Metaphor as a Rhetorical Tool in Selected Roman Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letters in Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province, Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate metaphor as a rhetorical device in selected Roman Catholic Bishops' pastoral letters in Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province of Nigeria, in order to discover its effectiveness as a persuasive tool in the letters. Data for the study, which span between 2000 and 2010, were selected through purposive sampling from five dioceses out of the seven dioceses in the province. The data were analysed based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory as posited by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Analysis revealed that Catholic bishops in Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province have effectively deployed metaphors of planting, journey, war, water, building, light, food, body parts, health and meteorology for the purpose of persuading their audience to accept their messages. The paper concludes that metaphor as a persuasive tool has been deployed by the Catholic bishops in Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province, in their pastoral letters. This study is a significant contribution to studies on the language and style of religion, especially in the area of Roman Catholic bishops' pastoral letters whose language has not received adequate attention from linguistic scholars.

Key words: Metaphor, rhetorical tool, pastoral letters, Roman Catholic bishops, Onitsha Ecclesiastical province.

1. Introduction

The annual pastoral letters of the Roman Catholic bishops in Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province of Nigeria are concerned with promoting the Catholic faith and its practice among the faithful in the Province. The bishops, as the custodians of the Catholic faith and as the shepherds of the flocks in their respective dioceses, have the responsibility of teaching the faith and encouraging the faithful to practice and defend it. This way they not only carry out Christ's mandate of evangelization which they have received through their Episcopal ordination as successors of the apostles, but also ensure continued survival of the Catholic faith. The faithful on their part are expected to act and live their lives in defense of the Catholic faith in the face of challenging social, religious, cultural and political circumstances. The bishops project this subject matter in two ways: by teaching and exhorting the believers on the Catholic faith and by persuading them to live by that faith. The teaching and the exhortation, which are based on the Catholic doctrine, dwell on three major themes: faith, repentance, and love. Under these themes, several sub themes (specific socio-religious issues) are discussed.

Metaphor is one of the rhetorical devices deployed by the bishops in their pastoral letters. Rhetorical devices are strategies of language use deployed by speakers and writers to enhance effective communication. Harris (2009) identifies three categories of rhetorical devices: those involving emphasis, association, clarification, and focus; those involving physical organization, transition, and disposition or arrangement; and those involving decoration and variety. As Dlugan (2008) rightly points out, a speech or writing devoid of rhetorical devices is like a painting void of colour. Metaphor as a rhetorical is exploited by the bishops for the purpose of ensuring effective communication of their messages and compliance by the faithful. Metaphor is generally seen as the mapping of meaning, or transference of properties, from one concept onto another. It is a tool for representing one entity or event in terms of some other related entity without explicitly stating a likeness (Bloor and Bloor, 2007). Wikberg (2008:34) describes metaphor as "a way of seeing something in terms of something else, a process which involves a linguistic expression referring in an unconventional way to people, animals, things, events, or concepts on the basis of some similarity, correlation, or analogy."

Metaphor as a figure that involves a gap between the conventional meaning of words and their occasion-specific use provides us with a means of explaining the unknown in terms of the known. It is therefore a kind of analogical reasoning through which abstractions or descriptions are made concrete and vivid to drive home points.

The basic identifying features of a linguistic metaphor is the occurrence of a lexical item from a domain or semantic field different from that of the topic of the ongoing talk, together with a potential transfer or change of meaning from the new semantic field to the ongoing topic (Cameron, 2007). Charteris Black (2005) sees metaphor as having linguistic, pragmatic and cognitive characteristics. Its linguistic characteristic is seen in its ability to cause semantic tension either by reification or personification; its pragmatic characteristic is seen in the fact that metaphor is motivated by the underlying purpose of persuading; while its cognitive characteristic is that a metaphor is caused by, and may cause a shift in the conceptual system.

On the uses of metaphor, Jacobs and Heracleous (2004) state that metaphors can help to concretize vague and abstract ideas, can holistically convey a large amount of information, can foster new ways of looking at things, and can facilitate change by providing a bridge from the familiar to the strange. Standard rhetorical functions of metaphor, according to Smith (2007), include: the logos function of providing an analogy that helps communicate the substance of the writer's point; the ethos function of establishing the writer as a credible and intelligent source of information; the pathos function of evoking favourable emotions; and the rhetorical style function of drawing attention and emphasis to the writer's point.

Saeed (2009) identifies two traditional positions on the role of metaphor in language. One is the classical view which conceives of metaphor as a kind of decorative addition to ordinary plain language, a rhetorical device to be used at certain times to gain certain effects. The second position is the Romantic view which considers metaphor as an evidence of the role of the imagination in conceptualizing and reasoning, and as such is a feature of all language. Analysis of metaphor here is based on the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), which is an extension of the romantic view of metaphor.

