AN ENCOUNTER WITH AFRICA

By CORA TWOHIG-MOENGÃNGONGO

VOLUMES IN WORD AND IMAGE portray Africa today with a wounded face, a face with many scars.[1] Ecologically, economically, medically, politically, intellectually, the many and diverse countries of this continent are racked by convulsions of chaos. I want to refocus from a seemingly hopeless horizon to a close-up of a particular place and time. As I reflect on my experience I attest to brokenness, of the people in this place, of cultural and ecclesial systems, of the very landscape. Precisely there I discover hope. In remembering my African encounter, I recover a journey of transformation revealing a deeper order and meaning emerging from the chaos.

Let me begin with a story about my encounter with Amina. Carved in ebony, this African sculpture was given to me in our community celebration and gift exchange during my second Christmas in eastern Nigeria. On the night of gift-giving, and to my surprise, I was appointed Mother Christmas, presenter of gifts. When the chairman for the evening called my own name, I accepted and unwrapped my package to find a polished seven-inch high bust, with intricately braided hair crowning a finely chiselled, resolutely focused countenance of an African woman. The accompanying card was missing so the mystery of the gift-giver was solved only when Moses, then a third-year student, somewhat shyly admitted to being the giver. Amina was readily recognized and called by name among those in our gathering. Amina, they told me, was known from history as a brave and strong woman who led her people victoriously. She was a warrior leader. Further details were not forthcoming during the evening. Later I happily carried Amina to my room and installed her prominently on my desk where her presence continued to evoke attention, from me and from students.

My research confirms that Amina was queen of Zaria in central Nigeria around 1588.[2] Oral tradition has it that the warrior queen fought and won many battles through which she expanded her jurisdiction as far south as the River Niger and to the north as far as Kano. She is remembered for the walled camps established whenever she halted

during her extensive campaigns. The famous Zaria wall is attributed to her reign. However infamous the oral tradition of her prowess, on the battlefield and off, she is remembered in contemporary Nigerian history as a strong woman who achieved considerable influence in Hausaland.

You may wonder what fabled Queen Amina has to do with any account by a female, Irish-Canadian, white Catholic theologian, lay missioner of her experience of two years lecturing in systematic theology at the Spiritan International School of Theology (SIST) at Attakwu, Enugu, in eastern Nigeria. In remembering my story, Amina becomes a symbol worth developing for a deeper meaning to the events that marked this brief time of two years.

'A symbol is an image that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling.'[3]

When I arrived at SIST at the persuasive invitation of the incumbent Rector, I found a seminary – not yet a diverse school of theology – a series of six interconnected two-storey buildings constructed in a bush compound just seven years earlier by Dutch brothers of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost and their Nigerian co-workers. The very existence of this school was a notable achievement of planning, hard labour and commitment. Here ninety-six young men, mainly Spiritans with some Claretians and several Benedictines and Dominicans, predominantly Nigerian but representing five west African nations, were engaged in priestly formation focusing on a four-year programme of theological studies towards a master's degree.[4] Ordination followed. A full-time teaching staff of seven clerics, two women administrative assistants, three women cooks and several support workers comprised the community. All were African but for two Irish Spiritan lecturers and me. I anticipated my minority status as female, non-African and lay with some caution but overall with a spirit of trust and equanimity.

'Welcome' in Igbo is 'Nnoo' (nuh). I never doubted that this spontaneous and unremitting expression of welcome that greeted my arrival at SIST to begin the school year was well-meaning. Neither did I doubt my own willingness to be there to teach theology. At age fifty, I was old enough to be an experienced teacher from at least three different cultural contexts and still blessed with health enough to welcome change. As the opening term progressed however, it was becoming clear that as the lone female theologian on our staff and, in fact, on any seminary staff in most of the eastern and northern regions of the country, I was a resisting presence. The air I breathed had a

