

## **Beatification of Paul VI: An Impetus for the Church in Uganda to Deepen its Commitment to Unity**

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### **Abstract**

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As Uganda celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its Martyrs, it also celebrates the Beatification of Paul VI, the pontiff who canonized them. This same year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism also issued by Paul VI. This year as well, marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Paul VI's inaugural encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam* in which he insisted on dialogue as a vital aspect of the Church's mission. This multiple celebration of great events cannot just coincide without any lesson left to the Church in Uganda. If reflected on in the lens of faith, it can be analyzed like this: Blessed Pope Paul VI, the first Pope to set his foot in Uganda, in 1969, made Uganda visible in the universal Catholic Church as he himself expressed it, "You are greeted by the entire Catholic Church through the authorized voice of its humble voice."<sup>2</sup>Canonizing its 22 young men as saints, whose 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is celebrated today, he confirmed the maturity of faith of the Church in Uganda. What about the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Ecclesiam Suam*? This is as if is a living voice of Blessed Paul VI calling on the Church in Uganda though looks mature, to reflect on its loopholes in regard to its ecumenical relations in order to deepen its commitment to unity, for which Christ prayed (*Jn* 17,21). Hence this paper entitled: "Beatification of Paul VI: An Impetus for the Church in Uganda to Deepen its Commitment to Unity" is structured as follows: the first section gives the canonical provisions of ecumenism in the Catholic Church. The second section presents the theological foundation and development of ecumenical movement in the Catholic Church. The third section shows Paul VI as a protagonist in authentic interpretation of ecumenical dialogue in the Catholic Church. The fourth section treats ecumenism in Uganda and its challenges. The fifth and last section gives some recommendations to the Church in Uganda.

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<sup>2</sup> Paul VI, Journey to Uganda; Address of Paul VI to the Parliament of Uganda-Kampala – Friday 1.8.1969. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/speeches/1969/August/documents/hf\\_p\\_vi\\_sp\\_e\\_1969\\_08\\_01](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1969/August/documents/hf_p_vi_sp_e_1969_08_01).

## 1.0 Canonical Provisions of Ecumenism

Among the pre-occupations of the Catholic Church, the most worthy of its consideration is Unity.<sup>3</sup> The reason for this is, the Divine Author impressed on it as a lasting sign of the truth (*Jn* 17,21; *Eph* 4,4). It is indeed one of the principle concerns of Vatican II Council.<sup>4</sup> This being so, several of the canons of the code of Canon Law are in support of this unity. Canon 209 obliges Christ's faithful to preserve their communion with the Church at all times even in their external actions. Canon 751 enumerates and warns JesusChrist's faithful about the possible offences which can break this unity. These are heresy, apostasy and schism. In addition to that, Canons 1369, 1373, 1330, 1344 and 1349 condemn those who sow the seed of division in the Church. Hence, in order to cultivate this unity among Christ's faithful, the teachers of faith are encouraged to maintain the unity of faith in their instructions (cf cc. 254, 275,386 § 2, 392 §1, 897).

Since the unity of the church has already been plagued and continues to be wounded by different sorts of divisions, canon 755 has been put in place to provide for the restoration of the unity which is frequently shattered. Canon 755 of 1983 Code of Canon Law, abrogated canon 1325 of 1917 Code which stopped the Catholics from entering into any debates or conferences with non-Catholics especially public ones without the permission of the Holy See or in urgent cases of the local ordinary.<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, the new Code shows the need to foster dialogue and regular contacts with separated brothers and sisters. Canon 755 of 1983 code in conjunction with canons 902-904 of 1990 Code of Canons of Eastern Catholic Churches lay down expectations that will encourage ecumenical activities.

Starting at the level of the Universal Church, the College of Bishops and the Holy See as institutes of highest authority, are obligated to determine the ways and

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<sup>3</sup> Leo XIII, Encyclical *Satis Cognitum*, on the Unity of the Church June, 29; 1896 [www.Vatican.va/...only\\_father/Leo\\_XIII/encyclical](http://www.Vatican.va/...only_father/Leo_XIII/encyclical).

