



# Africa

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## Africae Munus: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation

((( CONTENTS )))

### Encouragement for the Church in Africa and a challenge to the Universal Church

**Africae Munus: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation**

1

**Is Botswana Still a Model for Democracy on the African Continent?**

2

**Restorative Justice: Returning to African Traditions of Peacebuilding and Reconciliation**

3

**Making the Case for nonviolence in dealing with the Lord's Resistance Army**

4

**AFRICOM Update**

6

By Aniedi Okure, OP, AFJN Director

On November 19th, 2011, in the Republic of Benin in West Africa, Pope Benedict XVI published the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* which means Africa's Commitment, marking the climax of the Second Synod of Bishops for Africa (2009). The exhortation builds on the theme of the First Synod of Bishops for Africa, *Ecclesia in Africa* (1994) which focused on the "Church as Family of God". It described the family as a place of belonging, dialogue and solidarity, a place where everyone feels welcomed and the uniqueness of each member is respected and nurtured. The Second Synod places special emphasis on the theological themes that are integral to the family of God – personal reconciliation, building a just social order and promoting peace through living the beatitudes. *Africae Munus* notes that the family is the place that propagates the "culture of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation" (#43).

*Africae Munus* is presented as a two part address. Part one which includes many elements of *Ecclesia in Africa* opens with "Behold I make all things new" and highlights what the Pope sees as a new dawn of Christian maturity on the African continent. Part two focuses on the constituent members of the Church – clergy, consecrated persons, men and women missionaries, lay pastoral leaders, the elderly, youth and children – and challenges Church leadership to recognize and embrace their gifts so as to give an appropriate and holistic response to the pastoral needs of the time, and to lead by example rather than just teaching.

The Church's commitment to service, reconciliation, justice and peace must help societies to put Christ at the center of the world and build a just social order (#163). The burden of creating a just social order falls especially on those persons in the economic and political sphere who are builders of society (#22, 49). The role of the church is to serve as the watchdog in this process and lead all members of God's family to live in harmony.

The Pope notes that Western societies would benefit from Africa's vision of life; it is creation-centered and includes ancestors, the living and those yet to be born, thus embracing all of God's creation (#69). Strikingly, the Pope points out that the defense of life entails the elimination of ignorance through literacy and quality education of the whole person, adding that illiteracy is a princi-



Pope Benedict XVI in Benin, Nov 2011 . Photo: CNS

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!**

**May your holidays be peaceful and bright.**

God bless,

Aniedi,  
Bahati and  
Melaura



Continued on page 7

## Is Botswana Still a Model for Democracy on the African Continent?

By Akashni Pillay, native of South Africa



**“The time is now for Africans to seek resolve from the successes of its own people. The question is, can Botswana lead by example with a strong democratic model?”**

The Republic of Botswana stands as a pillar of democratic success upon the African continent. As a thriving model for good governance, the country’s elective process is deemed free, stable and equitable. It has attracted much attention from global leaders, and enjoyed an annual per capita income growth of approximately 9%, one of the fastest in the world after gaining independence in 1966.

To date Botswana has held eight elections amongst a population of 1.9 million people. According to Afrobarometer, about 82 percent of civil society firmly believed in the legitimacy of the elective process, whilst a further 73 percent are content with

the way in which governmental power is managed.

But Botswana is by no means devoid of its own internal challenges to stability. On one hand it fears that its ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) will render in a new dynamic form of authoritarianism, a serious threat to multi-partyism in the country. On the other hand, it still suffers recurring issues of land rights, a lack of ethnic diversity, and income disparities. The preservation of Botswana’s democracy is therefore a tough feat for current president Ian Seretse Khama.

The fragility of democratization in Africa in general has often harnessed restless civil societies on the continent; eager to reap the benefits of a stable post-colonialism and bridge the gaps that hinder a more egalitarian African integration with the international community.