The basic tenet of Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor theory, as expounded in their work, *Metaphors we live by* (1980), is that metaphor is a conceptual rather than a purely linguistic phenomenon. According to the authors, "our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature." Based on the regularity with which different languages employ the same metaphors, CMT proposes a principled relationship between metaphoric meanings and literal ones. The terminologies conceptual domain, target, source, and mapping are employed in order to systematically explain this. A conceptual domain refers to any coherent organisation of human experience; source is the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions (usually a concrete concept); while target is the conceptual domain that we try to understand (usually an abstract concept); mapping is the systematic set of correspondences that exist between constituent elements of the source and the target domain. According to this theory, metaphors allow us to understand the less concrete or abstract ideas in terms of more concrete concepts. When we use the terms of one domain to speak about another domain, we employ a metaphor that 'highlights certain features while suppressing others' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980:14) and this is based on similarities as well as contrast between the two domains.

The theory is found useful for the analysis of religious discourse which "contains utterances of merely religious character relating to some reality that is impossible to be grasped, in the believers' opinion, as well as utterances relating to reality that can be comprehended in common experience." (Sztazer,…50). It is particularly useful in this study which is concerned with ensuring proper understanding of the Catholic faith and its practice among the faithful in Onitsha province. Analysis of metaphors in the letters through the CMT will reveal the aspects of meaning in the source domains that are mapped onto the target domains and the communicative effectiveness of the metaphors.

2. *Methodology and Data Presentation*

The study capitalised on a corpus of ten pastoral letters, ranging between 20 and 104 pages, written between February and March (the Lenten Period), and spanning between 2000 and 2010. The letters were sampled through purposive sampling method, from five out of the seven dioceses in the Catholic Ecclesiastical Province of Onitsha in the South-eastern region of Nigeria (The seven dioceses in the province are: the arch diocese of Onitsha, the dioceses of Enugu, Awka, Nnewi, Awgu, Abakaliki,and Nsukka). Two pastoral letters were selected from each of the five sampled dioceses. For ease of reference, the sampled letters are abbreviated as follows:

1. Call to Conversion: CTC
2. God Is Calling us to Reconciliation: GCTR
3. We Walk by Faith: WWF
4. From Faith to Faith: FFF
5. The Measure of Love: TML
6. If only You Have Faith: IYHF
7. Repent and Believe the Good News: RBGN
8. Living in the Amazing Love of God: LALG
9. Living the Faith: LTF
10. Okwukwe Ezi Olu: OEO

Analysis of data was based on both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the case of the quantitative method the metaphors identified from the letters were classified and their frequency of occurrence established and computed in simple percentages. In the case of the qualitative method the metaphors were described, explained and interpreted based on Lakoff-Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory which was adopted because of its view of metaphor as a way of concretizing abstract concepts. Adoption of both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis was valuable, as it allowed statistically reliable information obtained through quantitative analysis to be backed up and enriched by explanations offered through qualitative analysis.

3. Data Analysis

In the bishops' letters, metaphors are used to provide striking vivid images aimed at enhancing the communicative meaning of the discourse and the persuasive effect of the letters. They are used to describe vividly ideas relating to the themes of the letters, which are faith, repentance, and love. Prominent among the metaphors deployed in the letters are those drawn from the semantic fields of planting, journey, war, water, building, light, food, body parts, health and meteorology.

3.1 Metaphor of Planting

Metaphor of planting constitutes the highest frequency of 30.2% of all the metaphor types deployed in the bishops' letters. Planting is concerned with sowing of seeds and harvesting of crops as well as other related activities. In the bishops' letters the ontology of planting is mapped onto abstract ideas in order to make descriptions concrete and vivid. For example, faith is represented as tree, seed, fruit, soil, and harvest; good works as fruits and flowers; Lent as planting season; a Christian as a reed; love as plant and root; Christian family as flower, etc. Some of these metaphors are exemplified by the following texts:

Faith as tree/good works as fruits and flowers

Text 1: …as a **tree**, **it [faith] grows** yielding **fruits** and **flowers of good works** of love. (IYHF, p.27)

Faith as seed, tree/our first Christians as fruits

Text 2: Under the difficult and dangerous circumstances, they [the early missionaries] **sowed** the **seed of faith** and nurtured it. It **germinated**, **blossomed** and **bore fruits** in **our first Christians**_ the pioneers of faith in Awgu diocese *(LTF, p.4).*

False doctrines and teachings as poisonous weeds

Text 3: There are abundant warnings in the New Testaments against the **poisonous weeds of false doctrines and teachings** (*FFF*, p.48)