peculiar brand of inertia, constituted and confirmed by long traditional cultural and ecclesial diminishments of women.[5] This negating reality, now recorded from the underside of history, documents how many African women, regarded primarily as childbearers, are threatened in their already precarious position by severe social and economic privations. An exemplary case is that of widows in Nigeria. By the time they are widowed, these women '. . . had probably already experienced gender discrimination, female genital mutilation, illiteracy, forced early marriage, subjugation and battering'.[6] Although African women's experience is marked by broad diversity, many common cultural and social hardships have taught a painful lesson of tolerance and even fatal acceptance in women's lives all lived within a firm belief in the supernatural. This is true especially for rural, pastoralist women, the women I often greeted as I walked the Attakwu road.[7] I met them, weary, bearing heavy bundles of firewood on their heads, a baby on their backs and perhaps holding another child by the hand. These descendants of Amina live now oblivious of the power and authority of the ancestral Queen.

That is the way things are. The question arises: 'Is this the way things have to be?' By inviting me to teach at SIST, I reasoned, the SIST administration was already hearing new questions and from a different voice. Besides, the message in my dreams had taught me I was ready and willing to go to Africa![8] Now somewhere in Nigeria an artisan with a dim memory of another way was crafting the figure of Amina in fine wood.

'The symbol has the power of recognizing and expressing what logical discourse abhors: the existence of internal tensions, incompatibilities, conflicts, struggles, destructions.'[9]

During my first term some students were demanding, insolent and even hostile toward me. This response shook me since part of my self-identity over the years had been confirmed as a competent, committed and engaging teacher. Many more students were silent, distant and unsure. I could appreciate their caution and I too was appropriately circumspect. Perhaps they deemed it unwise, so close to achieving ordination, to be seen stepping outside established boundaries until it could be established where, in relation to those boundaries, I fitted! What dismayed me was the ubiquitous entrenchment of a highly authoritarian, hierarchical operating structure where ordination marked the point of entry to the ranks of power and privilege. African clergy themselves had already critiqued what I was witnessing in a more overt and dramatic way than I had known elsewhere.[10]

That a woman could be intellectually competent was not new in a place where academic achievements among women as well as men are notable and respected, but I was discovering that the discipline of theology presented a particular problem. What has been described as 'the incurable disease' of clericalism,[11] as the practice and the model for these young men, largely prevailed during my early time at SIST. A small minority attempted to make formation more collegial and responsible. Nevertheless some staff members snapped fingers at students to refill water jugs on the staff table, to serve food, to wash their cars or to run other kinds of errands for the convenience of staff. There were frequent teasings and comments among students and staff about becoming bishop, suggesting it was a kind of ultimate career goal, a pinnacle of prestige. It was notable that the ordained never sat among the congregation at eucharist. Concelebration was the norm. In December, after ordination of about twenty new deacons, there was a severe crowding problem on the three-step altar elevation!

One strangely memorable experience occurred during my first Christmas break. The gift-exchange evening had passed but Amina, or we, were not yet ready. All the students had vacated the compound. In the pre-dawn light only the staff gathered for morning liturgy. I had earlier entered the chapel, opened the windows to welcome cool air and had taken a seat immediately in front of the altar instead of my usual place in the back row. This is not a small oratory but a large chapel. Four priests, my colleagues, fully vested, processed into the chapel and mounted the steps to the altar. The *ecclesia orandi* this day was five persons. The stark image of up–down, superior–inferior separation and the feelings welling up inside of me in this remnant community roared exclusion. I waited expectantly to be invited around the table of the altar. No invitation was proffered. In my journal that day I reflected that Advent is about preparing a welcome, 'Nnoo' to the Peace-bringer. But we had not swept the stable clean of refuse. Collectively, these images signalled contrasting messages to visions I nurtured of an egalitarian faith community, and Church as people of God.

The patriarchal ethos operates through control, over others, over themselves, over nature.

