The Role of Pastoral Agents in Entrenching Good Governance for Peace and Justice in Nigeria

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Abstract

Good governance is a byproduct of the social sciences, yet it is one element that helps the Church to realize its objectives and it is at the heart of the Church's administration. What then is the Church's view of good governance? Good governance is closely linked to administration. And so, in the Church's administration, pastoral agents are expected to entrench good governance for peace and justice to reign in a nation like Nigeria. Bribery and corruption, ethnicity and religion, conflict and insecurity have militated against good governance in Nigeria. Against this backdrop, this paper prescribes that good governance can be entrenched by pastoral agents by denouncing injustice through prophetic preaching, mentoring young leaders, and leading by example.

Key Words: Administration, Good Governance, Justice, Pastoral Agents, Peace.

Introduction

Good governance as a concept is amorphous. It is amorphous because it has been employed by experts in politics and international relations to explain different things. Although experts have viewed the concept through varied spectrum, they seem to be unanimous in agreeing that good governance is the sure and veritable tool with which poverty can be eradicated, development can be sustained and justice and peace can be guaranteed. It is normal therefore to say that good governance would mean the use of all the administrative paraphernalia used by one who governs to ensure the equal distribution of the dividends of democracy. Apparently, good governance is a jargon that is hewn from the corpus of reflections of experts of political science, public administration and International relations. Considering the syntactic matrix from where the concept comes from, one would argue that there is nothing that is obviously ecclesiastical about it. But from a study of the Church's administrative machinery and its organizational structure, one could construe that good governance is at the heart of its administration. The Church, like every human social group that lives in history, organises and makes complex juridical norms for the wellbeing of all the faithful. The Church, like every other society, has an objective and to achieve this objective it ought to have the basic elements to do so. Thus, governance is one of such elements that help the Church realizes its objectives. The pastoral agent therefore is expected to be one who is familiar with the rudiments of administration and being one who promotes good governance in the Church, he stands a good chance to entrench it in both the spiritual and political spaces for the promotion of peace and justice. If the concept of good governance is the byproduct of reflections in the social sciences, what is the Church's view of governance?

Conceptual Framework

i. Good Governance

The concept of governance is closely linked to administration. Administration is derived from the Latin word *administratio* which means handling, administration, management, government etc. (J. Krukowski, 1988: 155–173). As a matter of fact, administration exists in every organized secular and religious society. The indispensability of administration in the society is succinctly captured thus:

Administration must exist in any organization set up for a defined purpose or objective. Whether you think of the Church, the army, a university, an industrial or business concern or a purely social organization, there has to be administration because each one consists of human beings brought together in a hierarchical set-up, making use of tools, equipment, human and material resources, all in the quest to attain the objective for which the organization is established. Thus, the Bishop in the Church, the field marshal in the army, the vice chancellor in the university, the managing director or a chairman of an industrial or business enterprise, each has under him hierarchy of subordinates, each with functions and responsibilities assigned for the accomplishment of the objective or purpose of the organization. This process requires planning, organization, command, co-ordination, and control. All these constitute administration (A. Adebayo, 2011:1).

