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## Evaluating opportunities for evangelisation in the historical development of the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega since 1978

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**Abstract**

This paper evaluates the evangelisation opportunities in the historical development of the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega since 1978. The study adopted a historical research design. The study's target population was one million catholic faithful in the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega. A sample size of 384 catholic Christians was further deduced using the Krejcie and Morgan Table. Data collection tools used included questionnaires, interviews schedule, focus group discussions, observations, secondary sources, archival records, and internet materials. The respondents consent to be quoted in this work was given. Data obtained was qualitatively analyzed. The study unravelled the following opportunities: Education, health, human resource, rich documentation in the Catholic Church, stable hierarchy, rich scripture and long history, among others. These opportunities are important because they help the church to advance in her efforts of evangelisation. That is why this study employed the challenge and response theory as propounded by Arnold Toynbee. The area under study is a multi-ethnic with rich cultural diversity, the dances and music, that when blended well can enrich evangelisation and the liturgy.

**Keywords:** catholic, evangelisation, Kakamega, laity, opportunity

### Public Interest Statement

The reviewed literature on the area of study revealed that some researches have been done, but very minimal research, if any, has addressed the issue of evangelisation opportunities in the catholic diocese of Kakamega. Also, the area of study has many talented local artists, yet they have not been included as part of evangelising agents. Therefore, this study will provide information that forms a foundation on which the stake holders will be able to utilise and enhance evangelisation. Also, being aware of the global dynamic changes, this study is highly relevant in the post-modern era.

### Introduction

There is a reasonably common recognition among historians that every 500 years, the Church has faced some horrendous cataclysm (Wilker, 2018). These crises have always elicited opportunities that lead to changes in evangelisation trends. In the first 500 years (1 -500 CE), the early persecutions made the apostles disperse in the Roman Empire making the gospel spread in the vast Empire. The rise and conversion of Emperor Constantine (272-337 CE) provided an opportunity for the spread of evangelisation. In AD 324, he made Christianity a legal religion and convoked the Council of Nicea in AD 325 which became a turning point in the history of the Church in the first 500 years. The apostolic age's mission strategies, exegesis, *Didache*, zealotry, and apologetics led to the spreading of the Gospel from Jerusalem to other parts of Asia, Western Europe, and Mediterranean North Africa. Eusebius contends that the Peace of Rome (*Pax Romana*) provided an enabling environment for the evangelisation process coupled with the use of two famous official languages, Greek and Latin, which provided quick and flexible communication within the empire (Para-Mallam, 2008).

The second 500 years of the Church's history, which began from 500 CE to 1000 CE, witnessed the following opportunities: the rise of monasteries and convents, the Roman Catholic Church became organized into an elaborate hierarchy with the Pope as the head of Western Europe. The third 500 years, 1000-1500 CE, was the new millennium's beginning. Notwithstanding the Renaissance and Reformation that led to the rise of Protestantism, the church experienced the following opportunities: The crusades in which the church defended herself from Islamic attacks (Fanning, 2009), the rise of universities and scholasticism strengthened the intellectual foundation of papal power in the Western Church. Monastic reforms added papal power by giving the Pope many zealous monks and loyal servants, a great opportunity for evangelisation. The Church relied more on crusades to defend itself from the Muslims in the medieval ages. In the fourth 500 years, 1500-2000 CE, the Church responded to evangelisation differently based on the time's challenges. The Ignatius of Loyola Counter-reformation was indeed an opportunity for the church to put her house in order. Luther's challenge initiated the paradigm shift in the catechism, training of the clergy in philosophy and theology, Missionary congregation, training of the clergy, and missionary reaching Africans through voyages (Lez & Gonzalez, 2012). The discovery of the new lands led to the beginning of missions abroad. The Roman Church was organized around religious orders whose dedicated members were trained and ready for assignments. Their vows of poverty, obedience, and celibacy gave them ideal qualities for pioneer missionary work. Protestants rejected monasticism, which was the chief strategy of the Roman Catholic missionary effort (Fanning, 2009).

The Great Century (1792-1910 CE) witnessed a rise in missionary work. The missionary success was enormous because, from the very first, they recognized that the evangelisation of the world was the most pressing of all the obligations that rested upon the Christian Church, and the carrying out of these obligations was the typical affair of the community (Robinson, 1915). The ascension to the papacy of Pope Paul VI, who patterned his ministry after the *Peripatetic* Apostle Paul to the

Gentiles boasted evangelisation worldwide. He re-organized the modern Roman Curia and changed the congregation's name from the propagation of the faith (*Propaganda fide*) to the congregation of evangelisation of peoples. He prioritized evangelisation in his apostolic exhortation "*Evangelii Nuntiandi*" (on evangelisation of the modern world) (Pope Paul IV, 1975). In 1975, he lamented that Catholics were neglecting their basic duty. Evangelisation to him is the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity, for she exists to evangelize (R. N. Hann, 2013) John Paul II gave it "The New Evangelisation" and made it pragmatic and pervasive. The Pope made pastoral trips to many parts of the world, to over 129 countries. He introduced World Youth Day, and he reached out to the people through the media. Pope Benedict XVI (2005-2013) and Pope Francis (Pope Francis, 2013) have embraced the new evangelisation.

As advocated by the recent Popes, New Evangelisation calls for revamping mission strategies, new strategies and approaches, and involvement of all, thus resulting in the evangelisation paradigm shift (Lez & Gonzalez, 2012). The Church's evangelisation in Kenya has a long history since the 15<sup>th</sup> Century when the Portuguese landed on the East Coast of Africa (Muwemba, 2014). The missionaries had the support of the colonial government for protection and financial boost, the mission centres acted both as educational, health, and spiritual centres, and the missionaries could efficiently evangelize in the region (Burgman, 1990).

