

The Pastoral Implications of Confession in African Traditional Religion: The Case of Adultery in Nsukka Culture

Rev. Fr. Dr. Christian O. Ele, Ph.D.

General Studies Division
Enugu State University of Science and Technology
Agbani, Enugu State
Nigeria

Abstract

In Religions, there is the practice of confession, either as avowal of faith or acknowledgment of transgressions, or even both. This paper discusses the pastoral implications of confession in African Traditional Religion with special reference to adultery in Nsukka culture. Nsukka is a male society with characteristics of absolute patriarchy. The findings of this paper include the fact of Christians confessing the sin of adultery according to the belief system in African traditional Religion instead of accessing God's mercy through the Christian style and sacraments. This cultural practice has significant pastoral implications for Christianity in Nsukka area. In the light of this, therefore, the strong persuasions of this study are the need for Christians to maintain Christian sanctity by avoiding the sin of adultery, upholding fidelity in marriage and respecting the dignity of womanhood which patriarchy has gravely distorted.

Keywords: Confession, African traditional Religion, Adultery, Nsukka and Culture.

1. Introduction

Nsukka culture has patrilineal structure in its sociology of the family and as a consequence, much premium is placed on the male child. The male is an heir to his father's inheritance and has a lot of social powers and enjoys uncommon privileges attached to his maleness. Nsukka is a male society where patriarchy and male chauvinism have resisted westernization, civilization, enlightened trends from revealed religion such as Christianity, formal literacy and right reason. It is evidenced variously that this male world could construct, deconstruct and reconstruct some values under the cover of the spirits and gods or in partnership with the ancestors. The Holy Bible attests to the fact that in the origins of humanity, God created them male and female and in his own imago and likeness (Genesis 1:26 – 27, 5:2; Mark 10:6; Matthew 19:4). The human person, male or female, is image Dei. However, in historical twists, those cultures with absolute patriarchy characteristic such as the Nsukka culture specimen re-created the female gender in the image and likeness of their cultural categories, whims and caprices to massage the ego of the menfolk. Adultery (*Igba n'ezì, ituhu/ituwa ukwu, iradi*) is a taboo (*nso ani, nsoal'*), an abomination (*aru*) and sinful (*njo, ajo ihe*) among Nsukka people of Northern Igbo land, South East Nigeria. While both their society and religion give zero tolerance to married women's infidelity and extra-marital sex affairs, married men have license to promiscuity in the sense that these sexual sins are not counted against them. Adultery is "sexual intercourse between two partners of different sex, of whom at least one is married. Besides sin against chastity, adultery is also an offence against justice and fidelity" (Peschke, K. H., 2009). In Nsukka area, the adulteress is exposed to ridicule, dehumanization and ritual cleansing according to the stipulations of the indigenous religion. She must first and foremost confess her sins (*isa asisa, ika oji, ikwu okwu onu*) as a necessary condition for her forgiveness and wholeness. This confession could be voluntary from self or induced metaphysically by the gods. It is voluntary when she willingly confesses her infidelity to her husband and asks for his forgiveness. However, it is induced when, according to the belief system, the spiritual powers like the earth goddess (*ani/ala*; as it is said *al' ejire*), the ancestors (*Ndi ishi, Nna di*) or some other deities (like *Enokpa* in Enugu Ezike, *Mkpume* in Itchi) force her to confess her immoral acts through madness, sickness or some other afflictions known by their definitive symptoms.

In all these, the male offenders enjoy the protection of the gods who are blind to their sexual sins against their families, wives, children, larger society and God. Once it is gravely suspected or factually established that one's wife committed adultery, the first antidote or measure by the husband against the wrath of the gods or ancestors is to stop eating the food cooked by her. It is believed that if he eats her food, he dies immediately at its instance. This culture shares some similar perceptions with other societies across Africa and beyond. On Urhobo traditional justice system concerning adultery, Ottuh, J.A (2014:61) wrote: "In the Urhobo traditional justice system in the issue and punishment of adultery, the married woman is at the mercy of the man in so many ways. For instance, when a woman's husband has one or more concubines like the Old Testament Solomon in the Bible, the woman has no right to complain to the elders of the man's family or that of the community. If she does, she is put away. As far as the Urhobo tradition is concerned, the husband of a woman has the right to marry as many wives as he liked whereas a married woman cannot allow her hand to be held by another man without her being accused of adultery".