<sup>4</sup> *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no.1.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Stanislaus, Woywod, *A practical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* (London; Joseph F. Wagner Inc. 1948) p. 109.

means in which a response should be made to the demands of full communion such as meetings and assessing the ecumenical experience of all particular Churches; provide the resources necessary for the universal communion and among all the particular churches that belong to and are working for this communion. They are also mandated to give directives for guiding and channeling ecumenical activities in the Church (cf. c. 755§1).

On the local level according to the principle of subsidiarity, paragraph two of canon 755 directs the diocesan bishops to establish diocesan ecumenical commissions which is in line with the ecumenical commission of Episcopal Conference, in order to promote unity in the diocese. The Ecumenical Commission of the Episcopal Conference is to issue practical norms depending on the needs of the people, opportunities and circumstances in the region. In the same vein, the Ecumenical Commission of Synod of Episcopal Conferences of the Eastern Catholic Churches are mandated with a special duty of fostering unity among all Eastern Churches through prayers; examples of life; religious fidelity to the ancient traditions of the Eastern Churches, mutual and better understanding of each other; collaboration and brotherly respect in practice and spirit<sup>6</sup> (cf. CCEO, c. 903).

After giving the Canonical implications of ecumenism and ecumenical activities in the Catholic Church, the next section gives the theological foundation and development of ecumenical Movement in the Catholic Church whereby Paul VI played a key role.

## **2.0 Theological Foundation and Development of Ecumenical Movement in the Catholic Church**

The term ecumenical movements indicates the initiatives and activities encouraged and organized according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offer, to promote Christian unity.<sup>7</sup> This is done through dialogue, prayers and other kinds of collaboration with other Christian communities. The reason for the Church to be duty-bound with ecumenical initiatives and activities is

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<sup>6</sup> Eloy Tejero, Commentary on Can 755 in *Exegetical Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, Vol III/1, by Ernest Caparros *et al*, (Montreal, Canada, Wilson & Lafleur, 2004). P. 51.

<sup>7</sup>UR, no. 4.

because Jesus Christ mandated the Church to maintain unity( cf. *Jn*17,21; 10,30; 14, 10 – 11, 20*Eph* 4, 3 – 6).<sup>8</sup>

Although mandated by Jesus Christ to maintain unity in the church, the Catholic Church, after the mutual Declaration of Anathema between the Eastern and Western Churches (1054) and later results of reformation, for a long time had not only hesitated to join ecumenical movements but also condemned ecumenical dialogue which relativised the Catholic Church to be the true Church of Jesus Christ. This is reflected in the words of PiusXI:

Although many non-Catholics may be found who loudly preach fraternal communion in Christ Jesus, you will find none at all to whom it ever occurs to submit and obey the Vicar of Christ, either in his capacity as a teacher or as a governor.....This being so, it is clear that the Apostolic See cannot on any terms take part in their assemblies nor is it any way lawful for Catholics either to support or to work for such enterprises.<sup>9</sup>

Such kind of condemnation of ecumenical dialogue in the Catholic Church took a long time. It was only in 1949 when Pius XII conceived the need to foster dialogue with separated brothers. He issued an instruction *Ecclesia Catholica* in 1949 in which he gave rules directing Catholics' participation in ecumenical dialogue with true faith and doctrinal purity.<sup>10</sup> However, the popes who brought a real breakthrough of the Catholic Church into ecumenical dialogue were John XXIII and Paul VI. In 1960 John XXIII created the secretariat for promoting Christian unity, with a motu proprio *supremo Dei Notu*.<sup>11</sup> He also prepared the directives which will govern all the constitutions and decrees which were proposed for Vatican II Council including that of ecumenism. Although he did not live to see Vatican II Council completed, he contributed much in terms of proposing principles that will regulate ecumenical movements in the Catholic Church. Therefore, *Unitatis Redintegratio* although issued by Paul VI, is also a fruit of John XXIII's efforts.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. *UR*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Pius XI, Encyclical *Mortalium Animos*, no. 7-Wzatican.va/vi/pius\_XI/en/encyclicals/documents.

