

**THE RELEVANCE OF THE ENCYCLICAL LETTER EVANGELIUM VITAE
ADDRESSED BY POPE JOHN PAUL II IN COUNTERING TERRORISM AND WASTE
OF HUMAN LIVES IN NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism and waste of human lives is on the increase in Nigeria. The havoc, menace and barbaric killings caused by the Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen terrorist group is a typical example. Individual persons and groups in Nigeria more often than not resort to acts of terrorism and wasting of human lives in pursuing their course or perceived denied rights. Basic socio-political activities in Nigeria feature acts of terrorism and wasting of human lives as citizens employ such modes to actualize their goals. Almost all the ethnic groups in Nigeria have splinter groups that purposes to be agitating for their peculiar ethnic rights through terroristic means that often results in wasting of human lives. The Nigerian government appears to be frustrated in their battle against terrorism and the waste of human lives rife in the society as some of their efforts to combat it which includes several uses of force had proved abortive. Private investigators and researchers like Prof IyorwuseHagher are pointing accusing fingers at the presidency as being complacent over the issue. This work examines terrorism and waste of human lives in Nigeria vis a vis the encyclical letter evangelium vitae, and posits how this papal's admonition can be applied in countering the dastardly acts of the former pair.

Key Words: Terrorism. Waste of human lives. sanctity of life. Peace. Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary occurrences pertinent to terrorism and waste of human lives in the human society posits vividly that the world is not a safe place, despite the demise of the cold war era. Ever since the September 11, 2001 bombing of the world trade center in New York and the Pentagon in the suburbs of Washington D.C., the battle against terrorism and waste of human lives has assumed an unprecedented global proportion. It has taken a grave turn making the statement that Veith (2000), once made that terrorism is the post modern brand of warfare appearing to be prophetic in nature.

In Nigeria, terrorist groups that often wastes human lives abounds in various modes. The contemporary Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen terroristic attacks and waste of human lives; with the federal government complacent approach in combating them is a typical example. Nigeria, according to the global terrorism index report 2014, ranked fourth with the score points of 8.58, making Nigeria the fourth most affected country by terrorism out of the 50 high ranked countries ravaged by terrorism and incessant waste of human lives in the world: Whereas the

2017 report of the same source ranked Nigeria as the third most terrorized nation in the world. Besides, it is evident that some individuals and groups in Nigeria more often than not resort to acts of terrorism and wasting of human lives in pursuing their course.

Pertinent to the foregoing, Pope John Paul II wrote the encyclical letter *evangelium vitae* with the view of countering terrorism and the spread of culture of death, and proclaiming the good news of the value and dignity of each human life, of its grandeur and worth, and also in its temporal phase. The encyclical was presented with great doctrinal authority and Episcopal collegiality which was manifested first in the extraordinary consistory of cardinals in April 1991 and subsequently in consultation of all the bishops of the Catholic Church, who unanimously and firmly agree with the teaching imparted in it as Smith (1957), pointed out.

The aim of this work is to practically implement the lessons from the *Evangelium Vitae* countering the contemporary widespread terrorism and waste of human lives in Nigeria. Thus for all and sundry to always understand, value and respect the sanctity of human life.

This work will employ both the secondary means of data collection as in personal communication with individuals versed in terrorism and the value cum sanctity of human life; and the primary means of data collection as in consulting available and relevant literatures on the work being sampled. Conclusions and the necessary generalization will be drawn purely on the analysis and synthesis of the gathered data made through culture centered approach. The work will focus on the terroristic activity and waste of human lives perpetrated by the Boko Haram and the Fulani Herdsmen in Nigeria in recent times. It will employ the theory of peace process projected by Ibeanu (2006), as a means of building and imbibing the culture of peace in Nigeria in place of terrorism and waste of human lives which appears to be envogue.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Peace Process Theory: Ibeanu's (2006), peace process theory came up as a burden to clear the alchemic misconception that conflict is always present in the society and in different gradations without the corollary knowledge as well that peace exists in all societies and in different gradation as well. Peace to him is always a work in progress and never a finished condition. It cannot end nor dissipate.