In the culture of male dominance, the woman is perceived most largely as a *thing* and not a person. But the truth is that the woman is a human person to be loved, cherished and celebrated because she is not a thing or a commodity to be accommodated, used and discarded at will for even the most frivolous excuses, baseless suspicions and minutest provocations. As womanhood is a thing in this male perception, the men are therefore either the gods or the manufacturers of those gods who function their patriarchy and give them protection. In other words, the gods could be social realities and not spiritual beings. In this sense, the gods are the ingenuity of male hands put in place to diminish the dignity of the female folk and dominate them in perpetuity. Women in this cultural milieu due to their perceived status could not be recognized as offended nor can anyone explain enough why men could beget children outside of the wedlock or nuptial knot while the women cannot respond to a greeting or an announcement of a male visitor's arrival from her bathroom. It is not because bathroom betrayed King David and Bathsheba, Uriah's wife (2 Samuel 11:2) but rather it is one more example of oppression and suppression. A woman is bound to inform her husband when another man gives her any gift, monetary or otherwise or touches her buttocks or breasts even if casually or unintentionally. She cannot help her parents or paternal family from the wealth, money or any goods from her husband's house or family as she risks death if she does. Even the literate ones who got jobs or the women of great means by their enterprises cannot help their people who reared and educated them. If she does she would be punished by the gods with afflictions or death. The dignity of womanhood is on trial in obnoxious cultures of male dominance. This support given to her family too is a sin she must confess and embrace the torture and weighty burden of ritual cleansing.

In the wake of kidnappers menace, if a woman is raped in the process, she must confess to her husband as if it were voluntary sexual act on her part. This confession will lead to ritual cleansing as if culpable otherwise, she will be visited with spiritual or metaphysical punishment. This questions the place of the freedom of the will in the case of rape, in other words, the moral culpability of a rape victim in the case of forced sex. The woman in the culture of absolute patriarchy is understood as one of the husband's property just like his piece of furniture is counted as part of his property. To buttress this point, the man in the situation of primary or secondary impotence could hand over her wife to another man for sexual gratification or for procreation. The man could ask her to choose any man of her choice who must be unknown to him. This is in the case of sexual gratification and pleasure. However in the case of the need for procreation, it is restricted to the matrimonial family, that is the husband's relatives, nuclear or extended. In all these circumstances, the woman is subjected to the man's decisions and which are not choices borne of love for the wife but to avoid divorce in the former instance of sexual pleasure and to escape the social stigma of infertility or impotence in the latter example of procreation. All were fashioned culturally to satisfy the ego of *maleness*. If the women were to be barren or infertile she would be divorced or made a non-entity if she would remain in her husband's home as wife. At the death of her spouse, the marriage continues as it is not nullified by the loss of the husband. She remains his wife who must still keep all the marriage laws, restrictions and prohibitions. She cannot have sex with another man unless she returns her dowry to her husband's family and becomes an unmarried person or she goes into levirate marriage and as the third option, she performs a ritual that guarantees her freedom to remain in her late husband's house for her children's sake and gets *nwulo* (a lover) who satisfies her emotional and other needs. Some widows get more than one *nwulo* based on their libido and principles of life. In that ritual of "freedom", she cooks for her children and announces to them that she has cut off from their late father; since he is dead, she says, she would not like to associate with him any longer. She goes further to tell her children that she no longer lives for her late husband but rather lives for her children.

