

Message of Father Etienne Triaille to the Pax Romana Assembly in Abidjan

Dear friends of Pax Romana, greetings from Charleroi where I now reside, and best wishes of success for these days of reflection that unite you, Catholic Students and Professionals from Africa.

It is my pleasure to congratulate you, Fred Wamalwa and the organizing committee, for your initiative and the efforts you did to come to this day. From Belgium, I was following your commitment. Thank you.

The challenges that you are facing now and that you will face in the future are hard ones. But I know that together, united with Christ Jesus the founder and the foundation of our faith, we may change the world.

You know, from your daily life, what is challenging you: development of your respective countries, honest governance committed to the wellbeing of populations, changing climate and its consequences, ethnic conflicts, etc.

The theme of your Assembly is open to the future: “Catholic Professionals and the call to Good Citizenship in Africa today”. You feel that it is necessary, for good development, to be good citizens manifesting your commitment as Catholic Professionals. Both parts of the motto are bound and must be shown as such: Catholic and Citizens. My present contribution aims at inviting you to consider and to commit yourselves for the Church and in the Church.

Let us speak about the Church. In the wake of the scandals of pedophilia that the medias abundantly repeat, it has to reform itself from inside. It is necessary to clarify some situations, assure a better formation for priests to their mission and mostly, as the Pope asserts it, to *declericalize* the Church. Here I understand that this is about you!

It is not new that, within Pax Romana, we request a larger audience for the laity; but what was a call, is now a necessity. Time has come to give laity a louder voice in the Church. And, as lay people, you are called to be active members. Catholic Students today, Catholic Professionals today and tomorrow, you are part of the Church in Africa.

To be accepted, your commitment must be serious and motivated. First of all, you must develop for yourself a solid spiritual life rooted in friendship with Jesus, our Master and reference. Spiritual life is nurtured by the Word of God through readings and meditation; take time to read, study and meditate the Good News of Jesus to become experts in the matter. The

testimony of your life and the authenticity of your contribution will make you messengers of Jesus' message: a new world is emerging.

I would like to invite you to see further on the long term. I think that the Church will discover again its fundamental structure: the small communities of life that meet regularly to share the Word of God and the Bread of life. These communities already exist; they read and share the Word of God but, unless there is a priest, they may not share the Body and Blood of Christ; there is something very important missing. We may hope that some day in the future, lay people, married men, fathers of stable families, after due formation could be called to minister in those communities. I see you, Catholic Professionals, assuming that mission. Prepare yourself; give a good testimony of life; be honest and committed to the service of your people and you will be ready for a greater service.

Your Assembly takes place at the time of the Synod of Bishops for the Youth in the world and in the Church. Do you follow what is happening in Rome now? Are you interested? Will you read the final document and see how you may cooperate to the renewal we hope?

My prayer is with you, especially during your meeting days. May the Holy Spirit help you discern the best for the future. I thank God for all what I received through Pax Romana during 50 years, growing with Students and Professionals in Lubumbashi, Kinshasa, Nairobi and from all over Africa.

All the best to all of you!

Charleroi, October 10, 2018

Father Etienne Trialle, SJ