Factually, I was senior lecturer in systematic theology, although this reality was overtaken by the mass and momentum of feelings evoked by my being female, lay, white, foreign. I was very sensitive to the dynamic thus set in motion. The more habitual social graces were always observed, a gracious mercy in a land where a priority of

relationship and social interaction over purposeful efficiency has become exquisitely and finely tuned. On a deeper level, however, 'Nnoo' became an ambiguous greeting reaching my ears. I was somehow but not quite invisible. I was not a reverend father, not even a reverend sister, so this ecclesial non-status simultaneously conformed with, yet contradicted, other identifying roles. Titles were generously employed on our compound and, it appears, in all of Igboland, serving significant purposes of identification and power. In a good-humoured but telling exchange between students and me about my title, various respectful, familial and professional appellations such as Lady, Auntie, and Professor were proposed for me. We decided I would be 'Dr Cora'.

I continually reflected upon some of the 'givens' of our students' lives, residues deep in consciousness from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, the legacy of slavery, political colonialism, missionary colonialism, more recent ethnic wars. There was also a kaleidoscope of gifts: musical, athletic, poetic, mechanical, dramatic, intellectual, farming, comedic and spiritual. Students were disciplined in fulfilling daily responsibilities for maintaining basic needs of life on our compound. They were student theologians living dedicated lives and, in large measure, they were being schooled in clericalism. With this richness in mind, I would feel recommitted to offer my best, to bear up, to stay open, to remain faithful to 'the dream of a common language'.[12] This willingness faced resistance. I frequently saw and felt this as a tidal wave of patriarchal and clerical autocracy. Sometimes I surfed the wave, sometimes I dived underwater and let it wash over me, sometimes I was caught with my back to it and just got smacked over! 'Be attentive!' 'Stay awake!' These Advent exhortations rang with new clarity.

'Be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible, be in love.'[13]

Maintaining, day by day, a positive and open demeanour required a deft balancing act on my part akin to walking a tightrope across Niagara Falls! Teaching, researching, staff meetings, eating, praying, recreating, compound cleaning, singing practice, all were communal activities. Like the others, I needed a release from the burden of this public living. I would go to my room and close the door, creating a space to rest, to reflect, to rage, to weep. I understood, practically, why I felt like the odd woman out. I was! I understood theoretically the systemic nature of bias. I acknowledged my choice in agreeing to work and live in the particular male culture of SIST. Being here was the real thing. Living here was life in all its ambiguity.

The bias, the sexism, the ethnic and ecclesial traditions diminishing my sisters and me were wounding. I wrote pages in personal journals; I took long walks alone circling the soccer field or down the dirt road; I prayed. Then and later I was grateful for the support from some of the male faculty who were at least notionally aware of my outsider experience. Meeting other women, mostly women religious, African and non-African who visited our compound and invited me to visit them, offered renewing times.

While feelings of isolation and loneliness were often keenly felt, this was only part of the story. There was great peace in entering into the rhythms and ordering of the teaching, praying and day-to-day life on the SIST compound. Every class was a potential threshing mill where I was the grain for grinding. Gradually, every class became profoundly renewing. These hours of shared labour yielded irrefutable evidence that our desire to understand and to know what is true and what is good cannot help but evoke our "yes" of recognition. This is how we are created and how we create. This is our very dignity.[14] Every class recharged my batteries, especially the first-year group who began their theology studies as I arrived at SIST. We were allies in this new place, in a manner of speaking. All I had ever read or experienced about the meeting of Christianity and culture and the process of inculturation was confirmed by our reality – a situation of uncertainties, obscurities, ambiguities. It was consoling to recall that the faith of Israel and of the first generations of Christians emerged from a process of inculturation.

'Living in creative intercourse between chaos and order is an invitation into the dance of creation.'[15]

Our compound at SIST was an island of productivity in a sea of spiralling social, political and economic decline. Unremitting heat, constant fuel shortages, escalating prices, disease created by increased political and military heavy-handedness within Nigeria, worsening fears for students' families in Liberia and Sierra Leone caught in civil wars, armed robbers operating more and more boldly in the area, malaria, university- and school-closings – these realities with which we worked and prayed and learned and played made our efforts and achievements all the more remarkable. They strengthened my trembling knees. We were learning together. The moments of grace that said there is truth in these searchings, there is value in constancy and restraint – these were glimpses of that deep-set joy that spoke to me of redeeming life, for all of us.

