

The role of religion in politics: The Roman Catholic Church in the Democratic Republic of
Congo during the presidency of Joseph Kabila

By

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
MA Theology (Dogmatic and Christian Ethics)

In

The Faculty of Theology
Department of Dogmatic and Christian Ethics
University of Pretoria

August 2020

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree MA Theology at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Signed: Jean-Marie Kuzituka Did'ho

Date: August 2020

Place: Pretoria

Acknowledgement

The financial assistance of the Catholic Archdiocese of Johannesburg towards this research is hereby acknowledged.

The author declares that the opinions expressed in this dissertation and the conclusions arrived at are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the Catholic Archdiocese of Johannesburg's position.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the Congolese people who, courageously and bravely, stood up as one people to defend the fragile democracy enshrined in the Constitution. To those who lost their lives for the cause of the nation, I say, your blood, one day, will bear the fruits of true democracy.

List of Key Terms

- Religion: According to the Oxford dictionary, religion is an organised system of beliefs, ceremonies and rules in a god or a group of gods. Hence there are many religions, with Christianity being one of them.

- The Roman Catholic Church: Is one of the largest branches of Christianity that stems from the teachings, life and death of Jesus and its own Tradition.

- Congolese Catholic Bishops' Conference (CENCO): Is a body of all Congolese Catholic Bishops working in different parts of the country. They speak with one voice in all their public and media statements.

- Politics: Are activities associated with the governance of an area or a country.

- African Theology of Liberation: Theology that responds to the faith of the oppressed with a goal to open the horizons of those who suffer oppression in their homeland.

- The Kairos Document: This is a form of Black liberation theology that analyses the suffering of the oppressed and gives them hope looking at the cross of Christ.

- Prophetic Theology: This is a theology, according to the Kairos Document, that includes themes such as social analysis, critical biblical interpretation to debunk oppression in the Bible, and gives a message of hope.

- The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): Also known as Congo-Kinshasa or the former Zaire, the DRC is a country located in central Africa.

- Democracy: According to the New Encyclopaedic dictionary, democracy is a form of government where the supreme power is with the people and they exercise it directly or indirectly through representation.
- Joseph Kabila: Is a former President of the DRC. He was in power from January 2001 until January 2019.

Abstract

This study examines the role of religion in the DRC's political sphere from 2015 to 2019 during the second and last term of office of President Joseph Kabila. During these years (2015-2019), the government subjected religious organisations, their followers and leaders, mostly Catholics, and the general population to intimidation, arbitrary arrests and violence because of the Catholic Church's involvement and support for credible elections. The Catholic Church in the DRC was involved in protest marches after the failed implementation of the Agreement signed between the government and the opposition parties to postpone for a year, the elections. Agreement facilitated and mediated by the Catholic Church in the country at the request of Joseph Kabila's government.

I evaluate the role of the Catholic Church in the DRC using the theological principles set out in the Kairos Document as methodology. This theological document was written by a group of church leaders, activists and theologians to oppose and challenge the Church's stance with regard to the oppressive apartheid regime. This research is a case study of the relationship of the Catholic Church in the DRC to the struggle for democracy.

The Catholic Church in the Congo became one of the strongest voices calling for the 2018 DRC general elections not to be postponed again. These elections were supposed to have been held in December 2016 but were postponed to December 2018. As an accredited election observer, the Catholic Church in the Congo played a crucial role in ensuring that the elections were as free and fair as possible. While the Catholic Church may not be credited with being the sole mover for the elections to be held in 2018, it played a big role. In this study, we shall also be able to indicate how the Catholic Church in the DRC has a prophetic intervention in the recent politics of the DRC.

CHAPTER 1

1. Mapping the Study

1.1 General Introduction

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, religion forms part of the culture of people. Although there are no reliable statistics in terms of government census, the major religions in the country are Christianity, Islam and African traditional religions. According to the United States Department of State, the DRC Congo's total population was estimated at 85.3 million in July 2020. Out of that total, the Pew Research Centre estimates that 95.8 percent of the population consider themselves Christian while 1.5 percent are Muslim. Of Christians, 48.1 percent are Protestant, including the African Initiated Churches such as the Church of Jesus Christ on Earth through the Prophet Simon Kimbangu (Kimbanguist), and 47.3 percent Catholic.)¹. Within this context, religion has emerged as an important factor in civil society and as a powerful force for socio-political mobilisation in the DRC. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, religion in general, especially Christianity and even within Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church wields enormous influence in the political and public spaces as a provider of social services, preachers and educators in a country characterised by years of misrule, and a lack of state capacity and political will. According to (constituteproject.org, 2020), the 2006 Constitution revised in 2011 provides for freedom of religion and prohibits discrimination based on religious belief in its article 22: "All persons have the right to freedom of thought, of conscience and of religion. All persons have the right to manifest their religion or their convictions, alone or as a group, both in public and in private, by worship, teaching, practices, the accomplishment of

¹ This religious statistics was taken from (<https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:XppDg2IJWd0J:https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/CONGO-DEM-REP-2018-INTERNATIONAL-RELIGIOUS-FREEDOM-REPORT.pdf+&cd=19&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=za&client=safari>) [Accessed: 5 July 2020].

rites and the state of religious life, under reserve of respect for the law, for public order, for morality and for the rights of others.” In its article 26, the Constitution promotes freedom of assembly: “The freedom of demonstration is guaranteed. All demonstrations on public roads or in [the] open air are allowed but they require the organisers to inform the competent administrative authority in writing. No one may be forced to take part in a demonstration. The law determines the measures of application.”²

1.1.1. Aim of the Study

This study examines the role of religion in the DRC’s political sphere from 2015 to 2019 during the second and last term of office of President Joseph Kabila. During these years (2015-2019), (Ndaywel, 2019) says that, the government subjected religious organisations, followers and leaders, mostly Catholics, and the general population to intimidation, arbitrary arrests and violence because of the Catholic Church’s involvement and support for credible elections (Ndaywel, 2019:184). The Catholic Church was involved in three nationwide protest marches after the failed implementation of the Agreement signed between the government and the opposition parties (Ndaywel, 2019:184). This agreement was facilitated and mediated by the Catholic Church at the request of the then government (Ndaywel, 2019:169).

This study aims to achieve the role of religion in advancing social justice, human rights and democracy. To achieve all this is not the prerogative of politicians alone. Hence the aim to examine the role of the church in the political life of a country.

² (https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo_2011.pdf?lang=en 2011). [Accessed 5 July 2020].

1.1.2 Why involve the Kairos Document?

The Kairos Document was written by a group of church leaders and theologians to oppose and challenge the oppressive apartheid regime, and this research seeks to demonstrate the role the Catholic Church in the DRC played in the promotion of democracy and the rule of law. The Kairos Document was a theological response to the socio-political crisis that faced South Africa during that time. In response, the apartheid security forces sought to impose ‘law and order’, launching repressive measures, and many people lost their lives.³

The Kairos Document was a comment on the political crisis in South Africa. It was “a Christian, biblical, and theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa”. (Leonard, 2010:5). The authors of the Kairos Document critiqued the theological models and the types of activities the Church engaged in to try to resolve the problems the country was in. They attempted to develop, out of the chaotic situation the country was facing, some biblical and theological means in order to instigate some forms of revolutionary activities that would create a real difference toward liberation of South Africa.

“In June 1985 as the crisis was intensifying in the country, as more and more people were killed, maimed and imprisoned, as one black township after another revolted against the apartheid regime, as the people refused to be oppressed or to co-operate with oppressors, facing death by the day, and as the apartheid army moved into the townships to rule by the barrel of the gun, a number of theologians who were concerned about the situation expressed the need to reflect on this situation to determine what response by

³ <https://www.history.com/topics/afrika/apartheid> [Accessed 5 July 2020].

the Church and by all Christians in South Africa would be most appropriate.” (Leonard, 2010:5).

The Kairos Document is an open-ended document which was written with the intention of not being final.

There is an indirect relationship between the (Kairos Document, 1985) and the Catholic Church in the Congo in the sense that the Kairos Document was a noble theological statement that called for social justice, equity, and mutual acceptance in the society.

The Kairos Document was a fitting response to social injustice caused by an oppressive apartheid regime that wrongly derived its mandate from biblical teachings. It not only made the people realise that God sympathised with them, but also that God expects people to strive to liberate themselves, to work for a just social order, and not to accept their fate as an instance of providence. The relevance and or connection of the Kairos Document to the Catholic Church in the DRC is that this was a theological comment on the political crisis in South Africa. “a number of theologians who were concerned about the situation expressed the need to reflect on this situation to determine what response by the Church and by all Christians in South Africa would be most appropriate.” (Leonard, 2010:5). I therefore use the contents of the Kairos Document to evaluate the work of the Catholic Church in the DRC, which was concerned about the political situation in the country as President Joseph Kabila attempted to change the constitution and overstay in power by oppressing those who opposed him. The Catholic Church reflected on this situation and came with an appropriate response to involve Congolese citizens to fight for democracy and the rule of law.

1.1.3. Role of the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in the DRC gave the same hope to the people when it became one of the strongest voices calling for the 2018 DRC general elections not to be postponed (again). These elections were supposed to have been held in December 2016 but were postponed to December 2018. As an accredited election observer, the Catholic Church in the Congo played a crucial role in ensuring that the elections were as free and fair as possible. While the Catholic Church may not be credited with being the sole mover for the elections to be held in 2018, it played a big role. In this study, we shall also be able to indicate how the Catholic Church in the DRC has a prophetic intervention in the recent politics of the DRC. In the words of Berger, “those who neglect religion in their analyses of contemporary affairs do so at great peril.” (Berger, 1999:18).

This assertion of Berger is underscored by the realisation of the increasing socio-political role of religion in public affairs and the Catholic Church in the DRC featured prominently in public life in relation to the organisation of credible elections and the respect of the country’s constitution for the protection of democracy. In this study, I use the Democratic Republic of the Congo to illustrate the role of religion in politics. It is appropriate to highlight the contents of the five chapters that will form part of the study.

1.2 Introduction to Chapter One

This chapter will outline the contents of the entire study, including the problem statement, the objectives, the methodology, the theoretical framework and the literature review. It is meant to introduce the entire study on the role of religion in politics.

1.3 Chapter by Chapter Outline

In this chapter, I will map the context of the study. I will introduce the study and outline the problem statement, described the objectives, spell out the methodology, theoretical framework, and I will also conduct a literature review.

In the second chapter, I will discuss the methodology and theology of the Kairos Document and some magisterial documents of the Catholic church regarding the participation of Catholics in political life.

Chapter three will discuss the Catholic Church as facilitator, mediator and instigator. This chapter will especially focus on marches organised by the Catholic Church in the DRC and speeches given by various church leaders to motivate the people not to give up in their fight for human dignity and democracy in the DRC.

Chapter four will provide a critical engagement with the effort of the Catholic Church in the DRC-using among others, the Kairos Document.

In Chapter five, I shall use the Kairos Document methodology and others to evaluate the Catholic Church in the DRC based in findings made in the first four chapters with more critical engagement.

1. 4 Problem Statement

The problem that will be analysed or studied in this thesis is the role of the Catholic Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo in its prophetic mission to accompany the people in attaining liberation and democracy from the oppressive regime of President Joseph Kabila who attempted to change the constitution of the country in order to perpetuate himself in power.

In December 2018, the Democratic Republic of Congo held elections that originally were planned for December 2016. One of the strongest forces behind these elections to finally

happen was the Catholic Church in the DRC. Throughout the timeframe of 2016, 2017 and 2018, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the DRC (CENCO), encouraged the people to stand up against the tyranny of Joseph Kabila by organising demonstrations and marches throughout the country because Joseph Kabila refused to respect the deal signed between his government and the opposition, mediated by the Catholic Church, which deal stated that Kabila must step down at the end of 2017 and organise elections. Instead, elections were postponed until December 2018 and Kabila chose not to step down. The Catholic Church in the Congo withdrew from its mediating role and encouraged the people to stand up for their rights and the hope for a democratic future.⁴

It all started in 2015, when the Catholic Church took the position to respect the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which stipulates in its Article 70 that, “the President is elected for up to two five-year terms,” and Article 220 prohibits amendments to key elements of the State's political framework, including the number and length of presidential terms (Constitution of DRC 2005). The Church called on President Kabila's government to respect the Constitution and to organise presidential and national legislative elections at the regulated time as stipulated by the Constitution. President Kabila appeared not to obey the Constitution but chose to manipulate the judiciary to misinterpret the Constitution, which was an effort to delay the vote and extend his tenure of office (Bak, 2019:3).

In view of the critical situation that confronted the DRC during Joseph Kabila's regime, it is necessary to ask the following questions as part of the statement of the problem, as the problem is to analyse in this study the role of the Catholic Church in its mission to liberate the poor from an oppressive regime.

Research questions are:

⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/a615cba4-22c2-11e8-ae48-60d3531b7d11> [Accessed 18 February 2020].

- What role did the Catholic Church in the DRC have in the democratisation process in the country during the last term of office of President Joseph Kabila?
- Did the Catholic Church in the DRC achieve its role?

This research seeks to expose the presence of a prophetic mission displayed by the Catholic Church in Congo in taking sides with the oppressed and by participating in the struggle for a just society. The Catholic Church reminded the people of their moral duty of Christians to resist oppression and to struggle for liberation and justice. The people organised protests and demonstrations in order to press President Joseph Kabila's government to organise elections as stipulated per the country's constitution. From December 2017 to February 2018, "it seems to me that the most lasting and useful result has been achieved, thanks to civic education given in various parishes in the country, when thousands of young Congolese were able to make the supreme sacrifice to defend their human dignity and the common good of their Country" (Ndaywel, 2019:15). Therefore, an analysis of the ecclesiological model of the Catholic Church in the DRC is needed (Bak, 2019:3).

The answers to these questions will help us to analyse the role and the impact of the Catholic Church in the politics of the DRC and to formulate ethical content which will help other church denominations within its framework of moral and ethical responsibilities in order to confront decision-makers who tend to be dictators and enemies of their people.

This study seeks to address the gap that exists on the subject of religion in politics. The gap is the active involvement of religious leaders in politics without becoming politicians themselves and without neglecting and forgetting their pulpit. The Church can be active in politics as whistle-blower, as a keeper or a referee; to remind political leaders of their primary role of which they were elected by the people. This gap does exist between religion and politics in general and in the DRC in particular.

1. 3. Objectives

This study is the analysis of the role of the Catholic Church in the DRC in the promotion of Democracy in the country between 2015 and 2019 which is within the second and last term of President Joseph Kabila in office. I would like to demonstrate the (prophetic) role of the Catholic Church (in the DRC) in politics, more specifically political change towards democratisation as it empowered and backed up the people in their quest for liberation, justice and peace. The study will have the following objectives:

- To demonstrate how the deteriorating political situation in the DRC Congo required ecclesiastical and theological intervention
- To examine the role of the Catholic Church in the DRC in the protection of the DRC Constitution.
- To analyse the various ways in which of the Catholic Church in the Congo supported ordinary citizens in the struggle for electoral democracy in the years 2015-2019.
- To give an outline of the theology underpinning the interventions of the DRC Catholic Church in the attempts to interrupt the attempts of the Joseph Kabila regime to extend its rule indefinitely.
- Finally, to suit the need of an academic study, the main objective is to analyse the relationship between the Church and political intervention. The Church or religion must have a say in the governance of a state or a nation.

1. 4. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This study analyses the declarations and actions of the Catholic Church in the DRC in view of the Congolese political context as I shall discuss in the following chapters. In the last chapter I will use a ‘praxis matrix’ to explore the performance enacted by the bishops’ declarations and actions. This I will do in light of Kritzinger’s article, 2019.

Looking at the ‘praxis matrix’ methodology as described by (Kritzinger, 2019), I would like to discuss those seven dimensions, in the last chapter, that characterise religious or Christian actions aimed at transforming the society per the Congolese Catholic bishops’ messages and actions.

1. 4. 1. The Kairos Document: The Context

This theological document was written by a loose group of some church ministers, activists and some theologians in South Africa to oppose and challenge the Church’s stance with regard to the oppressive apartheid regime. However, the exact nature of its authorship remains debated, according to (Denis, 2017). The document was a theological response to the socio-political crisis that faced South Africa during that time. It accused “‘state theology’ and ‘church theology’ of betraying the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of a massive onslaught of the apartheid regime against the black population while making a plea for ‘prophetic theology’.” (Denis, 2017:4). There were compelling reasons that led to the production of the Kairos Document.

Going back to the 1980s, there had been mounting pressure, as Dr Beyers Naude wrote:

“From September 1984, when the first major clashes between communities and the police in the black townships occurred, there has been an ongoing situation of unrest in

our country. It has developed to such a degree that one is fully justified to describe the situation as the beginnings of a civil war. The situation of conflict has been aggravated by police actions, by calling in the army to support the police, by constant deaths, wounding and arrests in many parts of the country.” (*SA History Archives*, June 24-28 1985).

Dr Beyers Naude wrote about the seriousness of the situation then. He spoke of the unrest the country was facing. This shows how the South African Council of Churches was already concerned about the worsening political situation of the country.

“What can be said, however, in consideration of the atmosphere of urgency which characterised the mid-1980s in South Africa is that the activists, ministers of religion and theologians who jointly produced the Kairos Document felt closely associated with the ‘ordinary people’, those of Soweto for example, when confronted with a State which appeared as an implacable oppressor. They had a common cause.” (Denis, 2017:19).

The Black Churches became very radicalised, looking at the mounting oppression on blacks.

“In 1981, the Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in South Africa (ABRECSA), which included Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian and Congregationalist theologians and ministers, had called on their Churches to recognise apartheid as a heresy and to unite against it. In 1983, the United Democratic Front, which was to become a major component of the struggle against apartheid, had received the adhesion, alongside anti-apartheid organisations, NGOs and trade unions,... Desmond Tutu, ... Allan Boesak, ... and Denis Hurley, the Catholic archbishop of Durban, had been chosen as its patrons.” (Denis, 2017:8).

Before the release of the Kairos Document, two horrible oppression events happened, one by the South African Defence Force. They killed several people, including children, in Gaborone, Botswana, and among those killed were some members of the African National Congress (ANC) on 14 June 1985. Followed by this event was the State of Emergency declared by the apartheid regime on 21 July 1985 in the districts of Eastern Cape and Pretoria-Witwatersrand-Vereeniging region. Many organisations were banned, and at the same time, many people were detained. The non-response of Churches to these oppressive events led to the writing of the Kairos Document.

This brief contextual background in the writing of the Kairos Document helps us to understand the context and the importance of the Kairos Document.

1. 4. 2. Main Arguments of the Kairos Document

Written for the first time in 1985, the Kairos Document is known as a Christian, biblical and theological commentary on the political crisis that South Africa was facing under the apartheid regime. Concerned Christians attempted to reflect on the situation of death in the country. They critiqued the theological models that determined the types of activities the Church was engaged in to try to resolve the problems of the country. The authors wanted to develop an alternative biblical and theological model that could make a real difference to the future of South Africa. The Kairos Document is divided into five chapters, followed by a short conclusion:

1. The moment of truth; 2. Critique of State Theology; 3. Critique of Church Theology; 4. Towards a Prophetic Theology; and 5. Challenge to Action, followed by a short Conclusion.

1. The moment of truth

The authors of the Kairos Document saw that the moment of truth has arrived and it was a moment of truth not only for the apartheid regime but also for the Church. The country was plunged into a crisis that shook it to its foundations. As a group of theologians, they tried to understand the theological significance of this moment in the history of South Africa. They saw it as a moment of grace and opportunity, a moment chosen by God to take decisive action. According to them, if they missed this opportunity, “the loss for the Church, for the Gospel and for all the people of South Africa will be immeasurable. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He wept over the tragedy of the destruction of the city and the massacre of the people that was imminent, and all because you did not recognise your opportunity (KAIROS) when God offered it” (Luke 19: 44).” (Leonard, 2010:7).

In this crisis, the authors of the Kairos Document saw an opportunity to bring out the best in some people and the worst in others. It was indeed a moment of truth to show what the Church really was. The crisis of apartheid showed that the Church was really divided. More and more people were saying that there existed two Churches in South Africa: “A white Church and a Black Church. Even within the same denomination, there are in fact two Churches.” (Leonard, 2010:7). The conflict that opposed different social forces in South Africa also opposed Christians, but even among Christians, there were those who tried to sit on the fence, said the authors of the Kairos Document. The conflict in South Africa was between the oppressor and the oppressed. This made the crisis for the Church as an institution more acute because both the oppressor and the oppressed claimed loyalty to the same Church. As commented by the authors of the Kairos Document, the oppressor and the oppressed were both baptised in the same faith and were sharing the same bread, body of Christ. They both sat in the same pew in church, yet outside they are enemies.

The moment of truth compelled the authors of the Kairos Document to analyse more carefully the different theologies in the Churches and to speak boldly about the real significance of these

theologies. They isolated and gave criticism of three kinds of theologies and named them: State Theology, Church Theology and Prophetic Theology.

2. Critique of State Theology

According to the authors of the (Kairos Document, 1985), the apartheid State had its own theology, and they chose to call it ‘State Theology’. They defined State Theology as the justification of the status quo with its nature of racism, capitalism and totalitarianism. For the Kairos Document, State Theology justified and blessed injustice, it canonised the will of the powerful, and it reduced the poor to passivity, obedience and apathy. The State Theology did all this by misusing theological concepts and biblical texts for its own political purposes. They gave four key examples of how this was done.

First, the apartheid regime used Romans 13: 1-7 to give absolute and divine authority to the State. The authors of the Kairos Document underlined that the misuse of this biblical verse was not confined to the apartheid regime only. In the history of Christianity, totalitarian regimes also tried to legitimise an attitude of blind obedience towards the State by quoting this biblical text.

Secondly, they used the idea of ‘Law and Order’ to determine and control the people. The apartheid State made use of the concept of law and order to maintain the status quo yet the law was unjust and discriminatory. They recognised that it was indeed the duty of the state to maintain law and order and that the State did not have a divine mandate to impose law and order. Evil law and order cannot become moral because it was promulgated by the State. Their concern was that South Africa should have a just law and a right order.

Thirdly, the apartheid regime used the term ‘communist’ to paint anyone who rejected ‘State Theology’. Anyone who opposed the apartheid State and especially anyone who rejected its theology was simply labelled communist.

And fourthly, there was the misuse of the name of God, the God of the State even when the State oppressed people. The military and police chaplains used the name of God to encourage soldiers and policemen. Cabinet ministers also used the name of God in their speeches. The authors of the Kairos Document argued even that the name of God was used blasphemously in the preamble to the new apartheid Constitution. This God evoked by the apartheid State was an idol, “It is as mischievous, sinister and evil as any of the idols that the prophets of Israel had to contend with.” (Leonard, 2010:10). In describing State Theology as evil, the authors of Kairos Document argued that State Theology needed its own prophets and had to find them in the ranks of those who professed to be ministers in some Churches. State Theology fooled and confused many people with its heretical theology, said the authors of the Kairos Document.

