

THE CATHOLIC VOYAGE: AFRICAN JOURNAL OF CONSECRATED LIFE

A BRIEF HISTORY

Introduction

In the early 2000s, soon after the celebration of the Jubilee Year, the Nigeria Conference of Women Religious (NCWR), decided to have a publication that would benefit and benefit its member Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Hitherto, a medium of communication among its members was a newsletter, which till then was produced for several years. There was need to graduate from the publication of a newsletter to another medium that would give room for richer contents that would get to a larger audience. The idea of production of a journal was born and unanimously accepted in 2003. Thus, the *Catholic Voyage* was founded in 2003.¹

Since its beginning, leaders, scholars, thinkers, formators, agents of evangelization, especially members of the Institutes of Consecrated Life have forged a unique tradition and community project known today as "*The Catholic Voyage: African Journal of Consecrated Life*" (TCV). This tradition is inspired by the spirit and charisms of Consecrated Life and steeped in classical sources, such as the Bible and the documents of the Church. Yet, it is open to new development and horizons and it cultivates the African and Catholic intellectual and religious heritage. Thus, this tradition wants to undertake creative engagement with theologians and thinkers and offers bold response to the issues of contemporary Consecrated Life in the Church and society. To this end, the journal is animated by evangelical convictions and it is conscious of its prophetic calling.

TCV serves the Church and her evangelizing mission and, in particular, contributes to the growth and development of Consecrated Life in Africa, including Nigeria. Faithful to its vision, mission and core values, the TCV promotes a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Christian faith, life and culture in African context. It does this through information, formation and education, evangelization by means of the print and online media and other appropriate initiatives.

¹ Cfr., Sr. Mary Agatha Osarenkhoe, EHJ, "A Brief History of the Catholic Voyage. A witness's personal account of the beginnings: 2004 - 2009", in: *The Catholic Voyage: African Journal of Consecrated Life*, Vol. 11, (2015) 146-152.

Focus And Scope

The primary area of interest of this journal is Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic Life in the Church and Society, with particular reference to Africa. The concern is both at the level of reflection and at the level of practice and experience. The journal is guided by and follows the teachings of the Pope and Magisterium of the Church.

The Aims And Objectives

The primary aims and original mission of *The Catholic Voyage* are to educate, inform, form, and contribute to evangelization. It strives to propagate “the good, the true and the beautiful” in communicating message (John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, n.124) concerning Consecrated Life. In particular, its purposes are to:

- (1) Provide a forum for the cultivation, development and promotion of Theology, Canon law, philosophy, spirituality, Church history, and other ecclesiastical studies as well as social and human sciences which have a close connection with Consecrated Life and its evangelizing mission.
- (2) Become a medium for debate, dialogue and reflection on historical, contemporary, topical issues and challenges concerning consecrated life and its mission in the Church and in the world.
- (3) Contribute to the Church’s mandate for evangelization by proclaiming the Gospel through dialogue, inculturation, the promotion of social justice, peace and integral human development.
- 4) Make Christ’s message relevant and credible through the dissemination of studies and reflections, apostolates and ministries, documents and texts, as well as sharing pertinent experiences and testimonies of witnesses and experts concerning Consecrated life.

In pursuit of its aims and objectives, the journal produces print and online editions, runs a YouTube channel and uses Facebook and other social media.

From its outset, an editor with an editorial board has always directed the journal. The earliest editorial board appointed with the task of producing the journal unfortunately had unresolved issues and it could not produce any publication. Therefore, the board was dissolved. Subsequently, the NCWR in April 2003 appointed Sr. Mary Agatha Osarenkhoe, EHJ, as the Editor of the journal, while she also carried out her functions as the Executive Secretary of NCWR. In January 2005 members of the editorial board were appointed and the official appointment of the founding Editor was confirmed:

- Sr. Mary Agatha Osarenkhoe, EHJ – Founding Editor
- Fr. Lawrence Okwuosa, SVD
- Sr. Ifeoma Arinze, DC

The members of the Board were given the deadline of ensuring that the publication was out from the printing press for the Annual General Meeting in January each year.