Some might dismiss this tale of struggle as simply my process of acclimatizing and adapting. Certainly that is true. But it was much

more than my personal adjustment. The personal is the political. The political is about power relations. Power is the human energy to create, to empower, or else power becomes energy directed toward domination and exclusion.[16] Paul's letter to the Galatians 3: 27–28 teaches us what right power relations look like. The law of love in the way of Jesus Christ proclaims the value and freedom of each one – in him there is no distinction, neither Jew nor Greek, female nor male, slave nor free person. Historically human consciousness has not held the tension of differences inclusively. We have been first matriarchal, then patriarchal. We are yet on the way to a fuller stage of consciousness, where a dialectical balance that carries forward the truth in matriarchal and patriarchal values will incarnate a new Christ-consciousness.

Sophia speaks:
'O people: I am calling to you;
my cry goes out to the children of humanity.
. . . Wisdom is more precious than pearls,
and nothing else is so worthy of desire.'[17]

Patriarchy has valued male over female. In Igboland and in many African and world cultures the male is assigned power. The colonial missionary Church sacralized this power. Hierarchical, clerical, autocratic, exclusive church structures inherited and practised in many African Catholic churches were alive at SIST. I could sustain the scorching sub-Sahara heat. What caused me grief was the continuous struggle to claim my person as free, upright and whole amidst traditions that dictated otherwise. I lived in a solidarity of resistance with women: women on our compound; labourers in the unyielding fields; construction labourers transporting heavy trays of gravel and sand on their heads from early morning through midday heat until afternoon. I experienced how fear of change binds us, and offer an unforgettable example of an unbinding. A director of religious formation invited me to present a workshop with fifteen young women novices in her community from Nigeria and Cameroon. The director was very positive and obviously had prepared the group but the tension in our opening session spoke of resistance. It surfaced in our introductions where one young woman, whose body language said 'No' even when she had spoken 'Nnoo' asserted that she knew from her culture that men were more valuable than women. If I planned to say otherwise she would reject it. Others expressed similar conflict. By the end of our three days praying and reflecting together on our being created in the *imago Dei*, on Jesus and women disciples, on their vision of the

Kingdom for themselves and for their people, we experienced an outpouring of the Spirit in joy and discovery of a truer identity within them, as women, as disciples.

The following poem written by one of my SIST students expresses beautifully this lifelong call into freedom and conversion. The title Anselm chose is fitting.

> Identity
>
> Go to the Ancestral Shrine
> The Sacred Grove in your chest
> Enter the inner Temple
> And hear again the silent echoes
> Of the Ancestors' voice, calling
> Calling you to be awake, to arise
> Put off the mask of inferiority
> And discover the dignity of your race
> O sons and daughters of Africa!
> Enter the Mystic Silence
> And break loose the chain of mental slavery
> Face the void
> Love the darkness
> Go to the Ancestral Shrine
> The Sacred grove in your chest
> Enter the Inner Temple
> And hear again the silent echoes
> Of the Ancestors' voice, calling
> Calling you to be awake, to arise
> For you can transform the earth
> Only when you know who you are.[18]

The singing and dancing of these beautiful young women was the most extraordinary spontaneous outpouring of gratitude, to God and to all who had made our time together possible. We do, after all, long for the Promised Land even when we grumble in the desert along the way. My own vocation in West Africa was developing within me as solidarity and resistance against an old dispensation for the sake of freedom and new life, for a new consciousness of the feminine in our time. It was for the rising up of girls and women around me and for the young men for whom I was labouring with increasing affection and confidence. Being raised up and being freed are experiences of self-knowledge that are the beginning of wisdom. Sophia was visiting us.