Amongst a platform of African thinkers, development is still a contextual buzzword. Still, the push for African Solutions to African Problems is a feat that is ever more noteworthy of being realized. But what are African solutions to the democracy question? As Africa begins to heal and adjust from the detriments of the development ushered in by western international financial institutions like the World Bank, Africans are finding the will to hold their governments both ac-

countable and transparent (if not to bolster regime change altogether).

Meanwhile, war resulting from ethnic clashes, destitute poverty and government clampdowns on freedom of speech legislation still continue to tarnish the positive image of democracy that African states such as Botswana, South Africa, Liberia and Rwanda have sought to consolidate.

It is therefore imperative for developmental minds to draw from the strengths of the continent in order to combat their national weaknesses in a way that is inclusive of the African values that enrich our societies. Given the depth of regime change in African states like Libya, Tunisia and Egypt for example, the time is now for Africans to seek resolve from the successes of its own people. The question is, can Botswana lead by example with a strong democratic model amongst fragile African states?

A closer look into the political structure reveals a strong foundation in the Kgotla system- a traditional communal forum, where communal members openly discuss their issues on the ground. At a national level, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) maintains an essential and credible elective process. Furthermore, in conjunction with the presidency, Botswana maintained a lower chamber of fifteen members of the House of Chiefs that tends to the country’s customary issues. The combination essentially makes

**“A closer look into the political structure reveals a strong foundation in the Kgotla system—a traditional communal forum where communal members openly discuss their issues.”**

for a more participatory type of democracy, highlighting the maturity of Botswana in understanding the value of institutionalizing its traditional practices with its modern body politic. Synchronizing the traditional with the modern is highly progressive towards ushering in a democracy with an African face.

To date, Botswana boasts the achievement of its plan to have provided access to ten years of basic education to every child citizen of the country, and will stem to this achievement to the tertiary level as well. Although the population is much lower in Botswana than in many other African states, Botswana has much to teach in terms of a state’s

*Continued on page 5*

## **Restorative Justice: Returning to African Traditions of Peacebuilding and Reconciliation**

*Compiled by AFJN Staff*

### **Introduction**

Restorative Justice, the foundation of African worldviews, values, cultures and traditions that flourished for thousands of years until the continent was ravaged by slave trading, colonialism, neo-colonialism and twentieth century wars, survives today and is an integral component in the restoration of African communities and society. Indeed, the revival of restorative justice is at the heart of transforming many of the ills that are commonly associated with African countries. There is a significant role for restorative justice to play in transitioning repressive regimes into responsive and accountable governments. Likewise, restorative justice can foster healing, nonviolence and reconciliation between groups in which hatred, violence and revenge rule the day. Restorative justice can likewise transform systems which repress women, sideline elders and victimize youth. In short, restorative justice needs to return to its rightful place in African governance structures, community, and cultural support systems. It is the missing ingredient in the vision, dialogue and activities that seek to restore justice, peace and prosperity to African society. Africa Faith and Justice Network is resolutely committed to advancing restorative justice in pursuit of a restored Africa. Here is a preview of some dialogue we will be advancing:

**“Before sub-Saharan Africa was colonized by European powers, there were no prisons.”**

### **What is Restorative Justice?**

Restorative Justice as a term has numerous contexts and applications. In the African context, restorative justice is thousands of years old, and is often referred to as traditional justice. In global indigenous contexts, including Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America and the island nations, restorative justice is an indigenous understanding of addressing human affairs, balancing justice with peace, healing and reconciliation. In Western contexts, restorative justice is thought of as something fairly new, and is being progressively introduced, albeit slowly, as an alternative to punitive justice in the juvenile justice, criminal justice and school systems. In the African context, restorative justice utilizes indigenous, traditional mediation and reconciliation practices. Restorative justice principles are also applied to peacebuilding efforts following wars, genocide and institutional repression. Restorative justice embraces the concept of *Ubuntu* (I am because you are, the oneness and inter-relationship of humanity and community). Typical restorative justice frame-

works involve the offender, victim, family and community to repair the harm, address the sources of harm, offer forgiveness, provide accountability and transform or restore relationships.