Governance is also from the Latin *qubernum* which when loosely translated will mean "to take the helm". Paolo Gherri, while commenting on ecclesiastical governance as a responsibility averred: it is important to note that the juridico-institutional concept of governance itself is not being reduced to the immediate factors of dominio, power and authority but it tends to align itself to the idea of a "competent guide". The *qubernator* in fact, was the helmsman of the ship; the one who through his competence and resolution finds a way to adequately fortify the activities of the oarsmen, guiding the ship with care to the predetermined port/goal earmarked by the ship owner. The entire process of governance in the Church could be captured in one word: "discernment". Discernment as is employed here is not meant to express only its spiritual and psychological connotation; but to also articulate its other meaning which was propounded by the angelic doctor (Summa Theologicae 1 a 2 ae, III. 4). He describes discernment as 'simple discretio', which is a potential part of the virtue of prudence. This virtue of prudence helps the individual or grants the individual the habitual skill in judging, by which he discerns the divine will behind the common rules of Christian living. This process of discernment, with its focus on God's action in life and man's appropriate response to that action, allows an individual to become more aware of the elements involved in personal decision making (P. Gherri, 91-92). The Competent Authority is expected to thoroughly weigh every pastoral initiative aimed at bettering the life of the faithful before its introduction in the scheme of things in the community of believers. Naturally, when an administrator governs the people entrusted to his care, he will of course create the enabling environment for the enjoyment of the goods the society and the church can offer. It is the cardinal role which leadership plays that goes with the adage - 'an army of sheep led by a lion can conquer an army of lions led by a sheep.' Leadership matters. Therefore, the word "good" in 'good governance' will mean the proper exercise of authority that will lead to the attainment of public good.

ii. Pastoral Agent

A pastoral agent could be a priest or lay person depending on the context in which the concept is being used. Pastoral agents are basically those men and women who in the name of the church cater for the spiritual needs of the faithful. It is important to stress that it is not only priests that cater for spiritual needs. There are so many lay persons who are trained and who have been given the mandate to offer services that are oriented towards the satisfaction of the spiritual and emotional needs of the people of God. It should be noted that for one to be an effective pastoral agent, one is required to have some training in management because the lack of it can create administrative gridlock on the pastoral field. For the purpose of this work however, by pastoral agent, we will be referring to the ordained clergy who by the virtue of his ordination has received the faculty to preach the word, celebrate the sacraments and govern the juridic persons entrusted to his care.

The Bane of Good Governance in Nigeria

Since she gained independence in October 1960, Nigeria has grappled with the problem of governance. Despite the goodwill of all those that have had the privilege of governing our

nation, we cannot claim to have gotten it right as far as good governance is concerned. This is due probably to the lack of synergy between the helmsman and oarsmen. It is usually the case that at the helms of affair you may have a patriot whose thoughts and desires revolve around the repositioning of the nation and making it stand tall among the comity of nations. But if he surrounds himself with unpatriotic lieutenants whose overriding concern is the appropriation of the public good to themselves at the expense of the nation, you can be sure of having anything but the dividend of good governance.

It is really sad to observe that we have had some leaders who had good intention for Nigeria but had allowed themselves to be surrounded by politicians who, by their indulgence in traits, have negated their God given roles. The leadership of the nation which was mostly manned by political juggernauts from the north has been selfish, self-centered and impervious to reason. The incompetence of these leaders and their selfishness have created good grounds on which sprout corruption, ethnicity, inefficiency, lack of transparency and conflicts which form complete recipes that throw a clog in the wheels of good governance in Nigeria.

Bribery and Corruption

In general terms, corruption is the use or the abuse of public office to achieve private goals. It is a phenomenon that Bayart (1993: 514) described with the phrase "la politique du ventre," that is, the politics of the stomach. It is actually a broad term that is used to describe a lot of illicit practices that range from cutting corners, short-circuiting, law enforcement agents' extortion, kickbacks, fraud, judicial partiality and so forth.

Nigeria as a nation is blessed with rich human and natural resources and extraordinary opportunities for progress and prosperity but has been held down by the greed, selfishness and nepotism of her leaders and peoples (E.F. Kazah, 2018: 197). The Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) in a communiqué it issued on October 1, 1960 to mark the national independence, alerted the leaders of the fledgling nation of the dangers of bribery and corruption. It called on the citizenry to adopt personal and social attitude geared towards changing the society in which impersonal service and money economy are gradually becoming dominant indices. The Conference stated:

Bribery disrupts the order of justice. It sins against commutative justice by the wrongful appropriation of wealth. It sins against distributive justice and unfair distribution of benefits. Bribery pervades our society, in the sense that at all levels and in every department bribes are given and taken. This issue is serious and urgent. This issue becomes more serious when we see Christians take bribe and yet frequent the Sacraments as if they were free of guilt (CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA, 2015: 4).