The consequence of having a carnal knowledge of another man after the death of one's husband without this ritual is loss of her children to death, one after the other or she dies herself. As women go through this long ritual, harsh process and ordeal, the men do not have a ritual of "freedom" when their wives die because they had neither taboos nor restrictions even when those wives were alive. Women are in the shackles of this culture which has vastly violated their dignity. At very many instances, diseases such as meningitis, which turns the neck of a person and the head backward as if the neck is being strangled, has been attributed to adultery. When cerebral malaria makes one speak unintelligible and incoherent words, it is believed to be a sign of adultery. In the turbulence of complications during child birth, it is tied to adultery. These laughable suspicions, superstitions and unenlightened standpoints are associated with non-literate cultures all over the world. Women have lost their lives, unaided by medical science nor charity by their husbands and sons, all in the name of culture and tradition. Confession of the sin of adultery in African Traditional Religion thrives because the women cannot speak out for fear of social opprobrium and stigma; the men are not ready to abolish the obnoxious culture because they are protected by it, the traditional rulers and institutions claim that the culture guarantees fidelity and mortality and the church in her pastoral practice has been betrayed by her children who are in the church but has not left the shrines and belief systems in the indigenous religion. There are some partiality and imbalances in the whole cultural structure and system. It is obvious that the punishments given by both men and the gods go to the female offenders only. This is injustice against women. It is like a replication of the drama of the Gospel of John 8:1-11 where the woman caught in the very act of adultery was brought to Jesus Christ without the man as prescribed by law (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22-24). This is one more proof of gender discrimination in both biblical and extra-biblical cultures. It is on this note that Ifeyinwa Emejulu (2013) asks whether this taboo is "a form of social control or an avenue for women's victimization?" The standard practice as recommended in an age old maxim is that "he who goes to equity should go with clean hands".

This paper discusses confession in African Traditional Religion with special reference to the confession of adultery in Nsukka culture. This is necessitated by the fact that Nsukka cultural zone is predominantly Christian with an overwhelming catholic population, few African Traditional religious practitioners and sparsely populated members of the protestant and Pentecostal circles. The findings of this paper show that first, many Christian women who consciously or mistakenly commit this adultery (*ira di*) do not follow the confession styles in Christian Religion to access God's mercy instead they choose willingly or are forced to choose the patterns of confession in African Traditional Religion. Second, their husbands do not believe that their wives had been forgiven by the spirits, gods or ancestors if they stopped at the Christian sacramental, formalized or improvised ways of reconciliation and penance. The Christian husbands of theirs insist on the traditional methods of confession and reconciliation called the rite of *igo Nna di, ikpu aru, oriko or ise ulo*. These are the various names by which it is known in various communities across Igbo land. Third, the women after confession in the Christian Religion still believe that the gods, spirits or ancestors would punish them with madness, afflictions or strange sickness. One wonders the extent of the depths of faith and firm connections in the Christian values which they accepted as disciples of Christ such as the efficacy of the sacraments and the riches of mercy in Christ. The fundamental virtue should be the willingness to hear God who said in the Holy Scripture: "Thou shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18) "Thou shall not covet your neighbour's wife" (Exodus 20:17, Deuteronomy 5:21) nor look at a woman lustfully (Matthew 5:28); Job 31:1). This work recognizes confession of adultery in African Traditional Religion in Nsukka as *missio ad gentes* that needs primary evangelization. In this light, it is a large pastoral concern. It is a critical aspect of Igbo culture that is yet to receive the gospel values of Jesus Christ where male and female who committed the same crime are kept on just balances as Christians, seen as co-heirs in the order of grace and recognized as coequal human persons saved by Jesus Christ. The greatest persuasions of this study are to discourage adultery in all its forms by both genders and ask Christians of all denominations to access the mercy and merits of Christ's love in the sacrament. It is a clarion call on the Church in this area to evangelize this culture which is weakening the missionary harvests that accrue from the pastoral endeavours. In other words, there should be fidelity in marriage and patriarchy should respect the dignity of womanhood.

2. Confession In African Traditional Religion: The Case Of Adultery In Nsukka Culture.

Confession of sins is not an exclusivity of African Traditional Religion and neither is adultery the only sins committed by the guilty, repentant or penitent.