### **Restorative Justice vs. Punitive Justice**

Punitive justice approaches crime from the opposite viewpoint of restorative justice. It focuses on the offender, and seeks to punish the offender through incarceration, corporal punishment or death. Punitive justice has a devastating effect on society, especially to children, youth and families of poor, marginalized and racially and ethnically targeted communities. An example of the dramatic effects of the punitive justice system is the United States, where over 2.3 million people are incarcerated, the highest incarceration rate in the world. Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans are over-represented in prisons and jails disproportionately to their populations. It is commonly understood that one out of three black males in America are either locked up, on probation or parole. In Australia, where less than 3% of the population is indigenous, 25% of prisoners come from indigenous communities.

South Africa's prison population of 166,000 is among the highest in the world. In a punitive system, prisoners live under shocking, dehumanizing conditions where overcrowding, violence and rape are commonplace. In this system, there is no attempt

to improve the life of the victim, heal the community, transform the offender or repair the harm. The focus is on punishment of the offender.

### **Examples of Restorative Justice in Africa**

Before sub-Saharan Africa was colonized by European powers, there were no prisons. The colonial powers built prisons to incarcerate Africans who opposed the colonial regimes, those who refused to participate in forced labor and those who refused to surrender their ancestral lands and customs. This legacy of incarceration continues in the post-colonial period. Deteriorating socio-economic conditions exacerbate crimes previously rare in African societies and continue to expand prison populations. Notwithstanding the damage to indigenous support systems, a new mentality of punitive justice and the growth of prisons, traditional/restorative justice systems have survived. Two Examples:

*Continued on page 6*

## Making the Case for nonviolence in dealing with the Lord's Resistance Army

By Bahati Jacques, AFJN Policy Analyst

On October 14, 2011, President Barack Obama sent a letter to Congress to inform law-makers that he had authorized the deployment of one hundred “combat equipped U.S. forces to central Africa to provide assistance to regional forces that are working toward the removal of Joseph Kony from the battlefield.” This decision is in compliance with US Public Law 111 172, the *Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009*, enacted on May 24, 2010.

For more than two decades Joseph Kony, the Ugandan leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been killing, abducting and raping children, men and women in Uganda, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and the Republic of South Sudan (RSS).

The Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) has consistently opposed US military involvement in this crisis. During their annual meeting, AFJN's board members denounced the atrocities of the LRA but reiterated their stand in favor of a non-military approach to the problem:

“While we acknowledge and denounce the terrible destruction brought about by Joseph Kony and his militia, and deplore the heart-breaking suffering imposed on so many ordinary people, we stand opposed to the choice of the Obama administration to send further military assistance to the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and the Republic of South Sudan as of October 14<sup>th</sup> 2011. We do not see that further militarization will be in the best interest of the peoples of these countries in the long term; rather we advocate for non-military support to be sent to deal with the complex political issues. This position is consistent with our perspective on the militaristic aspects of US Public Law 111-172. AFJN was, and still is, deeply concerned about the statement of policy that would allow AFRICOM to ‘apprehend or otherwise remove Joseph Kony from the battlefield’. However, AFJN supported the developmental and transitional justice aspects of the bill long before it became law, and continues to support them.”

The Ugandan Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) has also maintained its position against military intervention and expressed concern over President Obama's decision, saying that “[W]hile many have lost

hope in any peaceful resolution to the conflict, the reality is that the peace process, in particular the Juba peace talks which began in 2006, is responsible for the relative calm being experienced in northern Uganda today. ... Instead of relying on military intervention, let us redouble our efforts to engage in dialogue.”

Even though President Obama's decision is required by law, Mr. Kwaku Osei, a doctoral student of the International Relations Department at the University of Cambridge in UK; argues that “America's plan in Uganda is hardly humanitarian.” He asks “Why now?” and suggests that “[I]f the U.S. does in fact want to improve the humanitarian situation in Uganda, there are other, more logical, ways to achieve this. The biggest obstacle to the strengthening of Ugandan democracy is not Joseph Kony or the dying LRA, but rather, Ugandan president and close U.S. ally Yoweri Museveni.”