In peace process theory, peace is extremely vital in nation building, for raising incorruptible judges, for astute democracy – effecting good governance, and free and fair elections; for making patriots out of the citizens of the Nation. Thus it is fundamentally applicable to the Nigerian situation in order to be a means through which the culture of peace will be built and imbibed by the citizens of Nigerians in place of the general culture of terrorism and waste of human lives in the air. As far as people have the notion of living in peace in their minds, peaceful means of living will always carry the day. Citizens of Nigeria will learn to value other peoples lives just as they value their own lives.

The historical background to terrorism and waste of human lives in Nigeria

In general human life experience, every problem has a cause. Terrorism which features mainly waste of human lives in Nigeria today did not evolve from the blues. Abinitio, there reigned peaceful state of affairs in Nigeria, hence Madubuko (2008), rightly observed:

The history of pre-colonial Nigeria indicates that the independent entities of Nigerian nation lived in peace and harmony. There was socio-political and economic stability in these various entities. Leaders proved to be leaders in matters affecting their various ethnic populations. This was the situation until the advent of the British Colonial mongers. Since then, Nigeria has lost its innocence and the values of a just and egalitarian society. (p. 106).

The statement above portrayed a pointer to that which brought chaos and violence to the Nigerian shores. The British once they landed on the Nigerian shores wasted no time in usurping control of the affairs of the independent native kingdoms and empires of the local communities and shattered their sovereignty through fraudulent treaties of protection and politics of divide and rule. Religion was equally manipulated to foster political crises in the pre-colonial and colonial era in Nigeria.

Boer (1984) and Tasie (2003), respectively, are both of the view that the missionary enterprise of the Europeans to Nigeria during the pre-colonial era is characterized by falsehood and is more of an irony. The motive behind the so called missionary outreach is nothing but to empower the economy of that nation while gaining dominance of Nigerian economy and her government. Little wonder some religious extremists and the militantssects like Boko-Haram detests, abhors, and loathes everything Western and European.

The missionaries came with bible on the right hand and weapons to plunder on the other hand and foolishly, Nigerian local chiefs embraced their extension of so called love and favour through which they permeated and destroyed the local system of government in existence and indirect rule policy set in. These missionaries in any event of trouble calls for the assistance of the home government who always rose to the occasion. In this way, the British government rounded up Nigeria communities, Dukedoms, pocket empires and kingdoms: Balkanizmng them through divide and rule politics.

The divide and rule politics entail the breaking up of Nigeria into different segments comprising of people with different cultural and religious backgrounds. Finally, through divide and rule politics, the last straw that broke the Carmel's back in the journey into the endemic culture of chaos, and violence which has metamorphosed into the culture of terrorism and wasting of human lives in the recent times in Nigeria was set in; Nigeria was forged into one entity; the different nationalities that never wished to be one, and imposed a colonial constitution and rule on them. Thus the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern parts of Nigeria was realized in 1st January, 1914.

An eye opener to the reality of the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern parts of Nigeria in relation to the terrorism and waste of human lives prevalent in Nigeria today is the statement that Lord Lugard made in the face of the 1914 amalgamation; Afigbo (cited by Okoye, 2007), posited it thus:

It is only the accident of British sovereignty which has made Nigeria one country.. They do not speak the same language and they have highly divergent customs and ways of life and they represent different stages of culture, (p. 143).

Why then did the British amalgamate these divergent entities? This fragile foundation laid for the country by the colonial government engendered unhealthy rivalry amongst Nigerians till date. The British only considered the economic prospects; they never took time to sensitize the citizens involved on the need to do so, neither did they consider the unity and welfare of the citizens involved. There was no proper information or means of communicating tolerance, love, peace and understanding into the fabrics of the beings of the citizens therein.