<sup>10</sup> Pius XIII Instruction *Ecclesia Catholica* in AAS 42 (1950) pp. 142 – 147.

<sup>11</sup> John XXIII Motu Proprio, *Supremo Dei Notu* in AAS 52 (1960) pp. 433 – 437.

Paul VI played a key role in promoting ecumenical movements. After the death of John XXIII, he continued and completed Vatican II Council. All the constitutions and decrees of the council including *Unitatis Redintegratio* were issued by him. Even shortly before the issuance of *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Paul VI had already issued an encyclical on ecumenical dialogue *ecclesiam suam* (1964). This will be talked about in the following section.

Paul VI believed that gestures sometimes are more eloquent than words; on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1965, he met with Athenagoras I, Patriarch of Constantinople. This meeting was crucial because it was a solemn lifting of the mutual Anathema between the Eastern and Western Churches which was declared in 1054. This was a start of dialogue of love and truth.<sup>12</sup> The following year 1966 he also met with Archbishop Michael Ramsey of Canterbury to exchange fraternal greeting. This was also a new stage in development of fraternal relation based on Christian charity leading to unity. Still under his pontificate, directories concerning ecumenical matters were published in two parts; part one in 1967 and part two in 1970.<sup>13</sup> They contained the principles and norms governing ecumenical activities.

St. John Paul II cannot escape our mention as far as ecumenical endeavours are concerned. He furthered the work of Paul VI. It was during his pontificate that the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian unity published the new directory for application of principles and norms on ecumenism in 1993. It contains earlier norms on ecumenism and others adopted due to the new situation. It was approved by John Paul II on June, 8, 1993.<sup>14</sup> The directory is divided into five chapters. The first chapter sets out a theological foundation for ecumenism. It bases much on Vatican II documents especially *Lumen Gentium* and *Unitatis Redintegratio* which reflect the Church as communion. The second chapter gives the canonical understanding of the organization of the Church at the service of Christian unity. The third chapter deals with the importance of shared worship, forms of Christian spirituality and ecumenical formation of clergy and collaborators. The fourth chapter treats the question of

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Deborah Castellano Lubov, *Historic Hug of Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras Remembered in book 50 years later*, Vatican City May 22, 2014 (Zenit.org).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Eloy Tejero Commentary on C. 755 in *Exegetical Commentary on Canon law*, vol. III/1, p. 50.

<sup>14</sup> Canon Law Society of Great Britain & Ireland, Newsletter, Ecumenism: Application of Principles and Norms no. 96 December 1993, p. 2.

intercommunion, and the final chapter deals with ecumenical cooperation, dialogue and common witness. In summary, the directory offers encouragement to those who should be taking ecumenism seriously. It sets reasonable and clear outlines for action and provides a solid theological rationale for ecumenical work by all Christ's faithful in the Catholic Church.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from approving this great ecumenical work, John Paul II himself published a great important and prophetic Encyclical by title *Ut Unum Sint* in 1995 in which he expresses his hope that the scandal of division in the Church would come to an end.<sup>16</sup>

John Paul II's pontificate was also marked with many apostolic travels and many of which were meant for ecumenical dialogue, for instance the journey he made to Assisi, he invited leaders of various churches to join him to pray for world peace. The response was tremendous; Jews, Moslems, Anglicans, Orthodox were among those who gathered to pray for peace.<sup>17</sup>

Turning to pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, he furthered this work of ecumenism to great heights. Ronald Roberson commented on him that the following day of his election as a pope, he called Cardinals to gather in Sistine chapel to outline his vision of the papacy and the priorities of his mission. He told the Cardinals the fostering of the unity of Christians he would like at the very pinnacle of his ministry. He quoted him as he referred to himself in a third person: "Peter's current successor takes on as his primary task the duty to work tirelessly to rebuild the full and visible unity of all Christ's followers. Concrete gestures that enter hearts and stir consciences are essential for all ecumenical progress".<sup>18</sup>

It is clear that pope Benedict's conviction was that, the central role of the bishop of Rome is to be a guarantor of the unity through which all the local churches are in full communion with one another and Jesus Christ himself. He practically expressed this in his letter to the Catholic bishops, on March, 10, 2009 which he wrote in remission of the excommunication of the four bishops consecrated by Archbishop

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7ff.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Igum E.B. *John Paul II* (Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa 2008), p 20.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Ronald Roberson, *Benedict XVI and Ecumenism: A Retrospective*. [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).