The Bishops have urged those who give and take bribes, especially government officials who use their offices for the acquisition of personal gratification, to desist from such ungodly acts; because in the long run, the poor and the defenseless are those mostly hit by the unbridled greed that deadens the conscience of perpetrators of corruption at different levels (E.F. Kazah, 2018: 197).

The virus of bribery and corruption does not only infect those in public offices but also the ordinary citizens who are at the lowest echelon and margins of the social strata. Hence, nobody is completely immune from this cankerworm:

The messenger who takes a two naira bribe from an applicant; the driver who pinches from petrol money entrusted to him; the nurse who extorts unneeded provisions from patients – each would embezzle millions if they had their hands on the nation's treasury. High handedness, oppression and misuse of authority exist even in low places: the tradesman with his apprentices; the warder with the convict

and the detainee, the house wife with her housemaid (CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA, 2015: 73).

Where corruption thrives, good governance is stifled. Thus, we are duty bound to embark on the purification of reason and the formation of ethics that will lead to a sustainable pursuit of justice and its application in the polity for the good of all.

Ethnicity and Religion

The ammunition of ethnicity and religion are the manipulative tools in the hands of those who control the levers of powers in Nigeria, most often to suit specific interest (O. Adeniyi, 2017: 3). The concern of ethnicity or better still ethno-centricism can be put in perspective in the construct; it was there on the beach even before the tide came. The Nigerian federation is composed of over 400 ethnic nationalities whose consent was not sought before they were lumped together by the colonialists. The fundamental flaw of the lumping together of these ethnic nationalities is that they have very striking differences that range from languages, cultures, traditions and even religion which were not factored in crafting the Nigerian State.

Expectedly, the politics and governance of the Nigerian state continue to be rudely punctuated by very disturbing ethnic and ethnic related crises that threaten its continued existence as a nation. It is disturbing when one places the rate at which ethnicity is manipulated side by side the visions of our founding fathers who were drawn from different ethnic nationalities and religion but have learnt to tolerate one another in order to build a nation where justice, love and peace shall reign. But who fuels the ethnic crisis? The politicians, especially those who have access to the corridors of power, in order to remain relevant, have employed the principle of divide and rule to further widen the chasm between these ethnic nationalities in order to continue to plunder the national cake with reckless abandon without a challenge. We live in a nation where ethnic considerations are put ahead of merit and national interest. A glimpse at our ministerial lists, service chiefs and directors in certain parastatals will eloquently convince you that ethnicity is indeed the recipe that gives ill equipped and clueless people the ticket to pontificate over the future of our nation.

Interethnic competition for power and scarce resources of the nation has pitched brothers against brothers. The competition is characterized by inter-ethnic discrimination in jobs, housing, admission into higher institutions, scholarships and distribution of welfare of services. How can a nation enjoy the proceeds of good governance when merit is sacrificed on the altar of ethnicity? Patrick Lock Otieno Lumumba in one of his speeches entitled: "Blood of Ethnicity is thicker than that of Christ", said: we live in a country where we profess the blood of Christ but in truth, the blood of ethnicity is thicker than the blood of Christ, because when the chips are down, it is our ethnicity that counts not our christianness." The Kenyan lawyer calls ethnicity, one-of-us syndrome. Today, there are pastoral agents who promote ethnicity in the Church. This division along ethnic line becomes prominent when they organize planting, harvest and bazaars. At such moments, the Church is divided between the St. Jude Igbo and Ss. Peter and Paul Idoma. Yes, some pastoral agents are guilty of promoting ethnicity! It is disheartening to see members of the Body of Christ being constantly at war over party affiliation, over appointment of Bishops and posting of priests, over location of local government headquarters, over contracts, over sharing of loot and the list will go on (M.H. Kukah, 2007: 32). If we are divided along ethnic lines in the Church and if the pastoral agents who by their calling are expected to mend clannish and ethnic cracks in both the Church and the society are the ones who fuel and sponsor them; how can we enjoy the peace and justice that comes with good governance?

