

Peacebuilding in an Interfaith Context in the Great Lakes Region of Africa: The Challenges of Creating New Approaches¹

Emmanuel Ntakarutimana, OP

THE AFRICAN GREAT LAKES REGION HAS EXPERIENCED cyclical violence since countries began gaining independence in the 1960s. The repeated emergence of leaders formed in contexts of rebellion and violence has yielded continuing authoritarian rule rather than democratic societies aimed at the common good. Three key continuing problems today are a regional development deficit, a distrust of institutions and erosion of social capital, and the instrumentalization of religion by authoritarian political regimes. Taking into account this long history of multidimensional vulnerability and instability, leaders of religious denominations are looking for innovative perspectives that could generate new approaches for the strengthening of social capital and the resilience of populations. One such initiative mobilized the energies of religious leaders in the region during 2019 and 2020. It is an interfaith platform called Dignity and Peace in the Great Lakes (PIDP-GL), which brings together representatives of the Catholic Church, traditional Protestant churches, Revivalist churches, and the Islamic community from platforms already operational in the various countries. PIDP-GL was halted by COVID-19, and the effort to revitalize it would benefit greatly from a stronger ecclesiology of peacebuilding for the Church in Africa.

THE GREAT LAKES REGION: A DIFFICULT STABILIZATION

In the wake of the violence and instability that emerged after the period of independence in the Great Lakes region, a wave of democracy movements occurred in the 1990s. In that context, national and regional civil society organizations emerged, particularly in the field of human rights. Religious denominations played a key role in the emergence and establishment of these organizations, particularly after the fall of the Berlin Wall and François Mitterand's *La Baule* speech in June of 1990, in which he urged African nations to

¹ This text, originally written in French, was translated by Fenian Kenney.

strengthen democracy. Both civil society organizations and religious institutions cultivated such growth and helped strengthen the link between democracy and development. There was also the formation of political parties, which challenged the political monopolies held by autocrats. This combination of different factors led to the breakdown of authoritarian, one-party regimes.²

However, the radicalization of the forces deeply rooted in the old regimes, as well as the political immaturity of opposition political parties, has prevented democratic improvements. Civil wars followed one after another in the regional countries, and rebellions took hold in the majority of the countries of Central and Eastern Africa, basing their legitimacy on having fought bloodthirsty dictatorships. After the Burundian and Rwandan tragedies (in 1993 and 1994, respectively), as well as the collapse of the Mobutu regime in Zaïre in 1996, the entire region was embroiled in what became the first African continental war. In the meantime, democratic emancipation movements of the late 1980s were eventually successful at stirring a general sentiment of disenchantment towards the elites who succeeded one another in power. The new leaders, having evolved in contexts of armed rebellions, did not construct political communities founded upon the common good, and instead developed so-called “democratic” regimes while remaining very authoritarian. The regional and international lack of power to restore democratic governance in the face of hardening authoritarian regimes was accepted. The international community largely accepted this resurgent authoritarianism, and did not intervene to facilitate security stabilization, leaving space for the development of a large number of armed groups who circulated in the region. The situation was especially enabled by the opportunity for armed groups to loot natural resources and trade arms. Political manipulations exploiting ethnic and tribal identity affiliations also contributed to the destabilization of society. There has also been great mistrust between states, in particular between Rwanda and Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda. The tragedies that occurred created a deplorable situation for the population, with the new phenomena of armies without borders, child soldiers, large-scale massacres, genocidal ethnic cleansing, and the displacement of populations, giving this region a great number of internally displaced people and refugees. Below, I will outline some of the most pressing current challenges in this context and, since the countries of the region contain a very high percentage of Christians, present some ways that regional Christian

² See André Guichaoua, Emmanuel Ntakirutimana, and Scott Straus, “Aspirations démocratiques et ‘démocraties autoritaires’ en Afrique centrale : Introduction,” *Revue Tiers Monde* 228 (2016): 9, 11–21, www.jstor.org/stable/44949810.

leaders are trying to construct peace and foster reconciliation as part of their evangelical and pastoral missions.³

DYNAMICS OF DISORDER: SOME EFFECTS FREQUENTLY ILL CONSIDERED

The socio-political evolution described above is accompanied by other realities affecting the region deeply. I would like to mention three that seem to me challenges that must be carefully considered in order to strengthen the resilience of populations and advance peacebuilding. These are: the development deficit linked to cultural regression, distrust of institutions accompanying a disarticulation of social capital, and the instrumentalization of religion.