'I am black but lovely, daughters of Jerusalem.'[19]

By the beginning of the second term there were indications that I had passed my initiation, an experience recalling for me images from Psalm

91 and stories of the famed firewalkers in the Fiji Islands who step across a path of fiery stones for a distance of about twelve feet and remain unscorched. Frequently I checked my soles and my soul, and as the days progressed both appeared dusty but intact. Amina's spirit was moving among us.

Gradually, more senior students asked for me to moderate their masters' theses, as the writing of the intrepid Alex and Joseph, who had come forward in the first term, seemed to be progressing nicely. New questions were surfacing and images previously unacknowledged entered creatively into students' imaginations. Respectful but constant knocks on my door signalled the desire to discuss readings, papers, faith journeys, all gesturing towards changing attitudes. My small personal library on liberation and feminist theologies, Lonergan studies, spirituality, poetry and music became a resource circulating on our compound. Animated discussion followed: in class during compound cleanup, on the covered walk connecting our hostels. Increasingly, assignments were written in inclusive language. Spontaneous moments of inclusive praying were voiced in our chapel. The invocations as brothers *and* sisters in Christ was becoming the praxis of brothers and sisters in Christ.

These changes were signs of conversion.[20] Certainly the sense of the sacred, of religious consciousness, had long permeated life and was everywhere felt in this land. The initiative of God reaching into human experience was vibrantly alive here in the way of daily living and speaking. Religious conversion, where the Holy has entered our horizon and we live consciously relating to that mystery, had brought us together as a particular collection of persons at SIST. As Jesus passed from death to resurrection with a new life, so we were being called to changes, reorientation and purification, which are so many deaths needed for new life. We were called to relationship with one another, as sisters and brothers in Christ, a troubling, surprising, demanding and rewarding call to authenticity. I was filled with awe at sharing in students' deepening appropriation of how God acts in our history and becomes enfleshed in our cultures. I prayed in thanksgiving for their faith that encouraged my own small trust. They taught me about the transcendent sky-God revealed in the cosmos; for the Igbo, Chukwu, Chineke and Osebruwa; for the Yoruba, Olodumare, the God who brushed the earth with the hem of his cloak. We explored what our tradition and our experience has known to have been from the beginning: that very Chukwu, Osebruwa, Yahweh, became one of us in Jesus Christ, empowering us through God's Spirit to active relationship and

co-creating in our lives for our world. We were learning, slowly, new ways of being with one another as female and male, as African and non-African, as cleric and lay, as teacher and student, ways that were neither hostile nor indifferent, but a little more open, respectful, participatory and trusting.

Other signs of conversion were showing. Imagination and emotion become blocked by negating experience in our lives.[21] Psychic conversion is about unbinding our sensitive psyche. Images we previously buried or ignored and their related feelings are offered anew to consciousness, inviting us to see with new eyes and to hear with new ears. This healing in the psyche can release new questioning toward deeper insight, fuller knowing, choosing and acting in response to truer value. One vivid re-imaging came in the form of a question from year-four student Reginald: 'Why in my home parish is an adulterous woman made to do public penance by kneeling before the altar all during Sunday mass while there is no sign of the man – has he not also sinned?'[22] Images of clerical comfort and privilege evoked Anthony's question: 'How can lay people participate in church ministry in ways that are faithful to Christ and to the teachings of Vatican II?'[23]

Well into my second term another image that created a minor tempest was my first appearance at SIST as eucharistic minister, at the request of the student sacristan. Why was I serving in this ministry when there were so many priests and deacons? Had I been properly commissioned as eucharistic minister? The image of a lay woman in this role and the feelings thus aroused challenged an existing order of things. More dramatic was the response by some staff members to my proposal for a course on Christian spirituality. Should a woman, and a lay woman at that, be teaching such a course to seminarians? While I was well supported by other colleagues, echoes of long years of cultural and ecclesial exclusion sounded their threatening toll. Yet again the Paschal Mystery moved us to resurrection. I was invited more frequently to minister to our community in bringing eucharist to the sick on the compound, in offering reflections on the gospel of the day, in accompanying priests to out-stations in the bush for morning liturgy, blessings and funeral rites. I was hearing 'Nnoo' with deeper resonating openness.