### **Opportunities for Evangelisation in the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega**

In this study, opportunities for evangelisation were taken to be the paradigm shifts that caused issues that the Church has taken advantage of to advance the process of evangelisation. These are, indeed, paradigm shifts that have advanced evangelisation in the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega. Opportunities, therefore, refer to favourable circumstances that have given the Catholic Church, as an institution (organization), a competitive advantage in the area of evangelisation. The theory of challenge and response propounded by Arnold Toynbee affirms that every challenge elicits a response that ameliorates or counters the situation. It is strongly argued that there was an opportunity out of it in every challenge the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega encountered in her evangelisation process. It is the response to the various challenges that became the opportunity that helped to realize the process of evangelisation. "Within every challenge you face, there is an opportunity hidden that will lead you towards the path of wealth and abundance (Stephen, 23<sup>rd</sup>/Oct/2021). "Whenever there is a challenge, there is also an opportunity to face it, to demonstrate and develop our will and determination (Dalai, 23<sup>rd</sup>/Oct/2021)." The hidden potentialities were realized, and when these potentialities were actualized, they became opportunities for evangelisation (Andrea, 25<sup>th</sup>/Nov/2021). While addressing the priests, religions, and nuns on the theme of challenges, Pope Francis said:

From the earliest days of Christianity, every period of history has been continuously subjected to multiple challenges. Therefore, we need not fear challenges; they should be taken as the bull by the horns! Do not fear them. Challenges are good because they make us grow, are a sign of lively faith, of a lively community that seeks his Lord and keeps eyes and hearts open. We should fear a faith without challenge, a faith that feels complete, all done as if everything had been already said and done. This faith is not needed. Challenges help us to ensure that our faith does not become ideological. Ideologies grow and sprout when one thinks they have complete faith. Challenges save us from closed and defined thinking and open us up to a broader understanding of the data revealed (L. Vincent, 2016).

From the preceding explanation, the following are some of the opportunities the present study established that the Church in Kakamega has utilized to enhance the evangelisation process within the various paradigm shifts. They included: Education, health, human resource, and rich documentation in the Catholic Church, self-sustenance/resource mobilization programmes, diverse expertise, stable hierarchy, rich scripture and long history, dialogue with other denominations, diverse programmes, networking, and universality of the Church.

### **Human Resource**

The ecclesial human resource possesses unique gifts and charisms of the immature faithful. These are latent gifts and charisma that the Church in Kakamega may not have fully realized. Each person has something that can be contributed to the evangelisation process (Henry, 1995). Unfortunately, lay persons are seldom encouraged to recognize their gifts and charisma. The lay persons remain in the church as servants who wrapped their talent in a handkerchief and hid it in the ground (Henry, 1995). Accordingly, "We are working in executive jobs in our companies and dealing with policy and important matters for it, but when we come to Church, we are only needed to shift tables and settle the chairs for a function (Henry, 1995).

According to D'Sousa, the pastors must work out of a "task-oriented" Church model. If the pastor would take the trouble to identify the gifts of his community (Parish), he would soon discover so much potential that there would be an explosion of power for the good of the community and the mission of the church, which evangelisation is (Henry, 1995). The Holy Spirit endows the believers with diverse gifts and charisma. The pastors of the church have to recognize them and channel them for the building up of the ecclesial community. The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature. Hence, the work of evangelisation is a fundamental duty of all the people of God (CCC. N. 781). Missionaries may be clergy, religious or lay members of Christ's faithful (CCC. N. 784). Trained catechists are to be employed for missionary activity. Thus, all the ecclesial members are missionaries/evangelists (CCC. N. 785).

For adequate participation of the Laity in evangelisation in the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega, there is a need to go beyond the liturgy-related ministries and create other relevant ministries that enhance evangelisation. According to Ian Kafuna,

The Catholic Church has very much recognized the lector and acolyte ministries because the two are given to those moving towards being ordained priests. Other ministries are required that can engage a large number of the Laity in evangelisation. For example, there is a need for the ministry for inter-religious dialogue, ministry to the new evangelisation, ministry to social service, ministry to hospital visitation, ministry to basic ecclesial communities, and ministry to street workers, to name a few (I. Kafuna, Personal Communication, 12<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2021).

This verbatim quotation is supported in the apostolic exhortation of *Christifideles Laici*, where Pope John Paul II prophetically said, "The third millennium will be for the lay people." During and after Vatican Council II, there have been several discussions on the Laity's dignity, role, and rights in the church. These discussions have resulted in a significant paradigm shift in evangelisation, where the Laity has continuously become an opportunity in evangelisation (Aryankalayil, 2005).

The Catholic Church has human resources in terms of skills and abilities in music, professionals, writers, and leadership. The Catholic Church in Kakamega has a well-taught group of young and old

artists and artistes. Their power has been proved in secular music. These different bodies of artisans and artistes were well incorporated into the Church Choir or Liturgy and sponsored to provide the Gospel or evangelize the people. Bonaventure Luchidio avers:

With the same breadth and vigour, the artist of secular music is received by the people, would be the same way they will sing and evangelize the people. The like of Ben Makabwa and Matombole band, the late Luseno and the crew as well as the Machimbos provides good example. These artists will attract the youth and other faithful to the church (B. Luchidio, Personal Communication, Oct. 30, 2022).

As already indicated in the Sister Act Video's contribution to evangelisation, Mary Clarence, the leading actor in the video, revolutionized the Parish by using her singing talent. She introduced Rogue music rhythm in church hymns that attracted many people back to the church that had become moribund (Sennet, 30<sup>th</sup>/08/2019). The same applies to rap music done by Fr. Ogalo of the Homabay Diocese (Catholic Register Staff, 4<sup>th</sup>/05/2017). From these two scenarios, it is evident that tapping and wiring the talents of the faithful can make evangelisation practical and inspiring, attracting Christians to the church, awakening those who have fallen, and bringing on board fresh converts. However, some priests are relatively slow and reluctant in taping, harnessing, and nurturing the various talents among the youths that transform evangelisation in the church. The postmodern era demands priests who are vibrant, pro-active in evangelisation, and with praxeological traits. Thus, the postmodern era demands Dewey's pragmatic approach, which applies to the new evangelisation. According to Omondi (2010), the Church leadership does not welcome such artists and artistes. While researching the influence of Luo religion, he strongly suggests that the stand-back attitude toward the artists participating in Liturgy should change (Omondi, 2010). The preceding argument resonates well with the view that "some of the ignored artists draw people to themselves and even develop a ministry church (FGD-CDKK CWA, 18<sup>th</sup>/08/2021).