Terrorism and waste of human lives perpetuated by the Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen in Nigeria

As experienced in the terrorist activities and groups in Nigeria, the Boko Haram episode stands in a unique way as the most single case of violence and terrorism which demystified the government of Nigeria, weakened it and held it and her citizens captive. ". A group that started since 2002, in the closet, their activities later led to a violent uprising in July 2009 in which its former leader and founder Mohammed Yusuf was executed. They resurged unexpectedly again in 2010 following a mass prison break at Bauchi in 2010. According to the report portrayed by Kessler (2014), Boko Haram had killed over 12,000 civilians and security forces members in Nigeria since 2009, had rendered over 1.5 million persons homeless in the North-east, North-central and Central Nigeria, and had abducted over 1 million women and children since 2009. Presently, the Boko Haram's leader is AbubakarShekau. It is important to note the assistance of the Russia's arm and amenities supplies that have helped in combating their attacks recently and the incumbent Federal Governments effort in seeking foreign aid to battle their terroristic activities. The fight still continues, irrespective of all odds as BokoHaram's members believes that they are fighting a just course in order to overthrow Nigerian's government and establish an Islamic state.

The Fulani herdsmen terroristic attacks and wasting of human lives in Kaduna, Taraba, Adamawa and Benue states in Nigeria had been tagged by the Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria as a well planned and properly coordinated attacks on Christians, and not a communal clash. However, as it is, it seems that these attacks goes beyond religious fanaticism to territorial domination. The Fulani herdsmen are not freedom fighters, they are simply a terrorist group in the same rank as Boko Haram but with a different agenda and tactics to dominate and expand the caliphate kingdom as far as possible through the use of military or other means to actualize their aspirations of conquering the geographic space known as Nigeria.

History had in full swoop of the story of the Fulani supremacy and their callous disregard for human life and decency. The recent barbaric killings in the states as aforementioned in Nigeria portrays total disregard for the sanctity of human life by this group that has been proscribed a terrorist group recently. They burn down churches, kill ordained priests of God, the young, the old and even pregnant women. They rape both young and old women, while taking over peoples land and properties.

According to Onabanjo (2018), the grazing reserve and cattle colony proposition of which 16 out of 36 states in Nigeria had indicated interest to be part of (all are purely northern states) is a perfect scheme and pretext to future control and domination from the North to the South, from

the desert to the ocean. Muhammad (cited by Opejobi, 2018), even alleged that Benue state belongs to the Fulani by right of conquest. He predicated his claim on the fact that half of Benue state is part of the Bauchi Emirate and also half of the Adamawa Emirate. He equally stressed that by extension, Benue is part and parcel of Sokoto caliphate as such nobody has the right to expel Fulani from the state; stating that the Fulani are the largest single nation in the African continent and they have remained unbeatable throughout their history. One can now see that the Fulani people's mindset is filled with nothing other than war and territorial domination. Whatever they offer is geared towards enslaving one, bearing in mind that this assertion was equally made by a Fulani. They have done it in the past; king Funfa – the Hausa Sarki who welcomed Usman Dan Fodiyo as his guest was overthrown and killed by Usman Dan Fodiyo who installed himself as the Sultan of Sokoto, after establishing the Sokoto caliphate between 1804 and 1808.

Usman captured all the core Northern ethnic kingdoms and installed Fulani emirates. Similarly, the Afoja kingdom Ilorin provided grazing land to JantaAlimi – a Fulani warrior who eventually killed Afoja in 1824 and became an emirate of the Fulani Sokoto caliphate. The Fulani story goes on in such despicable successions. The strange thing about these Fulani Herdsmen attacks is that the Nigerian government presently is not being proactive in her response to their unabated killings. Similarly, the security agencies display lack – luster response to these gruesome murders by the Fulani herdsmen.

Concise account of *Evangelium Vitae*

Its very title, *Evangelium Vitae* means (The Gospel of Life). This encyclical of Pope John Paul II demonstrates its highly positive character and its great spiritual thrust. the value and dignity of each human life, of its grandeur and worth, also in its temporal phase and against all forms of terrorism that endangers peoples lives. The cause of life is in fact at the same time the cause of the Gospel and the cause of man, the cause entrusted to the church. This teaching is in".

Lessons from the life of Pope John Paul II in lieu of promoting the sanctity of life.

Pope John Paul II was a polish with Vatican citizenship as recorded by Fitzsimons (1954). He was born on 18th May, 1920. His birth name was Karol Josef Wojtyla. His papacy began on 16th October 1978 and ended on 2nd April, 2005. He was ordained a Priest on 1st November, 1946; created cardinal on 26th June 1967, and was consecrated on 28th September, 1958. His papacy ended on 2nd April 2005 on his death at the age of 84 years.