So our shared life at SIST was slowly being transformed into more open and inclusive ways of living together. When Christmas came a second year and gifts were exchanged, a prophet among us brought Amina to all of us. I believe she came to tell us 'Ndewo – well done!' She came offering the memory of a woman of strength, to encourage

our wondering about how the gospel meets culture, about new ways of relating, creating and sharing power, about the value of women and women's work, about our church communities as faithful to the teachings of Vatican II in inclusive, compassionate ministry, about images of God as Yahweh, as Chukwu, as Sophia Wisdom, and about the wonder of how the Mystery that is Love confounds all our expectations.

Such are moments of my encounter with Africa. Year two at SIST began with high hopes for the coming year. Only weeks into the term armed robbers began terrorizing our compound with night raids. Students were attacked and several wounded. It was terrifying. The first few times we managed to carry on, but after the third attack within as many months there was a slow draining of life out of us. Each evening an uneasy quiet settled over the compound, a marked change from the active movement between the library and rooms before the attacks. I had been looking ahead to more years at SIST. Now the constant anxiety and demoralization drew me to remember a wise spiritual guide who told me: 'To be able to embrace the limitations in the situation so as not to destroy the gift is our call'.

Embracing my own limits meant returning to Canada at the end of my second year. It touches me deeply to remember the quiet knockings on my door during my last weeks at SIST. Students came, one by one, and after sitting down, they would speak haltingly of their feelings about my leaving and prayers that I would be able to remain. These were my own feelings and prayers. Leaving SIST for me was another small dying. The time we were given to live and work together was blessed. We trust in God's tender mercy to bless and protect the work that has begun and that continues at SIST to be carried afar to the ends of the earth. We rejoice in the women who began studies in theology in my last term; for the energy and hope they brought with them to these studies, side by side together with the men of SIST for the sake of the Church, Africa, and the world.

Wisdom Sophia, the order of the universe, is calling us through the chaos and the unknown to the imponderable depths – and we respond 'Nnoo!'

NOTES

[1] This description is from Nigerian theologian Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *A listening Church: autonomy and communion in African churches* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1966), pp 1–3. See also Robert J. Schreiter (ed), *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991),

pp vii–xi, and John Mihevc, 'The theology of structural adjustment' in *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, ed Elochukwu Uzukwu, vol 5, no 1 (Enugu, Nigeria: The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians, 1993), pp 44–60.

[2] O. Oyewole, *A historical dictionary of Nigeria* (Metuchen, NI and London, 1987), pp 44.

[3] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press for Lonergan Research Institute, 1990), p 64.

[4] The MA in theology is granted conjointly by SIST and Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, USA. In my final semester we launched a ten-week pilot project where thirty-five young women religious took classes in theology with a view to their being admitted as regular students.

[5] Adrian Hastings, *African Catholicism: essays in discovery* (London: SCM Press and Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1989), in one chapter asks if women were a special case concerning Christian missionary activity in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Africa. He shifts his response to the positive when he seriously considers women and realizes their invisibility in historical data. 'Special' for Hastings means distinct in oppressive and in affirming respects. See pp 36–51.

[6] From an unpublished paper, 'Widowhood in Nigeria: the case of four Eastern states' by Dr Elinor Ann Nwadinobi, Director of Administration and Clinical Services, The Tabitha Infirmary, Enugu, Nigeria, presented to the 23rd International Congress of the Medical Women's International Association, The Hague, Netherlands, May 1995, p 4.

[7] Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike in 'Christology and an African woman's experience' writes how in its diversity and hardship, what permeates and harmonizes all of life is the presence of the supernatural. For Christian woman, Jesus becomes her strength, her friend, her hope, her healer. See Robert Schreiter (ed), *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), pp 70–81.

[8] The importance of dreams and the process of my decision-making is described further in my article 'Trailing the image: reflections on a life in progress' in *Vox Feminarum: The Canadian Journal of Feminist Spirituality* (March 1996), pp 39–45.