The Catholic Diocese of Kakamega is blessed with many choirs, men and women of good melodies and voices (A. Likhaya, Personal Communication, Sept. 10, 2021). A well-prepared choir with relevant songs for Liturgy plays a significant role in the Liturgy (P. Sulumeti, Personal Communication, March 28, 2021). According to the diocesan pastoral coordinator, each Parish in the Diocese has at least one choir (V. Mukokho, Personal Communication, Aug. 20, 2021). Earlier on in the late 1990s, Bishop Sulumeti introduced *Isukuti* mass. *Isukuti* is a traditional drum that, during the Pre-Vatican II period, could not be allowed as a musical instrument in the church. While introducing *Isukuti* in the Church, Bishop Sulumeti said he was acting in the spirit of Vatican Council II (1962-1965), which encouraged the use of local languages and instruments in place of Latin songs and foreign instruments. In this regard, people could sing their songs composed by themselves and fit in the Liturgy (P. Sulumeti, Personal Communication, March 28, 2021). For sure, *Isukuti* mass has been a landmark. The first Parish to perform *Isukuti* mass was Our Lady of Assumption, Shitoli (A. Likhaya, Personal Communication, Sept. 10, 2021). Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI posits:

When well prepared and celebrated, Liturgy can act as an effective medium of evangelisation. Evidence of this abounds where people are drawn to the Gospel and become disciples through the work of a good choir (Brandon, 1971).

Since 1978, there has been a tremendous transformation in the development of the parish choir in the Diocese of Kakamega. The guiding motto has been devolved from St. Augustine of Hippo (354 AD - 430 AD) that reads: "The one who sings well prays twice (St. Augustine Confession). According to one of the catechists in CDKK, the musical tradition of the universal church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art as a continuation of sacred music and words; it forms a necessary or integral part of solemn Liturgy (Pope Paul VI, 1963). Songs and music fulfill their function as signs more significant when they are more closely connected with the liturgical action (mass) (Pope Paul VI, 1963).

The SCCs also indicate that the songs should explore the cultural richness of the people of God who celebrate it. According to Luchidio, "We have a very respectful Laity, a Laity that respects the hierarchy and the Church in genera" (B. ILuchidio, Personal Communication, Oct. 30, 2021). This resource has been a real opportunity for evangelisation. However, the critical part is how this resource is moulded. He further asserts that if there is no moulding, the resource melts, hence not achieving the desired results (B. ILuchidio, Personal Communication, Oct. 30, 2021).

The Laity of Kakamega is literate. They are practitioners. Indeed, many are professionals. It, therefore, behooves the diocesan management to help and moot ways of tapping into this mega resource. First, this resource provides agents of evangelisation; these are men and women who have willingly played a significant role in catechizing. Since colonial times, Catholic teachers in schools have continued to provide catechetical classes to the pupils and students (Muchanga, 2006).

To Luchidio, the missionaries knew many things. They were custodians of health, education, farming, teaching, and nearly everything. However, after the missionaries, the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega had the great opportunity of trained men and women who could bolster the management of the parishes, health centres, farms, schools, etc. Above all, this resource is readily available to help in evangelisation. According to their status, they have the potential to bring back the lapsed. They have the wherewithal in terms of administration of the Diocese for better evangelisation (B. Luchidio, Personal Communication, Oct. 30, 2021).

Notwithstanding this tremendous human resource opportunity, there have been cries that some clergy are repelling them, or they lack the skill of tapping into this mega resource. Many respondents pointed out that some clergy have an inherent inferiority complex, and as such, they fearfully engage the skilled Laity in the Parish (FGD-CWA, Aug. 18, 2021). Kangethe *et al.* (2018) examine how the Laity participates in evangelisation in Njoro parish, Nakuru Diocese. To him, the Laity is a sea of witnesses in all sectors, words, and actions. To these scholars, the evangelisation challenges call for a new vision of understanding to concretely impact the faith.

Moreover, all baptized and confirmed Catholics are strictly obliged to spread and confess the faith by word and deed (FGD-CMA, Oct. 23, 2021). Luchidio adds that the church in the CDKK has the opportunity of having writing scholars, Bible scholars, *etcetera*, hence a fantastic favour. The Catholic libraries are full of literature in videos, books, films, and archival materials. Most institutions within and outside the CDKK that wish to influence society with their message can find the information they wish to disseminate (B. ILuchidio, Personal Communication, Oct. 30, 2021).

A lot of evangelisation is taking place in print media-the printed word. Some prefer to read, watch films or television, especially the youths (Y.B. Kafai & K.A. Peppler, 2011). Silayo supported Luchidio's views by pointing out that the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega is blessed with writers. However, there is a need to improve on the dissemination of print media and how the print media can diffuse in the entire Diocese. The fear that emerged is that some faithful are not literate; others are not keen to read (B. Silayo, Personal Communication, Aug. 30, 2021).

The Diocese has several Catholics in leadership in the civil service and others who have retired. On this basis, the study finds this a great opportunity in the evangelisation process. The leadership, skills, and expertise of these human resources are an ample vantage opportunity in the area of evangelisation. Some of the retired members of the church can help in teaching, organizing workshops on mentorship, and nurturing the people in SCCs, parishes, and the Diocese for evangelisation. One YCS moderator supports this observation by expressing that the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega has great men and women who are influential leaders and essential icons who can be used in evangelisation. With patience, empathy, active listening, reliability, creativity, and positivity in team building, leaders can be a great resource in motivating the youth to participate fully in the evangelisation process (A. Bukhebi, Personal Communication, Oct. 12, 2021).

