

## **Book Report on *From Pilot to Pastoral Bishop***

This book report is based upon the book *From Pilot to Pastoral Bishop: Memories and Reflections of 53 years of Missionary Life in Kenya* written by Bishop Colin C. Davies and published by Paulines Publications Africa. It was copyrighted in 2014 by Bishop Colin C. Davies.

Reported by Rev. Dominic Mwanzia

The author Bishop Colin C. Davies is a Mill Hill missionary priest who has made prominent pastoral contributions to the Catholic Church in Kenya as a Bishop. Following his priestly ordination in 1952, he worked as a teacher in Mill Hill College in Freshfield, Liverpool. Later on, he was assigned to the then Prefecture Apostolic of Ngong, Kenya in 1964. He was the Bishop of Ngong when the Prefecture became the new diocese of Ngong. Prior to entering religious life, Colin worked in the England Royal Air Force. During the World War II, he qualified as a Royal Air Force pilot. He took the responsibility of a lay catechist to instruct his fellow officers on Christian faith. Ultimately, the influence of his uncle, a priest in the Archdiocese of Westminster led him to commit his life as a priest.

While in Ngong Diocese Colin developed diverse pastoral projects. Moreover, he was an active member of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) where he presiding over different committees. Bishop Colin attended the Vatican II 1964 and 1965 sessions as a Council Father. In Queen Elizabeth's New Year Honors List of 2003, he was appointed to the Most Excellent Order of British Empire (O.B.E). In humility, he avoided to go to Buckingham to collect this award. Instead, he chose to receive it from the British Commissioner in Nairobi with some pastoral workers representatives from Ngong Diocese. He retired as Bishop in 2003. Thereafter, in 2013, he transferred to the retirement home of the Mill Hill Missionaries in Liverpool, England because of ill-health. He had worked in Kenya as a missionary for 53 years.

I found this book to be very well thought out and well written from a pastoral perspective. It is written in straightforward everyday language founded on his human pastoral experience during the development of Christianity among the Maasai people and Kenya in general. *From Pilot to Pastoral Bishop* is divided into four chapters that reflect Bishop Davies' overview of pastoral activity under the support of the Kenya Catholic Church. As well, he demonstrates how he implemented pastoral ministry activities during his episcopate.

Chapter 1 "A Vision of New Evangelization" establishes Bishop Davies' evangelization approach of the Catholic Church of Kenya ever since the end of Vatican II. Bishops, priests, religious persons and laity are tasked with the responsibility of the New Evangelization. The author mentions the inculturation of the Gospel as a response to implement the decisions of Vatican II. He offers a synopsis of the pastoral outcomes of this council which he attended as the Prefect Apostolic of Ngong. These include adapting the Church as People of God; mission to human integral development; active participation of the laity; commitment to localization and inculturation; recognizing the maturity of African Church leaders; dialogue with other faiths and religions and finally use of the Word of God in the life of the church. Bishop Davies looks at the two African Synods (1994 and 2009) as

moments making the African Church authentic within the unity of Catholic Church. It led to the publication of two apostolic exhortations, that is, *The Church in Africa (Ecclesia in Africa)* and *Africa's Commitment (Africae Munus)*. The second synod was about developing the theological insights and pastoral challenges of the first African Synod. Subsequently, the author describes the AMECEA<sup>1</sup> pastoral initiatives and the KCCB<sup>2</sup>, an assembly of the Catholic Bishops in Kenya's joint pastoral ministries.

Chapter 2 “Agents of Evangelization” scrutinizes pastoral agents’ role in the mission of Christ. He specifies the role of the Kenya Catholic Secretariat in facilitating and coordinating pastoral activities through its various commissions. He emphasizes that the clergy should include the laity in church ministry without excluding the youth. He recommends each school or parish to have youth groups. In their different vocations bishops, clergy, religious and laity form the mystical body of Christ and participate in God’s plan of salvation. The indispensable role of catechists since the establishment of Christianity in Kenya cannot be ignored according to Bishop Davies. He deplores the unhealthy relationships that can occur between catechists and priests. Moreover, he underlines the Kenya National Diocesan Priests Association (KNDPA)’s collaboration between bishops and priests. A further form of collaboration is of Religious Superiors Conference of Kenya (RSCK) and the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya (AOSK). Both RSCK and AOSK are known to offer education and training to the vocation of religious men and women. They contribute very much to the educational, health and spiritual needs of the church in Kenya.

Chapter 3, “Pastoral Activities” explores pastoral activities of certain groups that can help serve the needs of the parish. Through celebrating good things God has done for us during liturgical celebrations, union with the whole Church is established. In this section Bishop Davies looks at sacrament of Baptism in the context of the Rite for Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA); Confirmation; frequent and worthy reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist and specifies the unity and holiness of the sacrament of Marriage and the function of catechists to journey with sick through the anointing of the sick.

The author goes on to emphasize Small Christian Communities (SCCs) as a model of being church. “SCCs should make Christianity a way of life, really touching their lives and supporting them in their problems. A SCC is ideally a communion of families” (page 14). He encourages membership and participation of the clergy in these communities. This book indicates the unity of parishioners achieved through the Psycho-Social Method (PSM) that involves groups of people implementing projects. The pastoral activity of the Medical Apostolate that serves Kenya through the Catholic Health Commission of Kenya (CHCK) does not escape the author’s attention. As well he highlights health services provided by the Mission of Essential Drugs and Supplies (MEDS). Bishop Davies surveys catechesis in the church and formal education in Kenyan schools. Through social communications pastoral agents are expected to communicate the Gospel through print and electronic media. Finally, he gives attention to laity movements. These include the Catholic Renewal Movement

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<sup>1</sup> AMECEA is an acronym for Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa. It is a Catholic service organization for the National Episcopal Conferences of the eight countries of Eastern Africa, namely Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Djibouti and Somali are affiliate members.

<sup>2</sup> Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB).

(Catholic Charismatics), Catholic Lay Missionaries (CLM) and Pontifical Missionary Childhood (PMC) also known as "Watoto wa Yesu."

Chapter 4, "Spiritual Growth" of the book seeks to promote the joyful experience of the Word of God in pastoral activities. The latter must be shaped by the Word of God at the personal level achieved through reading, praying and mediating the scripture. It is important for pastoral agents to be aware of the various translations or versions of the *Bible* while promoting the apostolate of the laity. The author pays tribute to *Bible Society of Kenya* for valuable ministry of producing *Bibles* in different languages. On the Family Life Apostolate KEC has established a commission to address this ministry. As regards true democratic Kenya, Paulines Publications Africa publishes booklets on Civic Education. In support of the ideal priest in an ideal parish, the bishop argues that the role of collaboration is paramount between the laity and clergy. The book concludes with two appendices on Cardinal Malula's letter to young priests and the biography of Bishop Colin C. Davies.

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