3. Critique of Church Theology

After analysing statements, speeches and press statements made by the ‘English-speaking’ Churches about the apartheid regime and the crisis, the authors of the Kairos Document found that all those pronouncements were a series of inter-related theological assumptions which they called ‘Church Theology’. This theology, according to the Kairos Document authors, did not express the faith of the majority of Christians in South Africa. However, the opinions expressed by Church leaders were regarded in the media and in Society as the official opinions of the Churches. These opinions are what the authors of the Kairos Document called ‘Church Theology.’ They questioned Church Theology, its assumptions, its implications and its practicality given the crisis the country was going through. According to them, “in a limited, guarded and cautious way this Theology is critical of apartheid. Its criticism, however, is superficial and counter-productive because instead of engaging in an in-depth analysis of the signs of our times, it relies upon a few stock ideas derived from Christian tradition and then

uncritically and repeatedly applies them to our situation.” (Leonard, 2010:15). Those stock ideas are: reconciliation or peace, justice and non-violence.

On the idea of reconciliation, Kairos Document authors argued that Church Theology takes ‘reconciliation’ as the key to resolve the crisis South Africa was facing. Church Theology promoted reconciliation between black and white or between all South Africans. Although reconciliation was important but in the apartheid crisis, one side was the oppressor who was armed and violent, and the other side was the oppressed who could not defend themselves. They found it un-Christian to speak about reconciliation and peace while injustices prevailed in the country. They refused to become accomplices in their own oppression and to become servants of the devil. They insisted there would be no reconciliation in South Africa without justice.

On the idea of justice, the authors of the Kairos Document acknowledged that Church Theology was concerned about the need for justice in the country. But they asked a theological question: ‘what kind of justice?’ Attempting to answer this question, the Kairos Document authors argued that “the justice that is envisaged is the justice of reform, that is to say, a justice that is determined by the oppressor, by the white minority, and that is offered to the people as a kind of concession.” (Leonard, 2010:17). They wanted a radical justice that comes from below and determined by the people.

On the idea of non-violence, Church Theology expressed a blanket condemnation of all violence without regard for who was using it. The authors of the Kairos Document found it counter-productive. The apartheid State recognised violence only when it was used by the people in the townships as they struggled for their liberation; for example, throwing stones, burning cars and buildings and sometimes killings those who collaborated with the apartheid regime. But they excluded the structural, institutional and unrepentant violence of the apartheid State. Church Theology professed non-violence but still appointed chaplains to the same army

and police forces that caused violence in the townships, said the authors of the Kairos Document.

The fundamental problem with Church Theology, as stated by the authors of the Kairos Document, was its lack of social analysis. Church Theology used principles such as reconciliation and peace, non-violence and amicable solutions and applied them uncritically, without an adequate understanding of the politics of the country.

4. Towards a Prophetic Theology

The authors of the Kairos Document felt that their KAIROS needed a response from Christians that was biblical, spiritual, pastoral and above all prophetic. They saw that it was not enough in those circumstances of oppression to just repeat generalised Christian principles. A bold and prophetic response to the crisis was needed rather than sitting on the fence. In order to do that, a social analysis of the situation was imperative. They also looked at oppression in the Bible and gave a message of hope to finally conclude the Document.

On social analysis, the first task of a Prophetic Theology was to read the signs of the times as Jesus would call it in Matthew 16:3. The authors of the Kairos Document said that it was wrong to see the crisis South Africa was going through as simply a racial war. The situation at hand was a situation of oppression which needed radical change. On one side, the oppressor benefited from the system as it favoured them. On the other hand, the oppressed were used as a tool of production and were paid starvation wages, and were separated from their families for migratory labour, all for the benefit of the white minority. This was the social analysis of the situation, according to the authors of the Kairos Document. In proposing a solution, they said that the Bible had a great deal “to say about this kind of conflict, about a world that is divided into oppressors and oppressed.” (Leonard, 2010:23). Hence they looked at oppression as described in the Bible.

Oppression, they said, is a central theme in the Old and New Testaments. Bible scholars who have studied the theme of oppression in the Bible discovered that there were no less than twenty different root words in Hebrew to describe oppression. “The Bible describes oppression as the experience of being crushed, degraded, humiliated, exploited, impoverished, defrauded, deceived and enslaved. And the oppressors are described as cruel, ruthless, arrogant, greedy, violent and tyrannical and as the enemy.” (Leonard, 2010:24). To have described oppression in this way, said the authors of the Kairos Document, one needs to have experienced it oneself. And indeed, they argued that nearly 90 percent of the history of the Jewish people and later the Christian people in the Bible, is a history of either domestic or international oppression. In this oppression, God revealed himself as a God of compassion for those who suffer, and he liberated them from oppression. The compassionate God then sent his son, Jesus, to take up the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Jesus identified himself with the poor and the oppressed, said the authors of the Kairos Document. They also argued that Jesus was also concerned about the rich and the oppressors and he called them to repentance. Jesus was oppressed and nailed to the cross. The authors identified themselves with the suffering of Christ. Oppressors become tyrannical as it is described in the Bible, said the Kairos Document authors. They said that once a particular regime becomes tyrannical, it loses its moral right to govern, and the people acquire the right to resist and to find ways to protect themselves against injustice and oppression. After describing what oppression and tyranny were all about, the authors of the Kairos Document concluded that the apartheid regime was an oppressive and tyrannical regime which became an enemy of the people, since it was hostile to the common good in principle. Hence they found the message of hope to the people at the very heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

They said it is at the very heart of the Gospel of Christ that one finds the message of hope in difficult times such as those which South Africa was going through. When Jesus spoke about hope, he meant the coming of God’s kingdom. In a world where hopelessness prevails as an

evil, the Kingdom of God is welcome as it embodies God's will. The authors of the Kairos Document were worried about why this powerful message of hope was not echoed in Church Theology, especially in the statements and pronouncements of Church leaders. Their attempted answer was that maybe because the promoters of Church Theology addressed themselves to the oppressor rather than to the oppressed, or maybe because they did not want to encourage the oppressed to be too hopeful for too much.

The authors of the Kairos Document wanted both the oppressor and the oppressed to demand of the Churches a message of hope. They argued that most of the people in the country had hope, especially the youth which acted courageously hoping that liberation was near. At times their bodies were broken, but their spirits were unbreakable. They said, "Hope needs to be confirmed. Hope needs to be maintained and strengthened. Hope needs to be spread. The people need to hear it said again and again that God is with them." (Leonard, 2010:28). On the other hand, the oppressors and all those who believe in the propaganda of the oppressors become fearful, the people must continue to expose the evil of oppression and tyranny and call the oppressor to repentance. The oppressors must not continue to have false hope in maintaining the status quo. The Kairos Document authors insisted that there was hope for all, but the road to that hope was going to be hard and painful. But God was with the people in taking their cross with Christ and leading them to the hope of the resurrection.

5. Challenge to Action

The authors of the Kairos Document did not want to argue that the Church should side with the poor and the oppressed because according to them, the greater part of the Church in South Africa was poor and oppressed. They did not either to take it for granted that everyone who was oppressed took up their own cause and was already struggling for their own liberation. They did not also assume that all oppressed Christians were fully aware of the fact that their

cause was God's cause. The fact that the majority of Church members were among the oppressed showed that the church sided with them. But the Church needed to confirm it. The challenge to action, said the authors of the Kairos Document, was that "we are a divided Church precisely because not all the members of our Churches have taken sides against oppression. In other words, not all Christians have united themselves with God "who is always on the side of the oppressed" (Psa. 103:6)." (Leonard, 2010:31). There was only one way to action, said the Kairos Document authors, and that was for those Churches that sided with the oppressor and those sitting on the fence to unite in faith and action with the oppressed. Hence, unity and reconciliation within the Church itself were crucial for all to participate in the struggle for liberation and for a just society. The authors of the Kairos Document advocated that Church activities should be transformed and reshaped to be more fully consistent with a prophetic faith related to the Kairos that God offered South Africa then. They also called on special campaigns by the Churches to take part in the struggle for liberation and not to become a 'third force' between the oppressor and the oppressed. The call to civil disobedience was also made, as they said the Church could not collaborate with tyranny because the people looked to the Church for moral guidance.

To conclude, the Kairos Document authors said that in creating this document, their hope was to stimulate discussion, debate, reflection and prayer. They hoped, above all, that the document would lead to action. And finally they called upon Christians throughout the world for support and solidarity to end the loss of lives.

1. 5. Literature Review

1. 5.1. Existing Literature

In this section of literature review I would like to contextualise this research within contemporary literature and empirical studies on the Catholic Church in the Congo and its role in the political, economic and social life of Congolese people. As (Creswell, 2003:29-30) points out, the literature review shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the study being reported. This thesis seeks to assess the role, the action and reaction of the Catholic Church in Congo in relation to Kabila's governance (last term in office from 2015-2019) and its overstay in power in the light of the Kairos Documents and the liberation/political theology of authors such as:

Emmanuel Katongole in his books "Born from Lament. The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa" (2017) and "The Sacrifice of Africa. A Political Theology for Africa" (2011). The literature review of these books form part of the literature that already exists in the area of my study.

The book of Isidore Ndaywell, recently published (2019) "*Le Congo dans l'ouragan de l'histoire, Combats pour l'État de Droit. Des femmes et des hommes de foi et de bonne volonté*" (translate: Congo in the Hurricane of History. Fights for the rule of law. women and men of faith and people of goodwill) will form part of the relevant literature as it retells the story of recent involvement of the Catholic Church in the politics of the Congo.

Tinyiko Maluleke, the supervisor of this study, has written extensively on the subject of public prophetic theology. It will be academically unfair of me not to include his publications in this literature review. His article, co-authored with Graham Duncan, "Through the past into the future: Jean-Francois Bill – Pastor, Activist, Theologian 8 July 1934 – 12 March 2005" will be reviewed here as it demonstrates the prophetic character of a church man.

The Kairos Document, being my main reference in this study, will form part of the methodology and theoretical framework as to what kind of ecclesiology the people of Congo would like to see and belong to. The Kairos Document will also crown the general conclusion of this research.

Why and how is the Kairos Document taken as a model to theologically analyse the situation in the DRC? One should recall that this theological document was written to oppose and challenge the Church's stance with regard to the oppressive apartheid regime. The document was a theological response to the socio-political crisis that faced South Africa during that time. After many years of oppression, the majority black oppressed turned militant. They were involved in acts of civil disobedience and in violence. In response, the apartheid security forces sought to impose 'law and order', launching repressive measures, and many people lost their lives. Many others were beaten and injured. Others were imprisoned. Why is the Kairos Document eligible to inspire the situation in DRC? It is because the people of Congo have been oppressed by various regimes since colonisation up to Kabila's regime. How? The Church has become a refuge for people in need of social development. The teachings of the Catholic Church hold that it is the preaching of values that is the Church's job, not the promotion or suggestion of political solutions. However, not engaging politically, such as in party participation, does not mean one needs to completely be out of the political environment (Allen, 2013:147). The body of the thesis will give proof to these assertions.

Literature review of theologies of resistance that seek to restore the dignity of (black) people are an inspiration to this study because for many years, and most recently during Joseph Kabila's presidency, the people of the DRC have been oppressed, marginalised and abused by the autocratic regime of Joseph Kabila to the point he overstayed in power for two more years beyond his constitutional term. The Church, which was an ally of various governments of the

DRC, sided at last with the people in order to take up the fight for human dignity and democracy.

Political Theology for Africa of Emmanuel Katongole in his two books and the Kairos Document are theologies from the grassroots. These theologies break the silence of traditional theology, which focuses on the metaphysical aspects of God and ignores the socio-political issues of the believer. Hence a black theological analysis of the Catholic Church-State relationship in the DRC during Joseph Kabila's presidency finds meaning in these theologies on how the Catholic Church stood alongside the grassroots majority of the population of the DRC to fight the state of lawlessness and abuse of human rights; to help and support the people to liberate themselves with a series of demonstrations, marches and sit-ins, conferences and workshops.

The three books cited above and the Kairos Documents are documents related to my subject. The following titles in the literature review speak about them, and some are cited in the following chapters of this study to enhance and add value to my study which seeks to bring Christianity to be more of a religion of the people, with the people and of the people.

1. 5. 2. Born of Lament – Katongole

(Emmanuel Katongole, 2017) The topic of hope comes strongly forward not as a wish but rather as a light to be discovered. According to (Katongole, 2017:xvi) his book, *Born from Lament*, is an account of hope in Africa as he gives selected portraits of Christian activists for nonviolent change from East Africa. “The central argument of this book is that, in the midst of suffering, hope takes the form of arguing and wrestling with God” (Katongole, 2017:xvi). Suffering, says Katongole begets hope and lament becomes a form of a discipline Africans use to find solutions for their trials. People the author met and worked with in countries such as DRC, Uganda and Burundi lived in a past full of unimaginable violence. Amid their violent

past, those people found themselves arguing with God. As Katongole puts it, it is through lament that Africans are able to mourn, protest and hope for a better future.

The story of hope through lament in part one of the book explains how devastating years of war in the DRC and in Uganda have been. The author recalls the book of Jason Stearns *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*. He says the history of the Congo is more complex and difficult to grasp because the Congo itself is a huge and complex country. In the past 25 years, (Joseph Kabila alone spent 18 years as president of DRC) Congo experienced a series of wars and fighting that left over 5.4 million dead, millions displaced from their villages and towns, tens of thousands of women raped, and 67 million people living in dire poverty (Katongole, 2017:3). The author continues, saying that all that is left is for the Media to show images of red-eyed and gun-wielding militias who roam the Congolese forest, raping and killing the population. What explanation shall one give to what is going on in the DRC? the author asks. In answering the question, the author argues that in order to understand the nature of violence in the DRC, one needs to understand similar connections of violence and fighting in other parts of the continent. The DRC is a mirror of violence in postcolonial Africa, says the author (Katongole, 2017:4). The DRC has a long history of violence and wars, and out of that history, Katongole asks a deep theological question. “How can one even begin to think about hope and what hope would look like in the context of Africa’s ongoing realities of war, violence and social disruption?” (Katongole, 2017:5).

To answer this question, the story of the DRC comes in handy as a good theological starting point because the DRC is a country that faces ongoing war, violence and social disruption for years.

Many see the violence and wars in Congo as mere fighting of rebel groups against the army over minerals. They see the DRC as a failed State in its ruins, says (Katongole, 2017:5). He rather sees the fighting in Congo as an expression of political violence. Hence the question of

what kind of political system the DRC has had to produce this kind of violence? In my view this is a crucial question to ask which implicates Joseph Kabila's political system in the violence in the Congo. In the attempt to answer this question, Katongole highlights some causes of the history of violence and wars in DRC: Institutional weakness of the State; the politics of the belly; and illusory salvation.

On the cause of the institutional weakness of the Congolese State, the author argues that this is perhaps the major factor entertaining violence in DRC. It goes back to Congo's political history with King Leopold II who killed millions of Congolese and mutilated and starved thousands. After King Leopold II came the Belgian colonial administration which continued in the footsteps of their king, and they were followed by the postcolonial politics of violence perpetrated by Mobutu, the dictator who became the embodiment of this system. Since then, the DRC has never had an effective army, administration, or judiciary. Postcolonial political leaders have also never been interested in creating strong institutions for fear of being prosecuted of their own wrongdoings once out of power. Hence they have kept the State apparatus weak but oppressive and dysfunctional since the country's inception in modern Western history up to the current post-colonial governments. According to (Katongole, 2017:6) the DRC's institutional weakness is part of the legacy of colonialism which continued with Mobutu. Joseph Kabila attempted to tame and erode political institutions by trying to amend the Constitution to have a third term in office, but the Catholic Church and the people prevented it.

About the politics of the belly, (Katongole, 2017:7) argues that even though the fighting in the DRC may start with an ideology, its end is always self-serving and self-enrichment of those involved in the fighting fight for control of the country's minerals and natural resources. Rwanda led the coalition of countries, Uganda, Burundi and Angola, which invaded the DRC in toppling Mobutu the dictator and destroying Rwandan rebels who reside in Congo. The

genesis of this ideology did not last as parties found themselves fighting each other on Congolese soil. “Greed and plunder had become the main motives for conflict in the region” (Katongole, 2017:7).

Writing about illusion salvation as being one of the causes of historical political unrest in DRC, (Katongole, 2017:9) states that many young people were drawn into the fighting in DRC because of false promises of peace, a better life and hence illusion salvation. After decades of colonialism by King Leopold II and the Belgian government, Congolese found themselves again in the 32-yearlong dictatorship of Mobutu which destroyed the country, especially the youth. To be recruited and fighting in militias groups gave hope.

“The new recruits were told that they were being enlisted to fight Mobutu, who had ruined the country and had made people corrupt and tribalistic. They were fighting to liberate their country and to establish a new future of democracy and development... but the promised future soon turns into a nightmare as the young recruits, trained in various modes of combat, fight and kill their way through the jungle” (Katongole, 2017:9-10).

The historical culture of violence in the DRC and the entrenchment of violence in the individual such as the youth with the ideology of liberating them from oppression did not pay a positive result; instead, it perpetuates a culture of violence in which no one is a winner but rather all are losers (Katongole, 2017:10).

In light of the above public theology of hopelessness, (Katongole, 2017:164) speaks of the politics of nonviolent love preached by the Congolese Catholic Archbishop Christopher Munzihirwa who was murdered in October 27, 1996, by a Rwandan military commander because he became the voice of the voiceless who suffered violence at the hands of Rwandan

militias and armies. His politics of nonviolent love clashed with the politics of violence of army commanders and militias, leading to his assassination. The author compared (Katongole, 2017:166) the commitment of Munzehirwa and his assassination to “Jeremiah and the Christlike figure, whose life and ministry provides an ecclesiological illumination of the Church as a nonviolent alternative and interruption of the politics of violence” (Katongole, 2017:166). Munzehirwa promoted the establishment of good institutional structures of justice for solid democratic institutions. The Catholic prelate also promoted forgiveness and love together with institutional justice to solidify democratic institutions. In order to resist war and promote peace, Archbishop Munzehirwa advocated solidarity and charity toward everybody. Soon after he became Bishop of Kasongo in 1990, Munzehirwa took the Swahili nickname of Muhudumu, which means the watchman or shepherd who stays out and awake at night to watch over the sheep. He saw that as a Catholic Bishop, he was a shepherd in the image of Jesus who cares for his sheep. When war was looming in Bukavu where he lived, Munzehirwa was asked to leave the city for his safety and go to another town, but he declined saying, “I am the Muhudumu of Bukavu. Yes, I have the possibility of leaving, but where will the population of Bukavu flee to?” (Katongole, 2017:170). For the same reason, shortly before his assassination, the Catholic prelate urged his priests not to flee their missions but rather to stand firm. He was a watchman not only for the Catholic population of his diocese but for the entire population of Bukavu. “Thus, on the afternoon of his assassination, he met with key civic and business leaders of the city to work out a plan to protect the city” (Katongole, 2017:171). In short, the life and ministry of Archbishop Munzehirwa have been described by many, both Catholics and non-Catholics, as a simple life and a simple preaching message but a concrete message of God, caring and for the protection of all, especially the weak and the poor. Prophetic ministry, according to (Katongole, 2017:175), is grounded in lament and that Prophet Jeremiah’s and Jesus’ laments are a social critique of politics - politics that exploits the poor.

It was the same prophetic mission that Munzihirwa embodied in the DRC. In conclusion, (Katongole, 2017:175) says that Munzihirwa did not only call for law and order in the country, nor did he only call for justice and reconciliation, but he also invoked a totally new vision of a society where God reigns and not Generals and armies. For Munzihirwa, politics without God is not true politics but a mere sham. He was not trying to convert the hearts of Generals to make them become God-fearing but instead he was after the very heart of politics. This is the nature of a prophet and a prophetic Church.

“Munzihirwa’s story thus provides a compelling ecclesiological illumination of the Church as a sign and sacrament of the way of Christ. In her incarnational presence in the world, and in places of conflict in Africa and elsewhere, the Church remembers and bears the story of the incarnate God. In this “remembrance” the Church finds herself ... between an embattled and suffering people whose history she shares and the suffering God of love, whose story she bears... and this is the gift and burden that Munzihirwa bore as he found himself in the terrible middle in Bukavu” (Katongole, 2017:177).

“In a continent beset by seemingly never-ending civil wars, dictatorships, poverty, and other forms of violence that kill millions of Africans,... what the Church uniquely offers, and what the lives and work of the faith activists illuminate, is the theological grammar of hope. The Church’s unique calling and mission at the intersection of social brokenness and repair is to be a sacrament of God’s ongoing work of social repair” (Katongole, 2017:264).

1. 5. 3. The Sacrifice of Africa – Katongole

According to (Katongole, 2011:29), “Africa is an overwhelmingly Christian continent... if in 1900 just 25 per cent of the Catholic population lived in the southern hemisphere, today that figure stands at 66 per cent, or two-thirds of the world’s 1.1 billion Catholics”. This explains why the Catholic Church within the continent and especially in the DRC is listened to by the people who are in the majority Catholic Christians. Similar growth is being witnessed in other Christian denominations in the continent, says (Katongole, 2011:29). Youth are the majority in number in all these Christian Churches, including the Catholic Church. African practice of Christianity is not only in churches for praise and worship but also in the public display of their faith in marketplaces, shops and homes: Christian symbols in forms of images, icons, scapulars and crucifixes are publicly displayed. (Katongole, 2011:30) notices that since the Christian centre of gravity has shifted to Africa, the living faith also gives confidence for one to say that Africa is a Christian continent. However, at the same time as Christianity grows in Africa, so too the realities of civil wars and social unrest. The DRC is not an exception to this plain reality that Katongole speaks about. To reinforce his assertion, Katongole writes, “a new outbreak of fighting in eastern Congo, in a civil war that has lasted over ten years, has left more than 3.8 million people dead and many more homeless” (Katongole, 2011:30).

Katongole continues, citing many other African countries that face conflicts resulting in massive deaths of ordinary people, African countries that face diseases such as HIV/AIDS where millions get infected and die of the disease.

“If churches and coffins represent two dominant cultural realities in Africa, they also represent the predicament of a continent suspended between hope and despair. They capture the hope and pain, the beauty and tragedy, the dreams and frustrations of a

continent that is at once overwhelmingly Christian and at the same time politically, economically, and socially distressed” (Katongole, 2011:31).

There is a complex relationship between Christianity and politics in Africa. To probe that relationship constitutes “the first order of business for Christian social ethics in Africa” (Katongole, 2011:31).