It is now the responsibility of the clergy to have ways of utilizing this leadership. The study established that in some parishes, the clergy were slow at engaging this leadership resource for fear of accountability and transparency in the running of the parishes as centres of evangelisation. This leadership can be a great value addition to the evangelisation process. Parishes that have engaged their human resources well have performed well in evangelisation and the general apostolate of the Parish.

### **Education as an Opportunity**

The Diocese has many schools, including 300 primary schools, 200 secondary schools, and a good number of tertiary institutions. Schools sponsored by the Catholic Church serve as avenues for evangelisation for the Catholic Church today in various ways. The Catholic-sponsored schools in the Diocese carry out two most outstanding commands: preaching and teaching, thus providing a real opportunity for evangelisation. These schools are the most influential centres of evangelism in the Diocese in that they help in training more agents of evangelisation. Therefore,

Apart from imparting knowledge, these institutions teach morality. Since the roots of evangelism are impeded in the Church, which derives its life from Christ, the evangelistic workers trained in these Catholic-sponsored institutions co-join their work with teachers, patrons, and ministers to instil discipline to learners by engaging them in conversation about faith, values, hope, meaning, purpose, goodness, beauty, truth and so on (B. Kibaki, Personal Communication, Sept. 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021).

Accordingly, the process of being friendly without discrimination and influencing the school community and the society at large towards a better living through good deeds and good dialogue is realized. It is evident that children naturally learn to trust and respond to education and teachers in their child-like faith. The Bible supports this in Proverbs 22:6, which advises that a child should be trained in the way they should go, and when they are old, will not turn from it. Through training in a religious school environment, mission fruits do not die with proper reproduction. Through education, the Catholic schools in the CDKK teach learners lifetime values and beliefs, and this creates the foundation on which the lives of these learners are built, as they grow firmly grounded in faith in Jesus Christ and with a reliance on the word as their guideline for life and service. Therefore, the learners can withstand their cultural pressures to conform to ungodly beliefs and practices.

### **Women in Evangelisation as an Opportunity**

Another real opportunity in the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega is the number of women in the Laity.

Throughout history, the central role of women in society has ensured the progress and long-term development of nations (Globalvolunteers.org). According to Michelle Bachelet, when women are empowered and can claim their rights and access to leadership, opportunities, and choices, economies grow, food security is enhanced, and prospects-both for current and future generations are improved.

The Old Testament speaks of several women who dedicated their time, homes, vocation, and unselfish service to God's Church, setting an example for today's women. For instance, in the book of Judges, Deborah the prophetess led Israel through decisive battles and judged God's people wisely, resulting in 40 years of peace and freedom from the Canaanites. In the New Testament, Jesus' earthly ministry was supported by the twelve male disciples and several women disciples who followed Him and served Him actively (Y.B Kafai & K.A Pepler, 2011). Paul's ministerial partners included several women. Among them were: Phoebe and Prisca (Romans 16). Philip, the evangelist, had four daughters whom the Holy Spirit used to prophesy, supporting the evangelisation of the infant Church (Acts 21:8-9).

These biblical examples indicate not a token role for women in the Church but a vital contribution that women can and must make in the life and outreach of the Church. Although the scriptures recognize that in the service of Christ, men and women are of equal value (Galatians 3:2). serious concerns exist about the role of women in the Catholic Church, particularly in its evangelistic mission. These reservations are shared not just by members but also by leaders and administrators. Only those with vision know how to value the women in their congregations and give those opportunities to develop their talents as teachers and nurturers of children and youth, music directors in the worship hour, and directors and leaders in other avenues of service.

Since biblical times, the Church has been blessed in every generation with gifted women who have witnessed to their Lord in extra-ordinary ways, including three – St. Teresa of Avila, St. Therese of Lisieux, and St. Catherine of Siena – who have been recognized as Doctors of the Church for their insights as evangelizers (The Catholic Answer Bible). It is, therefore, gratifying to see that the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega is working towards enhancing women's full participation in the life of the Diocese (*Diocesan Synod: Declaration and Decrees*, n. 34). This is a step in the right direction since women can significantly contribute to the evangelisation process.

In the Diocese, the women Catholics are many compared to the men. At the same time, their availability and participation in the liturgy or Church services are more than that of men. The participation of the women in the evangelisation in Kakamega has improved tremendously. There were no women catechists before 1978. However, today, nearly all 43 parishes have a woman catechist alongside a man (V. Likunda, Personal Communication, August 6, 2021). The number of women in the Parish Council is overwhelming. Since 1978, women have increasingly been involved in the parish's evangelisation and general administration. During the Synodal conference of Kakamega, the women's participation and contribution were commendable (not there). Hence, a gigantic paradigm shift. Bishop Obanyi and Bishop emeritus Philip Sulumeti shepherd of this Diocese had a vision for women evangelizers. Addressing a General Audience in 1994, Pope John Paul the II said:

Women have a pretty particular aptitude for passing on the faith, so much so that Jesus Himself appealed to it in the work of evangelisation. That is what happened to the Samaritan woman Jesus met at Jacob's well: He chose her for the first expression of the new faith in the non-Jewish territory (Pope John Paul II, 1994).

Many Samaritans from that town believed in Him (Jesus) because of the woman's testimony, "for he told me all the things that I have done...." They said we no longer believe just because of what you said: Now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man is the world's Saviour (John 4:39-43). At the resurrection, Jesus appeared to the women, and indeed they spread the good news of the resurrected Lord Jesus like a bush fire apostles (John 18). Luke narrates:

When they returned from the tomb, they told all these things to the eleven and the others. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others who told this news to the (Luke 24:9-10).

According to D'Souza, the love and service of women in the mission of evangelisation can have the special quality of bringing the compassionate Jesus the healer and reconciler to the poor and marginalized people. The women are proto agents of evangelisation to every child. A mother is the ideal first catechist or evangelizer to the family.