Njoku (2011) described John Paul II as a deeply Good-intoxicated spiritual leader, a people-oriented man in whom social and racial barriers collapse before the irresistible charm of a character that radiates love and compassion. He is a quintessence of a true Pius leader as can be seen from the fact that he was later beatified on 1st May, 2011 at St. Peter's square, Vatican city by Pope Benedict V XI and was equally later canonized at the same venue by Pope Francis on 27th April 2014.

Convinced in his thoughts and belief in the gospel of sanctity of life which is fostered by peace, Pope John Paul II maintained always that peace is the reliable omen for the restoration of universal brotherhood among men and women, for the pacification of human relations amidst differences and pluralism, and for an authentic direction of the day to day concrete activities of human society. St: John Paul II, in words and deeds, made profound effort in the service of peace, becoming gigantic constitutive stone in that beautiful peace edifice. Truly by voice, pen and action as Anyanwu (2014) pointed out, he made the church acquire a clear view of her mission in the world: the mission of peace; and to bear concrete witness to one of her proper functions: devotion to true peace. He never failed to raise his prophetic voice against all forms of genocide around the world, terrorism, wasting of human lives, unjust political structures and subjugation of the human person that make peace elusive.

In all those ways in which the reality of the sanctity of life is maimed, the Pope worked vigorously to see that the pillars of true peace were not uprooted or overpowered by those factors destructive of humanity. Condemning the massive and unbridled proliferation of arms and weapons through which the seeds of war and violence are spread, he called for a moral disarmament as the first condition necessary for peace. He beckoned on all believers to be peace seekers and prayed constantly that all men and women should see to it that force of reason prevails over the reasons of force as Odey (1996) declared

The Pope demonstrated vividly his teachings when on 13th May 1981, he forgave his would have been assassin, Mehmet Ali Acga (the turkish terrorist); proving that killing him in capital punishment will not solve the problem. He was one of the most travelled world leaders in history, visiting 129 countries during his pontificate and promoting versely the culture of life and sanctity of human life.

The charge that *Evangelium Vitae* poses to terrorists and desecrators of human life in Nigeria

Evergelium Vitae is an encyclical that breaks the bound of epoch and era. It is ever relevant owing to the peculiar subject matter it discussed which is absolute respect for the sanctity and uniqueness of the human life. The charge left in the hearts of men and with special reference to that of terrorists that commit murder arbitrarily by this encyclical cannever be overemphasized.

It is clear that this encyclical submits that any form of terrorism is threat to life. Being in constant fear of dying owing to threats posed to human life makes life no longer worth living. No human person had the right to subject another to perpetual fear of death. God created us to enjoy life in full service to him and not to be subjected to being in steady fear of the unknown, thereby dying daily in perpetual suffering and melancholy of the mind.

This encyclical projects to the fur that forgiveness is sublime. Pope John Paul II once forgave someone that tried to assassinate him. Jesus Christ prayed to God to forgive those crucifying him, declaring that they are oblivious of what they are doing. Even if the Boko Haram and the Fulani Herdsmen had been denied any perceived right of theirs at any time by the Nigerian government,

they should learn to forgive. Man is a human being and not a human doing. Mankind has a conscience no matter how one tries to block it. They should yield to the still small voice of the spirit deep down their inner man in order to be able to eschew from terrorism and barbaric way of killing fellow human beings in pursuit of whatever they deem their inheritance being denied.

Freedom to choose and choice is one gift that God gave mankind which is not meant to be abused. Mankind is free but to serve God and not to destroy lives and properties. Rousseau (cited by Russell, 2004), captures this vividly in his social contract theory when he declared that man is born free, but everywhere in chains. He maintained that one man may think that he is the master of others, but in reality is a slave more than others he feels he is lording it over. This should be a lesson to the terrorists in Nigeria. They are in chains because even if one allows them to take over Nigeria as their own, they will still not be satisfied because deep down their hearts lies a vacuum of evil that is basically insatiable. No bondage is greater than that.