Precarity and Violence Lead to Cultural Regression and Development Deficit

An analysis by the International Center for Transitional Justice illuminates the connection between conflict and low development.⁴ The majority of conflicts have arisen in recent decades in countries with low levels of development, where there has been poverty, inequality, vulnerability, and insecurity of varied kinds.⁵ These countries are marked by histories of massive human rights violations that further undermine the contextual prerequisites for political organization and development. Poverty aggravates the phenomena of marginalization and vulnerability, weakening the groups faced with abuses of power. The great inequalities that have developed generate frustration and incubate violence. Here, the problems of corruption and the illegal exploitation of natural resources become important. They constitute economic crimes that widen inequality and prevent benefits of development from reaching the poor. Another factor is that violence resulting from this cyclical insecurity leads to the destruction of physical infrastructure, further hindering development. A 2006 World Bank report showed that poverty leads to lower expectations among populations, which, in turn, produces a negative impact on

³ Estimates of the percentage of Christians: 85% in Uganda, 93% in Rwanda, 91% in Burundi, 90% in RDC, 80% in the Central African Republic (africa.la-croix.com/statistiques/).

⁴ See Pablo de Greiff and Roger Duthie, eds., *Transitional Justice and Development: Making Connections* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2009).

⁵ This issue was also treated in a 2017 conference hosted by Centre Ubuntu in Burundi. See Emmanuel Ntakarutimana, "La dimension développement dans un processus de 'justice transitionnelle,'" Centre Ubuntu, December 16, 2017, www.centre-ubuntu.bi/fr/content/la-dimension-d%C3%A9veloppement-dans-un-processus-de-%C2%AB-justice-transitionnelle-%C2%BB.

development.⁶ Developing countries have become acutely aware of this relationship between conflict, social capital, political organization, and development, affirming the capability approach to understanding development popularized by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, especially the categories of “Capability and Well-Being,” “Development as Freedom,” and “Agency.”⁷

In the communities of the region, reflexes of seclusion are developing which confine people to their families, clubs, and close groups, reducing public space and engagement. This leads to a disconnection from the common good. These realities do not only affect victims of violence and atrocities. Indeed, this dynamic of fear is contagious. The perpetrators of human rights violations also develop the same type of seclusion reflex as the victims, not only because of feelings of insecurity toward possible retaliation, but also out of fear of revolt and a reversal of the social situation. In such a context, it becomes difficult for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations, or more generally those with political or social power and those deprived of it, to imagine working together on initiatives of solidarity and development.

Mistrust of Institutions

Another phenomenon that generally appears in violent settings is the loss of trust in institutions. How could one respond positively to an authority or institution one is convinced no longer shares the same goals or values? Among victims, the words and decisions of institutional authorities provoke resentment, which does not allow any sense of free collaboration for the development of programs. The institutions are thus obliged to resort to force in order to implement decisions, which increases frustration and the potential for violence. The poor feel subjected to pressure obliging them to subscribe to norms whose social effects contribute to the reduction of their dignity by exacerbating inequalities, further marginalizing them, and restricting their access to goods and services. Everything I have just mentioned here shows how poverty, the question of human rights violations, and the destruction of any ethical basis for social action are intrinsically linked and constitute an impediment to development. The real engine of development is respect and promotion of life. A study

⁶ World Bank, *World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2006), chap. 2, esp. 48ff, documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/435331468127174418/pdf/322040World0Development0Report02006.pdf.

⁷ Amartya Sen, “Well-Being, Agency, and Freedom,” *Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 4 (1985): 169–221, doi.org/10.2307/2026184; Amartya Sen, “Capability and Well-Being,” in *The Quality of Life*, ed. Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 30–53, doi.org/10.1093/0198287976.003.0003.

by Philip Keefer and Stephen Knack has shown that there is a correlation between respect for civil and political rights and economic growth, as well as a correlation between political instability and violence and economic regression.⁸

Instrumentalization of Religion

The zeal of religion is very striking in the Great Lakes region today. Both the old religious denominations and the new religious movements experience great enthusiasm in their places of worship. The creation of new religious movements gives us the impression that we have finally reached an environment where we can immerse ourselves in the breath of life. We feel we are better protected. We find new friendships that recreate human warmth and community support. We have the feeling that we are entering a new era, thus satisfying eschatological hope and guiding ourselves by an ethical code adaptable to situations far from that of the great churches, which is quite rigid.