Confessions of sins are religious practices found to exist in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, to mention but four. Confession is a concept with ambivalent significance. It has more than one meaning: it means confession of faith and confession of sin. In the words of Ray Pritchard (n.d.): When a man is said to confess or make confession, the contents of the confession are variously distinguished. All, however, may be grouped into two heads, confession of faith and confession of sin. Confession of faith is public acknowledgements of fidelity to God, and to the truth through which God is revealed as in 1 Kings 8:33. They are declarations of unqualified confidence in Christ, and of surrender to this service, Matthew 10:32: “Everyone...shall confess me”. The word confession stands also for everything contained in the Christian religion – “the faith” used in the objective and widest sense, in Hebrews 3:1, 4:14. In the light of the above citation, a person who avows the Christian faith in the face of persecution or opposition is called a confessor. *In generalia*, anyone who confesses is a confessor but most often the nomenclature *penitent* is used to describe the sinner who confesses his or her sin. The priest who hears confessions and gives absolution is also referred to as a confessor. This brings us to the second meaning of confession, which is, confession of sin. According to *New World Encyclopedia* (n.d.), “confession of sins is the public or spoken acknowledgment of either personal or collective guilt, seen as a necessary step to receive divine forgiveness”. Apart from the content of confession that distinguished it either as “of faith” or “of sin”, confession of sin can be classified by its receipts. It is in this light that Ray Pritchard (n.d.) wrote on the various classes of confession of sins, thus:

1. To God alone. (Psalms 32:3-6; 1John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13; Daniel 9:19, Psalms 51) (Psalms 19:12; Romans 7:18),
2. To one’s neighbor, (Luke 17:4; 5:16; Matthew 5:23f.)
3. To a spiritual adviser or minister of the word,(2 Sameul 12:13; Matthew 3:6; Acts 19:18;)
4. To the entire church, (1 Corinthians 5:3 with 2 Corinthians 2:6f.

Confession as an explicit acknowledgement of transgression requires a penitent and a recipient, a competent authority who hears the confession. The authenticity and efficacy of confession in Nsukka culture are dependent on the word that is spoken and the word that is heard. The dialogue is a critical component where “Both the speaker and hearer embody a circle of functions, whether theistically, magically, or both, to consume the sin confessed. Confession is characterized not by a generic utterances of culpability but by the necessity to be concrete and specific, to evoke and destroy the very existence and malignant efficacy of a particular sin”. (Thomas Gale, 2005). In African Traditional Religion, there are patterns and processes of confession of the sin of adultery. This confession leads to reconciliation and restitution. In Nsukka culture, the adulteress confesses openly that she committed adultery and mentions with whom she committed the sexual sin. If it is more than one person, then she calls them by name or symbolically shows that her amorous partners are implicated in plurality raising some sand up. The husband does not stay at the scene of the public confession, “it is the husband’s sister that conveys/relays one by one to him, names of those mentioned by the unfaithful wife, the men who slept with her. Any single omission of names willfully or unintentionally renders the whole restitution exercise null and void. The sand is normally raised from the ground and thrown into the air by the confessor to signify that it is finished and to include both remembered and omitted names if not the madness may remain incurable” (Nairaland, 2011).

After the confession, certain rituals are performed by the *Onyishi* (the eldest man) or the *attama ma* (the traditional priest of the deity) with kola nut, tubers of yam, palm wine and goat. The husband is not allowed to partake of any of the items used to appease the gods in the ritual sacrifice. There is an ancient spirit that is seen only by the one who committed adultery. This spiritual entity is known as *Ndi ishi* in Nsukka area. In Aji, Enugu-Ezike for example those under the arrest of *Ndi ishi* confess their sins before *Enokpa*, a deity. It is after the public confession before *Enokpa* that the offender is taken to the house of the eldest man (*Onyishi*) for the cleansing rituals. If a man “sleeps with a married Enugu-Ezike woman at home or outside the town, it is the woman who would be caught by the *nso ala* and she must openly confess in what is called *ika oji* or face repercussion. If she refuses to confess or hides the fact from her husband and the husband eats from her pot or sleeps with her, the husband will be caught by the *Ndi ishi* (the community’s progenitors) and he may lose his life.