Metaphors in the texts above are drawn from the domain of planting. In text 1, faith is represented as tree, and good works as fruits. The abstract entity faith is conceptualized as having the qualities of a concrete entity tree and these include growing, flowering and fruiting. The bishops want the faithful to understand faith as a phenomenon that grows, flowers, and brings forth fruits just as tree does. But in the case of faith, the flowers and fruits are good works of love. The bishops have used this metaphor in order to create for a concrete and vivid picture of the kind of faith the faithful are expected to have: practical faith, faith that is expressed in good works.
In text 2, faith is conceptualized as seed and tree. The stages which a seed passes through, right from its planting, through nurturing, up to germination, blossoming and fruition are transferred to faith. The early missionaries likened to the farmer who sows and nurtures his seed until it grows and bears fruit. The seed corresponds to Christian faith; its growth and bearing of fruits correspond to the development of the faith to maturity.

Just as the farmer's seed grows, matures and bears fruit, so did the Christians who received Christian faith from the early missionaries grow, mature and become teachers of faith themselves, as exemplified in the pioneers of faith in Awgu diocese. The bishops use this metaphor to concretize the productive activities of the early missionaries among his people, so as to persuade the faithful to do likewise in the spirit of evangelization.

In text 3, false doctrines and teachings, that is, the teachings that go contrary to the teaching of the apostles, are represented as poisonous weeds. The phrase *poisonous weeds* is a Biblical allusion to Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds. Weeds are unwanted plants in the farmer's farm, which are considered dangerous to the crops, more especially when they are poisonous, and so the farmer wastes no time in uprooting them. Similarly, false doctrines and teachings, like poisonous weeds, are considered by the bishops to be dangerous to true doctrine and teaching of the apostles, and so should likewise be uprooted. This metaphor is used by the bishops to make clear to the faithful the danger inherent in accepting non-Catholic doctrines and teachings which they consider to be contrary to the apostolic doctrine and teachings which the Catholic Church upholds.

3.2 Metaphor of Journey

Metaphor of journey is the second highest metaphor deployed by the bishops in their letters. It has a frequency rate of 17.7%. Journey means movement from one place to another. Embarking on a journey involves some stages of movement, before one finally gets to one's destination. Our journeys typically have a beginning and an end, a sequence of places on the way and direction (Saeed, 2009:368). Abioye (2011:44) notes that life involves movement back and forth, is subject to change, and cannot be pinned down at any point in time; "it is full of events and incidents, either palatable or unpalatable." In the bishops' letters the ontology of journey is mapped onto the abstract entities, such that faith is conceptualized as pilgrimage, journey, path; repentance as return journey; life as pilgrimage, road, etc. Consider the following examples:

Repentance as a journey

Text 4: Any event of **conversion** is a **return journey** to the Father. (*CTC*, p.7)

Faith as pilgrimage

Text 5: Mary is the pre-eminent model of a lived faith. She advanced in her **pilgrimage of faith**, from Annunciation to Calvary and then to Pentecost, faithful every step of the way. (*LTF,* p.58)

Faith as path

Text 6: For, one "can never really reach Jesus, except by the **path of faith**, on a journey of which the stages seem to be indicated to us by the Gospel itself…" (***Novo Millennio Inneunte***, *no.19). (WWF*, p.6)

The above texts contain journey metaphors. The features of journey as an activity that involves movement from one place to another are transferred to Conversion and faith. In text 4, conversion is conceptualized as a return journey. A return journey may mean going back to the place from where one started a journey or travel moving from another place to a place where one belongs. The latter is the case here. The bishops admonish the faithful to make a return journey to God to whom they rightly belong. Just as journey involves stages of movement so does conversion involve processes, some of which include Lenten observances of prayer, fasting and abstinence, and alms-giving. This journey metaphor is used by the bishops to make the faithful understand the need to participate in the Lenten activities through which they are expected to renew their lives. In text 5, Mary's faith is said to undergo the same stages involved in a journey. Her faith progresses, just as her journey progresses, from Annunciation to Calvary and Pentecost. By the use of this metaphor, the bishops explain clearly the need for faith to grow and develop. In text 6, which is direct quotation from Pope's document, faith is conceptualised as path. Path is the road to a destination in a journey. In this metaphor, faith corresponds to path, while Jesus corresponds to the destination. Just as one cannot get to his destination without following the right part, no one can get to Jesus without having faith, as that is the only qualification. This metaphor is a way of describing vividly to the faithful the importance of faith in a relationship with Christ.