An average Nigerian is very religious. The Politicians now take advantage of the religious sentiment of the citizens to politically exploit them. They use religion as an instrument to oppress and deceive unsuspecting citizens. The great historian, Yusuf Bala Usman, a man

ahead of his time, spoke of manipulation of religion thesis far back in the 1980s, where leaders maneuver religion for selfish gains. Lumumba called manipulated religion the refuge of scoundrels in Africa. When religion is used as an instrument to clinch authority, it is obvious that good governance will only remain a dream that remains in the mind.

Conflict and Insecurity

The odds were stacked against President GoodLuck Ebele Jonathan when he started treating anybody within the ranks of his party, PDP, who had opposing views as political enemies. The last straw that broke the camel's back, as far as his presidency was concerned, was some of his administrative gaffe that courted very scathing criticisms from many quarters.

So, when Gen. Muhammadu Buhari of APC started his presidential campaign, using the "change" slogan, he captivated the citizens. He was seen as the messiah who has the magic wand to fix all the problems that bedeviled Nigeria. PMB has made so many promises that endeared him to the electorate. These promises include, five million jobs for the Nigerian youths, one dollar to one naira exchange rate, fight against corruption and insecurity, just to mention but a few. Today, we are already into his second term yet the statistics have shown that the Government of PMB has failed most Nigerians. The Boko Haram that PMB's Government has for the umpteenth time declared through its spokesperson as being technically defeated is still technically destroying people's lives and property in the northeastern Nigeria. While we are trying to brave the wanton destruction of lives and property by Boko Haram, we just woke up like from a dreamless slumber to the reality of Fulani herdsmen terrorists group. This group is considered one of the deadliest terrorists groups not only in the West African sub region but also in the world at large.

In the midst of the insecurity challenge that descends on our nation like a black pall, the citizens, having not a better disposition to the happenstance that portends gloom have become cynical, abhorrent to the status quo, disobedient, critical and at times rebellious. The height of the citizen's frustration in terms of the security challenges in Nigeria was summarized in the words of Gen Theophilus Danjuma: "You must rise to protect yourselves from these people, if you depend on the armed forces for protection, you will all die one by one. The ethnic cleansing must stop now, otherwise, Somalia will be a child's play. I ask everyone of you to be on the alert and defend your country, defend your territory, defend your state because you have nowhere else to go. The armed forces are not neutral, they are conniving with the armed bandits that are killing people". Almost every song, every piece of art that is produced in Nigeria today has the signature of the depth of the citizens' frustration. The annoyance and resentment of some citizens against the government has reached its crescendo because it seems that at the helm we have people who seem to lack the intellectual and managerial wherewithal to stem the tide of the ugly trend that is threatening to undermine our corporate existence as a nation. Some are already crying, "bring back our GEJ". Some are with the opinion that the PMB's government, at least from its body language, seems to run out of options on the best way to address the security situation in the nation.

The incompetence of our political leaders, the incessant decimation of innocent citizens by the terrorists groups that ply their unholy and acrimonious trade in Nigeria has stirred a loud cry of *perestroika* from many quarters. Many have called for the reinvigoration of the dreams of the founding fathers of our nation. There is almost a unanimous cry from across board that incessantly calls and without any sign of abetment for the obliteration of the administrative inefficiency that seems to characterize the art of governance in Nigeria.

Some have become so frustrated that they prefer to take the deadly journey to Europe. They are not afraid to go through Libya where they risk being used as source of collecting essential organs that are in high demand in the pharmaceutical world; nor the highly risky voyage across the Mediterranean sea on inflammable boats that most often than not capsize before they

make it across. Some of these Nigerians, who, sometimes out of frustration, have decided to exit from the nation have piqued: "we prefer to die trying to get to Europe than to submit ourselves to death in the cold hands of Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen, kidnap and hunger".

