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Abstract

This study examined the contribution of missionary pastoral ministry to evangelization in the Catholic Diocese of Meru, with particular attention to the models, methods and pastoral strategies used by missionaries and the lessons these approaches offer for contemporary evangelization. Problem statement: Although missionary activity established enduring Catholic structures and expanded catechesis, sacramental ministry, education and social services, the early missionary encounter also carried tensions arising from the negative treatment of indigenous religious and cultural practices. This tension raises a continuing pastoral question concerning how the Church can preserve the evangelical strengths of missionary practice while responding more effectively to local culture and changing social realities. The article adopts a qualitative pastoral theological approach based on the ecclesial documents, theological and missiological literature, historical accounts and contextual observations contained in the study. The study does not report a formal sampling frame, interview protocol or statistical dataset; consequently, the article makes qualitative rather than quantitative claims. The analysis shows that missionaries used village visitation, catechetical instruction, sacramental ministry, itinerant pastoral work, collaboration with catechists, consultation with local chiefs, education, health care and charitable services as complementary means of evangelization. These strategies contributed to parish development, communal life and the institutional presence of the Church. At the same time, the rejection of indigenous beliefs and practices sometimes alienated local people and weakened the possibility of genuine inculturation. Missionary evangelization in Meru produced important ecclesial and social gains, but contemporary pastoral ministry requires a more contextual, participatory and inculturated approach. The Diocese should strengthen catechetical formation, lay participation, culturally responsive pastoral planning and the integration of evangelization with integral human development.

Keywords: *pastoral ministry, missionary evangelization, inculturation, catechesis, integral human development, Meru Diocese*

1. Introduction

Evangelization is central to the identity and mission of the Church. In the Catholic tradition, it extends beyond verbal proclamation to the transformation of persons, communities and social life through the Gospel. Paul VI described evangelization as bringing the Good News into human situations so that humanity may be transformed from within.¹ Vatican Council II similarly located missionary activity within the nature of the Church itself and emphasized the responsibility of the whole People of God for the proclamation and witness of the Gospel.² Within this broad understanding, pastoral ministry becomes the practical setting in which proclamation, catechesis, sacramental life, community formation and service are integrated.

The history of evangelization in the Catholic Diocese of Meru reflects the decisive role of missionaries in establishing Christian communities and pastoral structures. The study indicates that missionaries moved between villages and emerging pastoral centres, taught catechism, celebrated the Eucharist, prepared candidates for baptism and established schools, hospitals, orphanages, farms and other social institutions. Missionaries also relied on itinerant and resident catechists, engaged local chiefs during the expansion of mission stations and developed parish structures that supported sustained pastoral contact. These activities linked the proclamation of the Gospel with education, health, charity and the organization of local Christian life.³

The missionary encounter, however, was not without limitations. The study reports that early missionaries often described indigenous religion and culture as pagan and required converts to renounce traditional practices. Such an approach could create distance between Christian faith and the cultural world of the people being evangelized. The later emphasis of the Church on inculturation, dialogue and the new evangelization therefore provides an important framework for reassessing the missionary legacy. New evangelization does not simply repeat earlier methods; it asks the Church to renew its missionary ardour, methods and expressions in response to changed historical and cultural circumstances.⁴

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Missionary pastoral ministry made a major contribution to the establishment of Catholic life in Meru, yet the same historical process revealed a persistent tension between the universality of the Gospel and the cultural forms through which the Gospel is received and lived. Missionaries strengthened catechesis, sacramental life, community organization and social services, but the tendency to dismiss indigenous religious values could make Christian conversion appear as cultural rejection rather than evangelical transformation. The contemporary Church therefore faces the problem of identifying which missionary practices remain pastorally valuable and which require reinterpretation in the light of inculturation, lay participation and the changing

¹ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), nos. 40–41.

² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (7 December 1965).

³ G. D. Kitter, *The White Fathers* (New York: Hamper and Brothers, 1956); Kuura and Mugania, *Diocese of Meru Parish Council Manual* (Makutano, Meru: Mugraphic Systems, 1999); L. Linda, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland* (London: Heimerann, 1974).