These new religious movements influence collective life often by offering simple answers to complex questions of existence, such as life, death, illness, and poverty. This may provoke among followers a refusal to engage in the fight against social problems. Charismatic authority uses different methods to anesthetize the critical spirit of the faithful. When this happens, these movements are sources of profit for their founders. Moreover, a politicized religion promoting a socio-political messianism where political leaders are seen as elected by God to lead his people can emerge. The last two decades in Burundi, for example, have reflected this. But throughout the region, religion is frequently instrumentalized in a way that limits political freedom and democratic processes. Because religion is such a powerful social energy, it is an effective tool for this purpose. It coalesces with the mobilization of identity and tribal passions that engender a fear of otherness and create a barrier to establishing collective national projects for the common good.

New religious movements are also impacting economic currents. They are proving to be a driver of an economic liberalism disconnected from a sense of solidarity or broader national interests. These movements transmit theologies of individual prosperity, in line with the prosperity gospel associated with North American movements of Pentecostalism and other revivalist movements. The insistence on personal salvation is a corollary to these new religious movements, a vision inspired by the economic vision of success. The

⁸ Philip Keefer and Stephen Knack, "Why Don't Poor Countries Catch Up? A Cross-National Test of an Institutional Explanation," *Economic Inquiry* 35, no. 3 (1997): 590–602, doi.org/10.1111/j.1465-7295.1997.tb02035.x.

community dimension of salvation is little mentioned, and social sins affecting structural levels not considered. In the Great Lakes region, we notice an increasingly effective presence of leaders from the upper sphere of political life able to leverage these religious forces for political and economic gain.

Taking into account this long history of multidimensional vulnerability, leaders of religious denominations, with support from the international community, are looking for innovative perspectives that could generate new approaches for strengthening resilience, renewing social capital, and promoting peacebuilding. One such initiative is the focus of the next section.

THE DREAM OF AN INTERFAITH PLATFORM TO PROMOTE PEACE AND DIGNITY IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

In an attempt to stabilize the region, and in consultation with the United Nations, a regional structure has been established by national leaders in countries of the region. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), bringing together Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, the DRC, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia was set up to work towards stabilizing the region.⁹ Since all of these countries are interconnected, it is impossible to stabilize one country alone without regional harmonization.

The religious denominations working in these countries felt challenged. The Catholic Church has often played a leadership role in bringing together religious denominations and institutions to promote common values and develop good relations. One such initiative mobilized the energies of religious leaders in the region during 2019 and 2020. The interfaith platform called Dignity and Peace in the Great Lakes (PIDP-GL) brings together representatives of the Catholic Church, traditional Protestant churches, Revivalist churches, and the Islamic community from initiatives already operational in the various countries, including Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the DRC, The Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and South Sudan. Seeing the strength of national-level inter-confessional collaboration in the DRC, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan, the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO) was inspired to bring together different confessions from across the sub-region to form PIDP-GL.

During 2019, workshops brought together representatives of religious denominations, who were able to analyze the situation in their countries, reviewing the main socio-political challenges, socio-

⁹ See the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, icglr.org.

economic situation, state of collaborative relations between religious groups, coexistence of ethnic and tribal groups, relational quality of the region, hotbeds of tension in the countries and the most threatening potential conflicts, and prospects of upcoming election cycles. In the same vein, they were able to assess the quality of respect for human rights, discuss the main perpetrators of human rights violations, and assess the state of political dialogue between the various socio-political actors. The technical teams of this project also spent time analyzing who controls the media, police, and army in their countries in order to assess potential threats and identify the red lines they could not afford to cross. These parameters and other exchanged elements made it possible to envisage possible scenarios for the following years—the most optimistic, pessimistic, and probable. The critical question remained: what would be needed for religious denominations to be able to exert a positive influence in each of the different scenarios?