Similarly, Jack Healey, head of the Human Rights Action Network and former executive director of Amnesty International USA, surprised to see many human rights organizations support President Obama's decision, offers this analysis: “[T]here is a danger when human rights groups ally themselves too closely with U.S. security interests that they may lose their legitimacy as neutral actors.” He also states : “[F]or the United States, this mission is not strictly humanitarian. As Jendayi Frazer, the former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, recently noted on Public Radio International, the U.S. military advisers are partly a reward to the Ugandan military for being a good ally to the United States in its global war on terror.” Such support can pose a serious dilemma when the need to expose military misconduct and abuses arises, as is the case in many armed conflicts.

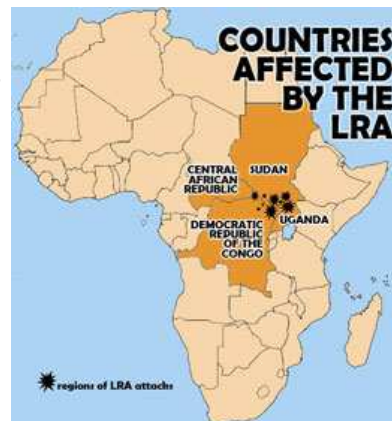
Skepticism over the true motivations behind US military intervention in Africa in general, and in LRA affected nations in particular, is based in part on a consistent record of a US foreign policy which aims primarily to place US interests first as opposed to genuine partnership, capacity building, civil society strengthening and democracy promotion. Besides, the US has been training and equipping Ugandan, Congolese and other armies in the region for a while for years; how has this keen interest in “enhancing capacity” made a change in security for civilians?

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**“... Military advisers are partly a reward to the Ugandan military for being a good ally to the United States in its global war on terror.”**

Let's state the obvious: today there is no strong democratic country in the world that has a militia groups killing people or political leaders using the army to maintain power. Both are happening in Uganda today. Elected officials in western democracies, through hard work, use nonviolence means to convince voters that they deserve to be their leaders. In addition, civil societies are empowered and the rule of law works fairly well.

The point here is that Kony has survived to this day because of a lack of leadership in his country of origin, Uganda. Instead of finding a solution to Kony, Ugandan soldiers were sent to invade the D.R. Congo in 1996 along with the Rwandan army. Uganda's neighboring nations where Kony is operating have many problems of their own. South Sudan recently became independent from the Republic of Sudan in July, 2011. The D.R. Congo has been mismanaged and unstable, particularly in the eastern provinces bordering with Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda ever since these nations invaded it in 1996. In Uganda and Congo, where American-trained and American troops are already operating, laws have been changed to accommodate the presidents' desire to remain in power. In these countries presidents have been in power for decades. Mobutu Sese Seko ruled Congo for 32 years until he was removed by force and President Kabila, in power beyond 10 years, amended constitutional election rules. He was sworn in on December 20, 2011 to serve another term after a presidential election described by numerous reports from impartial election monitors to lack credibility and not to conform to the truth. He is now accused of rigging the November 2011 elections. President Museveni has been in power for 25 years and counting.



The announcement of sending one hundred US troops to Central Africa is not in the best interests of the affected people in the long-term. Even if Kony was to be killed today, without forging a certain and clear path to democracy in these nations, the LRA would surely be replaced by another rebel group. As a matter of fact, there are other Ugandan rebel groups besides the LRA, namely the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) and the Alliance of Democratic Forces (ADF), currently operating and killing people in the DRC. There are many factors that foment rebellion. These should be addressed to prevent it from happening in the first place.

To this day Kony poses serious threats to many communities in these countries, but it is estimated that his staying power has been weakened over the years as a result of peace talks that started in 2006, defections from within his ranks and the amnesty laws promulgated by the Ugandan government. The affected people need help now; it is the responsibility of the governments of the countries affected to protect their people and to redouble their efforts for a peaceful solution to the crisis. •

*“Botswana” from page 2* commitment to the development of its people. It is thus admirable of Botswana to serve as the example to the African continent in its development of the link between realizing a human right and then actually having access to it.