⁴ Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris: The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2012); XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta: New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2012); Stephen Wang, *New Evangelization* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2013).

realities of local communities. Without such reflection, evangelization risks becoming either a repetition of inherited forms or an accommodation that lacks a clear Christian centre.⁵

1.2 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to examine the models, methods and pastoral strategies used by missionaries in the evangelization of the Catholic Diocese of Meru and to assess their implications for contemporary pastoral ministry, new evangelization, inculturation, catechesis and integral human development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Evangelization and the Transformation of Community

Evangelization in Catholic thought concerns the proclamation of Christ and the transformation of human life in its personal, communal and cultural dimensions. Paul VI emphasized that evangelization is not limited to extending the geographical reach of preaching.⁶ It seeks to affect values, judgements, sources of inspiration and patterns of life that are inconsistent with the Gospel. The study therefore interprets evangelization as both proclamation and transformation. The Gospel addresses the individual conscience, but it also enters the concrete social world in which people work, worship, organize families, educate children and relate to the wider community.

This understanding explains why missionary evangelization in Meru combined spiritual and social activities. Pastoral work involved preaching, catechesis and the sacraments, but missionaries also responded to education, health and material needs. Kalilombe is cited in the study to support a theology rooted in the lived circumstances of local communities.⁷ Such an approach recognizes that the Christian message is received by people whose spiritual needs cannot be separated from their social and cultural conditions. Evangelization therefore becomes more credible when its proclamation is accompanied by visible concern for human dignity and communal wellbeing.⁸

2.2 New Evangelization and Changing Cultural Realities

The concept of new evangelization emerged as the Church confronted societies in which Christian identity remained present while active faith, catechetical knowledge and participation had weakened. The study stresses that new evangelization is not simply re evangelization or a judgement that earlier missionary work failed. Rather, it is a renewed missionary commitment expressed through approaches appropriate to new cultural and social circumstances. The Synod of Bishops presents new evangelization as a call for renewed witness and transmission of the Christian faith, while Wang emphasizes a renewed missionary spirit.⁹ This perspective is

⁵ Antony Drego, *The Mission of the Local Church and Inculturation of Gospel* (Vidyaiddati: Regency Press, 1981); Ferdinand Waigbo, "Ecological Sensitivity in the New Evangelization of the Church in Africa," *AFTER* 55, nos. 3–4.

⁶ Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), nos. 40–41.

⁷ Patrick Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi* (Mambo Press, 1999).

⁸ Patrick Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi* (Mambo Press, 1999); Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (7 December 1965), no. 72.

⁹ Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris: The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2012); XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta: New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2012); Stephen Wang, *New Evangelization* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2013).

especially relevant to local Churches affected by globalization, media culture, social mobility and religious pluralism.

For the Diocese of Meru, the new evangelization creates a bridge between the historical missionary experience and contemporary pastoral needs. The early missionary emphasis on direct contact, catechesis and community building retains clear value, but the methods through which these aims are pursued must respond to current cultural conditions. The study accordingly links deeper evangelization with the strengthening of Christian faith among those already baptized and with a willingness to revisit pastoral practices that no longer communicate effectively.¹⁰

2.3 Missionary Models and Methods of Evangelization

The study identifies a strongly itinerant model of early missionary ministry. Missionaries resided at parish centres and travelled to newly established pastoral areas, sometimes remaining away for extended periods while teaching catechism, celebrating the Eucharist and organizing Christian communities. Young people accompanied missionaries during these journeys and assisted with practical tasks. This pattern of mobility enabled missionary contact with dispersed populations and reinforced the image of pastoral ministry as a ministry of presence rather than a remote administrative function.¹¹

A second model centred on the catechumenate and the formation of local catechists. Candidates for baptism underwent sustained religious preparation, while itinerant or resident catechists supported the emerging communities. Ngona is cited in the study in relation to Small Christian Communities and parish renewal.¹² The missionary approach recognized that the priest could not remain physically present in every locality and therefore relied on trained local collaborators to sustain religious instruction and community life. This pattern anticipates contemporary calls for shared responsibility among clergy, religious and laity.