Lefebvre. In this letter, he wrote expressing that the promotion of unity is part of the supreme and fundamental priority of the Church and of the successor of Peter at the present time.<sup>19</sup> Like his predecessors Paul VI and John Paul II, Benedict encouraged the continuation of ecumenical contacts and dialogues which had been started. Among his first trips outside Italy was to Istanbul-Turkey in November 2006. There he met with Bartholomew the Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople; signed with him a common declaration in which the two church leaders expressed their fraternal charity. They renewed their commitment to progress towards full communion. They also welcomed the renewal of the international dialogue between the two churches.<sup>20</sup> This is the unity which pope Francis will continue to cement on 30. Nov. 2014 when he will visit Turkey. Benedict is also remembered for his warm welcome to some of the Anglican brothers and sisters who came back to the Catholic Church.

He confirmed this by creating Anglican Ordinariates and issuing the Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* which governs those Ordinariates.<sup>21</sup> In his papacy, Benedict XVI was firmly committed to the restoration of the unity of the followers of Jesus Christ. He knew how deeply the Christian proclamation of the gospels is compromised by division and how much stronger it would be if all Christians spoke with one voice.<sup>22</sup>

Last but not least, is the current pope, Francis. He has shown an ecumenical sensitivity since his election. On his election, 13 March 2013, he presented himself as the bishop of Rome, the church which presides in charity over all the churches. Like Paul VI, Francis believes that gestures are more eloquent than words in ecumenical dialogue. This year (2014) on 24-26 May, he went to Jerusalem to meet Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople to commemorate the 50 years of the great first meeting of pope Paul VI and the Patriarch of the Orthodox church Athenagoras, on the level of equality and fraternity. Francis shared the need to leave Jerusalem where everything started by the gospel, to return to the undivided Church where Paul VI and Athenagoras met in 1964. He intended that this meeting would start a new spring of hope among those people who are facing violence and persecution due to religious

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*; Apostolic Constitution *Anglicanorum Coetibus* – Vatican  
[www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/apost](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost).

<sup>22</sup> Ronald Roberson, Benedict XVI and Ecumenism: A Retrospective.  
[www.usccb.org/...nd...teaching](http://www.usccb.org/...nd...teaching).

differences.<sup>23</sup> Pope Francis has made the Catholic Church involve itself in different interreligious dialogues for instance, on September 26, 2014 he sent the secretary of the pontifical council of interreligious dialogue F. Miguel Angel Ayuso Guixot as a Holy See observer to sign the interreligious Declaration on Syrian Crisis. The declaration was to help build a united front to the humanitarian crisis in Syria and the North of Iraq as well as in other regions of the world.<sup>24</sup> There are so many ecumenical activities which pope Francis has spearheaded and undertaken in cause of restoration of the unity in the Church.

In all these papal endeavours it is clear that Paul VI set the ecumenical activities in motion and his successors have kept the ball rolling aiming at restoring the Church to its original communion. The following section shows Paul VI as a protagonist of authentic interpretation of ecumenical dialogue in the Catholic Church whom the Church in Uganda which is beset with ecumenical relativism and indifference ought to emulate in ecumenical dialogue.