The results of the various national workshops were shared by the delegates from the countries during a workshop held in Switzerland from October 27 to November 3, 2019, with facilitation and technical support from the Swiss NGO CATIMPACT. The participants came to the conclusion that it was necessary to develop synergy between religious denominations working in these different countries in order to strengthen their contribution to solving regional problems related to peacebuilding and human rights. An important factor was recognizing that violent conflict in one country leads to fragilities throughout the rest, requiring an approach that could work across borders. That led PIDP-GL to shape a commitment to the shared values of the participating religious confessions and the overarching tradition of *ubuntu*. The concept of *ubuntu* is common in the Bantu languages that stretch roughly from Uganda to South Africa, expressing a relational understanding of human nature. It describes a sense of the human being as “human *being*,” frequently understood with an affirmation of communal belonging: “I am because we are.” It emphasizes values of integrity, solidarity, and compassion, along with respect for unity in diversity.

This shared commitment with our Muslim brothers and sisters was strengthened by Pope Francis in 2020. In his appeal for fraternity and social friendship in *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis built on his experience meeting with Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb of Al Azhar in Cairo, a meeting that allowed the joint signing of the “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” in 2019.¹⁰ Where the

¹⁰ Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, “Document on Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together,” February 4, 2019, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/

theological category of “fraternity” appears common within the church, Francis reinterpreted it to include others outside the church as well. This marks an innovation in the understanding of “social friendship,” akin to how reconciliation has been reinterpreted as political reconciliation in recent years in some academic circles.

PIDP-GL has set for itself the following vision based on this shared embrace of *ubuntu* values by the participating Christian and Muslim members: “A sub-region reconciled and united in its diversity, where dignity and peace reign.”¹¹ And its mission is to promote: living together through respect for human rights and civic duty in order to guarantee respect for human dignity and peace; education in the values of *ubuntu*, justice, and peace; the values of *ubuntu* by engaging religious leaders, socio-political leaders, and economic actors; collaboration between religious denominations and other sectors of society; the strengthening of mechanisms for conflict prevention and non-violent conflict transformation by facilitating reconciliation processes within and between countries of the sub-region; and the role of women and youth in peacebuilding efforts and leadership. The theory of change animating PIDP-GL’s goals is this: *IF* we create spaces of dialogue for political actors and social leaders for issues about peace and human rights, *THEN* they will adopt and influence new behaviors and seek new solutions, *BECAUSE* only with intentional formation will leaders become peacebuilders, and religious denominations have the credibility to engender that formation.

To mobilize this mission, PIDP-GL is focused on the following sectors of action:

1. Peacebuilding: This includes conflict transformation, mediation, and reconciliation;
2. Civic education: Developing initiatives related to improving the quality of electoral governance as well as the promotion and defense of human rights;
3. Advocacy skills: Making competent actors available to help teach and lead policy advocacy for those affected by human rights violations and the integration of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons;
4. Healing of memories: The accumulated layers of trauma generated by cyclical crises at the national and regional levels require substantial attention and the development of strategies for healing.

2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html.

¹¹ Emmanuel Ntakrutimana, OP, “Efforts d’édification de la paix en Afrique—Réponses évolutives et nouvelles approches,” www.catimpact.org/fr/efforts-dedification-de-la-paix-en-afrique/.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has halted the mobilization of this platform. The pandemic has led to border closures restricting regional cooperation, and the effects of the pandemic have led many organizations to shift the focus of their outreach and initiatives. In addition, conflict has spiked in the eastern zone of the DRC, and tensions between the DRC and Rwanda have increased. This changed context has been another challenge for implementing regional cooperation.

The members of PIDP-GL continue to network about the situation in the sub-region. Since the initial platform was developed, they have recognized that additional challenges must be faced, including sectors that require great technical expertise and even broader coalitions. One such issue is the exploitation of natural resources, an enormous theater for human rights violations frequently connected to violent conflict, especially in the eastern DRC. Illegal armed groups associated with natural resource extraction are also driving arms trade, drug trafficking, and illicit money flows. These dynamics are not confined to single countries; a regional effort is required to address the problems they create. At this time, no determinations have been made about whether these issues will be incorporated into the existing mission and goals.