A third model integrated evangelization with social institutions. The missionaries established schools, hospitals, orphanages, farms and other services in response to the poverty and material needs they encountered. The study interprets these services not as activities detached from evangelization but as practical expressions of the Church mission. Such an approach corresponds with the later emphasis on integral human development, in which Christian witness is related to education, health, justice, solidarity and the conditions necessary for human flourishing.¹³

2.4 Inculturation, Catechesis and Local Church Formation

The literature cited in the study presents inculturation as essential to a mature local Church. Drego links the mission of the local Church to the inculturation of the Gospel, while the AMECEA tradition stresses deeper evangelization within the lived cultures of African

¹⁰ Nicholas Segeja, "Reverential Dialogical Ministry: A Pastoral Paradigm for New Evangelization to the Parish," *African Christian Studies* 28, no. 2 (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2012); Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris: The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2012); XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta: New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2012).

¹¹ Kuura and Mugania, *Diocese of Meru Parish Council Manual* (Makutano, Meru: Mugraphic Systems, 1999); Paul Vedakumpadan, *Evangelization Today* (Shillary, India: Vendrame Missiological Institute, 1989).

¹² D. Ngona, *Small Christian Communities: A Source of Renewal for Parish Life* (Nairobi: St. Josephs Printing Press, 1995).

¹³ Patrick Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi* (Mambo Press, 1999); G. D. Kitter, *The White Fathers* (New York: Hamper and Brothers, 1956); L. Linda, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland* (London: Heimerann, 1974).

communities.¹⁴ Inculturation does not reduce Christian faith to local custom. It seeks a critical encounter in which the Gospel is expressed through culturally meaningful forms while also challenging cultural practices that are inconsistent with Christian teaching.

Catechesis is central to this process because it provides the sustained formation through which believers interpret faith in relation to everyday life. The study notes that many baptized Catholics receive limited formal catechetical formation after the sacraments of initiation and may learn prayers without developing a deeper capacity to connect Christian teaching with concrete experience. The need is therefore not merely for more information but for catechesis that forms Christian judgement, nurtures community participation and enables believers to integrate faith with family, work and social responsibility.¹⁵

3. Methodology

The article is based on a qualitative pastoral theological inquiry. The study draws on Church documents, theological and missiological literature, historical descriptions of missionary activity and contextual observations relating to the Catholic Diocese of Meru. The analysis in this revised article organizes those materials thematically around missionary strategies, catechesis, social institutions, cultural encounter, inculturation and integral human development. The approach is interpretive: it asks what the missionary practices described in the manuscript contributed to evangelization and what limitations or continuing pastoral questions emerge from them.

The study does not provide a formal sampling frame, sample size, interview schedule, questionnaire, statistical procedure or other details that would support a quantitative research design. For that reason, no numerical findings are introduced and no claims are made beyond the qualitative evidence available in the manuscript. Statements described by the original authors as observations or as findings from their research are treated as contextual qualitative evidence and are interpreted alongside the documentary and theological sources cited in the manuscript.

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Itinerant Pastoral Presence and Village Evangelization

The first major finding is that missionary evangelization in Meru depended heavily on physical presence among dispersed communities. Missionaries did not limit their work to parish centres. They travelled to villages and emerging outstations to teach catechism, celebrate the Eucharist, administer the sacraments and organize local Christian communities. The study presents this mobility as a practical response to the geography and pastoral needs of the mission field. The approach enabled personal contact with families and local leaders and helped the Church establish a presence beyond the central mission station.¹⁶

The pastoral significance of this model lies in its relational character. Evangelization was linked to visiting people where they lived and to sharing, at least temporarily, their daily environment. This contrasts with a model in which pastoral ministry is conducted primarily from administrative offices or through occasional liturgical contact. The historical missionary pattern therefore offers a continuing lesson for contemporary ministry: sustained

¹⁴ Antony Drego, *The Mission of the Local Church and Inculturation of Gospel* (Vidyaidati: Regency Press, 1981).

¹⁵ Plenary Assembly of AMECEA, *Deeper Evangelization in the New Millennium* (July 2002); D. Ngona, *Small Christian Communities: A Source of Renewal for Parish Life* (Nairobi: St. Josephs Printing Press, 1995).