### **Rich Scripture and Long History**

The Church has a wealth of scripture and rich history and mystery from which it can benefit in its evangelisation efforts. To understand the evangelisation process, the historical perspective of Christianity becomes fundamentally necessary to establish the paradigm shift. The scriptures contain stories of how Jesus and his followers evangelized the people. They provide strategies and changing trends in terms of making the good news reach the people. Scriptures alone are a powerful weapon in the process of evangelisation. The use of parables, demonstrations, performing miracles, and forming agents (disciples) of evangelisation are found in the scriptures. The Bible records that Jesus sent out His disciples to evangelize by visiting people's homes in pairs of two believers (Luke 10: 1-12).

The Catholic Church has a rich history of evangelisation, now two thousand years old. This is an excellent opportunity for the CDKK to learn from this historical process and improve her evangelisation strategies. The rich history has provided the various trends, strategies, peoples, and leaders who influenced the course of evangelisation. However, it should be noted that the role of the Church in evangelisation has had both a history of advantages and a history with a tainted background. Above all is the opportunity of the presence of the Holy Spirit guiding the Church. Jesus commissioned the disciples "go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation (Mark 16:15). Jesus adds: "And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age (Mathew 28:20). History is the mother of all studies: thus, the Church learns lessons from history not to repeat past mistakes (C. Simbe, Personal Communication, June 4,2021). Therefore, the CDKK has the opportunity to learn from the weaknesses and the strengths of the Church's involvement in evangelisation. Such opportunities can help the Church put in place mechanisms and strategies that are realistic and pragmatic toward sustainable evangelisation.

### **Rich Papal Letters (Encyclicals and Apostolic Exhortations)**

The long-standing history of the Catholic Church, with its richness in scriptures, has a treasure of numerous papal documents that have addressed the issues of evangelisation in the world. Historically, the effects of the Industrial Revolution period have seen various Popes writing Encyclicals and apostolic letters that advise the world on the way forward on countless issues. Some of these documents and encyclicals touching on the issues of evangelisation include *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Redemptoris Missio*, *New Evangelisation*, *Mission and Evangelisation*, Papal writings on new evangelisation,

and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, to name a few. Therefore, the rich apostolic letters, encyclicals, and Vatican documents are an opportunity of enhancing evangelisation in the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega. The Church, therefore, has a lot to refer to in its efforts and contributions toward evangelisation. In these letters by the Popes, the mandate of the Church as a prominent actor in evangelisation has been underscored. Together with the Vatican Council II documents, these documents provide an opportunity for the Catholic Church in Kakamega to read, understand, and borrow from them for her role in peacebuilding in the county following the 2007/08 PEV.

### **Presence of Defined Structures and diverse laity and expertise in the Catholic Church**

The Catholic Church structures, organization, and systems provide an opportunity for an effective evangelisation process. The defined structures are well manifested in the family, SCCs, parishes, Dioceses, metropolitan, national Episcopal Conference, Regional Conferences such as AMECEA, continental, e.g., SECAM, and global leadership at the Vatican. These structures provide an excellent opportunity for evangelisation initiatives to be taken effectively from the headquarters to the grassroots level and from the grassroots to the headquarters. Proponents of evangelisation programmes embrace both bottom-up and top-down approaches in the Church while handling the evangelisation process.

The opportunity here is that evangelisation can easily be streamlined using the platforms these systems and structures provide. In the Catholic Church setting, the Church is endowed with structures and systems that, when well utilized, the agents of evangelisation have an opportunity to champion and push forward the evangelisation programmes in the community (B. Luchidio, Oct. 30, 2021). These structures demonstrate that, while examining the evangelisation paradigm shift in the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega, the Catholic Church in Kakamega and Vihiga counties is at an advantage over the Church structure in Kenya in the global setting.

The Vatican statistics estimate about 1.2 billion Roman Catholics globally, Kakamega County having about 800,000 faithful. The Catholic Church has an opportunity to utilize these numbers in spreading peace messages to society at large. Of significance is the diversity of this population in terms of expertise and professionalism, which may be helpful when streamlining peacebuilding in society.

The Laity in leadership positions such as in education, law, and politics, and as medical workers, religious men and women, the clergy and social workers, and opinion leaders provide the opportunity for a broader panacea in the evangelisation process. However, this can only be an opportunity if such potentialities are realized and tapped for the good of creating agents of evangelisation. The Church is structured to have various religious groups such as the Catholic Women, the Legionaries, the Catholic Men Association, Pontifical Societies, the CJPC, and YCS. Given the diversity of age, gender, professionalism, and socioeconomic status in society, it poses an excellent opportunity for the Catholic Church's evangelisation process. However, this diversity becomes valid only if those in charge realize this potential and utilize it. It thus, calls for formation, ongoing formation, training, and sensitization of the Catholics in CDKK.

During the 2007-2008 PEV, this diversity was well utilized in how various groups responded to the request by the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Kakamega for the provision of financial and material aid to the victims. In addition to this, the role of women in the Church's evangelisation efforts should be enhanced, especially in the leadership of SCCs, which should not remain a male domain. The opportunity here is that several researchers have demonstrated that women are good agents of evangelisation. Therefore, the Catholic Church in Kakamega realizes that women are an excellent opportunity to enhance evangelisation.

There is a need to have a lot of sensitization in creating awareness of the potentiality of women of CDKK as the best agents of evangelisation. Therefore, an invaluable opportunity in the evangelisation process. This opportunity is also echoed by Kofi Anan when he said, "...not only do women belong to this planet, but the future of this planet depends on women (Mukabi, 2015). It is a great opportunity when various people come in to mobilize essential resources in evangelisation. The presence of political figures in the Church's midst is a potential opportunity for the evangelisation process. Consequently, the diverse nature of the Laity and the expertise they possess becomes an excellent opportunity to mobilize resources for evangelisation. The accommodative nature of the Catholic Church through dialogue with other denominations is also another opportunity for evangelisation. Peace dialogue meetings play a crucial role in evangelisation (Mukabi, 2015). The dialogue initiated by the Church brings warring groups together to discuss and share ideas and experiences and agree on new approaches to work in conflict-affected areas and fragile contexts. Embracing dialogue can be a great opportunity not only in peacebuilding but also in evangelisation (Mukabi, 2015).