### **Paul VI as a Protagonist of Authentic Interpretation of Ecumenical Dialogue**

According to Webster's New Dictionary and Thesaurus, a protagonist is a leading actor in the play or a leading figure. Some synonyms of protagonist are: a standard bearer, prime mover or champion.<sup>25</sup> Authentic interpretation according to Canon 16 of 1983 Code of canon law is an interpretation made by the author of the law (legislator). Having deduced from the discussion of the previous section that Paul VI, whose papacy by means of Vatican II Council ushered in a new spirit of dialogue, must be taken to be the author of the law concerning ecumenism, and of course its authentic interpreter. Without prejudice to the earlier contributions of popes Leo XIII, Pius XI, Pius XII and John XXIII, who conceived the idea to foster dialogue with separated brothers, created secretariat for promotion of Christian unity, Paul VI was the pope who gave a detailed meaning of ecumenical dialogue, its motives and goals in his inaugural Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*. It is from this interpretation that developed the interpretation found in Vatican II Council Decree on Ecumenism

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<sup>23</sup>Andrea Gagliarducci, *Pope Francis Holy land visit to focus on Ecumenism*.[www.freerepublic.com/focus/freligion/3109677](http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/freligion/3109677)Posted on January 8, 2014.

<sup>24</sup>Vatican official signs on to interreligious Declaration on Syrian crisis, September, 26, 2014 (Zenit.org).[www.nregister.com/.../Pope\\_Francis-on-ecumenism](http://www.nregister.com/.../Pope_Francis-on-ecumenism) August, 1, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Webster's new Dictionary and Thesaurus (Canada: DS-MAX Canada Inc. DS-Max U>S>A Inc. & Marlor Trading Inc.(1995) , p.304.



*unitatis Redintegratio*, in directories on ecumenical matters of 1967, 1970 and 1993. Paul VI has always been the point of reference for all his successor popes in matters concerning ecumenical dialogue.

His encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, the paths of the Church, is divided into three parts; one is about self-awareness, part two is about reform and renewal, and part three which is our main concern is about dialogue. In this third part, Paul VI invites the hierarchy, the faithful and those who look on with kindly attention to consider the motives which impel the Church towards the dialogue, the methods to be followed and the goals to be achieved.<sup>26</sup>

Some of the motives of ecumenical dialogue which Paul VI mentioned include: the Church's self awareness as a communion whose sanctification is produced by the sharing in the paschal mystery and baptism.<sup>27</sup> Another motive is to become aware that distinction is not a separation, therefore, it is part of Church's apostolic mission to enter into dialogue.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the realization of the nature of religion as a dialogue between God and man is also another motive for ecumenical dialogue. Moreover, the awareness of the fact that the whole history of salvation is a dialogue is also another important motive of ecumenical dialogue.

Having mentioned some of the motives Paul VI gave for ecumenical dialogue, it is important to know also the methods he proposed for this cause. The methods Paul VI proposed for ecumenical dialogue include the following points: the dialogue must be characterized by clarity, humility, trust and pedagogical prudence.<sup>29</sup> Dialogue is to be carried out in the spirit of friendship,<sup>30</sup> respect and service, open to all but never compromising the truth.<sup>31</sup> It must be supported by wisdom, learning, discernment, and guided by hope and love. To achieve this, preaching and catechetical formation is of great importance.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam with a Commentary by Gregory Baum*, New York: Paulist Press (1964) p. 77.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 62; UR 2§5, 3§2; LG 8§2; GS 78§3: CCC.818.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 65; LG 13§2; Eph 4,3.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 83-84.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 85.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 91-92.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 94, UR, 10.

Some of the goals which Paul VI expected to achieve out of ecumenical dialogue were: the union of truth and charity, of understanding and love. And this conversion is not come immediately but it is a gradual development with successive advances.<sup>33</sup> Another motive is that the Church will need to realize and respect the moral and spiritual values of the various liberties, human brotherhood, good culture, social welfare and civil order and will desire to enter into dialogue on these common ideals.<sup>34</sup> In other words, the Church prefers to stress always what it has in common with other Churches to what divides them.

We can conclude by saying that, these motives, methods and goals of ecumenical dialogue which distinguish Paul VI as an authentic interpreter of ecumenical dialogue must be the solution which the Church in Uganda should seek for its challenged ecumenical relations. Therefore, the next section presents Uganda and ecumenical dialogue and challenges.