¹⁶ G. D. Kitter, *The White Fathers* (New York: Hamper and Brothers, 1956); Paul Vedakumpadan, *Evangelization Today* (Shillary, India: Vendrame Missiological Institute, 1989).

evangelization requires accessibility, presence and regular engagement with local communities.¹⁷

4.2 Catechumenate, Catechists and Sacramental Formation

A second finding concerns the importance attached to catechetical and sacramental preparation. Candidates for baptism underwent prolonged instruction, and catechists became essential intermediaries between missionaries and local communities. The catechumenate provided a structured process through which converts learned Christian prayers and doctrine and prepared for sacramental participation. Although aspects of this process were culturally restrictive, the emphasis on sustained formation recognized that conversion required more than a momentary response to preaching.¹⁸

The study also indicates that catechists supported the continuity of pastoral work when priests were absent. This role is especially important in contexts where communities are geographically dispersed. The historical experience suggests that the strength of evangelization depends not only on the number of priests but also on the quality of formation given to lay pastoral agents. Contemporary catechesis can build on this legacy by forming catechists who are doctrinally grounded, culturally competent and able to connect faith with the concrete experiences of families and communities.¹⁹

4.3 Education, Health Care and Social Service as Evangelizing Practices

Missionary work in Meru combined religious proclamation with social services. The study describes the establishment of schools, hospitals, orphanages, farms and other institutions as part of the missionary response to poverty and social need. Education and health care created points of sustained interaction between missionaries and the local population, while charitable assistance demonstrated a practical concern for the whole person. The institutional legacy of missionary activity therefore formed an important part of the Church public presence.²⁰

This finding supports a holistic understanding of evangelization. The missionary method assumed that spiritual development and material wellbeing were related, even when the language of integral human development had not yet become prominent. The contemporary implication is that Church institutions should retain a clear pastoral identity while providing professionally responsible services. Schools, health facilities, development projects and parish initiatives become credible instruments of evangelization when they address real community needs and are governed in ways consistent with Christian values.²¹

¹⁷ Nicholas Segeja, "Reverential Dialogical Ministry: A Pastoral Paradigm for New Evangelization to the Parish," *African Christian Studies* 28, no. 2 (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2012); Paul Vedakumpadan, *Evangelization Today* (Shillary, India: Vendrame Missiological Institute, 1989).

¹⁸ Kuura and Mugania, *Diocese of Meru Parish Council Manual* (Makutano, Meru: Mugraphic Systems, 1999); D. Ngona, *Small Christian Communities: A Source of Renewal for Parish Life* (Nairobi: St. Josephs Printing Press, 1995).

¹⁹ D. Ngona, *Small Christian Communities: A Source of Renewal for Parish Life* (Nairobi: St. Josephs Printing Press, 1995); Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (18 November 1965), no. 18.

²⁰ Patrick Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi* (Mambo Press, 1999); L. Linda, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland* (London: Heimerann, 1974).

²¹ Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), nos. 40–41; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (7 December 1965), no. 72.

4.4 Missionary Community Life and Collaboration

The study reports a measure of unity in communities served by missionary priests and attributes this partly to shared community life, common use of resources and clearer organization of work. Missionary institutes often possessed institutional resources that enabled them to sustain apostolic activities and cooperate in ministry. This observation suggests that structures of common life and shared responsibility can reduce individual isolation and create practical support for demanding pastoral work.²²

For contemporary pastoral ministry, the relevant lesson is not simply to reproduce the organizational arrangements of missionary institutes. Rather, it is to recognize that evangelization is strengthened when clergy, religious and lay pastoral agents share planning, resources and responsibility. A parish or diocesan ministry centred too heavily on one individual becomes vulnerable to discontinuity, overload and limited participation. The missionary experience therefore points toward collaborative pastoral structures that preserve accountability while drawing on the different charisms present in the Church.²³

4.5 Cultural Tensions in the Missionary Encounter

A significant limitation identified in the study was the negative missionary attitude toward indigenous religion and culture. Traditional practices were frequently categorized as pagan, and catechumens were expected to distance themselves from practices associated with their former religious life. The manuscript argues that this rejection created resistance among people who regarded their inherited customs and religious traditions as central to communal identity. It also contributed to an attitude in which some converts understood Christian commitment as requiring rejection of their cultural world.²⁴

The problem was not that the Gospel should leave every cultural practice untouched. Christian evangelization necessarily involves moral and religious discernment. The problem arose when the cultural encounter was insufficiently dialogical and when the distinction between what could be purified and integrated and what was incompatible with Christian faith was not carefully made. The later Catholic emphasis on inculturation provides a more constructive framework for this encounter because it allows the Gospel to be expressed within local symbols, language and communal patterns while maintaining fidelity to Christian teaching.²⁵

4.6 New Evangelization and the Renewal of Pastoral Methods

The study interprets new evangelization as a call to renew the Church missionary commitment in response to new circumstances. The contemporary pastoral field differs from the period of first missionary proclamation. Many people are already baptized, yet their active participation, catechetical understanding or integration of faith into daily life may be weak. New

²² G. D. Kitter, *The White Fathers* (New York: Hamper and Brothers, 1956); Kuura and Mugania, *Diocese of Meru Parish Council Manual* (Makutano, Meru: Mugraphic Systems, 1999).