Paradoxically, Katongole cites some African theologians who probed the relationship between faith and politics in Africa. On one hand, they noticed that faith is growing and on the other hand the misery and calamity of the people is growing too. Jesse Mugambi (1995) for example, noted that Africa “is faced with a food deficit; it is the most hungry continent in the world. It is faced with debt crises... it is the most indebted continent; it has the highest level of illiteracy in the world, and half of the world’s refugees are Africans” (Katongole, 2011:31). Yet Africa is overwhelmingly a Christian continent. How does one explain such a contradiction? I would like to attempt answering this question by saying that the lack of a Prophetic Church in the continent is paramount to this contradiction - a Church that speaks of the people, with the people and for the people, a Church that understands the cries, joys and pains of its members. (Katongole, 2011:32) cannot understand that Africans who call upon God’s name reverently are also the ones who seem to be neglected most vehemently by God. Citing Mugambi, another African theologian, Katongole asks if the Gospel did not reach many people in Africa as very bad news. This is the beginning of a fresh start for Christian theological and social reflection in Africa. To the dissatisfaction of Katongole, Mugambi, who raised this question whether the Word of God did reach Africans as bad news did not answer the question himself. Instead, he quickly jumped to giving suggestions as to how the Church should assist in the reconstruction of the continent. For Mugambi, says (Katongole, 2011:32), the Church should play a role of a facilitator in the process of reconstruction in approaching the marginalised. By rushing to a

conclusion such as this, one loses the focus to what exactly is going on in the continent for it to be a continent in distress with issues of corruption, civil war, violence, and poverty.

The danger of this approach suggested by Mugambi is that one assumes that “Christianity possesses a sort of a historical innocence in the social history of Africa” (Katongole, 2011:32).

Yet the role of Christianity in Africa is not to offer only good recommendations, but to also rethink its own role in a social history where Churches and death do not exclude each other mutually but rather form the same reality. (Katongole, 2011:32) says that this is the reality that Christian social ethics so often overlooks in its haste to prescribe solutions.

On the question of what the Church can do in order to be socially relevant, (Katongole, 2011:33) takes us back to the conversation about Christian social ethics in Africa which prescribes three paradigms: 1. Spiritual formation (the spiritual), 2. Social-material intervention (the pastoral), and 3. Advocacy and mediation (the political).

Spiritual formation, which is mostly associated with evangelical Christians, tends to see the social impact of Christianity in terms of spiritual influence and motivation. Believers of this paradigm have the tendency of justifying Africa’s woes as a spiritual crisis hence the solution suggested is the formation of spiritual identity:

“When one accepts Christ, one becomes a new person and is ‘born again’; the rebirth is first and foremost a *spiritual* rebirth, which happens in the inner world of one’s *religious* consciousness. What this widespread view means is that the good news Christianity proclaims is not primarily about social, political, and material life, but rather the inner spiritual life of the individual.” (Katongole, 2011:33).

One thing followers of this paradigm neglect is that the inner spiritual transformation of the individual has social consequences because the spiritual identity of a Christian must bear fruit

in the way one concretely lives his or her life in society. For adepts of this spiritual formation, when one accepts Jesus as the Saviour and supreme ancestor, all other earthly powers and politics are desacralised. From this comes the notion of “all power belongs to God” and slowly dictatorship and abuse of power prevail in African politics. Joseph Kabila exploited this paradigm of spiritual formation as a weapon to distort the Gospel and manipulate the people as his government ministers often said: “all power comes from God”. The spiritual formation paradigm as evoked by Katongole is in my view equal to the Church Theology of the Kairos Documents which criticised less the apartheid regime and supported its idea of ‘all power comes from God’. Similarities between the Spiritual Formation paradigm of Katongole and the Church Theology of the Kairos Documents are clear as they lead to the distortion, misuse and to the hermeneutical misinterpretation of scriptures by oppressive regimes such as “give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” (Matthew, 22:21) or everyone to “be subjected to the governing authorities.” (Romans, 13:1-2). I shall elaborate more in the chapters that follow in this study.

The social-material intervention (pastoral) paradigm focuses on intervention relief or development. This paradigm is more practised by the Catholic Church and mainline Protestant churches. (Katongole, 2011:35) says that “within this paradigm, the Church’s social involvement is often portrayed as a kind of intervention – a response to the worsening social situations of suffering and instability in Africa that either directly results from government policies or are the cumulative effect of government neglect. A deep and practical humanitarian concern underpins this paradigm”.

(Pope John Paul II, 1995) in his Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* urged bishops, priests, deacons, men and women Religious and all the lay faithful in Africa to respond by providing relief and assistance to people as he perceived the social crisis in the continent following the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The pope was convinced that the Catholic Church

could do more to change the lives of people through pastoral and social agencies. He compared Africa “to the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho... Africa is a continent where countless human beings... are lying, as it were, on the edge of the road, sick, injured, disabled, marginalised and abandoned. They are in dire need of Good Samaritans who will come to their aid. For my part, I express the hope that the Church will continue patiently and tirelessly its work as a Good Samaritan” (John Paul II, 1995:41).

One understands in these lines of Pope John Paul II the Catholic Church’s historical role in providing education, healthcare, and social services. “If a humanitarian concern inspires the Church’s work in these social services, it is sustained, as the story of the Good Samaritan shows, by a theological conviction that the Gospel is and must be a liberating social force that can help Africans ‘rediscover their humanity’ and ‘regain a sense of dignity’.” (Katongole, 2011:36).

Integral human development characterises the pastoral paradigm because the human being who is being evangelised to accept Jesus as his or her Saviour is not an abstract being but is subject to social and economic questions; says (John Paul II, 1995:68). As the Roman Pontiff continued to reflect on the Gospel of Luke 4:18-19, he noted how essential the link between salvation and liberation was in the life and ministry of Jesus, who came not only to relieve human misery but also to combat every kind of neglect. This is what I call in the light of the Kairos Document, the prophetic mission of the Church. Jesus came to liberate humanity, and all his ministry was marked by the concern he showed to people around him who were suffering from all kinds of diseases and infirmities. This paradigm of the pastoral mission of Jesus invites Christians to not only limit themselves to the spiritual paradigm but to integrate all paradigms in their lives. This approach is not limited to the Catholic Church alone but is also found in mainline Protestant churches.

The growth in Christian Churches' social services (pastoral paradigm) in Africa has made these Churches become the biggest employer compared to many African governments that fail to create employment for its citizens. The DRC government of Kabila is not an exception to it. The social-material (pastoral) paradigm is similar in my view to the Prophetic Theology of the Kairos Documents. It is a paradigm that brings the Church close to the people to know, empathise and sympathise with the poor in their sorrows, pains and sufferings.

The third paradigm of Advocacy and Mediation (political), (Katongole, 2011:38) is characterised by justice, democracy and human rights. This is found in all mainline Churches, but the Catholic Church has given this paradigm great importance to the point that a whole school of thought is consecrated to it and it is called: The social teaching/tradition of the Church. Christian Churches in general have the responsibility to ensure democracy prevails and that human rights are respected for the dignity of people who are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis, 1-26-27). This paradigm of advocacy, mediation and reconciliation, says (Katongole, 2011:40) is very important for the Church in Africa to champion "in the face of ongoing conflicts and civil wars in Africa". He cited the role played by the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu during the transition from apartheid to the New South Africa, also the work of many other Church leaders in war-stricken countries such as Uganda and Rwanda in bringing the protagonists to the table of negotiation and reconciliation. The shortfall of this paradigm in my opinion is that it overlooks the notion of true justice, a redistributive justice, accountability, a "pay for your sins" justice as I would like to call it. Reconciliation entails forgiveness. But can the oppressed forgive the oppressor and reconcile simply because the oppressor has agreed to end or stop acts of violence and oppression over the oppressed? Or should there be acts of reparation justice that should precede reconciliation? The advocacy, mediation and reconciliation paradigm is according to me what the Kairos Documents call 'State Theology' (I explained in the introduction what State Theology is: A theology that seeks

reconciliation between the oppressed and the oppressor without reparation or without the oppressor feeling remorse for his or her degrading and unhuman actions of violence committed toward the oppressed.

1. 5. 4. Le Congo dans L'ouragan del'histoire – Ndaywel

Translated: Congo in the hurricane of history. Fighting for the rule of law for women and men of faith and goodwill.

This recently published book is a testimony of truthful events that happened in the DRC in the quest for democracy. This truth is offered to us in the form of a triptych. First, the author teaches us or reminds us that the Congolese populations, whatever their moral, intellectual and psychological weaknesses, have shown, over time, courage, energy and intelligence to try to overcome the obstacles to their collective progress and taking control of their national destiny. Second, the author states that what these Congolese populations have lacked over the past half-century, and what they still absolutely need for their human and economic development, is competent, honest and committed leadership in the service of the common good. Ndaywel notices that since the time of President Mobutu, the dictator, those who succeeded him have only reproduced his tyrannical methods. Thirdly, as far back as in the history of Christianity in the Congo, men and women without power or arms, but inspired and freed from the fear of death by their faith, were able to courageously resist the successive tyrannical powers, perpetrators of all types of crimes and violators of fundamental human rights. Distinguished and courageous Congolese such as Kimpa Mvita, Isidore Bankanja, Simon Kimbangu, Joseph Malula, Eugène Kabanga, Etienne Tshisekedi, Thérèse Pakasa, Christophe Munzihirwa, Emmanuel Kataliko, Denis Mukwege, François-David Ekofo, and many martyrs for democracy, some of which are quoted in this book, like Thérèse Kapangala, Rossy Mukendi,

Luc Nkulula, among the crowd of anonymous people who gave their lives for democracy in the DRC.

This book retells the recent dramatic and tragic political history of the DRC. but the book also traces the history of the loving presence of God whose Son came, among other things, “to deliver those who, for fear of death, spent their whole lives in a slave situation.” (Hebrews, 2, 15 and Luke 4,19).

Ndaywel also demonstrates in this book the maturity of the Congolese people and the heroism so often manifested during the history of the country by their ancestors. Thanks to the Congolese Catholic Bishops’ Conference (CENCO), says the author, members of the *Comité Laïc de Coordination* (laypeople co-ordination committee) had to put their intelligence and courage at the service of the common good to uphold the Congolese Constitution. They awakened by their exemplary leadership and at the cost of dangerous personal sacrifices, this heroism of the people in general and Congolese youth in particular. In writing this book, Ndaywel has inscribed for posterity the names and the bravery of the sons and daughters of the Congo in the Congolese resistance movement and has undoubtedly allowed Congolese citizens to become aware of the existence of this resistance movement. In the following lines, I shall review some chapters of the book that directly deal with my thesis.

Ndaywel starts his book by quoting Mobutu in one of his allocutions on October 4, 1973, in the gallery of the 28th General Assembly of the United Nations: “*Un fruit ne tombe que quand il est mûr, mais devant l’ouragan et la tempête de l’histoire, mûr ou pas mûr, il tombe quand même...!*” (Mobutu 1975: 365). Meaning, “A fruit only falls when it is ripe, but before the hurricane and the storm of history, ripe or not ripe, it falls anyway ...!” (Ndaywel, 2019:19).

The author says that since then, the DRC has not ceased to find itself precisely in the hurricane and the storm of history. Since its creation in 1885, the DRC’s trajectory has been a long walk for the construction of the rule of law. However, his book is confined to reading the last stage

of this journey, that of the promulgation of the last Constitution, from February 18, 2006, to the present day, a period which essentially covers Joseph Kabila's last two terms at the head of the country. He, however, says that it would be an error to be ignorant of the fact that this development, full of pitfalls, had its source in the Mobutu years and in a conjuncture whose foundations date from the colonial period. Similarly, the fight led by Christians, believers and men of goodwill, under the label of the Lay Coordination Committee, found its precedence in other fights waged by these men and women, in other contexts, during the colonial period certainly, but also in the decades which followed independence. As an observer-participant or, more correctly, participant-observer of this episode, Ndaywel largely realises it during the events that unfolded in the past two years of Joseph Kabila's term of office on which he reports in the last chapters of this book. Ndaywel finds it essential to situate the major role played by Christianity, Catholic and Protestant in this context,. "Deeply embedded in the history of the Congolese people, for centuries, faith in God has become a component of their identity and an instrument of combat. It is also a kind of palimpsest on which the Congolese have used to write down, for generations, their revolts, their pains, but also their aspirations and their hopes." (Ndaywel, 2019:19).

Ndaywel realises that the fight for political change and for transparent, credible and peaceful elections, waged in 2017-2018, was carried by a long history lurking in the shadows within the collective memory, and whose mastery was essential to understand the ways of being Congolese in our time. For Ndaywel, the history of the DRC is a glorious history of a people full of resistance and combat in order to achieve human dignity and honour. It is that history that he tries to tell in this book.

1. 5. 5. Through the past into the Future: Jean-Francois Bill – Pastor, Activist, Theologian – Tinyiko Sam Maluleke & Graham A Duncan

In their introduction, Duncan and Maluleke present Jean-Francois Bill as an exceptional church leader among many “who led the South African church community through the most turbulent years in the history of this country; the nineteen sixties, seventies and eighties.” (Duncan & Maluleke 2016: 106). It was because of the contributions and sacrifices of church leaders such as Bill that the euphoric of 1990s was made possible, says Duncan and Maluleke. The ministry of Jean-Francois Bill, according to the authors of this article, is characterised by his involvement in the struggles of ordinary South Africans. He always bore witness to Christ in siding with the disadvantaged. One of the characteristics of a church leader that comes out in these lines is the discipline Bill had. He knew how “to be of service to his family, his church, his community as well as the wider world.” (Duncan & Maluleke 2016: 106). Bill was convinced that only a united church could bear witness to a divided world. hence for Bill, the church should be seen as a mustard seed or a yeast to revolutionise and transform societal situations. A responsible church must act as ferment in society, as the leaven in the lump, Jean-Francois Bill thought.

Being an ecumenical, a community and political activist, Bill initiated already in the nineteen-sixties, a vast feeding scheme for underprivileged and suffering children of Zoutpansberg area in South Africa. In 1968, the church moved Bill to Pretoria where he came to experience the true reality of the apartheid regime. Being white, Bill could not live in the community of the people he served as a pastor. His experience of being exposed to the African church as he attended conferences in places such as Ivory Coast and Kenya, gave him a broad understanding of the church in Africa and an independent Africa. This exposure to the rest of the continent inspired him to redouble efforts to work for a politically independent South Africa. The ecumenical spirit in Bill and his drive to indigenise or africanise the church was not well

accepted by the regime as it was seen as a move to weaken the policy of separate development stands. Yet for Bill, this was “a matter of *‘responsibility’* for the church which ‘seeks to be faithful by becoming truly indigenous, not just in a cultural sense, but in a theological sense, by being responsible in the situation into which God has called it’.” (Duncan & Maluleke 2016: 113). It is therefore impossible, says Duncan and Maluleke, to write the history of ecumenism in South Africa, without mentioning the name of Jean-Francois Bill. His community activism led him to become a founding member of ‘the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Action (PACSA). There was no way for Bill to separate theological education with social justice activities. As taught by the Roman Catholic Church in its teachings on social justice, all people are made in the image and likeness of God and so possess an equal and inalienable worth. Because of this essential dignity, each person has the right to all that is needed to allow him or her to live their full potential as intended by God. (John Paul II, 1987: 38). The social concern for African family life was close at his heart as he saw how African families were subjected to the inhuman legalised migratory labour system. His political activism, say Duncan and Maluleke, led him to align himself with the oppressed blacks in South Africa, promoting their cause and aspirations.

“Bill had also been involved in the preparation of *Kairos liturgies for Good Friday and Easter Sunday* (Kairos Theologians 1986) based on the *Kairos Document*. These liturgies with sermon outlines made significant use of the Psalms. The authorities found this to be very provocative and detained him without charge. He was accused of treason and communist activities. These charges were dropped. Yet he was incarcerated for a further six months.” (Duncan & Maluleke 2016: 117).

The authors of this article describe Bill as a true witness of Christ and herald of God's kingdom because of his visionary ecumenism and being a practical and committed church man. The ministry of Bill, say Duncan and Maluleke, is characterised by a strong emphasis on those who suffered injustices and struggled for righteousness. He stood for the truth because he saw how people suffered inside his own church and in the country. Bill never lost sight of those suffering from political and economic system. He stood alongside the oppressed. "It was an approach that was anchored in biblical notions of justice and rooted in a conviction that, guided by the praxis of Jesus, the marginalised must lead the struggle against dehumanisation and oppression (Maluleke 2008, xiv)." (Duncan & Maluleke, 2016: 120).

1. 6. Value of the Study

This study seeks to add value in the role religion can play in political and social life beside the known traditional role of religion, which is the spiritual care of souls. Democracy, justice and peace certainly imply strong political institutions and actors. But it also implies strong spiritual institutions and pastors, who fearlessly play the role of whistle-blowers or referees in civil society; because without them, in a country infested by corruption and the looting of public resources, political achievements are never realised. This study is not to politicise religion but rather to demonstrate that pastoral duties and care for the spiritual needs of the people is holistic. It includes the social, the political, the economic and the spiritual needs. Religion, and in this study, the Catholic Church in the DRC, follows the logic of its Master, Jesus Christ, who although crucified, continues to love because the logic of the Catholic Church in the DRC, as shown above, is not of power, but of liberation and redemption of the people. In conclusion, this study explains the Catholic Church's in the DRC own passionate concern for democracy, human dignity and development. This is the practical concern of the Roman Catholic Church in the Congo.

1. 7. Proposed Scope and Delimitations

The main focus of this thesis is to illustrate the role of the Catholic Church in Congo in the struggle, together with the Congolese people, in attaining free, fair and democratic elections. This will lead us to discover whether the Catholic Church in Congo is captured or not. If it turns out to be so, then democracy in the Democratic Republic of Congo is a dream. In that case, the Catholic Church in Congo needs to be liberated. All this is in view of liberation ecclesiology and the dignity of human beings.

The study will be using the articles written by Church leaders in the DRC and by the media as inspiring documents for the people of the DRC to attain full democratisation of the country in relation to former President Joseph Kabila's manipulation of the judiciary and the Constitution to oppress the people and maintain power. The theory used to interpret the data is conceptual, meaning, I shall explain in narrative form, the main things to be studied in this research; those are the involvement of the Catholic Church in politics to accompany the people to attain free, fair and democratic elections, the respect of the constitution and of human rights.

1. 8. Conclusion

This chapter was mapping the context of the whole study. The chapter also highlighted the problem statement, objectives, methodology, theoretical framework and literature review. The chapter was meant to introduce the role of the Catholic Church in the politics of the DRC; which role should be discussed in full in the following chapters of the study.

CHAPTER 2

2. Methodological issues

In this chapter, I will give an overview of certain key magisterial documents on Catholic teachings about politics and democracy. I will also discuss the documents of the Catholic Church's interventions in the DRC from 2015 to 2019. I will again discuss the theology and methodology of the Kairos Document.

2.1. Shaping the Methodology

Writing the review of the Kairos Document above was intended to shape my methodology. Being a document written by some churchmen and theologians engaged in the struggle against apartheid, the Kairos Document influences my methodology as a model of Public Theology. In a society such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there were critical political, economic and social issues caused by a regime that seemed oppressive and tyrannical. In a society like this, the South African Kairos Document can be used as the basis for a public theology which is critical and prophetic, because it suggests a constructive agenda for liberation.

The Kairos Document was a consequence of liberation theology. In the words of Albert Nolan (1994), "Kairos theology has much in common with liberation theology. In fact, it might well be described as a species or type of liberation theology. Like other theologies of liberation, it makes use of social analysis and is driven by Christian faith to struggle for the liberation." (Nolan, 1994:215). The Kairos Document was a document written by people who were part of the struggle; they spoke from within the struggle and lived among the poor and the oppressed. In analysing the role of religion in politics, with a special focus on the Roman Catholic Church in the DRC during the Presidency of Joseph Kabila, the influence of the Kairos Document is

shown in the way the Bishops of the DRC, driven by Christian faith and living among the poor and the oppressed, committed themselves to struggle for free, fair and democratic elections in the country. In their pastoral letters and statements, they challenged the people of the DRC to action the way the authors of the Kairos Document challenged other Churches to action.

I shall use the section of the Kairos Document “towards a prophetic theology” and “the challenge to action” as I analyse the statements and the messages of the Catholic bishops in the DRC and their calls for the people of the DRC to liberate themselves by demanding elections as one of their fundamental rights in a democratic society. This I shall do in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of this study by seeing how prophetic those messages of the bishops were and how it motivated the people on the ground to stand up and fight for their rights. This will shape my methodology in the sense that the challenge to renewal and action set by the Kairos Document was addressed to the Church. The challenge for a democratic DRC, where the people choose their own leaders, was addressed to the people of the DRC who sit in church benches every Sunday.

Providing the research paradigm applied in this study, this research is interpretive. It situates the phenomenon of human rights and democracy in its social context in the DRC and its interpretation is grounded within its socio-historical and political context. I am aware of interpretive data collection techniques which include: interviews, observation and documentation. The last technique, documentation, is what qualifies this research interpretive. Reason for choosing this paradigm is that I use external (Kairos Document) and internal (some magisterial documents from the Catholic Church) documents such as Congolese Catholic Bishops’ statements, reports, newspaper articles, and websites to cast insight into the role of religion in politics. The persuasion of the Congolese Catholic bishops here is related to the context of oppression of the people by a government which refused to organise elections. In

this perspective, I will evaluate the messages and actions of the Congolese Catholic Bishops with (Kritzinger, 2019) using a praxis matrix.

2.2. Selected Teachings of the Catholic Church with a bearing on Democracy

The Catholic Church in the DRC forms part of the worldwide Catholic Church which is led by the Pope in the Vatican State in Rome, Italy. Being a conservative, traditional and hierarchical Church in its values, the decisions and laws promulgated by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church based in Vatican are applicable and binding to all Catholic Churches in the world. The Catholic Church in the DRC is not an exception to that. Thus, the teaching of the Catholic Church on democracy, although promulgated for universal use, is applicable to all local Catholic Churches around the world. In order to abide by the call of the universal Catholic Church made from Rome, the Catholic Church in Congo also strives to teach and apply the teaching of the universal Church on democracy.

From a historical perspective, the Catholic Church started to directly engage in modern politics and democracy from the Second Vatican Council, as stated in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. I shall give a full summary of the Document in the lines that follow and emphasise the importance of political participation. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (this document covers lots of topics of faith, social, economic and political life of Catholic Christians) in its paragraphs 1915-1917, provides important comments and perspectives on the views of the Catholic Church concerning democracy. For example, it states that:

“As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life. The manner of this participation may vary from one country or culture to another. One must pay tribute to those nations whose systems permit the largest possible number of citizens to take part in public life in a climate of genuine freedom. As with any ethical obligation, the

participation of all in realising the common good calls for a continually renewed conversion of the social partners. Fraud and other subterfuges, by which some people evade the constraints of the law and the prescriptions of societal obligation, must be firmly condemned because they are incompatible with the requirements of justice. Much care should be taken to promote institutions that improve the conditions of human life. It is incumbent on those who exercise authority to strengthen the values that inspire the confidence of the members of the group and encourage them to put themselves at the service of others. Participation begins with education and culture. One is entitled to think that the future of humanity is in the hands of those who are capable of providing the generations to come with reasons for life and optimism.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1993:977).

However in its terminology as mentioned in *Gaudium et Spes* and *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, we see that the Catholic Church does not refer to democracy as such, instead the Church refers to the rights of the people to choose their leaders, the right to reject despotism. This way of framing the issues in official Church documents defines and describes democracy implicitly rather than explicitly. For me, this is sufficient to suggest that certain teachings of the Catholic Church are supportive of democracy and can be used to strengthen democratic traditions and institutions.