### **Ecumenism in Uganda and Challenges**

Uganda is one of the East African countries. If we consider it from the angle of Ecclesiastical circumscription, it is under AMECEA Region (Association of Member Episcopal Conference of Eastern Africa). Long before the coming of Christianity, societies in Uganda were mainly based on traditional and cultural beliefs and worship. The coming of Christian Missionaries in the late 1870s changed religion in Uganda. First were the protestant Anglican missionaries on June, 30<sup>th</sup>, 1877; followed by French Catholic missionaries on February, 17<sup>th</sup>, 1879.<sup>35</sup> These missionaries from Britain for the Protestants and largely from France for the Catholics brought with them the antagonism between the British and French and this was in-built in their missionary endeavor.<sup>36</sup> This rivalry has to be understood against the background of centuries of controversy and warfare between Catholics and Protestants in Europe. The presence of rival versions of Christianity was immediately

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 116 UR, 7§3; CCC. 821.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 112.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. J. Ddiba, *Eddini mu Uganda*, Vol 1, St. Libertain Press, Masaka 1955, 57-107; John Mary Waliggo, *The Catholic Church in Buddu Province of Uganda*, Angel Agencies, Kampala 2010, 16-30; see also Ives Tournigny, *So Abundant a Harvest*, Darton, Longmand and Todd, London 1979, 13-50. See also [www.ujcc.co.ug/.../presentation](http://www.ujcc.co.ug/.../presentation)

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

a matter of controversy.<sup>37</sup>The leaders of these two missionary groups Alexander Mackay the Anglican leader and Fr. Simon Lourdel who had become the defacto spokesperson for the Catholics by permission of his superior Livinhac, got involved in theological debates in trying to defend their versions of faith in total disregard of unity and this almost caused the failure of mission in its nascent period. John Mary Waliggo reports thus:

The Confrontation between the two charismatic missionaries-Mackay and Lourdel-in Muteesa's audience hall on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June 1879 dominated the first phase of the Christian mission in Buganda and produced far-reaching results. The king, the royal pages and the Baganda at large realized its importance. The Calvinist and the Catholic faced each other, each convinced that he possessed exclusive truth as they tore each other before the king and the people. When they had finished, Muteesa closed the debate with a crucial question. How can I know what is right and what is false?...the king and all present saying every white man has a different religion.<sup>38</sup>

The missionaries recognized that these debates were against mission itself as they generated great divisions and cast doubt on the authenticity of their faiths and religions. They thus decided to create a policy of peaceful co-existence and never to attack each other on theological issues either in public or in writings and this would later form a basis for fruitful ecumenism in the country.<sup>39</sup> The confrontation of 29<sup>th</sup> June 1879 also precipitated a policy of competitions between Protestants and Catholics in all spheres and would later lead to wars of religion<sup>40</sup>.

It is clear that Uganda from the beginning received the antagonistic version of Christianity. Unfortunately, this rivalry was entrenched in the political system of Uganda through establishment of two political parties; the Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC) which consisted of almost entirely Protestants and Democratic Party (DP) which had only Catholics.<sup>41</sup>In 1962 Uganda got independence with UPC as the party in power. As a newly independent state, Uganda had many challenges particularly,

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<sup>37</sup>Cf. Armand Duval, *Father Simeon Lourdel, Apostle of Uganda (1853-1890)*, Angel Agencies, Kampala 2012, pp. 75-122.

<sup>38</sup> John Mary Waliggo, *The Catholic Church in Buddu*, 22-23.

<sup>39</sup>Cf. John Mary Waliggo, *The Catholic Church in Buddu*, 23.

<sup>40</sup>Cf. John Mary Waliggo, *The Catholic Church in Buddu*, 22-23. See also John Baur, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, Second Revised Edition (Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa 1998), p. 239.