²³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (18 November 1965), no. 18; Nicholas Segeja, "Reverential Dialogical Ministry: A Pastoral Paradigm for New Evangelization to the Parish," *African Christian Studies* 28, no. 2 (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2012).

²⁴ Antony Drego, *The Mission of the Local Church and Inculturation of Gospel* (Vidyaiddati: Regency Press, 1981); Ferdinand Waigbo, "Ecological Sensitivity in the New Evangelization of the Church in Africa," *AFTER* 55, nos. 3-4.

²⁵ Antony Drego, *The Mission of the Local Church and Inculturation of Gospel* (Vidyaiddati: Regency Press, 1981); Ferdinand Waigbo, "Ecological Sensitivity in the New Evangelization of the Church in Africa," *AFTER* 55, nos. 3-4.

evangelization therefore addresses both those who have not encountered the Gospel and Christians whose faith requires renewal and deeper formation.²⁶

The results suggest that the most enduring missionary strengths are active presence, sustained catechesis, community organization and service to human needs. These strengths need to be expressed through methods that are more participatory and culturally responsive. Digital culture, changing family structures, mobility, religious competition and new social expectations require pastoral planning that is attentive to contemporary conditions. The Gospel remains the centre, but the modes of communication and participation cannot remain static.²⁷

4.7 Inculturation and Integral Human Development

The study places inculturation and integral human development among the principal directions for contemporary evangelization. Inculturation addresses the cultural dimension of faith by enabling Christian teaching to enter the language, symbols, values and lived experience of a people. Integral human development broadens pastoral concern to include education, economic wellbeing, social justice, family life and other conditions that affect human dignity. Together, these perspectives prevent evangelization from being reduced either to cultural accommodation or to purely spiritual instruction.²⁸

The manuscript further identifies Church associations, institutions and projects as practical settings in which evangelization and human development can be integrated. Parish groups can strengthen belonging and shared apostolate. Church institutions can respond to community needs while maintaining Catholic identity. Development projects can promote justice and solidarity when they are responsibly managed and directed toward genuine needs. These findings indicate that the social dimension of evangelization is strongest when it remains connected to formation in faith rather than becoming an activity parallel to pastoral ministry.²⁹

5. Discussion

The missionary experience in Meru presents a mixed but constructive legacy. On one side, missionaries created durable patterns of pastoral presence, catechetical formation, sacramental ministry and institutional service. These practices helped Christianity move from initial proclamation toward organized local Church life. The establishment of local catechists and outstations also demonstrated that the growth of the Church required more than the personal ministry of foreign missionaries. Local participation was necessary for continuity, language competence and community rootedness.³⁰

On the other side, the cultural limitations of the early missionary model show why evangelization cannot be evaluated only by the number of institutions established or sacraments

²⁶ Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris: The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2012); XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Lineamenta: New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith* (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 2012); Stephen Wang, *New Evangelization* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2013).

²⁷ Plenary Assembly of AMECEA, *Deeper Evangelization in the New Millennium* (July 2002); Nicholas Segeja, "Reverential Dialogical Ministry: A Pastoral Paradigm for New Evangelization to the Parish," *African Christian Studies* 28, no. 2 (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2012).

²⁸ Plenary Assembly of AMECEA, *Deeper Evangelization in the New Millennium* (July 2002); Antony Drego, *The Mission of the Local Church and Inculturation of Gospel* (Vidyaaidati: Regency Press, 1981).

²⁹ Patrick Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi* (Mambo Press, 1999); Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (7 December 1965), no. 72.

³⁰ G. D. Kitter, *The White Fathers* (New York: Hamper and Brothers, 1956); Kuura and Mugania, *Diocese of Meru Parish Council Manual* (Makutano, Meru: Mugraphic Systems, 1999).