Under the papacy of Pope John Paul II (1978-2005), teachings on democracy were further evolved when he gave human rights a central role in his own teachings in encyclical letters and messages to the United Nations General Assembly marking anniversaries of the Declaration of the Universal Human Rights. He talked about universal human rights as rooted in the nature of the person. He criticised nations that did not respect human rights with regard to crimes against life. Whenever the Sovereign Pontiff spoke about human rights, he included rule of law and

respect for life as he clearly said in a message to His Excellency, Mr. Didier Opertti Badan, president of the 53rd session of the United Nations General Assembly, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Pope John Paul II said:

“In proclaiming a certain number of fundamental rights which are common to all the members of the human family, the Declaration has made a decisive contribution to the development of international law, it has challenged national legislation and has allowed millions of men and women to live with greater dignity. However, anyone who looks at today’s world cannot fail to note: these fundamental rights, proclaimed, codified and celebrated, are still the object of serious and constant violations. This anniversary is thus an appeal for an examination of conscience on the part of every State that willingly subscribed to the text of 1948. In fact, the tendency of some to choose one or another right at their convenience, while ignoring those which are contrary to their current interests, occurs too frequently. Others do not hesitate to isolate particular rights from their context in order to act as they please, often confusing freedom with licence, or to provide themselves with advantages which take little account of human solidarity. Without doubt, such attitudes threaten the organic structure of the Declaration, which associates every right with other rights, duties and limits required by an equitable social order.”⁵

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical letter, *Fides et Ratio* said that truth and freedom either go together hand in hand or together they perish in misery.” (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides*

⁵ http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1998/november/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19981130_50th-onu.html [Accessed 5 June 2019].

et Ratio 1999:90 paragraph 75). The Doctrinal Note on the Participation of Catholics in Political Life states that “it is not the Church’s task to set forth specific political solutions – and even less to propose a single solution as the acceptable one – to temporal questions that God has left to the free and responsible judgment of each person. It is, however, the Church’s right and duty to provide a moral judgment on temporal matters when this is required by faith or the moral law.” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2002:2).

If Christians must recognise the legitimacy of differing points of view about the organisation of worldly affairs, they are also called to reject, as injurious to democratic life, a conception of pluralism that reflects moral relativism.

The position of the Church concerning the poor is very clear in Jesus’ mission statement in the Gospel of Luke 4: 18; “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.” (Luke 4: 18). The Church cannot, therefore, ignore the priority of the poor. It is the core of Christianity that it gains its strength from working with the poor and the destitute. It is for this reason that Michael Taylor states that

“the task of theology is essentially practical. It has to do with orthopraxis rather than orthodoxy: taking sides with God to overcome oppression and social disturbance and eradicate poverty. Liberation is a central theme of the Bible as it is of much African theology.” (Taylor, 2000: 26).

The Church needs to become the voice of the voiceless and be prophetic in its stand against poverty and oppression.

In this study, we will assess the role that has been played by the Catholic Church in the DRC in relation to a regime which seems to be autocratic and oppressive, by analysing the documents, letters and actions of the Catholic Church in Congo from 2015 to 2019. The teaching of the Catholic Church on democracy (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2002:6) is to exhort “Christians to fulfil their duties faithfully in the spirit of the Gospel. It is a mistake to think that, because we have here no lasting city, but seek the city which is to come, we are entitled to shirk our earthly responsibilities; this is to forget that by our faith we are bound all the more to fulfil these responsibilities according to the vocation of each... may Christians... be proud of the opportunity to carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are ordered to the glory of God.” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2002:6).

The prophetic actions of the Catholic Church in the promotion of democracy and the protection of human dignity across the world must be understood against the backdrop of its key documents providing guidance for Church involvement in politics. In choosing these documents, I looked at those that provide close guidance for Church involvement in politics, especially in the promotion of democracy, human rights and dignity. I am mindful of the many official documents and encyclicals written by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church in matters of politics, democracy and human rights. Therefore, documents involved in my study include the following carefully selected but not inclusive documents:

2.3. 'Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in Political Life' (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 2002).

2.3.1. Relevance of the Document

I chose this specific document because it provides direct notes on some questions I treat in my study regarding the participation of Catholic Christians in political life. In this document, we find various insights and guidelines. The Document recognises the plurality of political parties which already entails a democratic culture, and encourages Catholics to exercise their rights and duty to contribute to the public life of their countries.

2.3.2. Document Review

The document says that, Catholics must assess their participation in political life to be sure that it is marked by a coherent responsibility. The Document also states that,

“It is commendable that in today’s democratic societies, in a climate of true freedom, everyone is made a participant in directing the body politics. Such societies call for new and fuller forms of participation in public life by Christian and non-Christian citizens alike. Indeed, all can contribute, by voting in elections for lawmakers and government officials, and in other ways as well, to the development of political solutions and legislative choices which, in their opinion, will benefit the common good. The life of a democracy could not be productive without the active, responsible and generous involvement of everyone.” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2002:1).

For example, the commitment and involvement of Christians in political life in the past and current century has been remarkable. The Catholic Church venerates many men and women as

saints who served God and the people through politics and government. One example among many is that of Saint Thomas More - he is known as the Patron Saint of Statesmen and Politicians. Thomas More gave witness by his martyrdom. His steadfastness and courage in keeping his religious convictions and dignity even in prison gained him a reputation among Catholics. He worked at the King of England's court as a lawyer, where he opposed the King's immorality. "Though subjected to various forms of psychological pressure, Saint Thomas More refused to compromise, never forsaking the constant fidelity to legitimate authority and institutions which distinguished him; he taught by his life and his death that man cannot be separated from God, nor politics from morality." (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2002:1).

The Catholic Church in this Document recognises that while democracy is the best expression of the direct participation of citizens in political choices, the Church also says that democracy can only succeed to the extent that it is based on a correct understanding of the human person. By this I understand as: Life is sacred and that the dignity of a person cannot be compromised for political gain. This principle, according to the (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2002), has to remain in the mind of Catholics actively involved in politics, otherwise, "the witness of the Christian faith in the world, as well as the unity and interior coherence of the faithful, would be non-existent." (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2002:1). If the principle of the Correct Understanding of the Human Person is not respected, democratic structures would be quite fragile. In conclusion, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith noted that this document intended to shed light on the unity of Christian life:

"Coherence between faith and life... Christians to fulfil their duties faithfully in the spirit of the Gospel. It is a mistake to think that, because we have here no lasting city,

but seek the city which is to come, we are entitled to shirk our earthly responsibilities... may Christians ... be proud of the opportunity to carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with religious values.” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 2002:6).

This is why the Catholic Bishops in the DRC, on questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life, forms and informs the people of their earthly responsibilities and tells them to carry them out diligently. The Catholic Bishops also urges national authorities to be more active in safeguarding peace, and national unity, deploring the perverse, persisting insecurity that caused immeasurable suffering to the populations. Catholic Bishops in Congo understand that life is sacred as stated in the document summarised above, hence they made the declaration of safeguarding peace and national unity which was signed by Archbishop Francois Xavier Maroy Rusengo of Bukavu. The Catholic Church-owned schools, hospitals and social services were shut down. It was a day of mourning, a day of prayer and communion with the population of Bukavu.

It was on the same line of ideas that the newly appointed Congolese Cardinal who replaced Cardinal Monsengwo who has retired, said in an interview with (Lucie Sarr, 2019) of the French online newspaper La Croix, that “My appointment as a cardinal does not change the nature of my mission. I remain a priest, I remain a bishop, and the prophetic dimension related to my mission is intact. A cardinal must be the voice of those who suffer. He has to talk when he has to. The duty of reserve does not apply to a priest or bishop. The duty of keeping quiet applies to diplomats.”⁶

⁶ <https://international.la-croix.com/news/violence-spreads-in-the-dr-congo/4925> [Accessed 30 March 2020].

As Catholics, Congolese bishops are heirs to a tradition of thought and action on the moral dimensions of the social, political and economic life of the country. The Gospel of Christ and the teaching of the universal Catholic Church call them to serve the people in need and to work actively for social, political and economic justice for all. This will be discussed further in the study in Chapter Three where I demonstrate the role of the Catholic Church in the struggle together with ordinary citizens in attaining liberation.

The teaching of the Catholic Church's social doctrine on the promotion of democracy and good governance, are part of the Church's pastoral priorities. The Catholic Bishops in the Congo are mindful of that and of the solemn exhortation given by Saint Paul to his disciple Timothy when he wrote: "Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching." (2 Tim 4:2-5). This is the kind of involvement in political life that the Catholic Bishops of the Congo wanted the people of the Congo to participate in, being actors of their own destiny.

2.4. "*Gaudium Et Spes*" (1965)

2.4.1. Relevance of the Document

I chose this document to feature in my study because this document of the Second Vatican Council protects the rights of every person as an individual and as a collective. It implicitly defines what democratic norms are all about. This document teaches the protection of the rights of the person as a necessary condition for citizens, individually and collectively, to play an active part in public life and administration. It was prepared with the purpose in mind to provide both Christians and non-Christians with some understanding of deep insights into the world and to raise a consciousness to the need to improve it. Many questions were raised so that the Church and society might work together to resolve them.

The relevance of this document for the Catholic Church in the DRC and the situation in the DRC is shown when the President Joseph Kabila attempted through the Parliament to change the Constitution in order to stay in power for a third term. The document, *Gaudium et Spes*, promotes the protection of the rights of the person individually and collectively as a necessary condition for citizens to play an active part in public life and administration. In the light of the above, the Catholic Church in the DRC made the people aware of their rights to vote, as stated in the Constitution of the country.

2.4.2. Document Review

The Fathers of Vatican II worked very hard trying to get a better grasp of humanity and understand the deeper responsibilities of being human which question they asked: What is God's plan for humanity? They responded by clearly arguing that, humans were not created to live for themselves; life rests in relationships. To live more fully, the priority of life, they said, is to be focused on truth, justice, freedom, and love. Jesus Christ founded the Church to serve humanity in this pursuit and to help people who seek holiness. In the end, they said, life is about sharing the mystery of God's awesome love.

Gaudium et Spes, this Second Vatican Council document, means 'Hope and Joy, is a Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. It speaks of the world as God's creation which is sustained by Him, and the world was freed from sin by Christ and is continually recreated and brought to its destiny through the power of the Holy Spirit. In light of the God's word, the Church is supposed to offer the human race the saving resources given to it by Christ. The Church must seek to provide meaningful answers to the questions people have about life. It is the creative energies of people and their intellect that produce social transformation, although some good and some bad. *Gaudium et Spes* also notices that societies are rapidly being transformed. People want things to happen now; they are not satisfied by waiting and in

many cases, don't mature at a rate equal to what they desire. The authors of this document saw that traditions and values are being lost. Moral conflicts are escalating as a result of a false way of living, and people's moral conscience is playing less and less of a role. Oppression and neglect for the poor is escalating. This is at the heart of the world's mistrust and division. They commented that the world was capable of acts that uplift life and acts that destroy life. This situation is rooted in people's ambition to material things. Yet, there are many people who desire to know what the purpose of life is. They believed that the Church can find answers to this question in pursuing Christ because finding answers to life's problems rests in Jesus. *Gaudium Et Spes* is divided into two parts and each part into chapters.

2.4.3. Part One: The Church and Man's Vocation

In this first part, the Document tries and understands the needs, the events, and the desires of the world: Who are we? What do we need to do better as a society? What do the actions and thoughts of the world mean? How can the world better fulfil God's will?

On the notion of the dignity of the human person, *Gaudium et Spes* emphasises that the dignity of being human stems from being created in God's image. This image is severely damaged by sin and was purchased back at a heavy price by the suffering and passion of Jesus Christ.

The authors of this document argued that there is a *law of love* written in our heart. There is an inner voice that calls us to love God and humanity. We have an ability to choose God or not. Not choosing God is what in the end eliminates that which binds us to God. Some deny the existence of God, some don't care if there is a God or not, and some are so proud that their ego allows for little faith in God. The truth of life rests in the mystery of God. In Christ, sorrow and death take on meaning.

They also said that, in following Jesus, we learn to love in such a way that our truest self is revealed. This document, on the notion of human dignity, wants to remind human beings that

they are of service to others; even those involved in politics are called to serve others and not to be served. In being involved in the politics of the Congo, the Catholic Church wanted to find concrete solutions to the political uncertainty caused by Joseph Kabila by not organising the elections in due course, dehumanising the majority of the Congolese population who seek what was good for the entire country: to exercise their basic right to vote. Hence, the Fathers of Vatican II Council stated that the human person finds his truest self when he seeks what is good, not only for him, but for all. The progress of one life goes hand-in-hand with the progress of society. Economies, politics, and the pursuit of social status contribute to much of the conflict in the world. The inherent nature of these can often breed pride and selfishness. This can only be overcome with the help of grace. Good prevails when people have access to food, clothing, shelter, freedom, the right to have a family or not, employment, education, a sound name, privacy, the right to follow one's conscience, and the choice to choose God or not. Society improves based on truth and survives on justice and love.

The document also says that, those most in need must be heard, and that great need should disturb the conscience of humanity. Life is to be preserved and elevated at all cost. We must learn to love and respect those who think differently from us. This is way of defining democracy. In accepting those who think differently from us, we should seek to understand, and in understanding, we can seek out the truth. Those we know to be in error are to be loved even more fervently. We never have the right to judge the heart of another. This is exactly what the Catholic Church in the DRC seek to do as they instigated the people to stand up for their rights.

The authors of *Gaudium et Spes* also said that, many will seek to elevate their stature in life, but the truth is there is basic equality in all humanity. Each of us is responsible for fulfilling the call to live justly and to walk in love always. God created us to be social, and we are bound together. Although this section does not explicitly mention the word 'democracy', one notices

the attributes and principles that form a democratic society in these lines. The document once more reminds us to listen to those most in need. The Catholic bishops in the DRC heard the cry of the people; they listened to them and wanted to accompany them to attain credible elections. But the Kabila government wanted to restrict the people to participate in public life. *Gaudium et Spes* says:

“It is fully consonant with human nature that there should be politico-juridical structures, providing all citizens without any distinction with ever improving and effective opportunities to play an active part in the establishment of the juridical foundations of the political community, in the administration of public affairs, in determining the aims and the terms of reference of public bodies, and in the election of political leaders. Every citizen ought to be mindful of his right and his duty to promote the common good by using his vote.” (Flannery, 1975:794-891).

The people of the Congo wanted to elect their political leaders as determined by the Constitution of the country but thus this right was infringed. *Gaudium et Spes* in the quotation above emphasises the importance of electing political leaders as per norms established on a juridical foundation. This leads us to discuss part two of *Gaudium et Spes*.

2.4.4. Part Two: Some More Urgent Problems

In part two of the authors of the document found five priorities of concern: Marriage and family, human culture, social/political and economic life, bonds among nations, and war and peace. These five priorities form parts of the five chapters contained in this section of the document. I shall summarise from Chapter Three forward as these chapters relate to my research.

The fathers of Vatican II noted that there is more than enough available in the world to provide for the needs of humanity. Those consumed by the enhancement of their own personal lives is what mostly prevents those in dire need from having what will sustain them. The purpose of currency and material resources is not to gain wealth for wealth's own sake or to dominate others. A just world seeks to provide opportunity for all to grow intellectually and morally. The act of work is of greater value to human beings than to seek material wealth. Through work, they should have the ability to support themselves and their family. To work, they said, is to serve one another. There should be an incentive in place for one to have private ownership and private control over possessions.

Their understanding of power is that, authority is required in society in order to prevent people from persecuting others. Authority must function as a moral force and not as a tyranny. But what the people of the Congo experienced at the hands of Joseph Kabila's last term in office was the opposite of what the Fathers of Vatican Two say in this document. Governments exist in the world for the sake of people. People should always have a voice in choosing those who represent them, and it is the duty of citizens to actively vote for their leaders. The laws of society must protect the rights of people. However, when a government takes on too much authority, it weakens the sense of responsibility for which individuals, families, and groups must take ownership. Citizens should be loyal to their country, but not at the expense of becoming blind to the needs of people in the world. The truest duty politically, they said, is to oppose injustice, oppression, and intolerance. Church and government are rightly independent and self-governing. The work of the Church is to preach the faith and teach social doctrines. The Church has the right and responsibility to pass moral judgments on society when the salvation of souls is at stake. This chapter is core to the prophetic mission held by the Catholic Church in DRC during the last five years of President Joseph Kabila's rule. It defines democracy and its principles of justice, equality and peace.

Gaudium et Spes states that peace is not the absence of war. True peace is of God; it involves the harmony of people and pursuing justice. Peace is directly relevant to people's ability to love. Peace will never be obtained or maintained unless people can trust and share. Peace requires sincere respect for others, and an effort to see that the basic human needs of others is met. Peace flows from Christ. Governments have a legitimate right to defend themselves. They have a duty to protect their citizens. No nation is free to choose to wage war for gain in any way. Blind obedience to a nation is never an excuse to destroy populated areas. The destruction of the inhabited regions of people is a crime against God and humanity. Peace is not possible where these exist: injustice, economic inequality, thirst for power, or disregard for human life, said the authors of *Gaudium et Spes*.

2.5. Populorum Progressio (On the Development of Peoples) – Papal Encyclical, Paul VI. 1967

2.5.1. The Relevance of the Document

The criterion used to choose this document was the extreme poverty in which the Congolese people live. The country has lots of natural resources which benefit only the few in political power. Pope Paul VI, in writing this encyclical letter on the development of people, was concerned about the question of social conflicts that took on world dimensions. The DRC is not spared from this social conflict. In this encyclical letter, Pope Paul VI noted that today the social question had become a worldwide question, and social conflicts had taken on world dimensions. He was disturbed by the capitalist system accompanying industrialisation, a system which contains such abuses as profit being the key motive for economic progress, competition the supreme law of economics, and private ownership of the means of production an absolute and unlimited right.

The Catholic Church in Congo through its Bishops' Conference was addressing the social question and social conflicts created by a regime supposed to bring a solution to social conflicts. The question of credible elections organised on a stipulated timeframe as per the Constitution of the country was pertinent to the Catholic Church, hence the involvement of bishops in raising their voices for the development of the people. The relevance of this document is that the dignity of citizens in the State is crucial. Those in a position of authority have the duty to protect the population they lead. The Catholic Church in the Congo asked the people to peacefully request credible elections which would restore their dignity as they choose for themselves the leaders they want to govern them.

2.5.2. Document Review

Pope Paul VI was worried that the destitution of whole populations tempts people to have recourse to violence, although a revolutionary uprising produces new injustices unless there is an established tyranny damaging human rights and harming the common good. The Holy Father noted with disapproval that with so many people hungry and destitute, lacking education and health care, money is squandered on national or personal ostentation and the arms race.

One of his major concerns was the gap between the rich and the poor: "Glaring inequalities exist not only in possessions but also in power" (Paul VI 1967). The hard reality of modern economics works to widen differences: rich peoples enjoy rapid growth while the poor develop slowly. The distance that separates the progress of some and the stagnation and regression of others is growing, and as a result of uneven trade relations, the poor nations remain ever poor while the rich ones become still richer. The pope warned that in promoting development, we must avoid the risk of adding to the wealth of the rich, the misery of the poor, and the servitude

of the oppressed, and he insisted that programmes to increase production should reduce inequalities.

The pope taught that our goal is not just to eliminate hunger or reduce poverty: the goal is to build a world in which the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich person. But there is, in addition, a strong concern for problems in developing countries. The pope worried that industrialisation was breaking down traditional structures which do not adapt themselves to the new conditions. He noted that there was some evidence of a neo-colonialism, in the form of political and economic pressures aimed at complete dominance. He called attention to two problems within the underdeveloped countries: nationalism and racism. Asserting that the Church offers people what is her characteristic attribute: a global vision of humanity, he said that legitimate feelings of concern for national unity and pride in cultural heritage should not be demeaned by an isolating nationalism, and that racism was an obstacle to collaboration among disadvantaged nations and a cause of division and hatred within countries.

The pope had experienced first-hand the problem of development during travels to Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, and he wanted to convey a sense of the seriousness of the problem. He said that the world was sick, its illness consisting of the lack of kinship among individuals and peoples. More and more people seek to do more, know more and have more in order to be more, but their living conditions prevent them. In whole continents, countless people experience hunger, infant mortality, retarded mental development, and depressing despondency. He insisted that no one can remain indifferent to the lot of those still buried in wretchedness, the victims of insecurity and the slaves of ignorance. “People need to grasp their serious problem in all its dimensions.” (Paul VI, 1967).

The pope made sure we understand that the solution is not merely economic, but human development, and a major theme of his encyclical was the fully human, the truly human. He spoke of the construction of a more human world, of being on the road towards a greater humanity. The Holy Father urged newly independent nations seek to assure their citizens a full human enhancement; technology alone cannot render the world a more humane place in which to live; people are truly human only when they are the authors of their own advancement; better-off nations should work to bring about a world that is more humane towards everyone; the goal is not just to eliminate hunger or reduce poverty: the goal is to build a world in which everyone can live a fully human life, said the Pope.

The development of which Paul VI spoke about demanded the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity, and the encyclical referred to the formation of a world which is better organised toward a universal solidarity and the desire to build a civilisation founded on world solidarity. The reality of human solidarity means that we have obligations towards everyone, even those who will come after us, and better-off nations have obligations that reflect the duty of human solidarity. The sign of human solidarity is peace, said the Pope.

In the course of presenting his thoughts on development, solidarity, and peace, Pope Paul VI touched on several economic issues which impact on the pursuit of development such as:

Trade: the Pope requested the industrialised nations that have an advantage, in exporting in the most part manufactured goods at steadily rising prices, while the under-developed countries export mostly food and raw materials which are under-priced and subject to wild fluctuations. Social justice obligates the better-off nations to rectify inequitable trade relations. The rule of free trade, taken by itself, is no longer able to govern international relations because economic conditions differ too much from country to country; freedom of trade is fair only if it is subject to the demands of social justice, said the Holy Father. Without abolishing the international

competitive market, it should be kept within the limits which make it just and moral, and therefore human.

Property: The desire for necessities is legitimate, but acquiring property can lead to greed, which is the most evident form of moral underdevelopment. Everyone has the right to obtain what is necessary, and all other rights are subordinate to this right, including the rights of property and free trade. In other words, the Pope wanted to say that, private property is not an absolute and unconditional right, and one is not justified in keeping for oneself what one does not need, when others lack necessities. Sometimes the common good may even demand the expropriation of landed estates. Every human being has the right to land.

Work: Work is willed and blessed by God, but it can be given exaggerated significance. Everyone who works is a creator, and work with others unites people as brothers and sisters. Work is human only if it remains intelligent and free, and sometimes it produces undesirable effects in people.

Unions: All social action involves an ideology. Many professional organisations and trade unions are acceptable, but only those whose ideology is not materialistic and atheistic.

Immigrants, migrant workers: Human solidarity and Christian charity oblige us to welcome immigrants, and this same welcome should be extended to migrant workers.

Family: Rigid family frameworks are gradually relaxing their hold on the people in developing nations, but it is important that the natural family remains as willed by God: monogamous and stable. Population increases can create problems, but parents should be free to decide on number of children they will have, following their consciences and enlightened by God's law authentically interpreted, the pope said.