The lack of security makes the citizens to naturally become suspicious of every move employed by those who wield the staff of authority in stemming the tide conflicts and chaos. The moment mutual suspiciousness is created between the leaders and the led, you can be sure that public good that characterizes good governance would not be guaranteed.

Entrenching Good Governance by Pastoral Agents

A Priest (Pastoral Agent) by "accepting ordination, he has chosen a state of life that is dedicated to the service of God and humanity through the Church. By choosing this state of life he becomes set apart and must strive to live a life that is in accordance with his chosen state, namely, living a simple lifestyle and avoiding anything that smacks of worldliness, extravagance, vanity and excessive luxury (Can 282 §2.)" (CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF NIGERIA, 20). In a consumerist world where the pursuit for material things is the order of the day and the culture of being a virtuous administrator is almost inexistent, the Priest is not only required to be eloquent and transparent but also accountable. It is very clear that from the nature of his training the pastoral agent is called to be everything for the people entrusted to his care and is called to guarantee the faithful access to the spiritual and temporal goods. How can a pastoral agent who by the standard of many is expected to be circumscribed to the rectory and mission territory be relevant in entrenching good governance in Nigeria? The pastoral agent can contribute his quota in entrenching good governance in many ways which include:

Denouncing Injustice through Prophetic Preaching

During the pre-new testament era, the wealth of some kings made them become despotic and erratic in the management of both people and property; and they either forced the people to till the land without remuneration or they even confiscated the parcel of land belonging to the poor and the defenseless. Hence, the poor were subjected to cruelty and injustice. A precious insight into the everyday life of the time is afforded by 1 Kings 21, the story of Naboth, which was included in the Bible first because it supported the author's conviction that Ahab (874-853) was a bad ruler. The story is valuable to show for instance the importance set on private and family property by Israelites, as well as the restrictions imposed by custom on even the will of the king, who in this instance was shown a way to circumvent them by his ruthless foreign wife, Jezebel. The insatiable desire of the high and mighty to acquire goods at the expense of the poor has rendered many widows and orphans (cf. 1 Kings 17, 10-16). This was the kind of background that informed the Old Testament prophets' resolve to denounce the rulers and the wealthy because, the offices and the wealth they held were given to them in trust to enhance the welfare of the downtrodden and the poor. The megalomaniac attitude of the rich however has deadened their conscience and made them insensitive to the plights of many. The prophets' role then was not strictly tied to foretelling the future but it was inclined more to forthtelling the presence. As such, all that they have to say is based on the realities around them, and on that basis, they warn their people. Today, the sense of urgency is basically the same: Can today's priests sufficiently analyze the present and warn the people about tomorrow? All that the priest needs to do is to speak the truth in a society that seems to have phobia for anything that looks like truth. He needs to speak the truth that is capable of pricking the conscience of corrupt politicians whose major preoccupation is scheming the best way to loot the national treasury. The pastoral agent needs to speak the truth that is aimed at exposing the merchant of violence and insecurity who have found in Nigeria's chaotic administrative situation a fertile ground to build stalls for selling their products. If a pastoral agent seeks to profitably exercise his priestly role, he must be knowledgeable about the history, politics, culture and dreams of his people and nation.

A pastoral agent must bring to bare all his philosophical and theological training to fight corruption, injustice and insecurity to a standstill. There may be attempts on his life but these should not deter, debar, derail or divert him from his assumed focus or imbue him with timidity or cause him to betray the truth. He must hearken to the exhortation Oscar Romero as preached in one of his heart piercing homilies: "…let us not be afraid to stand alone if it is in honor of truth. Let us rather be afraid of being demagogues. If we don't speak the truth to the people, we commit the worst sins. To betray the truth is to betray the people, seeking lies that deceive the people...." When pastoral agents exercise their prophetic role well they will not only inspire many to join politics in order to sanitize it but they will succeed in holding the public office holders accountable.