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administered. The quality of Christian reception matters. When conversion is experienced as cultural displacement, people may live a divided religious identity in which public Christian practice coexists with unintegrated traditional beliefs. Inculturation seeks to address this problem through critical dialogue. It asks how the Gospel can take root in a culture deeply enough to transform it from within rather than remaining an externally imposed religious system.³¹

The findings also underline the importance of catechesis after baptism. The missionary catechumenate gave sustained attention to preparation for Christian initiation, but the study is concerned that ongoing formation is often weak. This suggests that the contemporary pastoral challenge is not merely to restore a former catechetical system but to develop lifelong formation. Such formation should include doctrine, Scripture, prayer, moral discernment, social teaching, family life and the capacity to interpret local cultural practices in the light of faith.³²

Finally, the missionary integration of schools, health services and development activity with pastoral work remains relevant. Contemporary Church institutions operate in more complex professional and regulatory environments, but their evangelizing significance still depends on the quality of service, ethical leadership and explicit connection to the Church mission. Integral human development is therefore not an optional addition to evangelization. It is one expression of the Church commitment to the dignity of the whole person, provided that social action remains joined to the Gospel vision that gives it pastoral meaning.³³

6. Summary

The study examined missionary pastoral ministry in the Catholic Diocese of Meru through a qualitative pastoral theological analysis of the materials contained in the study. Missionary evangelization combined itinerant village ministry, catechetical instruction, sacramental preparation, collaboration with catechists, engagement with local leaders, and the establishment of education, health and charitable institutions. These methods contributed substantially to the formation of Catholic communities and to the institutional development of the local Church. The analysis nevertheless identified the rejection of indigenous religion and culture as an important limitation of the early missionary approach. The contemporary task is therefore to preserve missionary commitment, presence and formative discipline while strengthening inculturation, lay participation, lifelong catechesis and integral human development.

7. Conclusion

Missionary evangelization in Meru laid important foundations for the Catholic Diocese through preaching, catechesis, sacramental ministry, community organization and social institutions. Its strongest contribution was the integration of proclamation with concrete pastoral presence and practical service. Its principal limitation was an insufficiently dialogical approach to indigenous religion and culture. Contemporary evangelization should therefore neither

³¹ Antony Drego, *The Mission of the Local Church and Inculturation of Gospel* (Vidyaidati: Regency Press, 1981); Ferdinand Waigbo, "Ecological Sensitivity in the New Evangelization of the Church in Africa," *AFTER* 55, nos. 3–4.

³² Plenary Assembly of AMECEA, *Deeper Evangelization in the New Millennium* (July 2002); D. Ngona, *Small Christian Communities: A Source of Renewal for Parish Life* (Nairobi: St. Josephs Printing Press, 1995).

³³ Patrick Kalilombe, *Doing Theology at the Grassroots: Theological Essays from Malawi* (Mambo Press, 1999); Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (7 December 1965), no. 72.

romanticize nor dismiss the missionary legacy. It should receive its pastoral strengths critically and reinterpret them through the Church present emphasis on inculturation, shared responsibility and integral human development. A deeply evangelized local Church will be one in which Christian faith is doctrinally grounded, culturally intelligible, communally lived and visibly expressed in service to human dignity.³⁴

8. Recommendations

1. The Diocese of Meru should strengthen lifelong catechetical formation so that baptism and sacramental participation are followed by sustained formation in Scripture, doctrine, prayer and Christian living.
2. Pastoral planning should promote greater collaboration among clergy, religious, catechists and lay leaders, with clearly shared responsibilities for evangelization at parish, outstation and Small Christian Community levels.
3. Evangelization should use an inculturated approach that critically engages local language, symbols and social values while maintaining fidelity to Catholic teaching.
4. Church schools, health institutions, associations and development projects should be deliberately linked to the pastoral mission of the Diocese and governed with transparency and professional accountability.
5. Pastoral agents should recover the missionary practice of regular presence among communities while adapting communication methods to contemporary realities, including mobility and digital culture.
6. Further research should document the historical and contemporary experience of evangelization in Meru using clearly specified qualitative or mixed methods so that the voices of clergy, religious, catechists, lay leaders and ordinary Christians are systematically represented.

³⁴ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), nos. 40–41; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church (7 December 1965); Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (18 November 1965), no. 18.

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