3.3 Metaphor of War

Metaphors of war are those relating to fight, contest, battle, conflict, etc. These involve the use of weapons, whether physical or non-physical. The bishops use war terminologies in the letter to describe abstract ideas so as to ensure understanding. For example, they represent faith, Bible, and love as weapon; faith as shield and war; devil's machinations as darts; Gospel as army; prayer as battle; etc. Instances of war metaphor are found in the following texts:

Faith as shield/machinations of the devil as darts

Text 7: It is to our advantage if we can imitate Mary, draw inspiration from her and learn how to face life **armed with the shield of faith**, with which we can quench all the flaming **darts** of the evil one (Eph. 6:16). (*IYHF*, p.45)

Love as weapon

Text 8: …His Holiness, Pope John Paul II calls us to win the world with the **weapons of love** (*TML*, p.11)

Scripture as double-edged sword

Text 9: **It [the Scripture]** is a **double-edged sword** coming out from the mouth of God (Rev. 1:16) (*WWF,* p.48)

The metaphors deployed in the texts above belong to the field of war. Faith, love and Scripture are represented as weapons, instruments of warfare. In text 7, faith is conceptualized as a *shield,* and the machinations of the devil as *flaming darts.* The faithful correspond to soldiers. Just as soldiers use shield to deflect the opponents' weapons and prevent themselves from being harmed during war, the faithful are enjoined to learn from Mary how to use faith to counter the evil machinations of the devil and protect themselves from being worn over (In the Catholic Church Mary is believed to be a model of faith). This semantic mapping is meant to make the faithful understand the importance of faith in resisting the devil and whatever he stands for. It aims to persuade them to be steadfast in their Catholic faith.

In text 8, which is a report of Pope's message, love is conceptualized as weapon. The Pope enjoins the Catholic faithful to use love to win souls, just as soldiers use weapon to win wars. By quoting the pope's message, the bishops bring this call home to the faithful in their dioceses. They use the metaphor to make clear to the faithful the strength there is in love. In text 9, the abstract entity Scripture is represented as a weapon of war, double-edged sword, which is a concrete entity. Just as the double-edged sword is a powerful instrument of war in the hand of the soldier, which accomplishes victory for him, the word of God is a powerful instrument in the hand of a Christian, which accomplishes victory for him. By this transfer of meaning, the bishops demonstrate vividly to the faithful the strength there is in the word of God.

3.4   Metaphor of Water

Water is characterized by its flowing property. Metaphor of water resides in the use of water or water-like substances to conceptualize abstract entities. In the bishops' letters, love is conceptualized as liquid; unity as fluid; faith as fountain of water; God as well-spring; Scripture and Sacred Tradition as water; Christian prayer as water; Catholic Church as fountain of water; moral and spiritual decadence as water current, etc. Examples of these metaphors are found in the texts below:

The Scripture and the Sacred Tradition as water

Text 10:   **Both the Scripture and the Sacred Tradition** are closely bound together and communicate one with the other as **flowing** from the same **divine wellspring**… (*WWF*, p.32)

Faith as fountain

Text 11: **Faith** is like…**a fountain**…as **a fountain**, **good works flow** out of it… (IYHF, p.27)

Moral and spiritual decadence as water current

Text 12: Our Christians must **swim** against the prevailing **current** of **moral and spiritual decadence** by mounting the noble platform of true Christian living. (GCTR, p.15)

In text 10, the metaphor is reflected in the association of the word 'flowing' (which is associated with liquids, usually water, in this case as indicated by the compound word 'wellspring') with the Scripture and Sacred Tradition which are abstract entities. The idea of water as a liquid that flows is transferred to the Scripture and the Sacred Tradition. These correspond to water, while well-spring corresponds to God. Just as water flows from the well-spring, both the Scripture and the Sacred Tradition derive from God. The bishops have employed this metaphor in order to explain vividly and forcefully to the faithful the fact that both the Scripture and the Sacred Tradition are sources of divine revelation. This explanation is necessitated by the fact that some Catholics question Church teachings and practices that are not supported by the Scriptures.

In text 11, faith is represented as fountain, and good works as water. Just as water naturally flows from a fountain, good works naturally proceed from faith. This metaphor is used to make clear to the faithful the point that good works are a natural outcome of faith, so as to persuade them to express their faith in good works. In text 12, moral and spiritual decadence are conceptualised as water current, and true Christian living as noble platform.

Just as a ship resists the water current by mounting on the platform for safety, the faithful are enjoined to resist the moral and spiritual decadence in the country by living a true Christian life. The bishops use this metaphor to make their message clear and understandable.