[9] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p 66.

[10] This authoritarian structure reflects what Uzukwu describes as autocracy and clericalism that together constitute the chief obstacles to a new African church. He details a Nigerian example where the language and practice of some bishops addressing seminarians compares with the dominating manner of dictators. See Uzukwu, *A listening Church*, pp 119–124.

[11] Bishop Mwoleka of the diocese of Rulenge in western Tanzania in addressing a plenary assembly of African bishops used these words to challenge a false imagination among the bishops that the Church is the Church of the clergy. Elochukwu Uzukwu quotes Mwoleka in his book *A listening Church*, p 120.

[12] *The dream of a common language: poems 1974–1977* (New York: Norton, 1978) is the title of a collection by Adrienne Rich, poet, writer and superbly articulate wordsmith on human longing to release power in authentic relationship.

[13] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in theology*, p 268. These transcendental imperatives are a shorthand expression of Lonergan's intentionality analysis. My thanks to Fred Crowe SJ, generous Lonergan scholar, who directed me to yet another distinction in the text that speaks of development in Lonergan's thought.

[14] Bernard Lonergan asserts how the creative dynamic of human intentionality in authentic attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, responsibility, and loving becomes self- and world-constituting. See Lonergan, for example in *Method in theology*, pp 260–266. First year SIST student Chrysogonus, after two months in our Foundations of Theology course, lingered as we concluded one session and in a slow and thoughtful manner said, 'Dr Cora, you give us the real stuff,' which I took to mean that 'Yes' of recognition, a resting in insight, in truth and goodness, a moment of grace.

[15] Jungian analysts Elinor Dickson and Marion Woodman write about the journey into a new consciousness in our time. Guided by Sophia Wisdom it honours the energies of feminine and masculine in the human psyche for integrity and creativity. See *Dancing in the flames* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

[16] See Cora Twohig-Moengāngongo, 'Paradigms of power' in *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology: Power, authority and leadership: African and Christian*, vol 6, no 1 (Enugu: Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians, 1994), pp 33–52.

[17] Proverbs 8: 4, 11 in the New Jerusalem Bible.

[18] Anselm Adodo OSB, *African Ecclesial Review* vol 38, no 2 (Eldoret, Kenya: Gaba Publications, 1996), p 127.

[19] In the Hebrew Scriptures, the Song of Songs is the introduction to the Book of Wisdom. I quote 1:5 in the New Jerusalem Bible. In one interpretation 'black' is equated with 'wise' so the 'black arts' were originally the 'wise arts'. See Elinor Dickson and Marion Woodman, *Dancing in the flames*, p 8.

[20] I am following the notion of conversion in Bernard Lonergan as at least a fourfold reality; religious, moral, intellectual and affective. Robert Doran has worked with Lonergan on psychic conversion. In this paper I am grateful for a lucid article on conversion using Lonergan by Carla Mae Streeter OP, 'What is spirituality?' in *On holy ground* (St Louis, MO: Centre for Leadership Excellence of the Catholic Health Association of the United States, 1966), pp 139–145.

[21] Dramatic bias is the name Bernard Lonergan gives to this blocking or callus formed on the sensitivities of psyche, often through circumstances over which we have no control or even conscious memory. See *Collected works of Bernard Lonergan* vol 3: *Insight, a study in human understanding*, ed Frederick E. Crowe and Robert H. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp 214–220. Psychic conversion is detailed in the development of Lonergan by Robert Doran in *Theology and the dialectics of history* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp 42–59.

[22] This remembering became for Reginald a thesis question that explored the creation story of humans in the image of God and the life and teaching of Jesus meeting Igbo cultural and religious practice in gender relations for renewed pastoral practice. He titled the project 'African Theology and the Quest for Women's Liberation'.

[23] With the co-operation of his bishop, Bishop Sarpong in Ghana, Anthony completed a field study and theological reflection in a thesis project titled 'The role of the laity in The Church in Kumasi diocese, Ghana: a critique'.