### **Cultural and Land Diversity as an Opportunity for Evangelisation**

The Church that appreciates the cultural heritage and values of a people finds evangelisation easier. According to Sulumeti, appreciation of the cultural values of a people and speaking their *lingua franca* enables the agents of evangelisation to permeate the minds and hearts of the people (P. Sulumeti, Personal Communication, June 4, 2021). As Swinton suggests:

Even amid the deepest darkness, small gestures can bear powerful witness to the possibility that things are not the way they should be or indeed will be. Simple gestures such as sharing the bread offered hope and humanness within a context quite consciously designed to destroy both. These gestures did not prevent the evil or bring it to an end. Nor did they explain it. However, they did make a profound statement that evil does not need to have a final word (Swinton, 2007).

Western Kenya is an area of diverse and vibrant cultures and people. The different sub-ethnic groups in the region allow one to learn from one another. Each group presents a set of genuine values and cultural richness. The progress made, especially in the inculturation of the liturgy, is an excellent example of the richness of Luyia cultures. Which should not be seen as helpful to the Western community as a whole but also as strength and blessing for and contribution to the evangelisation cause in the region (Swinton, 2007). Sejero comments that the Catholic Church has members from different ethnic groups in the country, bringing different cultures and diversity from across the country. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the faithful to learn about different cultures so that they can blend in harmony. Different cultures, in this regard, provide an opportunity for the clergy to blend well with the rest of the people without asking which tribe or community they come from. Therefore, evangelisation has continued to grow as a result of different cultural diversities that complement each other (G. Itolondo, Personal Communication, April 2, 2021).

### **Restoration of the Lost Christians**

Restoration means to return to an earlier condition or position or bring it back into existence. Evangelisation here gives the evangelists or Christians the power to wake up the stagnant Christians in Church and society. In the CDKK, many fall into that category: the nominal Christians, the unbalanced Christians, the passionless Christians, and the non-maturing Christians. Charles Simbe

notes that their faith is “shipwrecked” because there has not been a strong wake-up challenge in recent times from those who preach the Gospel. Evangelistic awakening, which emphasizes the change of life in the Gospel, resolves this problem. The teaching and sermons based on the Gospel will help those who want to be “awakened.” In the place of authentic worship, believers can discover the power to overcome spiritual depression (C. Simbe, Personal Communication, June 4, 2021). Robert E. Webber says, “When worship is acted out in faith, the believer experiences the refreshment of his or her relationship to God, and he or she spontaneously experiences the joy of salvation (Weber, 2006). Luchidio affirms this by noting that as far as the faithful face various challenges as Catholic Church in evangelisation, it has brought with itself an opportunity for the Church to restore the faith of the lost Christians out there. It has indeed been an excellent opportunity for evangelisation mission. Many at a time, as a Church, they give hope to the Christians by preaching the word of God to them. The door-to-door evangelisation has enabled the Church to give hope to the poor, the lost, and community members. As the Church restores the lost back to God, they also get a chance to come back to the Church, subsequently increasing Church membership (B. Luchidio, Personal Communication, Oct. 30, 2021).

In a separate interview, Kizito Sabatia concurred with Charles Simbe and Luchidio. He unraveled that for the Church to win the souls for God should be the main aim of restoring the lost to Christ, a perfect evangelical opportunity that should be maximized. In some rural parishes, many people have already given up due to various challenges such as lack of basic needs like food, shelter, and clothing, so they give up, and some find no need to come to Church again. It is the perfect time to tell these people that God lives and loves His people as a Church. He can still be God if only they believe Him. St. Vincent de Paul and Catholic Justice and Peace Commission has contributed a lot in this area. By doing this, the Church has come up with ways of distributing food to the poor in society; hence they don’t feel that isolation from the Church, and this has been the best mechanism of restoring the lost to the Church (K. Sabatia, Personal Communication, June 16, 2021). Evangelisation has brought with it an opportunity to restore the lost Christians to the Church by preaching the Gospel of hope and comforting them to bring them closer to God. The pontificate of Pope Francis has been very keen on the new evangelisation that focuses mainly on the peripheralized faithful. Silayo contends that restoring the lost to God has been the primary call from God as far as evangelisation is concerned. Evangelisation, therefore, seems to bring the best opportunity to reach far and wide. As a Church, there has been an attempt to reach the lost Christians and give them a new meaning of life through evangelisation than any other Church activity. Therefore, it can be said that evangelisation has allowed the Church to evangelize the lost and give them a new meaning in life (C. Akimana, Personal Communication, July 8, 2021).

Love should compel Christians to have compassion for those in need, and everyone’s greatest need is eternal salvation (B. Silayo, Personal Communication, Oct. 13, 2021). Consider how richly God has loved His people (1 John 3:1, 4:10). If we are to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mathew 7:12). we should love them as we have been loved, which at the very least, means sharing the Gospel with them. Therefore, evangelisation gives Christians an opportunity to demonstrate the love of God to the lost by spreading the word of God to them, encouraging them to have faith in the Lord, and this will enable them to turn to God and live faithful lives through the love that the agents of evangelisation show them (Merker, 2016). Silayo opines:

The love between Christians means no one wants to see another person going astray from the Gospel of Christ. As the body of Christ, we are bound to show love to our

neighbours and love them as we love ourselves. Therefore, I think this has been the most incredible opportunity for us to evangelize and take the Gospel of the Lord to the next step. Through this gesture, saints can go to various places and evangelize to the masses through the act of love. The love for the lost compels them to do so (B. Silayo, Personal Communication, June 8, 2021).

From the preceding discourse, it is clear that within the challenges of evangelisation, the opportunity of rethinking the lost, the moribund, and the fallen-away Catholics becomes an urgent agenda that eventually results not only in reviving the faith but also in converting new believers.