In the end, the pope told everyone that the world situation demanded action based on a clear vision of all economic, social, cultural, and spiritual aspects. “The goal is not just to eliminate hunger or reduce poverty: the goal is to build a world in which everyone can live a fully human life, in which freedom is not an empty word and the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich person.” (Paul VI, 1967).

In this encyclical letter, Pope Paul VI was addressing the social question and social conflicts. He was disturbed by the capitalist system which abuses human beings as profit has become a key motive for economic progress. The Catholic Bishops in the Congo protested against this abuse of human dignity where even children were exploited in mines under the watchful eye of civil authorities. The sacredness of life is at the core of Christianity as teaching.

2.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I summarised, engaged and discussed some selected documents of the Magisterium (Catholic Church Documents written by the hierarchy) of the Catholic Church regarding the participation of Catholics in politics.

In view of these documents issued by the Catholic Church, I come to the conclusion that, the confidence that the people of the Congo place in the Catholic Church in particular and the Christian Church in general is of great importance, as it demonstrates how much they trust the Church with their lives, especially when the State which is supposed to protect them has failed and turned out to be the vulture. The commitment of the Catholic Church in the Congo in politics derives from the mission of the universal Church of Rome.

CHAPTER 3

3. The Catholic Church as mediator and instigator

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I shall discuss how and why the Catholic Church in the DRC was one of the strongest voices calling for the 2018 DRC general elections not to be postponed (again). These elections were supposed to have been held in December 2016 and were postponed to December 2018. I shall further argue that as an accredited election observer, the Catholic Church played a crucial role in ensuring that the elections were as free and fair as possible. While the Catholic Church may not be credited with being the sole mover for the elections to be held in 2018, it played a big role. In this chapter, we shall also be able to indicate how the Catholic Church in the DRC had a prophetic intervention in the recent politics of the DRC.

Furthermore, I will analyse the role of the Catholic Church in the DRC in the promotion of democracy in the country over a five-year period - 2015 and 2019. This period was one in which the Catholic Church took action after action, and made statement after statement, leading marches, calling for prayers, preaching many sermons against the State. That period falls within the second and last term of President Joseph Kabila in office. By making reference to, or by making use of the many marches of the Catholic Church, the many sermons preached by different bishops, especially Cardinal Monsengwo Pasinya, the then Metropolitan Archbishop of Kinshasa, the countless letters which the bishops wrote to the government, etc. I will demonstrate the prophetic role of the Catholic Church in the democratisation of the DRC, as it empowered and backed up the people in their quest for liberation, justice and peace.

3.2. Congolese Catholic Bishops' Document: "The Country is in very bad shape Stand up Congolese People"

3.2.1. Relevance of the Document

This was the message launched by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Congo (CENCO), gathered in their "54th Ordinary Plenary Assembly in Kinshasa, from June 19 to 23, 2017"⁷

The relevance of this document to this study is that the Catholic bishops of Congo designated evil by its name: The continuing deterioration of the economic, security and humanitarian situation, as well as the country's political impasse. This was the evil of the time, and they invited the people to react because the miserable situation in which Congolese people lived was a consequence of the persistent socio-political crisis, mainly due to the non-organisation of elections by those then in power in accordance with the Constitution of the country. We see that the Kairos Document influences this document in its section of 'towards a prophetic theology'. Whereby the first task of the Catholic bishops in the DRC was to detail the social analysis of the time, giving people hope and calling them to action.

3.2.2. Document Review

In their message addressed to the Catholic community and to the people of goodwill, Congolese Catholic Bishops were concerned about the repeated deterioration of the country's economy, security and the social life of the people. From a socio-economic point of view, the Catholic Bishops' Conference in the DRC noted that the economic health of the country was critical and worsening day by day. They denounced corruption, tax evasion and the misappropriation of

⁷ <http://cenco.cd/pays-va-tres-mal-debout-congolais-message-de-54-eme-assemblee-pleniere-ordinaire-eveques-membres-de-cenco/> [Accessed 30 May 2019].

public funds by a group that abused power; with the consequence of the unprecedented deterioration of the social life of the majority of the Congolese.

The Catholic bishops also stressed that “the almost general insecurity across the national territory has a direct impact on the lives of people.”⁸ They recalled the heavy humanitarian and material toll of the clashes in the Kasai regions, tribal clashes politically fomented which led to violent conflict... that caused more than 3,300 deaths and, at its peak, up to 1.4 million internally displaced persons.”⁹

Catholic Bishops also feared the massive, permanent and uncontrolled presence of several armed groups on the national territory, causing desolation and concern. In addition, there are other factors such as the kidnapping and murder of children, and robberies that became recurrent.

The Catholic bishops criticised the lack of justice, the restriction of the right to freedom of expression and the ban on peaceful demonstrations, which went as far as the excessive use of force; as well as the arbitrary arrests of human rights defenders, political and social actors and all those whose voices differed from those in power.

In addition, the bishops noted a hardening of power as well as the absence of state authority and public debate on crucial issues. According to the Catholic bishops, the origin of the miserable situation in which the Congolese people live today is a consequence of the persistent socio-political crisis due mainly to the non-organisation of the elections in accordance with the Constitution of the country. Thus, they pleaded for the full application of the global and inclusive New Year's Eve Agreement, mediated by the Catholic Church and signed by Joseph Kabila's side in power and the Opposition; (this agreement is described in the previous section)

⁸ <http://cenco.cd/pays-va-tres-mal-debout-congolais-message-de-54-eme-assemblee-pleniere-ordinaire-eveques-membres-de-cenco/> [Accessed 30 May 2019].

⁹ https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/Kasai_conflict_assessment.pdf [Accessed 30 May 2019].

which contained possible solutions toward the peaceful end of this crisis. But they regretted that a lack of political will and a disregard for the suffering of the people helped to empty this Agreement of its content. They urged all the parties to the Agreement to fully assume their responsibilities in good faith and out of love for the country. Such is the mission of the Church, as Katongole puts it: “The Church’s unique calling and mission at the intersection of social brokenness and repair is that the Church’s life and work at this intersection are not grounded in the conviction that she has something to bring, something to give to those who are suffering, she participates in the mystery of God’s own suffering, death and resurrection.” (Katongole, 2017:264).

The bishops also invited the Congolese to get involved in the smooth running of their country, without giving in to fear or fatalism, so as not to jeopardise their future. They also encouraged the pursuit of civic and electoral education; as well as an active and peaceful engagement in eradicating the causes of suffering.

The Catholic Bishops called on the population to enrol massively for the elections to be held before the end of the year 2017, in accordance with the New Year’s Eve Agreement. They also invited the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) to properly prepare for the organisation of these elections.

In conclusion, the Congolese Catholic bishops urgently called for moments of intense prayer for the country, accompanied by solidarity and fraternal proximity to those Congolese living in conflict zones. The message of Catholic Bishops in the DRC was a message of hope for the people, a message which illuminates the faces of the Congolese people with hope and courage. This is how, in the words of Katongole, “the African Church provides a living witness of what hope looks like in the context of violence and war.” (Katongole, 2017:264-265).

3.3. Congolese Catholic Bishops' Document: "The Congolese People cry out their Suffering: Let us quickly go to the Elections"

3.3.1. Relevance of the Document

The relevance of this document to this study is that this second message of the Catholic bishops of Congo demonstrated the prophetic leadership a Church should take in times of political crisis. The non-organisation of elections at the end of Joseph Kabila's term of office showed a political leadership problem of such a magnitude that Catholic bishops could not fold their hands and hope that politicians alone would somehow find the answer. The Kairos Document influences this document of the Congolese Catholic bishops as it was a prophetic response to a situation of oppression as expressed in section 4 of the Kairos Document. Congolese were no longer prepared to be humiliated, crushed, oppressed and exploited. They were determined, as says the Kairos Document, to change the system radically through a transparent, free and fair election so that the system could no longer benefit Joseph Kabila and his entourage alone.

3.3.2 Document Review

In their statement at the end of their general assembly held from November 22 to 24, 2017, in Kinshasa, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the DRC (CENCO) asked Joseph Kabila to declare publicly that he would not be a candidate in the next presidential election. The Catholic bishops launched this appeal on Monday, November 27, 2017, through a press release entitled "The Congolese people cry out their suffering, let's go quickly to the elections."

They wrote, “To you, Excellency the President of the Republic, we urge you to reassure the public, by public declaration, that you will not be a candidate for your own succession. We are convinced that this would contribute to the appeasement of political tensions.”¹⁰

The bishops called on Joseph Kabila to get involved fully in the implementation of the political relaxation measures prescribed in the agreement of December 31, 2016, an agreement I described in the section above, when The Catholic bishops of the DRC were called by the Kabila government to mediate between them and the Opposition. There was a consensus agreement to postpone the elections to the end of the year 2017, since elections did not take place at the end of 2016 as stipulated by the Constitution of the country. President Joseph Kabila called on Catholic Bishops to mediate. As the country approached December 19, 2016, the deadline for Joseph Kabila’s mandate, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference (CENCO) accepted the mission of mediation entrusted to them to bring together the political class and find a way out together. “Begun on December 8, this final concertation ended up, laboriously, in the evening of New Year’s Eve with the signing of the comprehensive and inclusive political agreement at the headquarters of Congolese Catholic Bishops.” (Ndaywel, 2019: 169).

The bishops also asked the Congolese people to remain vigilant and to demonstrate their disapproval peacefully by rejecting any use of violence in accordance with the Constitution. In addition, the Congolese episcopate recommended to the government in particular to protect marchers as per the Constitution of the country.

The Catholic bishops also urged parliamentarians to reject, in the spirit of the New Year's Eve agreement which they said remained the only consensual roadmap to get the country out of the

¹⁰ <http://www.diacenco.com/le-peuple-congolais-crie-sa-souffrance-cf-exode-37-allons-vite-aux-elections/> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

political crisis, any initiative to review and change the Constitution during the pre-electoral and electoral period.

The Catholic bishops also painted a negative picture of the socio-political situation in the country, in particular the suffering of the population, which exceeded the tolerable threshold.

They said:

“Five months after our message entitled ‘The Country is going very badly. Stand up, Congolese!’ in which we mentioned the violation of the Comprehensive and Inclusive Political Agreement of the Inter-diocesan Centre of Kinshasa and its consequences, we note that there is no significant progress. The political imbroglio and the suffering of the population which results from it, exceeds the threshold of tolerance. We are deeply disappointed to find ourselves in the same context of tensions as at the end of 2016. The People will not tolerate this being repeated in 2018.”¹¹

To put an end to this confusion, the Catholic bishops recommended that the Congolese people become aware of the electoral agenda and to get involved as the primary sovereign to obtain change. They also urged members of the government to publish, preferably before the end of 2017, the plan for the disbursement of funds intended for the independent electoral commission (CENI) in full transparency, as this was one of the reasons why Joseph Kabila’s government did not organise elections at the end of the year 2016.

In conclusion, the Catholic bishops of the DRC called on the international community to facilitate the holding of the elections in 2018 through financial and logistical support, and they

¹¹ <http://www.diacenco.com/le-peuple-congolais-crie-sa-souffrance-cf-exode-37-allons-vite-aux-elections/> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

reminded all political actors and the entire Congolese people that the New Year's Eve Agreement was not dead because it was, at that time, the only consensual road map.

3.4. Recent Participation of the Catholic Church in the DRC Politics

In 2015, a year before the missed elections of 2016, the Catholic Church started fighting for political change as the abuse of human rights and non-social development became symbols of Joseph Kabila's regime and his attempt to amend the country's Constitution in order to stay in power. The bishops of the Catholic Church in the DRC encouraged the people to stand up against Joseph Kabila in 2015, through peaceful demonstrations. The most significant one took place on January 19, 2015, in the Capital city of Kinshasa. There was massive participation of people in different major cities across the country. The objectives of the protest were proposed changes to the electoral law brought in Parliament by MPs of Kabila's party and coalition "that many Congolese believed would permit President Joseph Kabila to stay in office beyond his mandated two-term limit."¹²

A memorandum of demands was that electoral law should not be amended. Protestors were also demanding free and fair elections by the end of Joseph Kabila's second and last term of office. The march was led by the Catholic Church's lay co-ordination committee and students from the University of Kinshasa and students from other institutions of higher learning in Kinshasa and other major cities in the country: "Demonstrations were held in cities across the country, including Kinshasa, Bukavu, Bunia, Goma, Lubumbashi, Mbandaka, and Uvira." (Ndaywel, 2019:165). The government responded with violence. Several protesters died: According to Ndaywel, "there were 12 according to the government, 42 according to the

¹² <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/01/24/dr-congo-deadly-crackdown-protests> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

International Federation for Human Rights. The fact was that, shortly after, on March 19, 2015, 421 bodies were buried furtively in a mass grave in the area of Maluku (a rural area outside Kinshasa).” (Ndaywel, 2019: 165). According to a chronology of key events in the DRC profile – timeline from the BBC website, “2015 January – Dozens killed in protests against proposed electoral law changes which the Opposition said were designed to allow President Kabila to remain in power.”¹³ Many more were injured: “Human Rights Watch documented 13 cases in Kinshasa in which the security forces shot and wounded demonstrators and bystanders. Republican Guards soldiers shot a man in the foot when they saw him filming them from a balcony as they attempted to disperse a demonstration.”¹⁴ and many again were imprisoned; according to Human Right Watch (2015), “In Goma, the authorities arrested at least 26 people, including several prominent Opposition leaders, during the demonstrations on January 19. Twelve were provisionally released on January 21, and three were transferred to a children’s court... in Kinshasa, police officers confronted Christopher Ngoyi, a Human Rights activist who had been involved in mobilising people to participate in the demonstrations... another activist, Cyrille Dowe, was arrested. He was accused of threatening State security because he had photographed security forces during demonstrations...” Aglionby John of The Financial Times, London (2018) said, “Twelve marchers were killed, dozens injured and scores arrested.”

3.4.1. The Catholic Church in the Congo, An influential Power House

(Oyatambwe, 1997:20) stated that the Catholic Church in Congo is historically the most powerful religious actor whose importance is reflected by its material resources, the size of its

¹³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13286306> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

¹⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/01/24/dr-congo-deadly-crackdown-protests> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

infrastructures and the number of its followers. The Catholic Church in Congo took on Joseph Kabila over his refusal to step down when the motion of electoral law changes was introduced in Parliament and “adopted in January 17, 2015. This law was to be adopted in the Senate House before the president could promulgate it into law.” (Ndaywel, 2019: 165). The Catholic Church used its influence to mobilise people and organise marches. Opposition Members of Parliament supported the Catholic Church as it was the only institution that Joseph Kabila government was afraid of. This is how the Catholic Church demonstrated its power in promoting democracy and the rule of law. The civic education of the people and the organisation of marches made Joseph Kabila refrain from changing the electoral law. The Catholic Church really hardened its rhetoric against President Joseph Kabila. This led Mr Lambert Mende, Mr Kabila’s spokesperson, to accuse the Church of “trying to spread chaos”, adding that the Kabila government was ready to fight back whoever opposed them. Father Vincent Tshomba, a Catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Kinshasa, (at the time, I am writing this research, Fr Tshomba has been appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Kinshasa by the Holy Father, Pope Francis) replied to the spokesperson of Kabila saying, “We are acting because we are not seeing the political will that is necessary to guarantee elections. There are lots of promises but no guarantee there will be an election. We have to keep up the pressure.”¹⁵

(Willame, 1997:5) on the same line as Oyatambwe says, “the magnitude of its (the Catholic Church’s) economic and social role throughout the country is demonstrated by the fact that, even after the collapse of State structures and institutions, the Church remained one of the main pillars of the informal economy, as well as the primary provider of health care and education”. In the absence of the State in the lives of its citizens, the Catholic Church in Congo was present in society to provide social services in the education and health sectors.

¹⁵ www.ft.com march 14, 2018 (copyright The Financial Times Limited Mar 14, 2018) [Accessed 26 July 2020].

Many of the country's elites were educated in Catholic schools and universities run by missionary sisters or brothers or fathers. In the health sector, the Catholic Church efforts to reinforce the poor health services are palpable in improving health services.

3.4.2. Catholic Community Radio and Television stations in the Congo

The Catholic Church in the Congo has established community radio and television stations. These radio and television stations serve as tools of communications to educate, and inform the population of their rights and obligations vis-à-vis the State. It also helps the people to learn about their faith and the many other social, political and economic issues people need to know. This is how Catholic radio and television stations are broadcast throughout the DRC: “Radio Télévision Amani. This Roman Catholic radio station broadcasts from Kisangani; Radio Télévision Amani is owned by the Diocese of Kisangani. It also operates a local television station in Kisangani called Télévision Amani. Radio Boboto and Radio Nepoko are in the Archdiocese of Kisangani. Radio Television Elikya is owned by the Catholic Archdiocese of Kinshasa; Radio Kingandu is owned by Claretian missionary fathers and Radio Tomisa owned by the Catholic Diocese of Kikwit; Radio Tele du Diocese d’Idiofa and RTV Mama is owned by the Catholic Diocese of Idiofa; Radio Chretienne Nkembo is owned by the Catholic Diocese of Inongo; Radio Liberte owned by the Catholic Diocese of Popokabaka; all these radios and television stations broadcast from Bandundu province; Radio Mwindu is owned by the Catholic Archdiocese of Mbandaka and Radio Ledisa; all in the province of Equateur. Radio Maria is owned by the Archdiocese of Bukavu; Radio Moto Oicha is owned by the Catholic Diocese of Beni-Butembo, as is Radio Maria Nyota ya Asubui; Radio Malaika is owned by the Catholic diocese of Kolwezi; Radio Zenith is owned by the Catholic Archdiocese of Lubumbashi; Radio Fraternité and Radio Chrétienne de la Foi are owned by the Catholic Diocese of Mbuji Mayi;

Radio Tele Tutante is owned by the Catholic Diocese of Mweneditu; Radio Diku Dietu is owned by the Catholic diocese of Kananga.” (Democratic Republic of Congo Media and Telecoms Landscape Guide, December 2012.)¹⁶

All these radio and television stations are owned by the Catholic Church in Congo throughout the country. They serve to educate people of their rights and many other religious, social and political programmes.

Bak continues saying, in DRC “various churches have an important role in society... the Catholic Church has organised some of the most potent civil resistance against Kabila’s network, in spite of violent crackdowns. The Church has been particularly forceful in its rejection of the official results of the 2018 elections” (Bak 2019:15). Some examples of the potent civil resistance that Bak speaks about are the marches, protests and demonstrations organised and led by the Catholic Church since 2015 to force Joseph Kabila to respect the constitution. In December 2016, the final presidential term of Joseph Kabila was coming to its end. There were concerns over the fact that Joseph Kabila would not step down from power. The Congolese Bishops’ Conference was asked by Kabila’s government to mediate and negotiate the process of an agreement between the opposition and Kabila’s camp. The agreement was finally concluded on December 31, 2016. The agreement stated that new elections would be held in 2017. That Joseph Kabila would step down and not seek another term or amend the Constitution in order to re-present himself again in the upcoming elections. This agreement was never fulfilled as Joseph Kabila chose not to step down, or organise elections in 2017, instead they were postponed to December 2018 (Aljazeera TV www.aljazeera.com, 2017). The Catholic Church pushed for demonstrations in the light of the failed agreement as mentioned above, and the bishops withdrew their mediation as a sign of

¹⁶ <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/778296d0-a9ea-4938-a047-a58b22c38d20/attachedFile> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

protest and disappointment. “This did not mean that they withdrew their participation or engagement in the country’s politics and future. The bishops still urged the people to stand up for their rights and the hope for a democratic future.” (www.hrw.org, 2019). These are some few examples of when, where, what, and how the Catholic Church organised some potent civil resistance against Joseph Kabila’s network, in spite of violent crackdowns.

The Catholic Church of Democratic Republic of the Congo through its Bishops’ Conference, together with the people, had been waiting and fighting for a long time for political change since 2015. Only “in December 2018, after two years of delay, the government of the DRC finally... held elections” (Bak, 2019:2). This has been Joseph Kabila’s tactic - to delay elections in the way it happened with the first elections held in 2005.

Between December 2017 and February 2018, the Catholic Church organised massive gatherings to demand a democratic vote to change leadership. There was violence that led to deaths, places of worship were attacked by Kabila’s partisans, and Catholic Church leaders were publicly chastised.

This research is inspired naturally by the reports and articles on the recent events in the DRC. These reports and articles are mainly news reports and news articles written by members of the Catholic Church and news reporters.

Kabila’s tactics of election postponement and overstay in power are results of the misuse and abuse of power in order to exploit the people and rob the country of its intellectual and natural resources. The Catholic Church in Congo has been vocal in its approach to State power during Kabila’s regime and even before that: “Religion has figured prominently in Congo’s politics since colonial times. About eighty per cent of Congolese people are Christian, predominantly Roman Catholic” (Putzel et al, 2008:41).

The mission and/or manifesto of Jesus on earth as liberator is expressed in the Gospel of Luke: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). This was the mission Jesus came to accomplish on earth, his manifesto, a legacy he left to his followers and to the Christian Church.

The emphasis in this study is to demonstrate how religion should react to a political regime that oppresses its people. The (prophetic) role played by the Catholic Church in the DRC to side with the oppressed population will be analysed in depth in the following chapters of this study. According to the (Kairos Document 1985), Prophetic Theology, is a call to a particular crisis which requires systemic social analysis. Prophetic Theology also recognises the systemic liberatory trajectory in the Bible; it recognises a systemic tyranny in the State; it proclaims the biblical message of systemic change and hope. Prophetic Theology calls for action, including taking sides with the oppressed, participating in the struggle for a just society. It collaborates with civil society around special campaigns and becomes involved in civil disobedience. Prophetic Theology proclaims the moral duty of Christians to resist oppression and to struggle for liberation and justice. This definition of the Prophetic Theology according to the Kairos Document was embodied by the Catholic Church in the DRC where as a result a lay movement was formed, the Catholic Lay Coordination Committee (CLC), backed by Catholic priests and bishops in the DRC. This movement or committee was formed to organise protests in order to press President Joseph Kabila’s government to organise elections as stipulated per the country’s Constitution. From December 2017 to February 2018, “it seems to me that the most lasting and useful result has been achieved, thanks to civic education given in various parishes in the country, when thousands of young Congolese were able to make the supreme sacrifice to defend their human dignity and the common good of their Country” (Ndaywel, 2019:15).

The brief background to the involvement of the Catholic Church in promoting democracy and the rule of law was discussed in the organisation and the leading of marches to push Joseph Kabila to renounce to his idea of electoral law changes. All this civil resistance, such as the marches, protests and demonstrations organised and led by the Catholic Church since 2015 to force Joseph Kabila to respect the Constitution, were broadcast on Catholic radio and television stations countrywide to mobilise the people. If the Catholic Church in the DRC did not own their media houses, it would have been difficult for the Church to reach the millions of Congolese in a country which has the size of a subcontinent.