These achievements are noteworthy of praise as the country moves forth into a new dimension of status quo politics. The rise in a new scramble for African resources, particularly from the newly industrializing countries brings new threats to Africans and their economies, especially where democracy has not taken strong roots. We live in an era where faith in democracy will be ever more tested. Time is a defining factor in the stability of Botswana's democracy as a model to other African states. Meanwhile, I suggest that Botswana's democracy is indeed a book others would do well to take a leaf out of. •

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# AFRICOM

## UPDATE

The United States Africa Command is the US's regional military command for Africa. Unlike other regional commands, AFRICOM uses "soft power" and diplomatic efforts to pursue their goals. It is AFJN's belief that diplomatic and humanitarian efforts should be left to USAID and the Department of State, and further militarization is not what Africa needs.

By Melaura Homan-Smith, AFJN

**Libya:** In the aftermath of the overthrow of Gaddafi, AFRICOM looks to play a key role in developing the military of the country. With lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan, AFRICOM seeks to unify the fledgling state under a legitimate military and "bring rival militias under national control," according to the Army Times. While Libya has an "impressive arsenal", their combat readiness is low and the military suffers from "leadership problems, political favoritism and erratic training." Army Gen. Carter Ham, the commander of AFRICOM, suggests that bringing Libyan officers to US colleges, selling equipment and training would assist in unifying the nation and winning the hearts of young fighters who could have been recruited into rebel militias. The use of US intelligence to conduct background checks would further help with installing a strong army and navy for Libya.

Clearly Libya requires security for its people, but more sustained diplomatic effort should be put into the National Transitional Council setting up a government. The US Department of State, not the Pentagon, should be involved in helping Libya recover from the violence that led to the end of 34 years of dictatorial rule. AFRICOM being so inexorably entwined in creating, arming and staffing a mighty Libyan military could lead to the same loop: US support for a US-designed military until the new government endeavors to do something the US doesn't agree with. When things go wrong, a threat to revoke military aid is usually issued, but it is often too late for victims of conflict. The US should have a diplomatic and supportive role in Libya; after all, it did lead the charge to take down the previous government. But AFRICOM's new role should not extend to such invasive involvement in creating their military or government. The Libyans can do this themselves. •

"Restorative Justice" from page 3



Ugandan women, 2009 AFJN trip

### Uganda

*Mato Oput* in the Acholi communities of Northern Uganda combines mediation, reconciliation, forgiveness and accountability to resolve clan and family-centered grievances and disputes between the parties including serious harms through traditional leader-led processes, dances, ceremonies and cleansing rituals. *Mato-Oput* was successfully applied toward the end of the war in Northern Uganda. Former Lord's Resistance Army rebels, many of whom were abducted into the army, participated.

### Nigeria

The *Afikpo* indigenous justice system of east central Nigeria utilizes restorative justice and community traditions to resolve conflicts. Victims, offenders and community members actively participate in the proc-

ess and crime is viewed as a conflict between community members. Underlying socio-economic conditions and community values are re-examined. This indigenous justice system is victim-oriented while it helps to transform the offender and heal relationships in the community.

### A Pro-Active Approach to Restorative Justice

Contemporary Restorative Justice Systems need not only to be reactive, such as reacting to grievances, crimes, mass atrocities or state-sponsored violence. Restorative Justice can and should be pro-active and integrated into family and community support systems, communal land systems, school systems, social service, alcohol rehabilitation, juvenile, criminal justice and domestic court systems. Aboriginal communities in North America, Australia and New Zealand are having groundbreaking results as they bring back restorative justice practices in their communities and integrate these into the systems with which they interact. African society has a rich legacy of restorative justice and that legacy has never been needed more than now. •

*“Africae Munus” from front page*

pal obstacle to development.