### **Evangelizing to a Younger Community as an Opportunity for Evangelisation**

Kenya being a profoundly Christian country with the majority of people proclaiming the Christian faith and a high percentage below 35 years of age, provides a good argument for the Church to continue fostering the Gospel message of love, peace, unity, and honesty for the followers. It is known that two powerful instruments for change and transformation of society are religion and education. Since the Church in Western Kenya has the upper hand in both of them, it should use the opportunity to foster an integral growth of the human person (Swinton, 2007). Sechero observes that the youths have been a more incredible opportunity for the Church to evangelize. Generally, the larger population in the Church is made of the youths. When the youths are available in an area, evangelisation becomes easy as the Church can be able to foster Christianity values in them, who later spread the values to their peers (G. Itolondo, Personal Communication, Aug. 2, 2021).

The Church should utilize this rare opportunity by engaging the youth in various activities in the Church. The Church can establish evangelical centres to train these youths on evangelisation and mission so that they can have a chance to spread the Gospel of Christ to their peers in the community and beyond. The youths, as observed, are used in the evangelisation process mainly as evangelists and youth leaders to evangelize in the community. It is because going as per their age, it is believed that they have the required stamina as compared to the old (F. Miheso, Personal Communication, June 2, 2021). The great significance of an opportunity to evangelize is that more than half of the country's population is younger than thirty-five. It is, indeed, an asset that evangelisation and mission can draw upon. Getting the youths involved in the different activities of the Church is vital. The Church should promote and encourage creativity, especially among the youths, as the growth of the Church is always reflected in the growth in the number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life (B. Luchidio, Personal Communication, Oct. 30, 2021). Adding his voice to the evangelisation of the youth as a great opportunity, Miheso underscored that there is a good number of young men and women in the Catholic seminaries and convents. Some religious congregations like the Passionate missionaries and Dioceses do not have enough room or tuition funding for the aspirants to religious life. A number of the Catholic youths have also been sent abroad and trained; when they come back, they are sent to different stations as missionaries. Therefore, involving the youths in evangelisation is a significant development and a sign that the Christian faith continues to mature in these parts and Kenya as a whole (F. Miheso, Personal Communication, June 2, 2021). Therefore, it is true to say that young people have provided the Church with an opportunity to evangelize as they are strong enough to endure all challenges that come with evangelisation as compared to the older members of society.

### **COVID-19 as an Opportunity for Evangelisation**

While the researcher was interrogating Charles Simbe of Chamakanga parish on how Covid-19,

which is a global pandemic, turned out to be an opportunity for evangelisation, he had this to say:

In December 2019, a terrible destructive virus named Corona Virus struck the country, and many people were infected and affected by the virus. From the observations, many people lost their jobs, salaries were reduced, and others were forced to relocate upcountry due to the high cost of living in town. Religious places were closed, including Churches; therefore, many Christians were left stranded and traumatized. Churches came up with various strategies to salvage the situation, including online streaming of Masses, priests visiting families, and SCCs were organized so that they could evangelize themselves (C. Simbe, Personal Communication Personal Communication June 4, 2021).

One of the strategies used to ensure that it reaches more people was creating mini-evangelical groups among the members. Those used were to spread the message of hope to the less fortunate in society, among them those affected by the pandemic, whether directly or indirectly. It has to be noted that the disruption caused by the Coronavirus did not spare the Church either. The government ordered the closure of the Churches, which harmed evangelisation. As much as it hurt the Church, it also brought a perfect opportunity for evangelisation. The Church reached out to the people through door-to-door service, giving them a message of hope as the situation was challenging. It was at this point also that, as a Church, we were able to provide essential needs such as food to the poor people. This act of compassion attracted other people who were not members, and they were also able to be assisted where necessary by the Church. To me, that is evangelisation, and yes, Covid-19 was a perfect opportunity for us to reach out to the people and show them the love of God (B. Silayo, Personal Communication, Sep. 30, 2021).

The Coronavirus pandemic indeed played a significant role in the evangelisation mission. After the government ordered the opening of worship centres, there was an increase in the number of Christians in the Church, which can be attributed to this act of compassion and hope-giving that the agents of evangelisation in the CDKK- provided (V. Mukhokho, Personal Communication, Aug. 20, 2021).

For a long time, the Church has been accustomed to gathering physically for public worship. At this moment, the Church gathers in community and communion to give praise and glory to God. It is a time for celebration, fellowship, renewal of faith, and hope. He asserts:

The clergy for ages encouraged worshipers to come to Church, and some often resort to making believers feel guilty if they do not attend Church. The closure of Churches raised a better opportunity for the Church to evangelize, especially to the young people who had embraced modern technology. The closure of the Churches turned this around with the plea to 'please join us on YouTube, Facebook Live, or other electronic platforms, which the congregation is gladly accepting. It showed that the Church buildings might be closed, but God's people are still alive and active (J. Likule, Personal Communication, July 9, 2021).

The Covid-19 lockdown has forced many people to turn to electronic platforms to continue with public worship (FGD YCS Moderators, Personal Communication, Aug. 12, 2021). It exposed Christians to other forms of worship, liturgical practices, and preaching that they are usually accustomed to. The electronic medium has created opportunities to wander and experiment. For some, it leads to

a deeper appreciation of their Church tradition and worship practices, and for others, it may have opened up a new world of worship experiences altogether

The electronic platforms in the Covid-19 crisis presented a new opportunity for evangelisation as they opened new doors to Christian worshippers from different cultures and backgrounds worldwide. The pandemic has strengthened the possibilities of spreading the Gospel on a broader scale and reaching the un-Churched, people of other faiths and people with no faith as they grapple for answers in the current struggles in the world and tune in to electronic platforms for encouragement and hope. This reinforces the integration of worship and mission (FGD YCS Moderators, Personal Communication, Aug. 12, 2021).

