

Better Together and Journeying Together in Love and Friendship for ICCUSA Mission :

By Stan Chu Ilo

Presentation to ICCUSA Convention, 29th June, 2024

I pray that your inner vision may be flooded with
light, to enable you to see what hope the fact
that he has called you gives you and through you
to many others

The Power of Faith: The Power of Stories

When we embrace faith-when God embraces us—we become new creatures constituted and called to be part of the people of God. This is the beginning of a journey: our insertion into the story of God's engagement with humanity, our families, our churches, our schools, communities, nations etc. As we embark upon it, faith guides us by offering itself as a way of life that indicates paths to be taken and dark alleys or dead-end streets to be avoided, and that tells us what our specific tasks are in the great story of which we are a part. Finally that story gives meaning to all we do, from the smallest act to the weightiest.

ICCUSA 2003-2024

Thanks to ICCUSA founding members: Anthony Ikebudu, Sr MaryPaul Asoegwu, and Dr Paul Amuchie=You were led by faith to begin a journey that as you never knew would lead us to this day.

The Heart of the Matter

- No generation can bequeath to its successor what it has not got. ..if we are skeptical we shall only teach skepticism to our pupils, if fools only folly, if vulgar only vulgarity, if saints sanctity, if heroes heroism. Education is only the most fully conscious of the channels whereby each generation influences the next. It is not a closed system. Nothing which was not in the teachers can flow from them into the pupils- C. S. Lewis, quoted in *Handbook on Spiritual Formation*, 214.

Hopes, Dreams, Challenges

- *We are Biafrans Fighting for our nation In the name of Jesus. We shall conquer Biafra win! Biafra! We are Biafrans Fighting for our freedom In the name of Jesus. We shall conquer Biafra win! Biafra! We are Biafrans Marching to the war front. In the Name of Jesus We shall vanquish Biafra win! Biafra!*
- The diaries of my father after the war
- Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration after the War has failed. There was something almost mystical about the Biafran endeavor; its fusion of hope and fear, the evolution of its national, cultural and religious consciousness across one thousand days, hovering anxiously between the dread of genocide and a near millenarian belief in the virtues of ‘the Biafran Revolution’ and the advent of a new Israel, half heaven half earth, among the hills and towns of Igboland.
- “I have no dream”; “I have a dream” What people feel when they cannot find communities of support, love, and friendship vs. what people feel when they experience love in the community, school, church etc.
- Some Stories from Africa: The Example of Rose a blind Girl.

What can Unite Ndigbo: Agha ifele: A Wounded Race

- We should rather fight smart like the Jews did after the Holocaust and garnered such a coalition of forces that the whole of the Middle East and Arabs fought them and were defeated in the Yom Kippur War. I am not a pro-Zionist, but I am just giving you an example of the only minority group that succeeded at what you guys want to do. The Armenians mainly Christians tried it against the Muslim Ottomans and were crushed between 1894-1924 (more than 2 million were killed) like the Igbos were crushed by Nigeria and the British and Russians; the Kurds tried it against Saddam Hussein and were crushed; over 200,000 Kurds were slaughtered by Hussein in 1988.
- The fight for Biafra in the way, we Igbo are going after it now is a path to mass-suicide a *massa damnata* complex that some of us are warning out people to step back from. We Igbo should not make that stupid mistake of war with the Fulani again when they still control the state apparatus of violence.

Break up or breaking Down

Look at the Catalans in Spain, look at the Saharawi Arab people in Morocco, look at the Somaliland in Somalia, look at what is happening in Tigray, look at what is happening among the Tibetans and China, look at the bloody war in Northern Ireland that lasted for more than a century; and look at what is happening with the Palestinians and Israel. The Igbo do not want to become like Palestinians, who like us, have a just cause, but do not have a coalition of the great powers behind them.

Alignment of interests/Social Capital: Igbo Catholicism

- Look at what is happening in South Sudan and you will see why Voltaire calls for greater diversity in the polity to forestall one group becoming so dominant against the rest. So, in South Sudan it is clear that breaking out from one bigger group into a smaller group produced worst forms of evil men and elites in Salva Kir and Riek Machar
- So, what works is not *identity politics*, but *alignment of interests*

Friendship Model

- “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” **I Corinthians 11: 1**
- “I do not call you servants but friends, for I have made known to you all that I received from my father.” **John 15: 15**
- “I have given you an example that you should follow in my steps” **John 13: 15**
- “Learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls.” **Matthew 11: 29**
- “The man of God (2Kings 1: 9) received me like a father and expressed pleasure at my coming with a kindness most fitting in a bishop. I began to like him, at first indeed not as a teacher of the truth, for I had absolutely no confidence in your Church, but as a human being who was kind to me.” **Augustine and Ambrose who helped his conversion**
- “What consolation have we in this human society, so replete with mistaken notions and distressing anxieties, except the unfeigned faith and mutual affections of genuine and loyal friends.” **St Augustine**

The Challenge of Leadership

- Crisis of the Heart!
- What is Leadership? Influence: Passion, Purpose, Plan
- Interpretative and Adaptive Leadership
- Relational Leadership
- Implemental Leadership
- Connectors: Malcolm Gladwell's *The Tipping Point: How Little Things can Make a Difference*: You can make a difference but you cannot do it alone. This is why we need to work together. Connectors know everyone; how big things gets done Ben Flyvbjerg and Dan Gardner.