The Pope points to the impressive quality of the speeches at the Second Synod, the growth of the Church on the continent and its missionary endeavors as examples of the Christian maturity of the continent. He noted that a growing number of missionaries now leave Africa to minister in other parts of the world, and calls on the African Bishops to “respond generously to the requests of their confreres in countries lacking vocations and assist the faithful deprived of priests” (#167). The church worldwide and Western societies in particular would benefit by looking to Africa for inspiration especially in its life-centered values, their appreciation of the elderly whose wisdom and experience serve as a bridge between generations and in the process of reconciliation. Such appreciation should inspire “Western societies to treat the elderly with greater dignity” (#47-49).

*Africae Munus* is a shot in the arm for the Church in Africa and a challenge to Church leadership. An interesting observation is the Pope’s reference to Africa as a “spiritual ‘lung’ for a humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope” (#13). Africans remain resilient despite the collective trauma they have been subjected to in the past two centuries due to their deep spiritual roots, a deep sense of hope and connectedness to nature. Over the past two decades, Africa remains the region with the fastest growth of Christianity and Catholicism.

The challenge for African bishops and pastoral leaders is how to “dialogue with the various constituencies within the church and society” (#11), to embrace the contributions of all members of the family in justice and peace so that the Church can transform theology into pastoral care (#10). Within this context, *Africae Munus* calls on the universal church to recognize and celebrate Africa’s rightful place within the Church and the world (## 4-5).

The pope acknowledged the social, economic and political challenges that beset the African continent but did not dwell on them. Those who are used to seeing Africa as the poster child for disasters might find this a grave omission. Rather, he points to the growth and accomplishments of the Church in Africa, its maturity, the reserves of life and vitality it holds for the future and how, as a spiritual lung, it can inspire the rest of the world (#113). He emphasizes that the synod’s deliberations demonstrated a Christian maturity that is unafraid to face the truth that beset Africa and address possible solutions. He sees the Church as a blessing for the continent and for the entire world.

**“Africans remain resilient despite the collective trauma they have been subjected to in the past.”**

In addressing the social and economic challenges that beset Africa, the Pope criticizes the exploitation of Africa’s resources by external interests— often cooperating with African political and economic elites – that “ensure their own prosperity at the expense of the well-being of the local population” (#24). He calls on the Church to be the sentinel that speaks out fearlessly about these economic injustices.

Time and time again, the Pope emphasized the need for justice as a means for true and lasting peace. Observing that even charity must be done in justice, he describes as false “a charity which fails to respect justice and the rights of all” (#18). Education too is a matter of justice. The Church is obliged to educate all her members, including the Social Teachings of the Church, so they can truly be informed apostles for justice and ensure that the principle of subsidiarity where “neither the state nor any larger society substitutes itself for the initiative and responsibility of individuals and intermediary bodies” is upheld in African societies (#24).

In addressing the role of women in society, the Pope notes the violence that is often perpetuated against women, points to the “much too slow” understanding and “evolution of thinking” in regards to the rights and dignity of women (#56), and urges the Church to embrace their voices and talents. In doing so, the Church contributes to the “recognition and liberation of women, following the example of Christ’s own esteem for them” so that in turn women can continue to contribute to “the humanization of society” (#57). The question is how to attend to internal structures and attitudes that preclude participation of women in the apostolates.

*Africae Munus* is a strong encouragement to the Church in Africa and a challenge to her leadership. As did his predecessors, especially Paul VI, the Pope challenges the Church in Africa to embrace elements within its culture that serve as the cornerstone for the Gospel. Doing so will advance its maturity and enrich the universal church. The question one might ask is: To what extent can the Church in Africa embrace elements within its cultures and the voices and talents of its constituencies? Efforts are already underway by SECAM, (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar) and African scholars to plan its implementation. •

*See the full text at [Vatican.va](http://Vatican.va)*

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**Africa Faith and Justice Network**, inspired by the Gospel and informed by Catholic Social Teaching, educates and advocates for just relations with Africa.

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