Name

Among the five names proposed for the journal, *The Voyage* was chosen. The first edition of this journal was produced in 2003 and launched in January 2004. The production was made by the Editor with the help of the assistant editor, Sr. Pricilla Aliu, SND and the office assistant in the NCWR secretariat, Sr. Maureen Iwu, EHJ. It was printed in Enugu. The first edition of *The Voyage* was launched and distributed in the January 2004 on the occasion of the joint Annual General Meetings of the NCWR and the Conference of Major Superiors (Men) - CMSN(Men). With the production of the first edition, the long impasse with regard to the publication of the journal was resolved. The journal is the brain child of NCWR; the production of its first editions was a dream-come-true for the Conference. The then president of NCWR, Mother Maria Ifechukwu Udorah, DDL, expressed the following sentiments in her message to the Editor after the first two editions:

"We wish to thank you immensely for your beautiful editorial works in the production of the journal titled 'The Voyage'. Through your hard work and wisdom you were able to fulfill our beautiful dream of producing a journal we can call our own. Our utmost joy is that the work is indeed a wonderful one with so many well researched and inspiring articles and reflections as contributions from people of good-will. The two editions, 2004 and 2005 that were produced have sold very well in the book market, and we are indeed very grateful to you."

The same group of people who worked with the editor to produce the first edition also worked with her to produce the 2005 edition. The second and subsequent editions were printed in Lagos. Although the NCWR was the publisher of the first edition, the Conference of Major Superiors of Nigeria (Men) made important contribution and gave useful suggestions at the very early stage especially concerning how to improve the journal and what to do to sustain it. During one of the joint Executive Meetings, the CMSN(Men) asked that the journal become the publication of both Conferences, that is, the Conference of Major Superiors of Nigeria (CMSN) and the NCWR. The request was welcomed and accepted by the NCWR. Hereafter, starting with the 2005 edition, the proprietors and publishers of the journal is "*Conference of Major Superiors of Nigeria*," which means both the NCWR and CMSN[Men].

Although the initial name of the journal was "The Voyage" and the first three editions of the journal had this name, the name was, however, changed starting with the 2007 edition. It was changed because it was discovered in November 27, 2006 when an application was submitted to the Corporate Affairs Commission (Nigeria) in order to have

the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) that the name *The Voyage* already existed. The Conference was advised to change the name of the journal. “Catholic” was then added to make the difference. Hence the chosen new name of the journal was “The Catholic Voyage.” The journal received its ISSN in December 21, 2006. Later, the journal received a subtitle: *African Journal of Consecrated Life*.

The Concept Or Formula

The birth of *The Catholic Voyage* was inspired by the need to have a project that would enrich the life of Consecrated Men and Women. *The Catholic Voyage*, as desired by the both Conferences of the CMSN, performs functions of informing, educating and forming. For these reasons, the journal presents well-researched articles for the benefit of their members and other readers.

The articles are different genres. Some contributors are commissioned to write on given topics, while others write on topical subjects. Many readers find the articles very insightful, educative and helpful. There are contributors who volunteer to write on important or current topics.

Format

The maiden issue came out in A5 size with a glossy sky-blue cover. This size was handy, but there have been changes in the course of the years. Subsequent editions were in the same format but with a different colour for the cover each year. Today the format of the print edition and cover page reflects a renewal and creativity in response to the changing times and a new editorial needs and sensibility while preserving its traditions.

Contents And Editorial Policy

The Catholic Voyage is a wide range collection of articles, reports and reflections through various media (print, online, social media). It offers both scholarly articles and other types of articles such as reflections, book Review and Reports. It shares relevant church documents, the communiques and proceedings of conferences, meetings, seminars.

The editorial board members have terms of reference. They also have clear ideas about readership, frequency and circulation figures desired. They are to meet twice a year or as the need arises; seek for articles and edit them; work in close collaboration with the Editor-in-Chief; and they suggest means of sustaining, marketing and distribution. The TCV provides guidelines for authors. The sales and distribution of the journal are encouraging. Complimentary copies are given according to the journal’s criteria.

Readership, Frequency And Circulation

The journal has a valuable, fertile and diverse readership. The journal is intended primarily for consecrated persons, and for all individuals – laity, clergy, researchers and students – as well as to organizations/institutions. Some readers give feedbacks with beautiful and encouraging comments and make constructive critique and useful suggestions.