“BONDING” THE CHURCH IN AFRICA FOR PEACEBUILDING

Catholic Relief Services has had great success worldwide with programming to strengthen social cohesion and foster interreligious cooperation, including for peacebuilding. They label their methodology the “3 Bs”: binding, which involves change and conversion at the individual level; bonding, which involves developing common vision and goals within identity groups; and bridging, which is when different identity groups engage for collaboration and social change.¹² The methodology presumes that before inter-group collaboration can occur effectively, intra-group dissonances regarding the area of collaboration need to be addressed. Thus, as PIDP-GL attempts to recover momentum lost to COVID-19, the Catholic community could focus on strengthening its bonding around the ecclesial mission for peacebuilding, and more scholarship connecting Catholic social teaching and theological ethics on peace to ecclesiology, particularly African ecclesiology, would be a great benefit.

Pope Benedict XVI helped lay a foundation for an African ecclesiology oriented to a peacebuilding mission and primed for

¹² See Catholic Relief Services, *The Ties That Bind: Building Social Cohesion in Divided Communities* (Baltimore, MD: Catholic Relief Services, 2017), www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/ties-bind.

interreligious collaboration in *Africae Munus* in 2011. In his introduction to this apostolic exhortation following 2009's Africa Synod, Benedict encouraged the church to join in dialogue with other "religious, social, political, economic, cultural, and scientific communities" to face the continent's crises. He called the Synod Fathers' desire to respond to this need an "imperative born of the Gospel" (*Africae Munus*, nos. 11–12). Benedict was careful to note that the church's ultimate mission cannot be a political one (*Africae Munus*, no. 23). But he also assented to the fact that "one of the tasks of the Church in Africa consists in forming upright consciences receptive to the demands of justice, so as to produce men and women willing and able to build this just social order by their responsible conduct" (*Africae Munus*, no. 22). Benedict's understanding of what this conscience formation responsibility looks like was socially expansive. For example, he affirmed Justice and Peace Commissions that assist in electoral processes and provide civic education (*Africae Munus*, no. 23), and assigned the church responsibility to work with government authorities and public and private institutions to promote good governance and a just social order (*Africae Munus*, no. 81). In addition to these statements about how the Church in Africa should engage civic life, Benedict also called for cooperation with non-Catholics. He highlighted the importance of fraternal communion among the whole ecclesial family of Africa, and with regard to Islam, he stated: "I call upon the Church, in every situation, to persist in esteem for Muslims. ... If all of us who believe in God desire to promote reconciliation, justice, and peace, we must work together to banish every form of discrimination, intolerance, and religious fundamentalism" (*Africae Munus*, no. 94).

Consonant with *Africae Munus*'s mission statement for the Church in Africa in the twenty-first century, ACEAC and AMECEA, the regional episcopal associations of Central and Eastern Africa, along with the National Episcopal Conferences of Burundi, the DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda, developed a strategic plan for peacebuilding in 2010.¹³ It was the result of a three-year process that included partnership with and support from the Holy See, the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, Caritas Internationalis, Catholic Relief Services, Misereor, the US conference of bishops, and the Catholic Peacebuilding Network. The challenges of implementing that plan show just how difficult "bonding" the church for peacebuilding can be given current limitations, especially at the regional level PIDP-GL has attempted to engage.

¹³ For the full strategic plan, see cpn.nd.edu/assets/510931/final_strategic_plan_great_lakes_recd_june_27_2011.pdf.

The plan involved several overarching strategic goals for joint advocacy, exchanging experience, and responding to conflict fallout. It also included a goal of establishing a secretariat to coordinate peace and reconciliation work among the ecclesial groups involved. One notable success to emerge from the plan was the founding of an academic institute for peace and reconciliation at the Catholic University of Bukavu in the DRC under the auspices of ACEAC, a historic act of collaboration between the conferences of bishops of the DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi.¹⁴ But largely, it has proven difficult for regional churches to wrap their arms around a regional platform for peace, addressing the regional nature of conflict. As has been described by Gerard Powers, the coordinator of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network, implementation of the plan has been hindered by socio-political factors like instability, underdevelopment, and the need to devote resources to other ongoing and emerging crises, but also intra-church challenges like inability to reach consensus on issues and problems navigating institutions whose mandates do not precisely overlap with zones of conflicts.¹⁵ An ecclesiology more inclusive of peacebuilding would help create a more bonded regional approach to peace and justice.