Better Together

- Spirituality of Working Together (Tuckman's Stages): Forming, Storming, Norming, performing, transforming.
- Religious leaders can be successful bridge-builders because they have precisely the right set of resources. For one, they command community respect, and therefore speak with moral authority. Second, by dint of their profession, they counsel, exhort, and persuade audiences totaling tens of millions of people each week. Further, unlike other leaders, religious figures draw inspiration from scriptures that almost universally emphasize peace, fellowship, and altruism; their language is the language of social capital.”
- How can we build relationship and friendship in ICCUSA and among Igbo Catholic Communities?

ICCUSA as Social Capitals

- Social capital always refers to the non-monetary value of co-operation and networking existent in social relations between residents in local communities. Social capitals facilitate co-operation, coordination, participatory practices, for the mutual benefit of all (refer to my textual notes)

First: A Biblical Paradigm: unity

- “The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common. The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all given great respect. None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from them to present it to the apostles, it was then distributed to any members who might be in need” (Acts 4: 32-35).

Second Principle: Friendship and Love

- The love revealed in Jesus Christ on the Cross is that of a friend who wills to draw all, through forgiveness and reconciliation, into friendship. Hence divine love can be described in terms of love of friendship and is creative friendship.
- “If you are friends with Christ many others will warm themselves at your fire...On the day you no longer burn with love, many will die of the cold.” Francois Mauriac.
- St Ambrose’s definition of friendship seems to me the most adequate for our use here:

Third: Friendship is Goodwill, unqualified.

- Goodwill also tends to wrench the sword of anger from our hands. Goodwill makes wounds inflicted by a friend more beneficial than kisses given freely by an enemy (Prov 27:6). Goodwill makes those who were many become one, for though friends may be many they do become one, with one spirit and one mind (Acts 4: 32). We see too that even rebukes are agreeable when they are delivered in the context of friendship, for while they carry the power to sting, they do not carry real pain. We are stung by the critical words, but we are pleased by the thoughtfulness and goodwill which lie behind them.
- Defer to your friend as an equal, do not be embarrassed to be the first in doing kindness, for there is no pride among friends. Never fail your friends, for friendship is life's support.
- Your friend knows all about you, but still loves you.
- The crisis of friendship.

Some of the Things we can do Together

- Raise consciousness about the community problems and show how they can be engaged by all the stake holders;
- Mobilize the resources in the community and valorize the agency of the people using the people's strengths, resources, and wisdom;
- Create linkages and networks among the various groups in the church and other social groups to engage in activities that are inspired by their faith, but relate in many ways to addressing the challenges of poverty eradication, wealth creation, civic engagement, participatory practices for better society, solidarity with those on the margins and those in difficulties and the poor, cultural revival and participation;
- Empowering social groups that ordinarily have little influence in the social agenda since some of the church groups are often more involved with spiritual development and devotions;
- Outreach through greater bonds of love and friendship.
- Creating programs and activities which address the real needs of the people, and which are relevant to them.

12 Helpful Points for Building Friendship, Teaching to Love and Learning to work together

- People are insecure..give them Confidence (J. Maxwell)
- People want to feel special...sincerely complement them;
- People desire a better tomorrow...show them hope;
- People need to be understood...listen to them;
- People are selfish...speak to their needs;
- People get emotionally low...encourage them;
- People want to be associated with success...helping them to win
- Value the ideas and gifts of others;
- Be strong and encourage others to be strong even when under pressure and uncertain times, the emotional health (intelligence EQ) of a leader or a member of an organization affects the whole team;
- Live in Honesty: Those who receive the torch from you must be willing to believe you when you speak of its importance;
- Let your life speak; integrity is the badge of honor, loyalty is the crown of friendship; and reliability is the touchstone of character;
- Instead of cursing or causing the darkness light a candle of love
- Commit yourself to God

Respect People and Respect the Future

- Les Giblin said: “ You can’t make the other fellow feel important in your presence if you secretly feel that he is nobody”
- We are prophets, servants, not masters: Humility should be the watch word. Let us focus our gaze on Christ:

He calls us again and again; in order to justify us again and again-and again and again, and more and more, to sanctify and glorify us. It were well if we understood this; but we are slow to master the great truth, that is, as it were walking among us, and by his hand, or eye, or voice, bidding us follow him. Cardinal John Henry Newman

You are not a Messiah

- Pleaser, protector, rescuer, giver, counselor, teacher, crusader etc (Carmen Berry, When Helping you is Hurting me)
- When Messiahs feel overwhelmed and underappreciated most of us respond by helping even more. Through religious training, our families of origin, and society at large, we've been taught to be 'cheerful givers', to fight our own depression by helping those who are worse off than ourselves, to 'lose' ourselves in service. But we've not been taught how to identify and express our feelings. How could we stop helping others long enough to sort out what is best for ourselves? Wouldn't that be selfish? (p.19)

Steps for Deepening the Friendship Model of Building Communities

- Acknowledge your Need for Assistance and that we need each other.
- Co-Operate with the Process of Personal Spiritual and Personal Growth
- Attend to your Inner Voice and Work on Yourself for steady Improvement
- Listening to the Hurting Child Inside of You and Try to Attend to your love Tank when it is empty before you fill the love tanks of people you serve.
- Identity your own needs and wants
- Learn to accept love and Nurturance
- Acknowledge your own mistakes with hope, and embrace criticism with gratitude
- Make it more about the organization than of yourself
- Do not be rigid about structures and systems: 'This is how we do it' is good, but there may be other ways of doing it?
- Pay attention to the perspectives of other people. Avoid Selfishness, greed, and pride in all you do.
- Ndigbo have problems with "ibu onye ebee?"; ICCUSA must become truly Catholic transcending 'Ibu onye ebe?' by insisting that we are all Ndigbo.