The Catholic Voyage in print edition is, generally, published once a year. The online edition appears more than once a year.

Sales And Distribution

The first issue of the TCV was presented and launched in January 2004. Since then, each year the new print edition of the publication is presented in January to be launched at the joint annual general meeting of the CMSN². During its first eighteen years, on the whole, an average of about 750 copies were sold per year. After the meeting, Secretariats of the Conferences would serve as one of the outlets for sales and distribution to readers. The price of each copy is affordable.

Complimentary Copies

Every year complimentary copies are given to some bishops, Apostolic Nunciature, selected institutions and organizations and, of course, contributing authors. Letters of appreciation and compliments in terms of content and quality of the production are received from some beneficiaries. From 2014 a new plan for a wider distribution and marketing and for giving complimentary copies was presented to authorities.

The Editorial And Advisory Boards

At the beginning, after some initial difficulties and consequent dissolution of the Editorial Board, a new Board was established in April 2003, headed by the Editor-in-Chief. In December 2008, she requested and obtained relief from her appointment as editor-in-Chief of *The Catholic Voyage*. Therefore, after the 2009 edition of the journal a new Editor-in-Chief was appointed to replace her. The successor was Rev. Sr. Dr. Henrietta Alokha, SSH.

Today the journal enjoys an expanded Editorial Board and an Advisory Board. Since its foundation, the journal has had three Editors-in-Chief:

² As at 2009, “One thousand copies were printed for each edition” (Sr. Agatha Osarenkhoe, EHJ)

- Rev. Sr. Agatha OSARENKHOE, EHJ (2003-2008).
- †Rev. Sr. Henrietta Ebosioigwe ALOKHA, SSH, (2009-2013), [d. 15/3/2020].
- Rev. Fr. Oseni J. Osilama OGUNU, OMV (January 2014 till present).

Looking to the future, the continuation of the journal depends on everyone. The readers, donors and associates, Editorial and Advisory Boards, Publishers have contribution to make. Despite its challenges, the journal continues to focus on its aims and mission. Certainly, “If we want the journal to continue to exist and grow, we must patronize it and further publicize it... It promotes the mission of Consecrated Life in church and society. It is a very good venture (...). It is a laudable initiative. Today more than ever before, we need such journal as *The Catholic Voyage* to serve especially the clergy, the consecrated persons, and the candidates in Houses of Formation and seminaries, and also the lay faithful who desire to have a deepened knowledge of or share in the spirituality, charism or apostolic mission of the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Society of Apostolic Life.” (Rev. Dr. Mary Agatha Osarenkhoe, EHJ, Founding Editor and the Superior General, Institute of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus).

In its eagerness to serve, the TCV has to seek new ways, approaches and methods to pursue its statutory aims and objectives. This will facilitate attaining its development and growth.

A New Era And New Horizons in the Development And Growth

Consecrated persons can always find the paths of creativity, innovation and faithfulness within the tradition of the Church's teachings and involvement in evangelization through the means of Social Communication. Thus, since 2014 many things have happened in the TCV:

- ✓ From late 2015, *The Catholic Voyage* progressively entered into a new phase of development marked by different important initiatives.
- ✓ The members of the Editorial Board increased in number and is more diversified, thanks to the availability of scholars and reviewers, male and female, specialized in various academic disciplines.
- ✓ The Content and Editorial policy of the journal was reviewed and updated.
- ✓ Since 2018, *The Catholic Voyage* acquired a subtitle: *African Journal of Consecrated Life*. After a further reflection on the title of this journal, its history, nature, subject-matter and scope of the journal, as well as its audience, its general context and orientation as a periodical, it became evident that the addition of a subtitle had for long become necessary, appropriate and useful. In fact, along with the title, the subtitle adopted intends to:

- a) Clarify, expand on and define the title and thus offer precision on *what* this journal is all about, its central theme of interest.
- b) indicate its general perspective and scope.

c) Connect the journal with readership or audience.
d) Help to promote the journal and position it in the marketplace. Those who are interested and search for this kind of journal would be able to easily search for, identify and find it.