In a contribution to the 2016 volume *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*, Stan Chu Ilo, from Nigeria, expressed well what is needed for an invigoration of African ecclesiology. Ilo used the pastoral vision of Pope Francis as a starting point and outlined three “As” needed for the Church in Africa. First is accountability, which involves bringing the best out of Africa’s resources—human, cultural, and natural—and being a church of reconciliation in order to heal divisions in the church and wider society.¹⁶ Second is accompaniment. This means maintaining a pastoral focus on “the incarnational principle of totally identifying with other people, especially those in need.”¹⁷ Ilo did not refer directly to the principle of *ubuntu*, but he noted that a church of accompaniment would “reflect the African sense of community and interconnectedness,” in keeping

¹⁴ La Croix, “L’Église africaine crée un institut pour la paix et la réconciliation à Bukavu (RD-Congo),” *La Croix*, June 7, 2015, www.la-croix.com/Religion/Actualite/L-Eglise-africaine-cree-un-institut-pour-la-paix-et-la-reconciliation-a-Bukavu-RD-Congo-2015-06-07-1320733.

¹⁵ Gerard F. Powers, “Toward an Integral Catholic Peacebuilding,” *The Journal of Social Encounters* 1, no. 1 (2017): 9–10, digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/social_encounters/vol1/iss1/2/.

¹⁶ Stan Chu Ilo, “The Church of Pope Francis: An Ecclesiology of Accountability, Accompaniment, and Action,” in *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016), 23–25.

¹⁷ Ilo, “The Church of Pope Francis,” 27.

with *ubuntu*.¹⁸ Third is action, meaning the Church in Africa should embrace the responsibility to undertake actions and deeds that can transform society in light of the Gospel of Christ.¹⁹ Ilo did not call any of this peacebuilding, but a church that makes itself accountable for reconciliation, accompanies the vulnerable, and commits to action to improve the common good would be one constructing a strong foundation for peacebuilding. Regional and interreligious initiatives to transform conflict, heal trauma, and improve governance, all in the service of peace, need a church with a more robustly developed ecclesiology of peacebuilding, along the lines of Ilo's and Benedict XVI's visions, as well as that of Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*, in order to be successful.

CONCLUSION

The work to be done for stabilizing society in the Great Lakes region is enormous. The issues of peace, trauma healing, and reconciliation are complex and require certain technical capabilities. They also depend upon a lot of energy, which necessitates the development of coalitions and collaboration. From the perspective of the church, at the base of everything there is a spiritual requirement to follow Christ, dialogue with leaders of other religious denominations who share many of the same values and hopes for society and develop with them synergies of action to create political communities that are places of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis engaged in a reflection on fraternity and social friendship. He elaborated his conception of social and political charity and the activity of political love. He launched his reflection by questioning the populism and liberalism developed in recent years: the former for exploiting the vulnerable for demagoguery and political gain, and the latter for neglecting the vulnerable while enriching the powerful (*Fratelli Tutti*, nos. 155–169). In contrast, he called for leaders who can operate with a politics of charity: “Recognizing that all people are our brothers and sisters, and seeking forms of social friendship that include everyone, is not merely utopian. It demands a decisive commitment to devising effective means to this end” (*Fratelli Tutti*, no. 180). PIDP-GL is an attempt to express such charity and help transform the African Great Lakes region in a way that makes it conducive to this sort of leadership for the sake of integral peace. To be successful, initiatives like PIDP-GL need the support of a more strongly bonded African Church taking to heart the mission of peacebuilding so that regional and interreligious projects can be built on a more supportive foundation. **M**

¹⁸ Ilo, “The Church of Pope Francis,” 28.

¹⁹ Ilo, “The Church of Pope Francis,” 29.

Emmanuel Ntakarutimana, OP, is Director of Centre Ubuntu, a laboratory for analysis and action for the promotion of peace and reconciliation in Burundi and the Great Lakes region of Africa. He also leads the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Burundi's initiative to establish a Catholic university in Burundi.