha Kola (School of Theology for Laymen, Douala)**  
“The Church and the African Family Today”  
**Fr. Paulinus Odozor, CSSp (University of Notre Dame)**  
“*Amoris Laetitia*: The Youth and the Question of Reception”

**12:15–12:30 p.m. Discussion**  
WALSH AULA

**12:30–2:00 p.m. Lunch**

## *Saturday, March 25*

- 2:00–3:05 p.m.**     **Session 11: African Christianity and Its Various Interlocutors (Part 1): Islam and African Traditional Religion**  
*Session Chair: Fr. Michael Perry, OFM (University of Notre Dame)*  
WALSH AULA  
**Pierre Diara (Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris/Catholic Institute of Paris)**  
“African Traditional Religion and Christianity in Dialogue”  
**Fr. Cosmas Ebo Sarbah (University of Ghana)**  
“Islam and Christianity in Dialogue in Africa”  
**Ebrahim Moosa (University of Notre Dame)**  
“Towards an Islamic Public Theology for the 21st Century”
- 3:05–3:20 p.m.**     **Discussion**  
WALSH AULA
- 3:20–3:45 p.m.**     **Break**  
COURTYARD
- 3:45–5:05 p.m.**     **Session 12: African Christianity and Its Various Interlocutors (Part 2)**  
*Session Chair: Obiageli Nzenwa (Independent Human Resources Consultant, Abuja)*  
WALSH AULA  
**Bishop Mathew Hassan Kukah (Diocese of Sokoto, Nigeria)**  
“Christianity and the World of Politics in Africa”  
**Nwando Achebe (Michigan State University)**  
“Historical Challenges to Christianity in Africa”  
**Bishop Godfrey Onah (Diocese of Nsukka, Nigeria)**  
“Current and Ongoing Intellectual Challenges to Christianity in Africa”
- 5:05–5:20 p.m.**     **Discussion**  
WALSH AULA
- 5:20 p.m.**             **Conference Adjourns for the Day**

- 7:30 a.m.**             **Mass**  
ROOM 410
- 9:00–11:45 a.m.**     **Session 13: The Social Situation and Some Current Issues in African Christianity**  
*Session Chair: M. Shawn Copeland (Boston College)*  
WALSH AULA  
**Peter Cardinal Turkson (Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development)**  
“The African Churches and the Social Question: Lessons from Catholic Social Teaching”  
**Fr. Raymond Aina, MSP (National Missionary Seminary, Nigeria)**  
“*Laudato Si* and the Environmental Challenge in Africa”  
**Fr. Ludovic Lado, SJ (Catholic University of Central Africa)**  
“African Pentecostalism in an Emerging World Church”  
**Fr. Michael Perry, OFM (Franciscan Generalate)**  
“Social Reconciliation and the Role of the Church in Africa: Reflections from Burundi, Eastern DRC, and South Sudan”  
**Dianne Pinderhughes (University of Notre Dame)**  
“Social Disorganization and Social Disintegration: Some Observations for Black Catholics”
- 11:45–12:00 p.m.**     **Discussion**  
WALSH AULA
- 12:00–1:00 p.m.**     **Lunch**
- 1:00–2:25 p.m.**     **Session 14: Faith and Culture in Contemporary Africa**  
*Session Chair: Fr. William Headley, CSSp (University of Notre Dame)*  
WALSH AULA  
**Teresia Hinga (Santa Clara University)**  
“African Cultures and the Christian Family Today”  
**Amy Servais (Mater Domini, Cape Town)**  
“Youth, Sexuality, and Relationships in Africa and the African Church”  
**Archbishop Fortunatus Nwachukwu (Apostolic Nunciature, Nicaragua)**  
“Ethnicity, Race, and Discriminations as Challenges to the African Christianity”
- 2:25–2:40 p.m.**     **Discussion**  
WALSH AULA









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