3.5. Actions, Actors and Meetings of the Catholic Church Interventions from 2015 to 2019

The Catholic Church starting to issue documents and planning actions from 2015 to 2019, was all started by the succession debate in Parliament, the amendment of the Constitution in order to secure President Kabila's third term or mandate as president of the country. Since the independence of the DRC, no succession had been carried out in a peaceful manner. The first Congo President after independence, "Joseph Kasa-Vubu, yet at the end of his mandate, only left through a power coup; Mobutu who ousted Kasa-Vubu, only left the presidential chair by a Laurent Desire Kabila coup, helped by his allies. Laurent Desire Kabila who replaced him was assassinated before his son, Joseph Kabila, succeeded him." (Ndaywel, 2019:62).

It was to put an end to all these excesses and promote democratic values, that the Catholic Church started to act, because the Constitution of February 18, 2006, made the provision of being very precise on the question of terms of office, says (Ndaywel, 2019:163). Article 10 of the Constitution of the DRC declares: "The President of the Republic is elected by direct

universal suffrage for a mandate of five years renewable only once. Any reform in this area is prohibited.” (Constitution of the DRC 2006 – translated from French).

Article 64 of the same Constitution specifies that, “Every Congolese has the duty to defeat any individual or group of individuals who takes power by force or who exercises it in violation of the provisions of this Constitution.” (Constitution of the DRC 2006 – translated from French).

Despite this legal arsenal, says Ndaywel, “the octopus of the dictatorship, contrary to what one might have believed, could still break into the glasshouse of democracy through one of its tentacles.”(Ndaywel 2019: 163).

It is with this background that I shall present in this section the documents, actions and actors of the Catholic Church which intervened.

3.5.1. January 19, 2015 March

The majority of the Catholic population recognised the logic of change, and they mandated the organisation of the elections as prescribed by the constitution. On January 19, 2015, the Catholic Church organised and led the first march to protest against the change of electoral law as I have already described it in the section above. A significant number of people, mostly youth, responded to the call of the Catholic Church to demonstrate in various cities in the country. Violence broke out in the capital Kinshasa. The marchers were chanting “*Kabila, Yebela*” in Lingala, one of the four national languages spoken in Kinshasa, which means, “Kabila, be on your guard.” (Ndaywel, 2019: 165). Following this action, “a new initiative saw the light... a group of Congolese compatriots gathered in Paris around André Mbata Batukumesu Mangu, lecturer of Public Law at the University of Kinshasa and the University of South Africa, well known for his patriotic commitment.” (Ndaywel, 2019: 166). This group of Congolese compatriots formed a citizens’ movement to defend democracy and Human Rights in the DRC.

The Paris meeting of the Congolese citizens which was initiated by the first action of citizens in Kinshasa in January 2015, led to a form of patriotic engagement which was a response to the ceaseless calls of Catholic Bishops on the catastrophic situation of the country. These calls from the Catholic bishops saw other Christian denominations join the protests. For example, “Eric Nsenda, spokesman for the Church of Christ in the Congo, an umbrella group of 60 Protestant churches that used to support Mr Kabila, says the organisation now backs the “people”.”¹⁷

3.5.2. Youth Meeting

A Catholic youth, “Ben Kabamba, who recently returned to the Congo from exile in the United States, set up a youth association for a new society.” (Ndaywel, 2019:168). The association was committed to raising awareness among young people of the need for civic engagement. There were many other youth movements and associations throughout the country. Catholic youth saw that it was important for all youth movements to work together. They called for a meeting in Kinshasa of the leaders of all youth associations and movements to federate their energies; the meeting was held on March 14 and 15, 2015, within the walls of the Don Bosco Catholic Parish in the municipality of Masina. (Ndaywel 2019:168). “The immediate goal of the youth was to spark a mass uprising to remove Joseph Kabila from power if he refused to step down by December 20, 2016.”¹⁸

In this meeting, Congolese youth invited young people from other African countries, notably, from Senegal and Burkina Faso to learn from their experiences. At the end of the meeting, a new Congolese Youth Movement was born by the name of *Filimbi*, in Kiswahili. The name

¹⁷ <https://www.ft.com/content/a615cba4-22c2-11e8-ae48-60d3531b7d11> [Accessed 15 July 2020].

¹⁸ <https://blog.amnestyusa.org/africa/a-social-movement-to-be-reckoned-with-in-africa/> or <https://africasacountry.com/2018/09/kinshasa-headache> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

Filimbi means ‘whistle’, the Congolese popular instrument for signalling a threat, for launching an alert, for mobilising in the face of danger. It is also sport’s instrument for sanctioning a fault and signalling the end of a game.

The newly formed Catholic youth movement experienced its first setbacks at the closing of the workshop on March 15, 2015. “Some 40 participants were arrested on the grounds of preparing for “terrorist activities”. Some were released the same day or in the days that followed.” (Ndaywel, 2019: 168). The founders of the movement remained in prison until August 29, 2016, after an intense national and international mobilisation. Ndaywel argued that here, “the fight for democracy started its cruising speed. It was going to lead to exile, to the arbitrary imprisonment and martyrdom of several of these activists.” (Ndaywel, 2019: 168).

From this pioneer youth movement, several others were born. All these youth movements were to become direct and effective partners of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Congo and its Lay Co-ordination Committee (CLC).

Upon their release from prison where they were detained after this meeting, the youth leaders made this media statement:

“We are not plotters or terrorists, we are a new generation of committed young Africans. We who hold the destiny of the continent in our hands must not be deprived of our freedom. We are a new civic movement that has just emerged in Africa. We will not be intimidated by long detentions, harassment and repression. We are *Filimbi*. We are *Lucha*. We are *Balai Citoyen*. We are *Y’en a Marre*. We use our voices and whistles rather than weapons to advance democracy. We put good governance, responsible government and respect for basic freedoms at the top of our list of demands. In the

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and all over Africa, we are proud to be part of the civic awakening of young Africans.”¹⁹

In an interview with a journalist of ‘The Guardian’ newspaper, Ben Kabamba stated that, “The movement is much larger than us, the entire population is part of this movement that absolutely wants to see change in Congo,”²⁰

Filimbi is a youth movement which was born after this Catholic Youth Meeting. The word *Filimbi* means whistle. *Lucha* is another youth movement born later in DRC, and it means, *Lutte pour le changement* (struggle for change). *Balai Citoyen* is a youth civic movement from Burkina Faso, which means, Citizen’s broom (used to sweep dictatorial regimes) and *Y’en a marre* is a youth civic movement from Senegal which means “we are fed up”.

3.5.3. March organised by the lay Catholic Committee

What was the Lay Catholic Committee of Co-ordination, and who were the members? The Lay Catholic Committee of Co-ordination was a group of Catholic men and women of the Archdiocese of Kinshasa, who were assigned with the mission or the project to ensure the implementation of the pastoral directives of the Archdiocese of Kinshasa, to raise awareness among the population to play its role in the socio-political field, to conscientise the population to play its role as the primary custodian of power, and to initiate and co-ordinate actions which contribute to this end.

¹⁹ <https://blog.amnestyusa.org/africa/a-social-movement-to-be-reckoned-with-in-africa/> 26 July 2020].

²⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/13/telema-congolese-youth-standing-up-to-kabila-government> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

The committee received the blessing and recognition of Cardinal Monsengwo, Archbishop of Kinshasa, on November 15, 2017, and it was composed of the following people: Isidore Ndaywel, Thierry Nlandu, Justin Okana, Leonnie Kandolo, Julien Lukengu, Gertrude Ekombe, Franklin Mbokolo, and Jonas Tshiombela.

The first march took place on December 31, 2017. Marchers were demanding the release of all political prisoners; the end of the exile of political opponents threatened with arrest upon returning to the country; the end of duplication of political parties; the opening of media houses unjustly closed and the fair use of national media, RTNC (Congolese National Radio and Television); and the restructuring of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI). “These were the objectives of the organisers of the marches, the Catholic Lay Committee (CLC) as confirmed and specified by the local ordinary (Cardinal Monsengwo) in his certificate of canonical recognition of the organising committee.” (Ndayewel, 2019:179).

People gathered in their respective parishes before the march to attend the celebration of the Mass first then afterwards going into the streets. In the parish where Ndaywel attended the Mass, “the celebrant, Father Olivier of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, ended his Mass by saying: “I see that you are afraid!” - which relaxed the audience before the start of the march. After 15 minutes, we saw police officers appear. The priest asked us to kneel down and continue to pray the rosary, without complying with verbal threats from the police. After about 30 minutes, it was the parish priest himself who ordered the column of demonstrators to return to the parish yard.” (Ndaywel, 2019:180). In some other parishes in Kinshasa, there was news of death, wounded and cases of arrests. “By using violent means directly against the Catholic Church, Mr Kabila seems confident enough of his ability to cope with the consequences of so openly opposing the powerful institution. His recent attempt to discredit the Church by accusing Cardinal Monsengwo of being a Belgian agent mandated to bring down

his regime further supports this. The regime has now sent a signal that it will keep meeting any future opposition movement (in any shape or form) with violence to contain the risk of toppling of a government that is not showing signs of leaving peacefully any time soon. The open discontent of the Catholic Church will increase pressure on the Kabila administration.”²¹

Marchers were chanting songs of liberation of the Congo, since they wanted credible elections, an essential condition for ending the crisis of legitimacy.

3.5.4. January 21, 2018 March

The second peaceful march took place on January 21, 2018. The march was to continue with the same objectives in order to achieve peaceful elections. The march was launched under the heading of “Together, let us march to take control of our destiny.” (Ndaywel 2019: 182).

During the second march, there were thousands, across the country to be mobilised, says Ndaywel, beyond their political label, beyond their religious denominations and the diversity of citizens’ organisations. They all went out to say “STOP!” to the suffering of the Congolese people. “As the only response to our demands, the government deliberately chose to suppress this march in barbarism. Far from intimidating us, the government strengthened our determination and our will to enjoy our constitutional right to publicly demonstrate.” (Ndaywel, 2019:182).

The Catholic Lay Committee decided to go all the way until the prerequisites for genuinely credible elections had been met. They decided not to stop the marches until the rights of

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[http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=906325874&Country=Congo%20\(Democratic%20Republic\)&t_9](http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=906325874&Country=Congo%20(Democratic%20Republic)&t_9) [26 July 2020].

Congolese were respected and their dignity restored. “This time, the march aroused greater enthusiasm, mobilising large crowds, including Muslims and some Kimbanguist groups. The instructions for non-violence were rigorously followed.” (Ndaywel, 2019:182). Despite all that, police repression was even more brutal than the previous time. “Priests were molested, Christians brutalised, including in other cities of the country. Tear gas bombs were dropped even in churches; in Binza/Delveaux where some Christians took refuge in a maternity hospital, they were followed with gas causing the intoxication of some new-borns.” (Ndaywel, 2019:183).

Ndaywel calls this Sunday a black Sunday, which brought its share of the wounded and the dead among them: “Jackson Kabadiatshi Malango, Benjamin Mwindilayi, Kikunda, Matthieu Mfuamba, Hussein Ngadu Kisene and many unidentified victims... the most emblematic victim was Therese Kapangala... she was the daughter of a police officer who, at the time, was on duty on another site.” (Ndaywel, 2019:183).

3.5.5. February 25, 2018 March

Ndaywel says that it became obvious that the actions had to continue after two successful marches. In the organising committee, they were determined to proceed, on the strength of the support of public opinion, which expected the third peaceful march to take place on February 16, the anniversary of the very first initiative of its kind in 1992 against President Mobutu. Ndaywel continues saying that they could not organise the march on that day because their marches always corresponded to a Sunday, as they always started with the celebration of the Eucharist.

This third march had the theme: “Enough is enough! Our people no longer believe in the political will of the current leaders to ensure a peaceful alternation of power.” (Ndaywel, 2019:184). The march took place on Sunday, February 25, 2018. Ndaywel argued that, “the many windows of opportunity offered to our current leaders, both by the national and the international communities, have been deliberately and systematically rejected, thus reaffirming their desire to remain in power without respecting any democratic procedure.” (Ndaywel, 2019:184).

So the people, through the organisation of marches by the Catholic Church, decided to block the road to a dictatorship. They only wanted the organisation of peaceful, transparent, free and fair elections through these demonstrations. The scenario was the same in this third march. Processions began after Sunday Masses from different parishes in Kinshasa and in other cities of the country such as: Boma, Matadi, Bandundu, Idiofa, Mbandaka, Kisangani, Bukavu, Lubumbashi, Mbuji-Mayi, Kananga, all with palm branches, crucifixes, rosaries, and hymns. Many demonstrators were killed throughout the country. In Kinshasa, says (Ndaywel, 2019:185), an activist by the name of Rossy Mukendi, was killed in the parish yard, with a bullet at close range. He was a charismatic leader of young human rights activists in the capital city. Ndaywel says, Rossy was targeted by the police because of his charisma and influence. Rossy became an emblematic figure in the fight for democracy. “Since his assassination, his quotes have not ceased to be reproduced in speeches and on advertising media, and various banners. The most common are: “I will die proud to have defended an ideal”, “We will colour the Congolese soil with our blood so that our children do not live as slaves in their own country.”, and the most popular, “The people always win.” ((Ndaywel, 2019:186-187).

The eulogy of Rossy Mukendi at a funeral Mass held at the Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Congo, concluded:

“Happy are you, Rossy, in the Lord, for having fulfilled the mission of your life to the end! Happy are you, Rossy, to now be counted among the martyrs of democracy in the Congo. Happy are you, Rossy, to remain at the forefront of this national combat, by serving as a model and guide for our young people... thank you for sharing your deep conviction: ‘The people always win’. Yes, we are certain, with God’s help, that the Congolese will win. He will achieve a resounding victory against lies, inequality, impunity, injustice, and so many other anti-values that cruelly delay the advent of peace in our country.” (Ndaywel, 2019:187).

During the march in which Rossy Mukendi was killed, it was believed, according to the BBC news online, 15 people were arrested, three of whom were members of the clergy.²²

3.6. A New Era: Joseph Kabila Government calls on Bishops to Mediate

As pressure continued to mount, President Joseph Kabila called for a national dialogue under the mediation of the African Union. The national dialogue started on September 1, 2016, but the opposition parties refused to attend. President Joseph Kabila called on Catholic Bishops to mediate. As the country approached December 19, 2016, the deadline for Joseph Kabila’s mandate, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference (CENCO) accepted the mission of mediation entrusted to them to bring together the political class and find a way out together. “Begun on December 8, this final concertation ended up, laboriously, on the evening of New Year’s Eve with the signing of the comprehensive and inclusive political agreement at the headquarter of Congolese Catholic Bishops.” (Ndaywel 2019: 169).

²² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43190515> [Accessed 30 July 2020].

“The role as mediator of last resort illustrates the clout of the Church in Congo – home to some 30 million faithful – where Catholic leaders have long gone beyond their pastoral duties to fill the void left by an absent state, providing healthcare and schooling, and promoting human rights and democracy. In October, Congo’s President Joseph Kabila appeared to have secured the backing of regional leaders for an African Union-mediated deal with some opposition leaders to remain in power until April 2018, a year and a half after his second and last term in office ends.”²³

But the application and the implementation of the agreement became impossible for lack of political will. Three months later, not much had been implemented. This led the Bishops’ Conference to resign from its task of mediation. “On March 27, 2017, it declared that it was unable to continue its mission indefinitely.” (Ndaywel, 2019:169). When Joseph Kabila started again to pursue his idea of changing the Constitution, Catholic Bishops raised the tone. They issued two vigorous documents, on June 23 and November 24, 2017, under the heading of: “The Country is in very bad shape. Stand up Congolese people” and “The Congolese People cry out their suffering: Let us quickly go to the elections.” (Ndaywel, 2019:171).

3.7. The role of the Catholic Church in the protection of the Constitution

Historically, the Catholic Church has always been involved in the political scene in the DRC. This is because the Catholic Church has proven to have moral integrity in the running of its institutions (www.aljazeera.com). For years, the Catholic Church in Congo had been involved

²³ <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-congo-catholics/careful-steps-for-catholic-church-tasked-with-pulling-congo-back-from-crisis-idUSKBN13W2K9> [Accessed 30 July 2020].

in raising public awareness and preparing for electoral deadlines. Catholic bishops in the DRC have always played the role of mediation between the regime and the Opposition, and this has left a memory of neutrality and impartiality. Both the political Opposition and those in power have on many occasions resorted to the offices of the Catholic Church for mediation. Such was the case “in December (2015), the Catholic bishops, united in Cenco (*Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo*), undertook a last step to broaden the support for the transition and eventually, on 31 December at 11:45pm, a new agreement was signed which stated that Kabila would not stand for a third mandate, or try to change the Constitution, and elections would be held before the end of 2017.” (Berwouts, 2017:164).

The political crisis created by President Joseph Kabila through not organising presidential elections on time prompted the Catholic Church in the Congo to organise protests, despite government intimidation, demanding elections to be held as prescribed by the Constitution of the country and as per the agreement facilitated by the Catholic Church and signed in December 31, 2015. By organising marches and demonstrations with the memoranda that the government should organise credible and transparent elections timeously as stipulated by the Constitution as I have explained it in chapter 1, section 1.4 of this research, the Catholic Church in DRC wanted to give voice to the popular demand for political reforms and the holding of peaceful, democratic and credible elections.

The organisation of the ongoing marches and protests in the country was led by the Catholic Church and co-ordinated by a group of lay people, called Co-ordination of Lay Committee (CLC). The Catholic Church shifted from being a mediator to a mobiliser: The Catholic Church was asked by Joseph Kabila to mediate between his side in office and the political opposition as I have stated it above. By fulfilling this role, the Catholic Church in the DRC played a role of a mediator. When the agreement was not implemented to the letter by Joseph Kabila, the

Catholic Bishops raised the tone and started mobilising people to protest. Here the Catholic Church turned from being a mediator to becoming a mobiliser. “On March 27, 2017, it (the Catholic Church) declared that it was unable to continue its mission (of mediation) indefinitely.” (Ndaywel, 2019:169). In accord with the (Kairos Document, 1985), the Catholic Church in Congo stopped practicing State Theology, which is the theology of an oppressive regime; State Theology claims obedience to the state, and insists on law and order; it invokes the name of God and misuses theological concepts and biblical texts.

The Catholic Church in the DRC also refrained from Church Theology, which is the theology of the institutional churches which emphasises reconciliation, but without justice and repentance, without taking sides. It is also concerned with justice, but merely the justice of reform, focusing on individual conversion and morality. Church theology condemns violence, but it does not condemn the systemic violence of oppression. It does not recognise the violence necessary for the struggle for liberation. (Kairos Document 1985).

The Catholic Church moved to being prophetic by indefinitely refusing to mediate as there was no political will on the side of Joseph Kabila to organise elections on time and not to re-present himself nor to change the Constitution as stated by Berwouts that “on 31 December at 11:45pm, a new agreement was signed which stated that Kabila would not stand for a third term, or try to change the Constitution, and elections would be held before the end of 2017.” (Berwouts, 2017:164).

This prophetic move from the Catholic Church in the Congo is, according to the Kairos Document (1985), a call to a particular crisis which requires systemic social analysis. Prophetic Theology also recognises the systemic liberatory trajectory in the Bible; it recognises a systemic tyranny in the State; it proclaims the biblical message of systemic change and hope. Prophetic Theology documents calls for action, including taking sides with the oppressed, participating in the struggle for a just society. It collaborates with civil society around special

campaigns and becomes involved in civil disobedience. Prophetic Theology proclaims the moral duty of Christians to resist oppression and to struggle for liberation and justice. Hence the Catholic Church in Congo felt the need to educate, empower and mobilise the people to demand reforms and elections, lest the people become drowned out like the political opposition that was weakened by the repressive Joseph Kabila's government. It was in the name of solidarity, which is one of the principles for a successful democracy (Harrington, 2012:12), that the Catholic Church in Congo took the initiative to side with the people. Pope Saint John Paul II in his encyclical letter, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (The Concern of the Church for the Social Order) described the principle of solidarity as "a firm and steadfast determination to commit oneself to the common good." (John Paul II, 1987: No. 38).

What the Catholic Church and the Lay Committee did in the DRC, was precisely to oppose any legislation that undermine human life and dignity as "the principle of solidarity underlines the necessity for citizens to be united, to share the needs and problems of others and to recognise and defend the dignity of each individual." (Harrington 2012: 14). It is in the same line of ideas that (Bryson, 2001:267-270) argues that the Church in Africa must reach deep into the African heart and feel the pain and anguish which is slowly eating away the precious lives of men and women who do not know where to turn for a solution or remedy. He continues to say that any form of Christianity which does not accompany people on their journey of life will not fully grasp their pain or problems. The Catholic Church in the Congo did not propose any legislation. They simply stood behind support for democracy in the form of people power to choose their own leaders and government. In December 2016, the final term of Joseph Kabila's presidency was coming to an end. But there were concerns over the fact that he would not step down. The Catholic Bishops in the DRC encouraged the people to stand up against the idea of the third term of office of Joseph Kabila by organising marches and demonstrations. The

Catholic Bishops in the Congo “urged the people to stand up for their rights and the hope for a democratic future.”²⁴ The Catholic Church and its Lay Committee did not participate in politics, but only supported the idea of forming a democratic society for the sake of a common good as they lamented Kabila’s political logic built on oppression and military forces. The Catholic Church in the DRC was seeking the common good of all as stated in the Second Vatican Council (1965) document, *Dignitatis Humanae* (The Dignity of the Human Person).²⁵ It was along this same line when Katongole explored Jeremiah’s prophetic ministry of lament. His “exploration has confirmed that Jeremiah’s pronouncements, critique, and lament point not only to much-needed reform and revision but to the birth of a new society founded on a new covenant... it is a decisive political intervention – a critique of present political logic and systems built on military force, problematic alliances, economics of greed, and an absence of truth” (Katongole, 2017:162).

This is in my view what was in the knowledge of the Catholic Church in the Congo when it decided to mobilise the people after the failed agreement signed in December 2016, between Joseph Kabila’s camp and the Opposition. The agreement stated that Kabila would step down and not seek the third term and would organise elections in 2017. The Catholic bishops, assembled in one body or organisation called CENCO (National Episcopal Conference of Catholic Bishops of the Congo), asked the Congolese people to defend the democratisation process in the DRC in order to have a new society founded on democratic values rather than give up the struggle. Katongole continues saying that, it was this kind of knowledge that was “also at work in the life and non-violent advocacy of Archbishop Christopher Munzihirwa of Bukavu in Eastern Congo. His oft-repeated saying – “there are things that can be seen only by

²⁴ www.hrw.org/blog-feed/democratic-republic-congo-crisis#blog-305775 [Accessed 26 July 2020].

²⁵ www.vatican.va [Accessed 30 July 2020].

eyes that have cried” – points to this prophetic logic that is both a critique of the politics of violence and the promise of a new, nonviolent social reality grounded in what Munzihirwa referred to as “the way of Christ.” (Katongole 2017:163). The prophetic role played by the slain Catholic Prelate in the advancement of democracy in the DRC was demonstrated in length in my literature review in chapter one of this study.