<sup>41</sup>See also Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, *Sowing the Mastered Seed: Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Uganda*, Macmillan Publishers Ltd, London 1997, p. 35-38.

religious divisions, ignorance, poverty and disease. How was the Church to contribute to the newly independent state which was so divided? <sup>42</sup>

Fortunately, 1962 was the year when Vatican II Council sat. Vatican II ushered in a new spirit of relationship between religions. The Documents: The Decree on Ecumenism and the Decree on relationship of the Church with other religions have influenced the position of Catholics towards other Christian believers and other world religions including African traditional religions. In response to Vatican II Council, and inspired by the world council of religions for peace, the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) was founded in 1963 by the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican churches through Archbishop Joseph Kiwanuka (Catholic), Leslic Brown (Anglican) and Theodorus Nankyama (Orthodox).<sup>43</sup>

UJCC was established for the working towards greater mutual understanding and unity, as well as achieving cooperation by means of joint consultation and acting in practical matters of common interest such as economic empowerment and development, education and communication media. Other areas of cooperation also include intervention through member churches to resolve conflict, enhance harmonious co-existence and uphold human dignity and to work with the member churches to fulfill the great commission to go out to the earth and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup>

This Joint Christian Council has on one hand succeeded in achieving some of its goals. It has established a theological commission and ecumenical joint Action committees. Member Christians have reached the consensus of a common baptismal formula. They have agreed on celebration of common joint prayers and events such as fundraising. Some joint initiatives have been carried out like that of HIV/AIDS Medical administration. There is also development of common religious education text books. Through this council, the churches many times are able to speak with one voice on matters of common concern like on issues of governance and those related to morals and service delivery.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Cf. S.R. Karugire, *The Political History of Uganda*, Hienemann Educational Books, Nairobi 1978, pp. 17-99. See also D.M. Mudoola, *Religion, Ethnicity and Politics in Uganda*, Fountain Publishers, Kampala 1966, 10ff.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

On the other hand, there are still some loopholes according to the pastoral letter of the Catholic bishops of Uganda written at the celebration of 50 years of independence. They reported that despite all the efforts spent in ecumenical endeavours, they sadly note that especially at grassroots there are still strained relationships among followers of various religions as a result of mutual suspicion and mistrust. This jeopardizes sustainable peace and development of the country.<sup>46</sup> This unfriendly relation which sometimes resurfaces between churches has persisted. Even on his visitation to Uganda, Paul VI warned the Christians using the words from conciliar document: “ We as Christians can never forget that the Church condemns any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their religion, race...(*Nostrae Aetate* no. 5).<sup>47</sup>

Some of the Christians who are not deep rooted in their religious conviction, when they engage in ecumenical dialogue they are often caught up in the danger of relativism or indifferentism. Indifferentism is the belief held by some that no religion or philosophy is superior to another. Indifferentism was first explicitly identified and opposed by Pope Gregory XVI in his encyclical *Mirari Vos*. Some Christians in Uganda especially the youth are in danger of compromising their faith in the name of ecumenical dialogue. Pope Francis warns about this danger. He refers to it as a ghost of relativism:

There is always a ghost of everything is relative. There is one principle, there can be no dialogue if it does not come from one's identity. Without identity, dialogue cannot exist. It would be a phantom dialogue, a dialogue in the air. It does not work. Each of us has our own religious identity. Then dialogue a bit forward on theological matters, that is beautiful but that which is important is walking together without betraying one's own identity, without masking it with hypocrisy.<sup>48</sup>

Pope Francis clearly shows that relativism is watering down the real meaning of ecumenical dialogue. With so many Christian Churches in Uganda; Catholicism,

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<sup>46</sup> Bishops of Uganda fifty years of independence; celebrating our Heritage [www.uecom.org](http://www.uecom.org) October 9 2012.

<sup>47</sup> Paul VI, journey to Uganda: Address to the parliament of Uganda-Kampala 1.8.1969. [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/paul\\_vi/speeches/1969/august/documents/hf\\_p\\_vi\\_spe\\_1969-080](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1969/august/documents/hf_p_vi_spe_1969-080).

<sup>48</sup> Pope Francis Address to Interreligious leaders of Albania Tirana on September, 21, 2014 at the Catholic University of Our Lady of good counsel in Albania (Zenit.org).