Pope John Paul II maintained that there will always be the weak amongst us and it behoves that the strong should always protect the weak and not to crush them nor put them in harm way. Humankind should be complementing each other and not destroying each other. One has wisdom and knowledge; one has will power and physical strength – these various gifts should be blended to serve God who is the ultimate reality. The Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen and even armed robbers that engage in terrorism and killing of human beings should accept the fact that Nigeria is one nation under God and come together to move the nation forward.

Jesus Christ laid down His life to save the whole world. The story of true saviours includes saving of other people lives outside their own. Mankind should learn to save one another thereby being each others keeper. No man is created to live in isolation. No one race is created to lord it over others. All men are equal before God. It is quite unfortunate that the recent Fulani Herdsmen menace posits to the fur as if they value the life of a cow more than several human lives. Instead of destroying lives, mankind should launch into saving lives. If terrorists in Nigeria succeeds in killing everybody, they as well will turn around to start killing each other because what goes around comes around.

Visitation to invitation of and round table conferences with the victims and perpetrators of massive destruction of lives and properties should be quickly implemented. It is surprising that the president of Nigeria had not even taken time to visit the victims of brutal murders fostered by the Fulani Herdsmen in Benue state and the suburbs. Commenting on that Omokri (2018), lamented that the presidency valued his “gay cows” in Daura, Katsina state than those that are facing attacks in Benue state and the suburbs by the Fulani Herdsmen. Pope John Paul II used the tool of visitation to pacify people all over the world that were facing various challenges and threats to life. The Nigerian presidency needs to be more proactive in handling the menace of Herdsmen killings and other related issues as Aisha (2018), lamented.

Finally, *Evangelium Vitae* reiterates firmly on the sanctity of human life and the basic fundamental rights of man, of which he maintained that the right to life is paramount. Little wonder Iwe (1986), maintained that Pope John XXIII in his declaration of the fundamental rights

of man placed the right to life first with specific mention of the other rights which particularly serve to maintain life. Man has the right to life. He has the right to bodily integrity and to the means necessary for maintaining a decent standard of living, particularly food, clothing, shelter, medical care, rest and finally necessary social services.

The right to live is the most fundamental of all human rights; hence, no one has the right to kill another human person. This word is very important as this work projects that if terrorists and those that spill innocent blood in wanton like-manner should embrace it, they will quickly realize that just as they are living and enjoying their lives, others are enjoying theirs as well. They will not do to others what they will not want another to do to them which is the golden rule. The right to live is a right which springs directly and immediately from the very nature of man. It is a right which a man or human being enjoys in virtue of the fact that he is a human person. It is the first of the fundamental rights of man deriving strictly from and based immediately on the dispositions of the natural law.

In lieu of the foregoing, it behoves then that no one should engage in any of the factors which often affect adversely the enjoyment of the right to life. Some of these factors that terrorists in Nigeria are associated with like homicide, genocide, war, suicide killings and taking laws into their hands by emitting jungle justice is strictly condemned by Pope John Paul II. Once all and sundry abides by these basic principles of life, Nigeria will be a perfect, peaceful and enjoyable nation to live in.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In lieu of the findings in this work, the following recommendations are proffered.

1. The government of Nigeria should try to make education free at least from nursery to secondary school level and history should be made subjective in all the course outlines in all the secondary and tertiary institutions so that the illiteracy level will be reduced and the average Nigerian educated. Equipped with history of the nation, one will understand the terrors and horrors of war, shedding of blood and terrorism and avoid it completely.
2. The government of Nigeria at each regime must be just to employ the basic principles of Good Governance which are participatory, consensus-orientation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, affectivity and efficiency, equitability, inclusiveness, visionary and follows the rule of law. This actually blends with the injunctions in the *evangelium vitae*.
3. There is need for a round table conference in Nigeria that representatives from the major ethnic groups in Nigeria will be in attendance. This conference will take into cognizance all the complaints of each group and resolve on practical measures to move forward. These conferences should be held in utmost sincerity without any selfish interest at all. Credit is given to the 2014 national conference in Nigeria under the Former President Goodluck Jonathan; believing that their reports will at long last be made working document for the nation. This work suggests that these national conferences be held at four years intervals.
4. An Amnesty programme targeted at creating exit window for “forcefully conscripted” members of terrorist groups like Boko Haram should be created by the federal government as

this can weaken Boko Haram fighters. It should be placed steady and patiently as a long term programme as most members of the terrorists groups may not be too quick to respond.