- ✓ It is a Peer-Review journal: As an academic publication, this is a double-blind Peer Reviewed journal. It has Guidelines for Reviewers, including peer-review process, Duties of Peer-reviewers, and Peer-Reviewers' Guide.
- ✓ Guidelines for authors (contributors) were updated.
- ✓ In addition to its expanded Editorial Board, an Advisory Board was established.
- ✓ In order to better respond to the present-day needs, there has been the strong desire, on the one hand, to expand number of print copies produced and ensure these reach more and diverse categories of readers; and, on the other hand, to entire into the digital world and to ensure and promote:

(a) the Online presence of the TCV for its great visibility and accessibility, an increase global and continental online access, awareness, quality & use of African-published, peer-reviewed research.

(b) increase at least the Nigerian and African readership of the journal.

(c) Facilitate participation in Conferences, workshops or seminars, online programs, initiatives and projects.

The journal intends to expand its horizon, outreach, visibility, means and modality of communicating its message. This is in order to better fulfill its aims and in the light of *Vita Consecrata (VC)*, n.99 and *Ecclesia in Africa*, n.125. Therefore, besides the print edition, the journal:

- produced an Online edition since 2019. Accordingly, the TCV obtained the E-ISSN to be able to publish in electronic media
- Created a Facebook page since 2019.
- Created in 2021 a YouTube Channel called “The Catholic Voyage-Africa”.
- The TCV established a Social Media Team to assist the Editorial Board in coordinating and running activities of its social media outlets.
- In 2021 the TCV created its own website in 2021; hitherto, its articles were hosted online in two other websites. This website makes its information available to writers (Authors), Readers, Librarians, Subscribers, as well as organizations and businesses interested in advertising in TCV.

We hope that the website of this *African Journal of Consecrated Life* will be able to host other relevant journals.

Conclusion

We thank God for the gift of Consecrated Life and for the history of this African journal that, through lights and shadows, seeks to promote it. We cannot dismiss the need for a journal as *The Catholic Voyage: African Journal for Consecrated Life* today. The TCV

does not serve as mere information dissemination. The journal informs, educates, forms, and evangelizes. This has many benefits. However, if we want the journal to continue to exist and grow, we must patronize it and further publicize it. It is worth investing on *The Catholic Voyage*. It promotes the Consecrated Life and its mission in the Church and in the contemporary world. It is a very good venture and a necessary enterprise, in which we all are stakeholders. It is a laudable initiative placed at the service of the Church and of African society today, especially for those who desire to have a deepened knowledge and share the rich and multifaceted vocation, spirituality, way of life and mission of the many different forms of Consecrated Life and Society of Apostolic Life (VC, 5-12). As St. John Paul II exhorts Consecrated persons: “You have not only a glorious history to remember and to recount, but also a great history still to be accomplished! Look to the future, where the Spirit is sending you in order to do even greater things.”(VC, 110). Therefore, the TCV will strive to contribute, albeit in a humble way, its own quota toward the accomplishment and the telling or sharing of the story, the “great history”, of Consecrated Life and its mission in the Church and in the world, especially in Africa.

- Fr. Oseni J.O. Ogunu, OMV

A Brief Introduction

The Catholic Voyage is a platform for encouraging online visibility of Nigerian and International catholic researchers. It allows multiple journals of different researchers to come together under one host. It is equally is a website that hosts and indexes academic journals from different higher institutions and associations.

At Catholic Voyage, we welcome well-researched articles on historical and contemporary issues from any area of ecclesiastical disciplines and human sciences relating to Consecrated Life and Society of Apostolic Life, especially in African context. In particular, it appreciates topics dealing with issues of Consecrated Life and Society of Apostolic Life; from this viewpoint, articles concerning Religion, Priesthood, Sacred Scriptures, Church history, Theology, inculturation, human development, Culture, Morality or Ethics, Education, Health Care, Canon Law, Church, Spirituality, Philosophy, Anthropology, Sociology, psychology.

The journal also presents sections on book review, and Documentation and reports concerning the activities of the CMSN, when available. It is a great platform for online visibility of Nigerian researches and researchers through Open Journals System. Contact us on Phone: +2347031048438, Email: voyagecmsn@gmail.com

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