According to AFP (*Agence France-Presse*), a French global news agency, the Catholic Church across the country organised 149 peaceful marches from the end of 2017. Of all these marches, 66 were suppressed, 67 were dispersed with live bullets and tear gas, and 16 took place without incident.²⁶ These demonstrations took place countrywide under the leadership of the Catholic Church and its Lay Committee (CLC). In Kinshasa, as reported by the French global news agency, the police killed seven demonstrators during the first march of December 31, 2017. The repression and the killings did not stop the Catholic Church from organising other marches, which were even larger than the first. In the protests that followed after the first, the Catholic Church was joined by Muslims and Protestant denominations. In all these marches protestors were killed, parishes were vandalised, and clergymen and women were humiliated, beaten, kicked and insulted by Joseph Kabila’s police and army forces. The Catholic Church and its Lay Committee, however, vowed to continue organising and backing protests despite repressions and killings.

According to the Catholic News Agency (CAN) (2018), the role and the impact of the Catholic Church was to create a national momentum around holding the elections as stipulated by the Constitution and respecting the Constitution to the letter. This was a core demand by the Catholic Church, the civil society, the political Opposition and the entire Congolese population.²⁷ The pressure from the Congolese people to demand elections and respect of the

²⁶ www.afp.com [Accessed 30 July 2020].

²⁷ <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/as-kabila-steps-down-catholics-in-dr-congo-continue-push-for-democracy-83618>. [Accessed 3 May 2019]

Constitution became overwhelming; to the point that even the Congolese diaspora became involved in protests. Marches were organised in many cities of Europe, North America and in South Africa by Congolese citizens in diaspora in support of those in the DRC for a fair and free democratic process and respect of the constitution. By doing this, the Catholic Church in DRC echoed the Second Vatican Council documents, *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World). The Vatican Council Documents state that

“The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the men of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. Thus, the Church, at once a visible organisation and a spiritual community, travels the same journey as all humankind and shares the same earthly lot with the world: it is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God.” (Flannery, 1975: 794-891).

The same Vatican II Document continues to state that,

“It is fully consonant with human nature that there should be politico-judicial structures, providing all citizens without any distinction with ever improving and effective opportunities to play an active part in the establishment of the juridical foundations of the political community, in the administration of public affairs, in determining the aims and the terms of reference of public bodies, and in the election of political leaders. Every citizen ought to be mindful of his right and his duty to promote the common good by using his vote.” (Flannery, 1975:794-891).

The role of religion, I believe, is its prophetic mission is to fight evil, but the lack of cohesion among different Church denominations and religions weakens its prophetic voice and its impact. This illustrates the power of ecumenism in the role of religion in politics. If Churches join forces together in their prophetic mission to fight evil, lawmakers will not attempt to pass legislation that attack human life and undermine human dignity. Here in the following lines, I shall explain how the prophetic approach of the Catholic Church inspired a Protestant pastor to call on President Joseph Kabila to constitutionally hand over power to others once his constitutional mandate came to an end.

The Catholic Church in the DRC in all its structures (Bishops' Conference and the Lay Movement), had a clear and well-understood mission when asking the people to stand up for their democratic rights. This is an important factor for a Church which is called upon to stand up for the poor, the oppressed and the marginalised. To show its prophetic mission, the Catholic Church in the DRC had to actively help the oppressed Congolese people whose right to freely choose its leaders (vote-election) was violated.

3.8. Actors

3.8.1. DRC's Combative Cardinal: Laurent Monsengwo

The 80-year-old Catholic prelate has played a great and key role in shaping the future of the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is one of the religious leaders who has for decades spoken out against the violence that has swept the country, including civil wars that killed and continue to kill millions of Congolese. His outspokenness turned him into a rallying figure for protest against Joseph Kabila, whose regime was corrupt, incompetent and repressive.

The Cardinal became a bitter enemy of the regime when he openly asked President Joseph Kabila to leave office after Joseph Kabila's soldiers and police killed a number of Christian

protestors. In an outraged statement, the Catholic prelate denounced, condemned and stigmatised the behaviour of the men and women in uniform, who, sadly channelled barbarism to the people with orders badly taken from their leaders. In his homily during the Mass celebrated in memory of the victims, the Cardinal denounced police brutality and called victims, martyrs of democracy. “It is time that truth wins over lies. That mediocre leaders stand down and that peace and justice reign in DRC.” the Cardinal declared (Ndaywel, 2019: 205). Monsengwo’s homily elicited an immediate reply from President Joseph Kabila’s government, demanding that the Catholic Church remain neutral in politics.²⁸ The government denounced the Cardinal’s statement as insulting towards the leaders of the country and the police. They could not accept that such a statement came from a minister of God. They reminded the Catholic Church of the secular nature of the Congolese State. Yet when Joseph Kabila’s regime failed to organise the December 2016 general elections, they requested the Catholic Church’s intervention to mediate between the regime and the opposition. The Church brokered a deal which averted a bloodbath because the Congolese people were ready for an insurrection. It was under this December 2016 agreement, that Joseph Kabila was allowed to stay in office, provided new elections were held in 2017, but he still failed to organise them.

In one of his addresses in Brussels, soon after the 2018 elections, titled, “What future for the DRC after the electoral fraud of December 30, 2018?”, Cardinal Monsengwo denounced electoral fraud and was worried about the future of the country. He said in the words of Saint Paul in his letter to the Romans 5:5, that hope does not disappoint us, and added,

“If in the short term, electoral fraud is leading the country to an impasse, the fact remains that in the long term, the work of civic and electoral education undertaken by the Catholic Church

²⁸ <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/rdc-les-autorites-repondent-aux-accusations-de-l-eglise-catholique-212329>, [Accessed 27 July 2020].

and by different actors is already bearing fruit and helps to revive the confidence that the questions of the population, the rule of law, education, the economy, public services, the revival of agriculture will be taken care of by the Congolese who will continue to fight peacefully in order to build a Congo more beautiful than before... the people who see their aspirations mutilated and their hopes hindered, do not forget that the future is in their hands each time the events contrary forces him to find other reasons to live and hope. Such hope constantly pushes the people to a true ethic of precaution and of their responsibilities. If these elections led to a real political change, the people would then begin a reconciliation rooted in the truth, with a view to lasting peace and community justice.”²⁹

This statement of Cardinal Laurent Pasinya Monsengwo reflects what Katongole calls “the prophetic lament” within the African context. (Katongole 2017:163-178). In relation to Archbishop Munzihirwa of Bukavu in the Eastern DRC, Katongole says that the Archbishop reminded military commanders and issued statements that called on soldiers to be disciplined and reminded them of their duties to protect the people. In one of his Easter messages to Catholics of Bukavu, he said, “Despite anguish and suffering, the Christian who is persecuted for the cause of justice finds spiritual peace in total and profound assent to God” (Katongole, 2017:165). In speaking about the Catholic prelate and his politics of non-violent love, (Katongole, 2017:163-178) explains the prophetic dimension of peacebuilding. According to him, prophetic ministry is grounded in lament, taking the prophetic missions of Prophet Jeremiah and Jesus as examples of laments and social critiques of politics that exploit the poor with military might in order to secure their legitimacy. Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo is following in the footsteps of his fellow Catholic prelates such as Archbishop Munzihirwa, who

²⁹ <https://africa.la-croix.com/quel-avenir-pour-le-congo%E2%80%89apres-la-fraude-lelectorale-du-30-decembre-2018-le-discours-du-cardinal-monsengwo-a-bruxelles/> [Accessed 27 July 2020].

prophetically lamented the injustices in the country. Like Prophet Jeremiah, Monsengwo pointed to the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in the DRC “as the foundation of true and lasting peace. It was a similar prophetic moment, in its double gifts of critique and energising, that Munzehirwa embodied in Bukavu” (Katongole, 2017:175).

As Katongole puts it, “In her incarnational presence in the world, and in places of conflicts in Africa and elsewhere, the Church remembers and bears the story of the incarnate God. In this “remembrance” the Church finds herself in that “terrible middle” between an embattled and suffering people whose history she shares and the suffering God of love, whose story she bears” (Katongole, 2017:177).

The personal position of Cardinal Monsengwo during his address in Brussels was that the respect for democratic principles and human rights must prevail in the DRC in future. He mentioned that bad governance was also a problem that prevented social development and democracy in the DRC: “There is a cruel lack of competent, responsible, visionary and honest leadership capable of making the tremendous potential of the Congo bear fruit for the prosperity of its population... I do not see how the continuation of the Kabila regime in other forms as operated by the electoral fiasco of December 30, 2018, will improve the governance of the Congo, given that supposedly new wine has been poured into old bottles.”³⁰ To finally answer to the question which was the topic of his address, Cardinal Monsengwo said that he trusts the people of the DRC, because only the Congolese people are at the centre of solutions that will make possible a better, prosperous and radiant future for all. What one can note from the message of Cardinal Monsengwo is that the Catholic Church in the DRC worked with the people of the Congo to promote democracy with a non-violent agenda. It was not by anger that

³⁰ <https://africa.la-croix.com/quel-avenir-pour-le-congo%E2%80%89apres-la-fraude-lelectorale-du-30-decembre-2018-le-discours-du-cardinal-monsengwo-a-bruxelles/> [Accessed 27 July 2020].

the Catholic Church in the Congo asked the people to take on the streets but rather by encouragement, to frame the then situation of the country: a situation of injustice.

3.8.2. Archbishop Ambongo and the message of Hope

Fridolin Ambongo, then Archbishop of Mbandaka in the province of Equateur wrote a message of hope to the people of God and to the Congolese on February 27, 2018. His message was titled, “Take Courage. Stand with the flame of hope in your hand.”³¹ The Archbishop of Mbandaka started his homily by saying, “no one else will take you out of misery except yourself. I exhort you not to give in to violence with violence, I simply say to you: Take courage. Stand with the flame of hope in your hand”.³² This echoes the words of Gustavo Gutierrez in *Theology of Liberation* (Gutierrez, 1973: 17-18) when he speaks about the broad and deep aspiration for liberation that inflames the history of humankind in our day, liberation from all that limits or keeps human beings from self-fulfilment, liberation from all impediments to the exercise of freedom.

Archbishop Ambongo condemned the events that had taken place after the peaceful march of Christians of February 25, 2018. The march was organised in accordance with the Constitution of the country to demand the full application of the agreement signed between the Opposition and the government. Congolese citizens, Catholic and non-Catholic Christians with their pastors, priests and other religious authorities with bibles, rosaries and crosses in their hands, marched without insults or violence, chanting religious songs. This peaceful march was repressed and dispersed by the police who disproportionately used tear gas and live

³¹ <http://www.diacenco.com/mgr-fridolin-ambongo-prennez-courage-tenez-vous-debout-avec-la-flamme-de-lesperance-en-main/> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

³² <http://www.diacenco.com/mgr-fridolin-ambongo-prennez-courage-tenez-vous-debout-avec-la-flamme-de-lesperance-en-main/> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

ammunition. Similar incidents were registered in other cities of the country such as “In the northern city of Kisangani, several witnesses reported that police used teargas and gunfire to disperse marchers. It was not clear whether the security forces were firing at demonstrators. ‘Even now the shooting is continuing,’ said one Kisangani resident, who asked not to be identified. ‘I don’t know if anyone’s been hurt, but I arrived back home without my family ... Everyone fled in a different direction.’ A heavy security presence was also visible on the streets of Goma, the largest city in eastern Congo.”³³

As a result, in the city of Mbandaka, a case of death was registered. Many were wounded, some of them in critical condition, and others again arrested, including minors. After the repression of the march by the police, the Archbishop of Mbandaka, Fridolin Ambongo, and other religious leaders had a working session to take stock of the march. They went to the Governor’s office to meet with him and with his members of the security committee to tell him of the unacceptable situation that had occurred in the city. They deplored and condemned the excessive use of brutality by the police against the unarmed and peaceful population, with whom a simple exchange-dialogue would have sufficed. They invited the security authorities to better control their personnel. Religious leaders also demanded that all injured marchers be taken care of by the provincial government of Equateur. Finally, they admired the people of Mbandaka for having defeated the demon of fear and marched to express their rights.

This is how prophetic leadership should be exercised in the Church. The pastor needs to associate with the lowly, the downtrodden and the suffering humanity.

³³ <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/congo-police-kill-protester-church-led-march-kabila/> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

3.8.3. A Protestant Pastor called on J. Kabila to “hand over the baton”

On January 16, 2018, at the 17th commemoration of the assassination of former Congolese President Laurent Desire Kabila, Pastor Francois David Ekofo of the Protestant Church of Christ in Congo (ECC), a group of 64 Protestant Churches, criticised the Congolese government in the presence of State officials and members of the presidential family during his preaching. This was a brave and bold move by the Protestant Church and yet another sign that the Ecumenical Church of Congo was in communion with the Catholic Church and the people in opposing the attempt by Joseph Kabila’s government to amend the Constitution in order to stay in power. As (Katongole, 2017) puts it in his book, *Born from Lament, The Theology and Politics of Hope in Africa*, this story of Pastor Ekofo is a story of faith, hope and courage given to Congolese Christians in order to own their destiny.

The Pastor called for a political changeover. He said, “I particularly like races: relay races, where a person hands over the baton to a second person, then a third and a fourth... it is the same in the history of the country. We take the helm and pass it on to others.”³⁴

Pastor Ekofo also criticised the looting and the unfair distribution of the DRC’s natural resources and wealth. He stated in his preaching that God had given the Congolese people one of the richest countries on earth and God himself did not understand why the Congolese were so poor. He emphasised passionately saying that he did not believe the State really exists. “If we need continuity”, the pastor said, “we need to leave to our children a country where the State is real, a responsible State, where everyone is equal in the eyes of the law.”³⁵

³⁴<http://www.kinshasatimes.cd/menace-le-pasteur-ekofo-sen-va-en-exil-aux-usa/>, [Accessed 27 July 2020].

³⁵<https://sma.ie/pastor-in-democratic-rrepublic-of-congo-missing-after-criticizing-kabila/>, [Accessed 27 July 2020].

After this preaching, Pastor David Ekofo went into hiding for fear of reprisals. There were pressures for his arrest by the Kabila regime. According to the United Nations Mission in the DRC, Monusco, Pastor Ekofo took a UN flight out of the country after he was warned of being on the list of wanted personalities by Kabila's government. He is now living in exile in the United States of America. In the same line of ideas, and in the words of Katongole, let us "get a fuller grasp of the social and political implications of a prophetic lament within the African context" (Katongole, 2017:163).

I shall now examine the work of Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo during the mobilisation process in the DRC.

3.9. Conclusion

What I discussed in this chapter was the proof of the Catholic Church taking active role in politics with the aim to serve the people. The chapter pointed to the social and political dynamism of the Catholic Church in the DRC as confirmed in the story of Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo. The lone story of a lone Protestant pastor in this chapter came to reinforce the prophetic influence of the Catholic Church in the DRC to other Christian churches in the quest for a democratic country. The Catholic Church in the DRC worked for real political change and a transition towards democracy, in the way of people power. The Catholic Church in the DRC became one of the pro-democratic forces in the fight against the authoritarian regime of President Joseph Kabila. This was shown in its role as mediator and mobiliser. Although not engaging in politics, the Catholic Church has been the voice of the Congolese people by encouraging the people to remember their rights. The Catholic Church has also played the role of helping the people to protest the undemocratic regime of Joseph Kabila. In this chapter, I have also tried to present a compelling ecclesiological illumination of the Catholic Church as a living sign of hope to a people bruised by an undemocratic regime. Borrowing from

(Katongole, 2017) the concept of “prophetic lament”, I noted that the practice of lament by the Catholic Church in the DRC played a more explicit and prominent role in the advancement of democracy in the country. The Catholic Church in the DRC wanted to show that its role was not to propose political solutions. However, it was their right and duty to provide a moral and ethical judgement and to “reject as, injurious to democratic life, a conception of pluralism that reflects moral relativism. Democracy must be based on the true and solid foundation of non-negotiable ethical principles, which are underpinning of life in society.”³⁶

This is precisely what the Catholic Church in the Congo did. It did not propose specific legislations. It simply stood behind support for democracy in the form of the people’s power to choose their own leaders democratically.

³⁶http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20021124_politica_en.html [Accessed 30 July 2020].

CHAPTER 4

4. Critical engagement of the Catholic Church in the DRC

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I shall critically engaged the effort of the Catholic Church in the DRC to protect the fragile democratic process as the Civil Society. I will use the context of the Kairos Document to illustrate the motivation of the Catholic Church to side with the people.

The context into which the Kairos Document was written, was to respond to the socio-political crisis that faced South Africa during that time. The document accused certain Church denominations of betraying the Gospel of Christ as they did not condemned the massive onslaught of the apartheid regime against the black majority. The situation of oppression was aggravated by the brutality of the police and the army. After condemning the theology of those Churches, the document promoted a ‘prophetic theology’ as its authors felt closely associated with the suffering people. It is in this context of the Kairos Document, that I will critically engage the effort of the Catholic Church in the DRC.

4.2. Critical engagement

According to (Ndaywel, 2019), “Christianity, as lived by Catholics, has become a significant component of the identity of the Congolese people. The latter uses it as an instrument of resistance, struggle and liberation. Any political leader who undermines the dignity and the national sovereignty of the people,... and uses violence, corruption, and plundering of the country resources, puts himself in trouble with a Christian or a group of Christians.” (Ndaywel, 2019:14).

Since President Joseph Kabila showed his intention to stay in power beyond his constitutional mandate, the country witnessed a great effort by the Catholic Church to rise out of its role of “mediation, seeking to facilitate dialogue between the government and disparate opposition groups”³⁷ to face the regime, which showed signs of oppression “after Mr Kabila failed to organise an election in 2016 and the country teetered on the brink of chaos after scores of protesters were killed by the police”.³⁸ The country witnessed the Catholic Church more often taking daring positions vis-à-vis Joseph Kabila’s power, in order to be with the people in seeking their liberation. After the Catholic Church in the DRC took positions against the oppressive regime of Joseph Kabila, Congolese people gradually started committing themselves in different ways to the process of their own liberation. Lay movements were formed such as *Comité Laïc de Coordination* (CLC), a lay Catholic Movement which became very active in organising marches and many other demonstrations to force Kabila to respect the Constitution and organise presidential elections. As (Gutiérrez, 1993:59) would say, the people of God “are becoming aware that this liberation implies a break with the status quo that it calls for a social revolution.” When Gutiérrez speaks about the commitment of Christians in different ways to the process of liberation, he emphasises more the political commitment of the youth, especially, to create a more just society since they are the future of the country. This is exactly what happened in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Many youth activists’ groups were born after the Catholic Church stood up against the regime in protection of the Constitution. Activist youth groups such as LUCHA (*Lutte pour le changement*), which means Movement for Change, a youth activist group composed of youth from all over the country, put tremendous political pressure to Kabila’s regime not to amend the Constitution and to respect the term of office. Many youths from this group and the many other groups were killed,

³⁷ <https://www.eiu.com/n/> [Accessed 30 July 2020].

³⁸ <https://www.ft.com/content/a615cba4-22c2-11e8-ae48-60d3531b7d11> [Accessed 30 July 2020].

kidnapped and imprisoned. As Gutierrez puts it, “The ever more revolutionary political options of Christian groups – especially students, workers, and peasants - have frequently been responsible for conflicts between lay apostolic movements and the hierarchy” (Gutiérrez, (1973:59).

This assertion by Gutiérrez is justified by what many youth and lay members went through in the Congo after their commitment to the struggle for liberation. The Congolese Catholic bishops were compelled to stand up and speak out because the oppression and the suffering of the people became unbearable.

Reflecting with (Freire, 1996), I come to understand that the problem of the humanisation of humankind has always been at the centre of all man’s problems. It is a concern one cannot escape. However, as we recognise the concern for humanisation, at the same time we should recognise, on the other hand, the concern too for dehumanisation. African history, in general and Congolese history in particular, is full of testimonies of the dehumanisation of humankind. Freire, 1996:25-26) says that both humanisation and dehumanisation are real alternatives, but only the first one, humanisation, is the people’s vocation. He argues that humanisation is thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression and the violence of the oppressors. Those dehumanised must yearn for freedom and justice. They must struggle to recover their lost humanity, says Freire. The struggle of the Catholic Church in the Congo is a struggle of becoming more fully human; it is a struggle of human dignity and human rights. No one is born a lesser human. In order for this struggle to have meaning, (Freire, 1996) says that “the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity, become in turn oppressors of the oppressors as well”. (Freire, 1996:26).

The Congolese people have been oppressed for many years. They do not need false charity which subdues them to slavery. They want to become more human and to work to transform

their country. The true generosity and charity they need is the solidarity of the world in joining them in their fight to restore their humanity and to destroy the causes of oppression, which are dictatorship, corruption and the looting of the country's resources by those in power. In order to seek the world's support, the oppressed need lessons in the restoration of their humanity, lessons on the sacredness of humanity. I strongly believe that liberation is not won by chance but by acting on it. Therefore, the Catholic Church in the Congo came to understand this and tried to help the oppressed Congolese people to not be afraid of freedom but act on it. However, this fear of freedom was not only on the side of the oppressed Congolese. It was also on the oppressor's side. The oppressed were afraid to embrace freedom, and the oppressor was afraid of losing the freedom to oppress in order to keep power. This is what one could call the neo-colonialism of the oppressive regime of Joseph Kabila, which was afraid to lose power by not organising elections. Freire once argued that "Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion." (Freire, 1996:29).

In order to overcome and conquer the situation of oppression, to paraphrase (Freire, 1996), the oppressed people must first recognise and understand its causes. What were the causes of the Congo's unrest? It is in answering this question that the oppressed, through transforming action, can create a new situation, a situation of freedom. One of the weak points of the Catholic Church in the Congo was the fear of freedom for which they fought. They desired freedom, yet they feared it at the same time. They were not wholly prophetic as the Church. They were divided.

I would like to explain here how divided the Catholic Church was in terms of the national body of the bishops' conference. There were a few bishops who implemented their pastoral letters

in their various dioceses³⁹ although they all wrote and agreed on it. Hence the militant Archbishop of Kinshasa, Cardinal Laurent Monsengwo, became almost the lone voice of the Catholic Church in the Congo in the fight against the oppression of Joseph Kabila. In the words of (Freire, 1996), “liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one. The man or woman who emerges is a new person, viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanisation of all people”. (Freire, 1996: 9).

Among the many statements on governance issued by the Catholic Church in the DRC was the February 17, 2018, statement after Church leaders were overwhelmed by the outcry of people on issues of maladministration, rampaging corruption, oppression, insecurity, kidnapping, and harassment by the police and the collapse of the economy. The Catholic bishops and shepherds of the people introduced their statement in these words:

“Moved by the pastoral care of the Congolese people, sharing in their joys and hopes, sorrows and anxieties... because of the persistence and worsening of the country’s socio-political crisis. The Body of Christ, the Church is not subordinated to any political organisation. Its only concern is to contribute to the well-being of the entire Congolese people, to safeguarding and promoting the dignity of the human person, to respect life, freedom and fundamental rights... we observe, both inside and outside the country, an awakening of conscience of the Congolese people and its determination to take its destiny in hand.” (Ndaywel, 2019:184).