5. The recent grazing preposition (grazing reserve and cattle colony) should be resisted by all means. It should not be embraced by any state nor the bill passed into law. It is senseless, irrational and only serves the interests of the Fulani agenda.
6. This work supports the idea that the federal government should establish cattle colonies in Sambisa forest as suggested by the Pan Niger Delta Forum (cited by Omotayo, 2018). Sambisa forest is a perfect site to raise cattles. Okwesili (cited by Inyang, 2018), pointed out that Sambisa forest is 18 times as large as Lagos state. According to her, all of Lagos state is 3,345 square km, whereas Sambisa forest is 60,000 square km. In the same vein Burutai (cited by Igata, 2018), affirmed that Sambisa forest is as big as Enugu state. It is calculated that it has 686 square kilometers, 6.8 million hectares, 68 million plots of 100 feet by 100 feet; thus at 5 cows per plot, it can take 340 million cows. So if the federal government is really looking for land to graze cattle, they should consider Sambisa forest unless they have something else in their mind.
7. Citizens and those in political positions in Nigeria should no longer keep silent over the federal governments negligence of victims of brutal massacres and killings by the Fulani herdsmen and other terrorist groups in the country. They should speak up and were necessary meet their complaints with non-violent actions to drive home their points.
8. Terrorists with high profile records of killing, destruction of goods and carrying out acts of massive destruction should be sentenced to death once found guilty after trials. They should not just be sent to prison in order to avoid flooding the Nigerian Prisons with terrorists. Prisoner Radicalization theory posited by Hamm (2014), exposed that the worst terrorists are recruited in prisons. The government of Nigeria should equally improve on the prisons security facilities to meet up with the challenges of the culture of terrorism in the contemporary epoch. This work strictly condemns the federal governments moving of high profile terrorists to Ekwulobia Prison in Anambra state in 2016. High profile terrorists should not be moved at random and for a long distance at that. It creates room for suspicion.
9. All the religious groups in Nigeria should always promote their religious value since all hinges on love, peace, unity and so on as the major tool to uphold and sustain democratic principles in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The scourge of terrorism has become more virulent in recent years in Nigeria and it has produced brutal massacres which have in turn put even greater obstacles in the. It is the obvious that the culture of death, threat to life and wasting of human lives which it has created; and is threat to life and wasting of human lives which it has created; and is equally endemic in the contemporary milieu is basically fostered by lack of respect for the sanctity of life, lack of love and tolerance, not having a full cognition of what peace and especially, the peace of mind is all about.

Terrorists that wastes human lives in Nigeria like members of the BokoHaram, the Fulani Herdsmen and other terrorist groups being groomed in various ethnic groups can learn justice in dealing with fellow human beings and respect of other peoples values via the admonitions already presented in the *Evangelium Vitae*. This if embraced by the average citizen of Nigeria, wars and rumoursof war, hatred and rancour, feelings of marginalization, depression, oppression and jealousy will have no place in the affairs of the Nigerian citizens.

The culture of terrorism, wasting of human life and general threat to human life should be replaced with the culture of peace, love, tolerance and the sanctity of human life. It is possible to build the culture of peace by instilling it into children from homes starting at the cradle and toddling stages. Peace talks should be paramount in every idle talks, discussions in public and private inorder to effect the submission of the theoretical framework of this paper. Emelu (2014), is of the view that this is possible once people will eschew selfishness and go beyond a mere legalistic interpretation of justice to find the justice of love; a justice that goes the extra mile in being ones brothers keeper. Bearing in mind that the big wars outside start with the little wars in our hearts against ones neighbour.

Citizens of Nigeria should embrace the injunctions in the *Evangelium Vitae* and the peace process theory which is equivalent to the proposals of the *Pacem in Terris* in. They should make it the cornerstone of their relationships both public or private. When this is employed, everyone will develop this indepth urge never to hurt one another intentionally. Indiscriminate shading of blood through terrorism both physical and spiritual will be naturally debunked from ones mind not to talk of being visibly externalized.

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