For the woman whether Enugu-Ezike or non-Enugu-Ezike, or whether it is a man from her village in Enugu-Ezike that she sleeps with or with a man from Iceland, she must confess before the *Umuada* (elderly women and not so elderly) completely naked.... And usually, what remains of the honour or her husband’s is protect by not allowing her to name too many men she has slept with during the *ika oji*.

In that case, she is simply asked to smash a block on the floor, signifying that they are too many to remember. (*The Authority*, 2016). In Itchi, Igbo Eze South, the confession and rituals are before *Mkpume* Itchi a deity in the town which is believed to be enforcing morality and arresting women who engage in marital infidelity. One of the highlights of these rituals is that a woman forfeits all the clothes, bangles, ear rings, necklaces she wore on the day or days she committed adultery to the deity. All the hair on her body especially the hand, armpit and pubic are shaved completely as part of the rites of atonement, purification and forgiveness. There are terrible mental torture and public shame associated with confession of adultery in Nsukka. The dignity of womanhood is compromised. The whole of Nsukka zone does not accept adultery for the fear of its hazardous consequences. But the debate is against the heavy burden placed on women alone. Confession of sin is found in all African Traditional Societies which frowns at such sins like adultery, incest, bestiality homosexuality, lesbianism, murder, stealing of yams, witchcraft, violation of taboos and wickedness. According to Nwangama, E.U (2005) reporting his *interview* with elder Mbada Otozi (2002) on culture of Ezza people, Ebonyi State. "If a woman commits adultery in Ezza, she quickly confesses her sin publicly by naming the lover or lovers (paramours) if they are so many that she could not remember all of them, she names those she could recollect and picks up few pebbles and cast them away to signify the unnamed lovers. Then the woman will be provided a kid by her lover if he is uncircumcised. The woman will cradle the kid on her lap for some time. Then she takes the kid down and invokes the earth goddess and other spiritual beings telling them that it is a result of adultery that she committed that she offers the kid to the spirits as propitiation and expiation sacrifice. Having said that, she takes the kid to a far away bush and throws it there. After this, the elder man in the family will get *Akpunto* (silk cotton) leaved and *Oboloto* (Oboroto) and squeeze them in a bowl of water and sprinkle on the offenders (the woman and her lover). After the sacrifice the woman and her lover ask the husband to forgive them their sins and vow never to commit adultery again. The lover will also beg the relatives of the woman for forgiveness". In the above case, both lovers participate in the purification rituals after the woman shall have confessed her sins.

In Njaba, Imo State the woman who commits adultery will appear almost naked except for underwear publicly in the full glare of family members drawn from her biological family, husband and his relatives, the oldest people, *Nze n'ozo* title holders of that hamlet, and their ancestors called the "*Ogaranya*". "She will be required to mention the names of every man she slept with after marriage. Where she forgets a particular name or the elders assume she has called too many names already, she is told to "*Kpofe aja na azu*", meaning just to collect and throw sand behind you to make up for the others, as what applied to a woman that mentioned over 12 names. After the confession, the elders will provide some leaves which is expected to be pounded in a small mortar. When it is adjudged okay, she is made to eat of it, her husband will eat, her people, and every other person in attendance there. Everyone will just take a pinch of the leaves. It is that act that is referred to as "*Igba oriko*" or a kind of communion feast. From that moment, both she and her husband become free from any repercussion as a result of her infidelity or "*Igahie ukwu*". From that moment, the couple is free to resume cohabiting as husband and wife". (*The Authority* 2016). In some non-literate societies, confessions are made as a preparatory practice before fishing or hunting. According to Thomas Gale (2005) "...women must observe particular taboos while their husbands are away hunting in order not to compromise the success of the expedition. The husbands themselves during the days preceding departure, must abstain from various activities, in particular from cohabitation with their wives. Confession is another preparatory practice. Individual members of the hunting or fishing party must confess their sins prior to departure, since unacknowledged speaking of a taboo or a persistent condition of impurity and capability would endanger the success of the entire expedition. One who resisted making a required confession would be excluded from participating. Among the Lotuko of East Sudan, there is a public confession by warriors at the beginning of the great hunting season. Their confessions are made individually with lowered voice and then repeated by the priest serving the rain god". Among Idoma and Igalla tribes, North Central Nigeria, there is a strong belief in *Alekwu* spirit that kills a married woman who commits adultery. In the words of Chief Onoja, D.E (2016) in his interview with *Daily Trust* responded: "Yes. Alekwu is still in existence even though some people think that it's no longer in vogue. If it catches a woman, she must confess her atrocity. If she is lucky after the confession, Alekwu will leave her, but if she doesn't Alekwu will continue to reduce her physically. She will shrink like an AIDS patient until she confesses and dies". For Elder Amuta Onoja Simon of Orokam in his interview with *Daily Trust* insisted that a married woman must steer clear of adultery or she would be killed by Alekwu, noting that the tradition could not be jettisoned because of the church". (2016). In Yourba land, husbands plant *Magun* Juju on their wives to expose them and kill their lovers.