### **Evangelizing Through Friends as an Opportunity**

On whether friends of the Laity in the Church can become an opportunity for evangelisation, Maurice Kigame had this to say:

Friends are one of the opportunities through which evangelisation mission is achieved. We encourage our teams and Church members to make friends out here so that they can preach the Gospel to them and help them develop good Christian values. Through evangelisation, we make friends from every part where our team reaches; these friends, in turn, help us to effectively evangelize, especially in the interior where we cannot be able to reach due to various reasons (M. Kigame, Personal Communication, Aug. 12, 2021). Landau singled out that evangelisation through friends is a great opportunity for evangelisation, characterized by Christians developing relationships with people to show them kindness and talk to them about God eventually. Christians use this by justifying that sometimes Jesus related to those who took an interest in him as friends or that it is more effective than other methods of evangelism which are seen as less personal. This approach is also known as “love someone into the kingdom” (Landau, 2000).

As far as evangelisation is concerned, Sarah Wandabwa, a YCS moderator, suggested that friends are the best means to reach the out-of-reach population. She confirms that evangelizing through friends means reaching people for Christ by being a friend to them or evangelizing them through their friends. It is a very effective way of getting out the good news. It reaches people who refuse to accept a tract handed to them or sent through the mail. It reaches people who would be offended by a direct personal evangelisation approach. It reaches people who organized Christianity so turns off that they would never attend a religious service or watch one on TV (S. Wandabwa, Personal Communication, Aug. 10, 2021).

Charles Lwole is of the same view as moderator Sarah Wandabwa. He states that the good thing about evangelizing through friends or friendship evangelisation is that almost every Christian can get involved. Friendships can be made across cultures, races, and religions. For years, even relatives who are not converted and acquaintances with whom there was little contact or no contact can be reached. It is because the world is full of lonely people and, therefore, many will react warmly to someone who reaches out to them. Undoubtedly, in friendship evangelisation, the outcome will be determined by what is done, said, and the personality initiating friendship evangelisation (C. Lwole, Personal Communication, Dec. 15, 2021).

### **A Way of Showing Love for God through Evangelisation**

The ultimate motivation in evangelisation must be to see God glorified, and God is glorified when the truth about Him is known and made known. Thus, the desire should be to glorify God by proclaiming the truth about Him as often as possible. This motivation will be sustainable when love for others runs dry. The deepest motivation must be to glorify God if evangelisation has to be done despite rejection, opposition, and even persecution (Merker, 2016). Accordingly,

When you love God, you should show it that indeed you love Him. Therefore, this can be expressed when we go out there to evangelize and share this love with those lost, those who feel desperate in life. To those who think life is meaningless, therefore when Christians evangelize, they share their love with others, therefore, using this as an opportunity to evangelize and spread the Gospel (V. Mukokho, Personal Communication, Aug. 20, 2021).

By showing love to God, Christians can evangelize to the people in the community through the same magnitude. Therefore, this is an opportunity to show love to God through evangelisation, cause, and mission.

### **Conclusion**

The paper endeavoured to discuss some opportunities in the process of evangelisation in the CDKK since 1978. These opportunities were underscored as major contributing factors to the evangelisation paradigm shift in the Church development in CDKK. In addressing opportunities for evangelisation in the CDKK, the study dwelt on favourable events and circumstances that have given the Catholic Church a competitive advantage in evangelisation. In a nutshell, the use of challenge and response theory aided in ameliorating challenges discussed and paved the way for opportunities.

First are human resource persons who possess unique gifts and charisms of the lay faithful. In this case, the study found out that all the people of God with various gifts must be incorporated for adequate participation in evangelisation. For example, clergy, religious or lay members must participate in missionary work of the Church in CDKK. Both cultural and modern artists and artistes must be brought on board since they highly influence the masses. Secondly, education was discovered to be another opportunity. Establishing schools in the CDKK is the easy way and opportune time to evangelize to the school staff and students. Evangelisation in schools is achieved by making Christian Religious Education compulsory, scheduling masses and other pastoral programmes, forming YCS in schools, installing clerics as chaplains, and establishing parishes nearby to enhance proper evangelisation.

Thirdly, involving women in evangelisation is also very important. For instance, women should be empowered and given leadership positions in the Church, especially duties to do with missionary works. Thus, it will quickly make them dispatch it to many people since they are always the majority in the Church. They will thus make a robust outreach in the Church.

Fourth, the rich scripture and long history of the Catholic Church make it easy to conduct evangelisation in the CDKK. This rich history provides lessons to the Church of not repeating mistakes that earlier agents previously made of evangelisation. Thus, it makes the Church in CDKK informed of the weakness and strengths of the Church's mandate of evangelisation.

Fifth are the rich papal, encyclicals, and apostolic exhortations letters. They have expansively addressed the issues of evangelisation in the world. Therefore, when the encyclicals and apostolic

exhortation letters and the Vatican Council II documents are utilized by the Church in CDKK, by reading, understanding, and profoundly interrogating them, indeed an opportunity for evangelisation will be embraced. Among other opportunities established as a result of challenge and response theory included: the presence of defined structures in the Catholic Church, presence of diverse Laity and expertise, cultural and land diversity, restoration of the lost Christians, evangelizing to a young community, Covid-19 and evangelizing through friends as an opportunity.

### **Recommendations**

The limitations of the study included, fading memories of informants, poor documentation, uncooperative clergy, inability to access some archival sources and the vastness of the diocese. However, researcher sought permission to access the archives, purposive sampling helped in reaching the key informants and the three research assistants helped in reaching the various parts of the diocese. The study recommends that the church should identify and nurture local artist and musicians, and in-cooperate them in evangelisation. Also, it recommends that, pastoral programs instructions (PPI) and catholic awareness pastoral programs (CAPAP) to be urgently revisited, as they are opportunities for evangelisation.

### **Acronyms:**

CDKK - Catholic Diocese of Kakamega

CCC - Code of the Canon Law

AMECEA - Association of Member of Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa

SCCs - Small Christian Communities

SECAM - The Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa

YCS - Young Catholic Society

PEV - Post Election Violence

FGD - Focus Group Discussion

CWA - Catholic Women Association

CMA - Catholic Men Association

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