Mentoring Young Leaders

The pastoral agent by the virtue of his calling tends to have a lot of influence on the young. Most people around the mission territory see him as a beacon of light that precedes them to lead them to an extra ordinary experience of joy, love and peace. Since the pastoral agent has such a grip on the young, he may sample from among the young men and women of his mission territory, those who have flair for politics and leadership and mentor them into becoming studded leaders that can positively transform the art of governance in our nation.

In order to mentor the young leaders, pastoral agents may take a cue from John Bosco who spent his life mentoring young people. John Bosco's ministry to the young came to the limelight in the 1840s in the slums of Turin, Italy. He cringed at how poverty, starvation and child's labour decimated the population, especially the young. The young had lost hope in the government and had resigned to fate. With his heart full of trust in God and divine providence and an empty pocket, he started the famous "oratory;" a term which to his mind suggests prayer and organized recreation. Through his ministry, most members of his "rugged boys" grew up to become influential people in the Italian Christian Democratic Party that facilitated the ouster of fascism in Italy. They fought for peace in the nation and for justice for the downtrodden and those on the fringe of the society. There are so many youths that are losing it because of the lack of meaning in life in Nigeria. Pastoral agents have the responsibility of giving them back hope and dignity so that armed with these; they will launch themselves into mainstream politics, a domain that requires urgent purgation.

Leading by Example

Pastoral agents must be honest in the discharge of their duties. The work of pastoral agents is not strictly confined to the breaking of the Word and the dispensation of the sacraments. Pastoral agents do not need to be reminded that being transparent in their works and their faithful witness to the love of Christ will enable them to imbue public institutions with a Christian spirit (Apostolorum Successores, 195). Mother Teresa of Calcuta once said: "Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway." It is not charitable for a pastoral agent to give the people any reason to begin to suspect him when it comes to the administration of the ecclesiastical goods entrusted to his care. He must work hard to resist the temptation that will lead to the hooding of financial information which in the long run may greatly prevent the parish consulting bodies from accessing and accurately assessing important financial information that is necessary for growth. Any dishonest transaction can potentially create an environment of fraud, diversion of ecclesiastical goods for personal use, making a mockery of the Church's tradition which insists on accountability and transparency, making the people lose confidence. When a pastoral agent show signs that he is an astute administrator, he can effortlessly influence the members of his community to begin to lead a life that reflects that which he transmits to them. The virtues they learn from him will help them in no great measure to give everyone his or her due and to ensure the entrenchment of peace in the polity.

Conclusion

Pastoral agents have a crucial role to play in entrenching good governance for justice and peace in our nation. The bulk of the work does not depend on what we say but on what we do as individuals. Because of our calling, we are ostentatious; we are naturally placed on a pedestal where people see us. We must be seen governing the juridic persons and the people of God entrusted to our care with love. When we strive towards being selfless and committed in the discharge of our duties we can naturally influence others to replicate the same wherever they find themselves.

Strenuous effort should be made by pastoral agents to preach peace to their flock. We should use every channel of the mass media, both print and electronic, to openly denounce the ills that characterize bad governance. We should not only educate people but we should also get them involve in tackling some of the issues that threaten the flourishing of public good in our nation.

In brief, the core of governance and how to entrench this governance in Nigeria, from the pastoral point of view, is what this paper has been about. The logic for this is very simple; it is proper governance that ensures justice. St. Augustine captures it well when he asks, "in the absence of justice, what is sovereignty but organized robbery?" It is justice as ensured in good governance that makes administration worth its name. Once there is justice, peace is sure to follow. For peace and justice are sides of the same coin. What this means is that, only justice ensures peace. Allen White cautions: peace without justice is tyranny. Tyranny, as is obvious, is a form of maladministration. The call to us therefore, as pastoral agents, it is to go out there and make men and women disciples of good governance. Only then can we be building a kingdom of justice and peace on earth.

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