As Ojo, M.O.D (2013) wrote: “....., the husbands who have placed *Magun* on the body of their wives usually refrain from having sex with those wives until *Magun* eventually kills the men committing adultery with their wives”. The modern minds may have arguments in support of adultery ranging from psychology of variety, pathology of sexual deficiencies, sociology of extra-marital activities and the quest for robust economy, among others. The omniscient God knew all those possible reasons when the decreed fidelity and chastity in marriage.

3. Pastoral Implications

Confession of the sin of adultery in African Traditional Religion in Nsukka cultural zone and elsewhere by Christians has vast pastoral implications for the Church. The Christian gospel has not been able to bring out or convert a great number from the traditional world views into which they were born and nurtured. The religiosity of the African as *Homo Africanus Religiosus* begins at birth and many find it very difficult to extricate themselves from its values even when they realize that they are opposed to the Christian Faith. The grip of superstition is firm on the people who are perpetually afraid of the gods or ancestors. The world view of the people which is deeply rooted in the indigenous religion is a big pastoral challenge. The priests are not without persecutions who had fought this cultural aspect through proper catechesis. They were mischievously branded missionaries who support adultery. Since adultery is prohibited in Christianity too, they were misunderstood and injuriously labeled preachers, who encouraged sexual immorality in the community. Some Christian husbands withdrew their wives' membership and fellowship in mothers' associations in the Church. The pastoral space was turbulent as priests and other committed pastoral agents of evangelization received insults and all sorts of calumny, persecutions and violent attacks. However, the Church is on mission with the priests and trusted lay faithful who are resolute and unscarred by the trends of opposition. The Catechesis and pastoral strategies that are both prudent and persuasive are on-going. The teaming population of Christians in the Church especially on Sundays should not impress the missionaries until the lay Christians live out their Christian responsibilities through the weekdays. The heavy population in the Church on Sundays is mathematical religiosity of quantity without quality faith and active witnessing. The Church, by this pastoral challenge, is implicated in her methods of evangelization. As Onah, Sebastian (2014) observed: Popular among the traditional conventional methods of evangelization are: witnessing, preaching, homilies, sermons, catechetical instructions, the celebration of the sacraments, and popular religiosity (EN 41ff). The import of these traditional methods can never be over emphasized. However, invaluable as they are, most of these methods seem ineffective in our times. This apparent inefficiency, in my opinion, does not come from the methods themselves but from the approach and the teaching aids and tools used in the application of methods.

