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Editor's Introduction

Marc Roscoe Loustau

College of the Holy Cross, Worcester MA, mloustau706@gmail.com

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MARC ROSCOE LOUSTAU

Catholicism in Africa

Part One: Contemporary Issues



Marc Roscoe Loustau is editor of the *Journal of Global Catholicism* and a Catholics & Cultures fellow. As a scholar of religious studies in the context of personal, social, and economic change, his research has focused on Catholicism in Eastern Europe where, after decades of official state atheism, there has been a prominent resurgence of religion in public life. Loustau has taught courses at the College of the Holy Cross on contemporary global Catholicism. He holds a Th.D. from Harvard Divinity School.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This is the second edition of the *Journal of Global Catholicism*, the first of a two-part Special Issue on Catholicism in Africa. The *Journal of Global Catholicism* is a peer-reviewed and interdisciplinary academic journal published through the Catholics & Cultures initiative at College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts. As we welcome the four contributors to this edition, who have come to us by way of the Center for World Catholicism & Intercultural Theology (CWCIT) at DePaul University, the Editorial Board continues to take steps to ensure the JGC's global reach and scope. We are committed to the exciting prospects heralded by the new, open-access age in academic publishing. Articles in our premier issue, "Indian Catholicism: Interventions & Imaginings," were downloaded more than 700 times by readers in 54 countries. In the past year, the Catholics & Cultures website (www.catholicsandcultures.org) has had 263,000 page views in nearly 100,000 user sessions from viewers in the United States, the Philippines, India, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and countries all over the world. These statistics reflect our commitment to expanding and breaking open scholarly conversations about Catholicism in Anglo-American academic institutions.

We look forward not only to the upcoming second edition of Catholicism in Africa, but also to several exciting publications in the pipeline. We are pleased to announce an upcoming volume on "Pilgrimage Palimpsests: Storytelling and Intersubjectivity Across Multiple Shrines, Sites, and Routes," featuring scholars working in Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, the United States, and Western Europe. In March 2018, the JGC will be jointly hosting an academic conference with Pázmány Péter Catholic University in Budapest, Hungary on "Lived Catholicism from the Baltics to the Balkans." The JGC and Catholics & Cultures continue to flourish, and we are excited about these upcoming publications and events.

The contributors to this edition, "Catholicism in Africa, Part One: Contemporary Issues," mix academic pursuits with a deep sensitivity to lived Catholicism in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in Nigeria and Tanzania. Benedict Nwabugwu

Agbo conducts ethno-musicological compositional research at the University of Nigeria Nsukka. Walter C. Ihejirika is a senior lecturer in communication studies in the Department of Linguistics and Communication Studies, Federal University of Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. Stan Chu Ilo is a research professor at the Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology, DePaul University. Jordan Nyenyembe is a Catholic priest from Mbinga Diocese in Tanzania and lecturer at the Institute of African Studies (Vienna University College). Their interdisciplinary professional activities and placements reflect the benefits of convening an open conversation about the future of research on global Catholicism.

Here is what you'll find in the pages of this edition:

Is Catholicism a culture? This question has loomed large in Catholic communities around the globe in the wake of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). It looms no less large for African Catholics, according to **Benedict Nwabugwu Agbo**, who addresses these topics through his ethno-musicological research. His contribution pushes the boundaries of typical theological and social scientific research that engages the idea of Christianity as a culture. He addresses this topic outside the former's Western Protestant lineage; he includes detailed transcriptions of liturgical music whereas the latter has generally relied on ritual description and ethnographic interviews.

Where does the Catholic Church in Africa stand? **Walter C. Ihejirika** describes the conference where the authors originally presented these papers as a liminal space. The articles are therefore a record of the freedom and intellectual creativity that comes from being in-between. Perhaps reflecting the freedom to play with time and space that such liminality offers, Ihejirika himself seeks wisdom from theologians like Gregory of Nazianzus, the 4th-century Archbishop of Constantinople, while also situating his comments in the growing interdisciplinary field of religion, media, and culture. His article is an exemplary instance of applied Catholic theological research and interdisciplinary scholarship. In regards to the former, his contribution provides a culturally- and theologically-grounded model of applied scholarship that many anthropologists, who have recently become more interested in applying their research, can beneficially take notice of.



Who is Pope Francis? **Stan Chu Ilo** argues that answering this question is harder than it first appears. To say that he is pope does not begin to capture Francis' appeal to Catholics in Africa. For Ilo, Pope Francis is first and foremost a prophet of world Catholicism. As a prophet, Pope Francis is placed in history and responds to the needs of this age, including world Catholicism's interest in "experimentation" and "taking measured steps into the unknown." Ilo's comments provide a valuable interpretation of Pope Francis' role from the perspective of an African Catholic, an interpretation that potentially challenges those advanced in recent publications by anthropologists and historians.

Who is a priest? Again, a seemingly simple question but, as **Jordan Nyenyembe** argues, African Catholics give varied and unstable answers to it. Nyenyembe describes diverse models of priesthood operating in African Catholic communities in Nigeria and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. He critiques these approaches from a perspective that identifies servant leadership as the core model of priesthood.

We are sure you will find this collection of essays provocative, and we commend your attention to the soon-to-be-published second part, "Catholicism in Africa: Looking To the Future."

I wish to thank the following persons for supporting this issue of the JGC: Thomas Landy, founder and director of Catholics & Cultures at the College of the Holy Cross; Mathew Schmalz, founding editor of the JGC; Danielle Kane, associate editor; and Patricia Hinchliffe, administrative assistant. I'd especially like to thank our colleagues at the Center for World Catholicism & Intercultural Theology (CWCIT) at DePaul University: Stan Chu Ilo, Karen Kraft, William Cavanaugh, and Francis Salinel.

Marc Roscoe Loustau

Editor, Journal of Global Catholicism

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