In its Article 16, the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo states that “the individual is sacred. The State has the obligation to respect and protect him/her. All persons

³⁹ In the Catholic Church, a diocese is a territorial area administered by a bishop. He has the canonical power to decide on pastoral matters.

have the right to life, physical integrity and to the free development of their personality”. In its Article 23, it says, “all persons have the right to freedom of expression. This right implies the freedom to express their opinions and convictions...”⁴⁰ Articles 25 and 26 speak about the freedom for peaceful meetings and freedom for demonstrations. All these freedoms are guaranteed by the Constitution, subject to respect for the law, public order and morality. In their statement on governance, Congolese Catholic bishops were deeply concerned by very serious facts and hostile attitudes from Kabila’s government. These include:

1. The killings and bloodshed of peaceful marchers who organised marches throughout the country on December 31, 2017, and on January 21, 2018. Many arrests, injuries, kidnappings and deaths were registered during these two marches organised by the Church. In retaliation to the marches, the Kabila government attacked church buildings and ecclesiastical communities, desecrated churches and even prohibited people from praying in certain cities. The crimes committed by those Congolese Christians and citizens were to call for peaceful marches in order to compel Kabila’s regime to implement the December 31, 2016 agreement signed between the opposition and his government. The agreement stipulated that elections had to be organised by December 2017 and all political prisoners released.
2. The Roman Catholic Church, being at the front of organising most of these marches and protests, saw itself being denigrated and defamed by Kabila’s regime and its supporters. Campaigns of denigration and defamation towards the Catholic Church were aimed at weakening the moral strength of the Church in order to divert the attention of people from the real issues of the country. “Steadfast in our faith in Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, and faithful to our prophetic mission, we will never give

⁴⁰ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo_2011.pdf?lang=en
[Accessed 30 July 2020].

up our commitment to the rule of law in the Democratic Republic of Congo”. (Ndaywel, 2019:184).

Catholic bishops in the Congo were also concerned about the disturbing extension of zones of insecurity in different provinces such as Kasai, North Kivu and South Kivu, and in Ituri, Kwilu and Kwango. All these insecurities were caused by assailants who kill and massacre with the intention of exterminating locals and implementing their plan for the occupation and balkanisation of the Congolese land.

In order to remedy the political and social situation of the country as stated above, Catholic bishops suggested these recommendations to competent authorities to:

- Cancel edicts prohibiting peaceful demonstrations, take legal action against those who have committed crimes during all marches organised by civil society and take appropriate measures to supervise peaceful marches as it is done in other countries.
- Stop the prosecution of and threats against the organisers of peaceful marches who have only exercised their rights recognised by the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- Make credible and effective the authority of the State to safeguard the integrity of the national territory, protect the borders and ensure the safety of the population and its goods.
- The Catholic bishops asked the Congolese people to stay vigilant; taking control of their own destiny, particularly through prayer and initiatives that would peacefully block the way of any attempt at confiscation or seizure of power through unconstitutional channels.

- Catholic bishops also requested that the international community accompany the people in the electoral process and try to place the interests of the poor above its own interests.

These kinds of recommendations are what I call a prophetic stand against the evil of the time; fearlessly, the Catholic bishops in the DRC made their voices heard by those in position of authority to respect the lives of the people and the constitution of the country.

At the end of their message, Catholic bishops paid tribute to the dead and the wounded and expressed their closeness and compassion to the Congolese families who had suffered the loss of their loved ones during repressed marches. They reiterated that the Democratic Republic of the Congo belonged to all its daughters and sons and that it was the right and duty of all to fight everything that could jeopardise its future. They also reminded government authorities that it was their responsibility to ensure the security of the population and the integrity of the national territory.

In one of his articles, (Boff, 1981:369) speaks about liberation spirituality which grounds Liberation Theology and a life of solidarity. He argues that what sustains liberation Theology and practice is a spiritual encounter with the Lord among the poor. In the light of the Catholic bishops' message above, one notices that their spiritual experience led them to encounter a new and challenging face of God in the poor suffering people of the Congo, who took to the streets to protect the Constitution of their country. Leonardo Boff made a concrete connection between practice and salvation, using the Gospel of Matthew 25 as his source. He asserted that the truthfulness of prayer is measured in relation to concrete ethical practice for justice (washing of the feet). This is what Boff calls authentic prayer-work and faith-life or prayer-action and faith-liberation. The prayer and faith of the Church must be such that they love and liberate others. The unity of prayer and faith needs to produce concrete data such as a commitment to change the world for the better and to defend the poor. It is on the same line that (Werenfried, 1969) speaks about how our solemn liturgies are an insult to God when our brothers and sisters

die in filth. He continues by saying that “all our comfortable acts of homage to God are so infinitely remote that they must sound like a curse in the ears of his Divine Son if we do not honour him in the poorest of his children.” (Werenfried, 1969:60).

In line with Werenfried, in the spirit of solidarity with those who are suffering, many Catholic bishops’ conferences in Africa and in the world sent messages of support and solidarity to the Congolese bishops’ conference. (Ndaywel, 2019:206-215). They sent messages of solidarity because they saw how the Catholic Church in the DRC worked to mobilise, form and inform the people of their rights – a mobilisation which led the people to take to the streets and claim their right to vote. The Catholic bishops in the Congo promoted peaceful resolution to the conflict, peaceful transition of power in respect of the country’s Constitution and they advocated ending human rights violations.

4.3. Relevance of the Kairos Document for the Church in the DRC

The relevance of the Kairos Document today for the Catholic Church in the Congo in particular and the Church in general is that the Church of Congo should strive to make its teachings relevant in the lives of the people. The Kairos Document indirectly urges the Catholic Church in the Congo to act promptly and vigorously against the social, economic and political injustices that face the people of the Congo. The prophetic mission of the Church is to stand against any and every form of oppression in order to liberate and transform people’s lives. Congolese citizens lived in wretched conditions during Joseph Kabila’s reign. Kabila’s government dominated the economy and politics of the country, leaving the population marginalised and oppressed. The Catholic Church in the Congo needed to become the voice of the voiceless against Joseph Kabila’s oppression. Religion should remain the hope of the people in encouraging and educating the citizens so that they demand a just social order.

The Catholic Church in the Congo is called in the light of the Kairos Document to demonstrate its ability to be united and analyse political, economic and social issues of the country on a biblical anchor. The good side of the Kairos Document is that it not only described the many problems brought by the apartheid regime, but it really analysed the apartheid regime even to the pre-suppositions on which the regime rested. According to the Kairos Document, apartheid based its justification in Church Theology.

The Catholic Church in the Congo needs to work hard to create a new social and democratic order in the DRC if it wants political leaders to become accountable to the people. For instance, Joseph Kabila wanted to review the Constitution of the country to remain in power. The Catholic Church in the DRC should develop a document along the lines of the Kairos Document to ensure that the government works for the people and their social welfare. Joseph Kabila used ethnic hatred and regionalism to divide the people. “According to local government and church representatives in Bunia, however, the Congolese government is seeking not just to eliminate the rebels from Rwanda but also to sow disorder in the country in advance of delayed national elections now due to take place on Dec. 23. President Joseph Kabila, in power since 2001, has proved reluctant to leave his office despite serving as many terms as the country’s constitution allows.”⁴¹ The Catholic Church in the Congo should fearlessly stand against such practices that discriminate unjustly for the benefit of politicians.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I engaged critically the effort of the Catholic Church in the Congo as part of the Civil Society. I used the context of the Kairos Document to analyse what led the Catholic Church in the Congo to instigate the people to stand up. In the context of this document, I came

⁴¹ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/11/27/is-kabila-using-ethnic-violence-to-stay-in-power/> [Accessed 30 July 2020].

to the conclusion that if the Catholic Church in the Congo wants to resolve social injustices, it should be ready to foster unity, togetherness and strong partnerships with other Churches. It needs to oppose any form of ‘State or Church Theology’ that supports oppressive regimes and calls for reconciliation when the oppressor does not acknowledge the sufferings inflicted on the oppressed. These two theologies motivate politicians to retain power at any cost, as Joseph Kabila attempted to do.

The Church cannot commit itself and its members to focus only on reconciliation and the spiritual life of the people. It must take on a more holistic and unified approach to life. As the Kairos Document urges, God stands for justice, and his Church should be prophetic and oppose any form of injustice. “We need a bold and incisive response that is prophetic because it speaks to the particular circumstances of this crisis, a response that does not give the impression of sitting on the fence but is clearly and unambiguously taking a stand.” (Kairos Document 1985). The Catholic Church in the Congo needs to develop a positive prophetic theology that would help people of God feel that God loves them and cares for them. In order to develop a new and Prophetic Theology, the Catholic Church needs to evaluate itself by looking at what kinds of theologies it has been using to advance people’s lives. Church leaders and theologians must come together to evaluate old theologies and generate new theologies.

CHAPTER 5

5. Evaluating the DRC Catholic Church using a 'praxis matrix'

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will analyse the declarations and actions of the Catholic Church in the DRC in view of the Congolese political context as discussed in the chapters above. The chapter will use a 'praxis matrix' to explore the performance enacted by the bishops' declarations and actions. This I will do in light of Kritzinger's article, 2019.

The Congolese Catholic Bishops' Conference (CENCO) is a body of all Catholic bishops working in different dioceses in the country. It is an organisation that bears witness to the Gospel of Christ. It strives to produce a socio-political discourse that responds to its evangelising mission. The functions of the Congolese Catholic bishops in the public space are ensured among other things, by the transmission of messages which address social issues, engage in theological and political reflection, and structure Christians as citizens. With their persuasive aim, episcopal documents crystallise the Catholic doctrine, propose values and norms for action. They also give guidelines for behaviour and motivate Christians and other people of goodwill to commit to temporal tasks.

The persuasion of the Congolese Catholic bishops here is related to the context of oppression of the people by a government which refused to organise elections. In this perspective, I will evaluate the messages and actions of the Congolese Catholic Bishops with (Kritzinger, 2019) using a praxis matrix.

5.2. The Praxis of the Congolese Catholic Bishops' messages

According to (Kritzinger, 2019:94), he uses the praxis matrix “to analyse the particular performance of Christian faith” expressed in a declaration. He continues that “this approach is based on several methodological assumptions... it distinguishes seven dimensions of transformative Christian performance in a particular context, namely; agency, contextual understanding, ecclesial scrutiny, interpreting the tradition, discernment for action, reflexivity and spirituality.” (Kritzinger, 2019:94).

Although this has been discussed in previous chapters, some background information on the messages and actions of the Catholic Bishops in the DRC is necessary before the evaluation. The research question posed in chapter one was: What role did the Catholic Church in the DRC have in the democratisation process in the country during the last term of office of President Joseph Kabila? This led me to discuss the theology of the Catholic Church in political life in chapter two by summarising and contextualising some magisterial documents in political life. Based on theological documents of the Catholic Church on politics, I discussed proofs of the Catholic Church in the DRC taking an active role in the organisation of marches and protests in chapter three. I then critically engaged those efforts of the Catholic Church in the DRC using the aspect of the Kairos Document in chapter four. I looked at the context of the Kairos Document in both chapters two and four.

Looking at the ‘praxis matrix’ methodology as described by (Kritzinger, 2019), I would like to discuss those seven dimensions that characterise religious or Christian actions aimed at transforming the society per the Congolese Catholic bishops’ messages and actions.

5.2.1. Discernment for action

Why did The Congolese Catholic Church through its bishops decide to issue declarations or pastoral letters and how did those messages lead to action? To understand the rationale for their messages, I discussed the content of those messages in chapter two. In their first message, they asked the people to stand up for their rights. The bishops could not accept the continuing deterioration of the economic, security and humanitarian situation, as well as the country's political impasse. This was the evil of the time, and they invited the people to react because the miserable situation in which Congolese people lived was a consequence of the persistent socio-political crisis, mainly due to the non-organisation of elections by those then in power in accordance with the Constitution of the country. We see that the Kairos Document influences this document in its section, 'towards a prophetic theology'. Whereby the first task of the Catholic bishops in the DRC was to detail the social analysis of the time, giving people hope and calling them to action.

In their second message, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the DRC (CENCO) asked Joseph Kabila to declare publicly that he would not be a candidate in the next presidential election. This was after they had heard the cries of the Congolese people who continued to be oppressed and harassed by Joseph Kabila's regime. The effectiveness of this message should be measured in terms of the bishops' call to serve the people of God. as (Kritzinger, 2019) says, "Whenever anyone works to achieve a more dignified human life for the poor and the weak, this is seen as signs of the reign of God." (Kritzinger, 2019:101). The Catholic bishops in the Congo became involved in the suffering of the people to find answers to the questions of credible elections organised at the stipulated time by the Constitution, and that Joseph Kabila should not re-present himself for the third term. Their theology was reality-related as it involved reading the suffering of the people.

The purpose of these documents could be seen as making people more aware of the danger of the system Joseph Kabila was leading them into. They hoped to see the Congolese people being involved in the democratisation process of the DRC.

5.2.2. Agency

The second praxis matrix as described by (Kritzinger, 2019) is the agency. In this, the author wants to know who were the authors behind the document? In the case of the Congolese Catholic bishops' conference, the authors are all Catholic bishops who form part of the body called CENCO (Congolese Catholic Bishops' Conference). It is not easy to trace all the role players such as those of the Kairos Document that shaped the agency of the Congolese Catholic Church in developing these theological documents that supported the people in their quest for a better country. However, I have mentioned a few key contributors and their contributions in chapter two. Among the bishops who contributed to this process were: Cardinals Monsengwo, Ambongo and the Protestant Pastor, Ekofo. What shaped their messages was the reality of political oppression and the suffering of the people. The people killed by the security forces of Joseph Kabila were the same people who sat in church pews every Sunday. Catholic bishops had a pastoral obligation to stand with the people.

5.2.3. Interpreting the tradition

The messages of the Catholic Bishops in the DRC were messages of hope, messages which illuminated the faces of the Congolese people with hope and courage. Thus in the words of Katongole, "the African Church provides a living witness of what hope looks like in the context of violence and war." (Katongole, 2017:264-265). This is what the Kairos Document describes as 'Prophetic Theology'.

The Congolese Catholic bishops also asked the people to remain vigilant and to demonstrate their disapproval peacefully by rejecting any use of violence in accordance with the Constitution. In addition, the Congolese episcopate recommended in particular to the government to protect marchers as per the Constitution of the country. The Catholic bishops also urged parliamentarians to reject any initiative to review and change the Constitution during the pre-electoral and electoral period. They also painted a negative picture of the socio-political situation in the country, in particular the suffering of the population, which exceeded a tolerable threshold. The Catholic Church in the DRC was, therefore “willing to suffer if it comes into conflict with the authorities.” (Kritzinger, 2019:117). And indeed the Catholic Church did suffer. As discussed in chapter three, Joseph Kabila’s security forces (police and the army) arrested Catholic priests, vandalised churches and presbyteries, and Catholic schools and hospitals were also burned or destroyed. The Catholic Church went through all these attacks because of the bishops’ pastoral messages which radiated encouragement and comfort. Their messages engaged the Catholic Social Teachings with an option to the poor. In their messages, the Congolese Catholic bishops acknowledged that suffering for speaking the truth and acting prophetically is the way of the Church. This was expressed by Cardinal Ambongo, then Archbishop of Mbandaka in chapter three of this study. The Cardinal told the people this: “Take Courage. Stand with the flame of hope in your hand... no one else will take you out of misery except yourself. I exhort you not to give in to violence with violence, I simply say to you: Take courage. Stand with the flame of hope in your hand.”⁴² This is how the Congolese Catholic Bishops’ messages created a deep sense of connection and identity with the people.

⁴² <http://www.diacenco.com/mgr-fridolin-ambongo-prenez-courage-tenez-vous-debout-avec-la-flamme-de-lesperance-en-main/> [Accessed 26 July 2020].

5.2.4. Contextual understanding

In the previous chapters and previous sections of this current chapter, I have discussed how the messages of the Congolese Catholic bishops echoed the suffering and oppression of the people under Joseph Kabila's regime. Instead of repeating those messages here, it is important to highlight some aspects of the Catholic bishops' messages' contextual understanding which were not explicitly expressed. According to (Kritzinger, 2019), "when the declaration, therefore, speaks about 'victims of injustice', 'oppressive powers' and 'ideologies', it does not fill in the details due to self-imposed restraint characteristic of the genre of a 'confessing' statement." (Kritzinger, 2019:120).

The Congolese Catholic bishops' messages were addressed to the people at a specific time and in response to contemporary events. They spoke about Congolese people as victims of oppression and Joseph Kabila as the incarnation of an oppressive power. Their ideologies were that of liberation and democratisation. The bishops' messages were highly specific about the fact that they openly articulated the political, economic and social dimensions of the Catholic Church's praxis. In the spirit of the Social Teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, some documents of which I summarised in chapter two, the messages of the Congolese Catholic bishops are theologically relevant now and in the future.

5.2.5. Ecclesial scrutiny

The bishops called on people of the DRC to be united, have courage and hope. These are biblical terms or language which reveal the essence of the Holy Trinity, the image of the one and undivided God. However, each of these words (unity, courage and hope) imply a fundamental critique of the Catholic Church in the DRC. Religious statistics, as highlighted in

chapter one, show that there are many Christian Church denominations in the Congo. Not one or two were invited by the Catholic Church to join the struggle. Those who joined them, came by themselves and informally through their members and not through their hierarchy. In view of this, I think, the Catholic bishops in the DRC did not completely participate in God's mission of building a united nation and people.

5.2.6. Spirituality

In this fold, I would like to explore the spirituality that guided and empowered the Congolese bishops as they issued those messages to the people. The context into which these messages were issued contributes to its spirituality. Joseph Kabila's regime showed signs of clinging to power beyond his constitutional mandate in early 2015, as I have discussed in chapters one, two and three of this study.

The Gospel of Christ and the Social Teachings of the Catholic Church being key to the mission of evangelisation prompted the Congolese Catholic bishops to stand alongside the people for their rights. Their motivation in writing these messages to the people of the DRC was not political "but based on a deep sense of having been called by God to participate in God's mission of establishing justice for all." (Kritzinger, 2019:121).

5.2.7. Reflexivity

In this final praxis matrix, I need to find out whether the Congolese people did learn from the messages of the Catholic bishops and have taken up their destiny into their own hands. Whether the people did learn something or not, my objectives in this study were: To demonstrate how the deteriorating political situation in the Congo required ecclesiastical and theological intervention; to examine the role of the Catholic Church in the DRC in the protection of the

DRC Constitution; to analyse the various ways in which the Catholic Church in the Congo supported ordinary citizens in the struggle for electoral democracy in the years 2015-2019 and to give an outline of the theology underpinning the interventions of the DRC Catholic Church to interrupt the attempts of Joseph Kabila's regime to extend its rule indefinitely. Whether these objectives were met or not, the fact that the Catholic Bishops in the DRC did issue messages of hope, encouragement and unity which motivated the people to stand up and take part in the democratisation process in the country, the messages of the bishops demonstrate an act of reflexivity. The messages called on the Congolese people to reflexivity, to own the democratisation process in the protection of the constitution.

General Conclusion

This study was based on the assessment of the role of Religion in Politics with a special focus on the Roman Catholic Church in the DRC during the Presidency of Joseph Kabila. I had a double commitment to this study as a Congolese citizen, and also as an engaged minister of the Gospel and concerned African scholar of theology. This study is therefore a contribution to understanding the nature, the role and the impact of the Catholic Church in the Congo in the lives of the people. The study paid particular attention to the role the Catholic Church played in mobilising the people to enforce respect for the Constitution and in encouraging the people not to remain submissive to the oppressive regime of President Joseph Kabila, who refused to organise elections in due course and created terror to intimidate, oppress and suppress those who claimed their rights. The role played by the Catholic Church in the DRC was contextualised with the content of the Kairos Document, whose authors saw the cries of the oppressed South Africans and decided to stand up alongside them.

Besides the general introduction which introduced the study, chapter one was mapping the context of the study and presented the problem statement, objectives, and methodology followed by a literature review. I chose to collect and analyse the data as this was a qualitative study based on the compilation of written materials. The methodology led me to analyse the Kairos Document and its three forms of theologies, which later helped me to define what kind of Church the Catholic Church in the Congo is. I also reviewed the literature on Political Theology in Africa.

In chapter two, I discussed the theology and methodology of some documents of the Catholic Church in general and some documents of the Congolese Catholic bishops in particular. The Catholic Church in the Congo showed signs of a Prophetic Church in its support and awakening

of people's consciences to own their destiny. The Kairos Document was used as methodology to reach this conclusion.

Chapter three discussed the proofs of the Catholic Church's involvement in the Congo in the struggle together with ordinary citizens in attaining liberation. Speeches and statements of bishops appeared in this chapter. The role played by the Catholic Church in the awakening of people's consciences was visible despite security forces killing protesters, those who took to the streets to protest against President Joseph Kabila's oppressive regime. Catholic priests were thrown in jail, Christians and supporters of the Opposition parties were arrested. Joseph Kabila's regime banned meetings, marches and demonstrations by Churches, Opposition parties and civil society. Media outlets accused of being pro-Opposition were shut down, expatriate Church leaders, international journalists and researchers were expelled, and their visas cancelled. Internet, social media and text messaging were cut for months. All these tactics were meant to restrain and contain the Catholic Church and the people of the DRC from claiming their rights.

Chapter four critically engaged the effort of the Catholic Church in the Congo using the aspect of the Kairos Document. I came to the conclusion that, prophetically, the Congolese Catholic bishops stood with the people to seek justice and democracy as they managed to stop Joseph Kabila from amending the Constitution and staying in power.

In Chapter five, I found in the article of Kritzinger's praxis matrix, a methodology to evaluate the Catholic Church in the Congo. I used 'praxis matrix' seven dimensions of transformative Christian performance to analyse the role played by the Catholic Church in the Congo to

accompany the people to liberation. The primary role of the Catholic Church was to mobilise the people on the ground for the country's democratisation.

This study was an assessment of the role of the Catholic Church in the Congo in relation to President Joseph Kabila's overstay in power and attempt to achieve a third term in office. The study was inspired mostly by the Kairos Document. In our view, the Kairos Document is still relevant and an authoritative critique against apartheid and any form of an oppressive regime. Such are the messages of the Congolese Catholic bishops.

The Kairos Document is like a magnet which attracts and urges Christians from all denominations to live out their faith and be active in fighting oppressive regimes in their various forms. Some may accuse the Kairos Document of advocating violence. However, any subjugated people can be justified in defending themselves violently, even though others may say it is not morally justifiable. In his "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", (Freire, 1996) says that "every human being, no matter how 'ignorant' or submerged in the 'culture of silence' he or she may be, is capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with others. Provided with the proper tools for such an encounter, the individual can gradually perceive personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his or her own perception of that reality, and deal critically with it." (Freire, 1996:14). The Kairos Document does not justify or condone any forms of violence.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has faced and continues to face many crises. There has been no true and lasting peace. Poverty, lack of security and violation of human rights have characterised the daily lives of the people. Under the reign of President Joseph Kabila, all these calamities accumulated. Although the country has known three democratic elections, the real

problem remains the lack of political will to live out democratic values in respect of human rights and to foster social cohesion and development. The political situation became highly polarised when Joseph Kabila attempted to change the Constitution in order to stay in power for a third term. The DRC faces a legitimacy crisis today as a result of a lack of transparency in the electoral process of December 2018.

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