Protestantism ( as the mainstream Churches), Pentecostals, Orthodox and many minority African independent Churches plus the various syncretic movements scattered in multi-religious sects cropping up. It is hard for young people who are not conversant with doctrinal issues of this faith to discern which one is authentically inspired religion. They often end up relativising all the doctrines from different Churches. While dialogue of life is a bit simpler and practical, dialogue on doctrinal matters is problematic especially when the level of education on doctrinal matters is wanting. That is why the Church in Uganda has to listen to what the living voice of Paul VI, the authentic interpreter of ecumenical dialogue has to say on ecumenical dialogue concerning the deposit of faith in order to subdue the danger of relativism or indifferentism, mutual suspicion and mistrust. Therefore, the last section will give recommendations advocated by Paul VI and others on ecumenical dialogue.

## Recommendations

The kind of ecumenical dialogue which Paul VI insisted on in his Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* and which later took root in Vatican II decree of ecumenism, is characterized with clarity, humility, open to all, never compromising the truth; requiring wisdom, learning, discernment; built on freedom and guided always by hope and love.<sup>49</sup>

On the danger of relativism, Paul VI says that the desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down or subtracting from the truth. Our dialogue must not weaken attachment to our faith. In apostolate one cannot make vague compromises about the principles of faith and action on which the profession of faith is based. An immoderate desire to make peace and sink differences at all costs is fundamentally a kind of skepticism about the power and content of the word of God.<sup>50</sup> The decree on ecumenism also advocates that dialogue demands sincere and firm fidelity to one's own faith without which dialogue is reduced to a conversation in which neither side is genuinely engaged.<sup>51</sup> On the same note, the new directory for application of principles and norms on ecumenism (1993), recommends the

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<sup>49</sup> Pope's Address to Interreligious leaders of Albania. Tirana on September 21. 2014 at Catholic University of our lady of good counsel in Albania (zenit.org).

<sup>50</sup> Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, no. 91.

<sup>51</sup> *Directory Concerning Ecumenical Matters: Part II* (1970) Ecumenism in Higher Education, no. 76.

formation of clergy and their collaborators in deeper knowledge of ecumenism so that they may teach others to do it in right way.<sup>52</sup> It also recommends the need to express the deposit of faith in words suitable to the time while avoiding ambiguity.<sup>53</sup>

It is also stressed in the new directory of ecumenism that theological students in their basic formation should be taught doctrine by Catholics so as to know their faith well<sup>54</sup> but subjects that are not strictly doctrinal can be taught by others. Looking at this issue from the canonical point of view it can be suggested that before engaging Christ's faithful in ecumenical dialogue as canon 755 advocates, ministers of the Word should give proper catechetical formation to Christ's faithful according to the provisions of canons 773, 747 § 2 so that they may participate in dialogue and doctrinal issues when they are deeply rooted in their faith (cf c. 229 §1) On mutual suspicion and mistrust, Paul VI states that dialogue must be characterized by trust not only in the power of words, but also in an attitude of welcoming the trust of the interlocutor. Trust promotes confidence and friendship. It binds hearts in mutual adherence to the good which excludes self-seeking.<sup>55</sup>

To do away with suspicion, Paul VI advocates prudence which esteems highly the psychological and moral circumstances of the listener (cf *Mt* 7,6) whether he be a child uneducated, unprepared, indifferent or hostile.

He said that prudence strives to learn the sensitivities of the hearer and requires reasonable presentation which is not displeasing and incomprehensible to him or her.<sup>56</sup> A dialogue of love reaches in friendship past the fracturing and the suspicions, to encounter other Christians as brothers and sisters.<sup>57</sup>

## Conclusion

This multiple celebration of beatification of Paul VI, 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the decree of Ecumenism, of *Ecclesiam Suam* and of Canonization of Uganda Martyrs offers the Church in Uganda an opportunity to reflect on its past, to consider its

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<sup>52</sup>New Directory for Application of principles and norms of Ecumenism (1993) nos. 62 – 67.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.* no.181.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.* no. 192.

<sup>55</sup> Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, no. 83 (3)

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, no. 84

<sup>57</sup>John Flynn, Anniversary of Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism, November 9 2014 (Zenit.org)

present endeavours in ecumenical dialogue, to identify its strength and weakness and at the same time devise means of deepening its commitment to Christian unity.

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