The above view shows that one of the pastoral implications in context is the adequate application of the principles and practice of new evangelization in Nsukka cultural zone. New evangelization in St. Pope John Paul's conception is not an invention of a new gospel hence evangelization cannot be new in its content since its very message is always Christ, our salvation. On this note, he wrote: The New evangelization does not consist of a new gospel....Neither does it involve removing from the gospel whatever seems difficult for the modern mentality of accept.... The new evangelization has as its point of departure the certitude that in Christ there are 'inexhaustible riches' (Eph 3:8) which no culture or era can exhaust.... These riches are first of all, Christ himself, his person, because he himself is our salvation” (Cited by Ralph Martin (2010) We have seen from the above citation that the message of New Evangelization is that of continuity from the past to the present. The simple theological reason is that Jesus Christ who is preached is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Heb 13:8). The “newness” is therefore found in the agent of new evangelization whose heart has been made new by the power of the Holy Spirit and in the very nature of New Evangelization which is new in its ardour, methods and expression. (Ralph Martin (2010) in Ele, C. (2014). The emphasis of the New Evangelization in context therefore, is that the Church in Nsukka Diocese should channel the fresh ardour of her proper catechesis to making all Christians keep God's commandments and eschew adultery. It is to the Glory of God when no Christian is found guilty of adultery in the first place instead of struggling with the idea of which religion the offender should confess his or her guilt. If every Christian keeps away from sexual immorality and infidelity in marriage, no deity can arrest, frighten or attach them. It is only in the situation of holiness and uprightness can the Christian say that “he who is in me is greater than he who is in the world” (1John 4:4). There is greater need for both the Christians and non-Christians to appreciate within this pastoral circumstance the Jesus' model of dealing with sinners. The Holy Bible is replete with evidences that Jesus loves the sinner but hates his/her sin. So, Jesus liberating the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:1-11) is “entirely in keeping with Jesus” relationship to sinners.

He called Matthew, the tax collector to be his disciple (Matthew 10:3, see also Luke 5). He was accepting of the sinful woman who anointed him at a Pharisee's house (Luke 7). He made a Samaritan the hero of one of his parables (Luke 10) and a tax collector the hero of another (Luke 18). He went to dinner with Zacharias a tax collector (Luke 19). He dealt with the woman at the well in a straight forward but respectful manner (John 4)". (SW- Admin, n.d.). In John 8:1 – 11, those who dropped their stones and charges against the adulterous woman were the adherents of Jewish religion. They were not Christians, so to speak, but they listened to Jesus, understood his message and recognized his authority. In like manner, African Traditional Religious practitioners should listen to Jesus and respect his Will as he dispenses Mercy through his Church in the sacrament of confession. The Church should uphold the dignity of womanhood at all times. All obnoxious cultures against women should be obliterated. St. Pope John 11 (1988) in his apostolic letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (on the dignity and vocation of women), reflecting on Genesis 2:18-25, teaches: The Biblical text provides sufficient bases for recognizing the essential equality of man and woman from the point of view of their humanity. From the very beginning, both are persons, unlike the other living beings in the world about them. The woman is another "I" in a common humanity. Thus in the same context as the creation of man and woman, the biblical account speaks of God's instituting marriage as an indispensable condition for the transmission of life to new generations, the transmission of life to which marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordered: "Be faithful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28).

The woman is not to be subdued nor reduced to a *thing*. She is rather to subdue and conquer the earth with the husband who has left his mother and father for her sake (Gen 1:28, 2:24). Patriarchy has a lot of injustice to the woman and the girl child. As injustice is injustice everywhere and injustice to one is injustice to all, then the Church in her pastoral mission of *Justice and Peace* should teach at all times the need for just balances in the administration of justice in the case of adultery to touch the men culprits too. New Evangelization needs to address every culture. As put by Bishop G.I. Onah of Nsukka Diocese (2014): "Our culture too needs to encounter Jesus. Every culture needs the same transmission that the encounter brings about in human beings". It is therefore imperative that the Church focuses on the person of Christ as she permeates Nsukka culture and contexts with the gospel.

4. Recommendations/Conclusion

Adultery is an ancient taboo in Nsukka culture. Adultery is punished, according to the belief system, by the gods who are spiritual custodians of morality. The value of Christian marriage from Judeo – Christian tradition abhors marital infidelity which is promoted chiefly by adultery. A lot of hazards are caused by extramarital sex affairs in the individual, family and society at large. The issues to understand First, the need for all to embrace chastity and fidelity in marriage and second, for Christians to live their lives in such a way that adherents of African Traditional Religion do not ridicule them before their shrines and deities as they confess their sins which should not be mentioned among Christians and the third the need to punish all, male and female, who commit the crime. Fourth, the dignity of womanhood should be respected as women are human persons created by God. Finally, there is an advocacy for the continued application of New Evangelization by the Church on mission in the cultural zone for greater impacts and more harvests in the vineyard.

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