3.5 Metaphor of Building

Building is concerned with construction of houses and other similar structures. It is a gradual process which progresses from one stage to another until it reaches completion. This meaning is transferred to other fields to make their descriptions concrete and clear. For example, faith is represented as house and foundation; Catholic Church as pillar; truth as house, etc. The following texts contain examples of building metaphors as deployed in the bishops' letters.

Faith as house

Text 13: Such is the real faith, a **faith built on a rock** which never fell. (*OEO*, p.8)

Church as pillar/truth as building

Text 14: Some critical points that must be accepted as the basis of the new world are the primacy of the spirit over matter;… the necessity of the **Church as the pillar** and mainstay of the truth… (WWF, p.58)

Christian Catholic lives and communities as house/faith as foundation

Text 15: We need to embrace anew the gospel of Jesus Christ in its radicality and **rebuild our Christian Catholic lives and communities** on the solid **foundation of faith** (WWF, p.24).

In the above texts 13, faith is represented in terms of house. Experts in the field of building are of the view that a house built on a rocky foundation is always strong, much stronger than that built on a sandy foundation. By analogy the bishops ask the faithful to build their faith on a rock which never fell. By so doing, they map the meaning of house onto the concept of faith, such that faith development is seen to undergo the same procedure as that involved in building a house. Just as building a house involves making a strong foundation, gradual process of building, and completion into a full blown house, faith development involves living in Christ, growing in faith in him, and maturing in the faith until salvation is attained. This type of faith which is built on the foundation of Christ and which grows progressively towards salvation is what the bishops consider to be 'real faith.' They use this metaphor to explain the need for steady growth in faith.

In text 14, the Catholic Church is conceptualized as pillar, and truth as building. *Pillar* is a building terminology which refers to a vertical structure constructed to serve as a support to the main building. Without the pillar the building may not stand. Therefore, just as the pillar is the carrier of the main building, the Catholic Church is the carrier of truth. The bishops use this metaphor to make the faithful understand clearly that the Catholic Church holds a pride of place in relation to other non-Catholic Churches, as the custodian of truth and the way to eternal salvation. This is aimed at strengthening their faith in the Catholic Church.

Text 15 also contains building metaphor which is expressed through representation of Christian Catholic lives and communities as house, and faith as foundation. Rebuild means to reconstruct, to build again, or to construct again. This idea from the field of building and construction is carried over to the abstract entities *Christian Catholic lives* and *communities*. These are expected to be rebuilt on the solid foundation of faith. Here again, the abstract entity faith is made to receive the attributes of building. It is conceived of as a foundation, the underground structure on which a building is constructed. The bishops use this metaphor to create a concrete image that will enhance understanding of their message which is that the faithful need to renew their lives and communities based on strong faith.

3.6 Metaphor of Light

Light is synonymous with illumination. Certain objects are known to provide illumination. These include the sun, fire, stars, electrical bulb, etc. In the bishops' letters, objects, other than light providing ones are metaphorically represented as giving light. For example, faith is represented as light; hope as lamp; the gospel as light, etc. Consider the following examples:

Gospel as light/culture as darkness

Text 16: Every culture must be open to the **light of the Gospel** which penetrating the **culture** reveals "what is the will of God what is good and acceptable and mature" (see Rom. 12:2) (*WWF*, p.61)

Hope as glimmer

Text 17: Just when there was a **glimmer of hope** that God's promise to him [Abraham] could be fulfilled through his son, Isaac, God tested him further by asking him to sacrifice his son. (*LTF*, p.32)

Faith as illuminant/love as light

Text 18: **Faith shines** out in love when we bear the burdens of our neighbours… (*LTF*, p.41)

In text 16 above, Gospel is conceptualized as light, and culture as darkness. Light gives illumination making it possible for one to see one's way through the darkness. It reveals everything that is hidden. Just as light penetrates darkness and makes everything seen, the Gospel makes penetrates culture and reveals aspects of it that are bad and those that are in line with the will of God. The metaphor is used by the bishops to make clear and vivid to the faithful the need to determine the relevance or otherwise of certain aspects of their culture based on the Gospel.

In text 17, hope is represented as glimmer, a steady glow, which can be rekindled into flame. This meaning is transferred to hope. Just as glimmer suggests the possibility of a flame, hope suggests the possibility of achieving one's desires. Thus, just when Abraham has got a son and was confident that the promise of being the father of nations would be a reality, God asked him to sacrifice the same son to him. The essence of this metaphor is to explain vividly to the faithful the need to persevere in faith despite all odds as God is always faithful to his promise.

In text 18, faith is presented as an illuminant, and love as light. Just as sun is associated with light, faith is associated with love which manifests in bearing the burden of others. The bishops use this metaphor to describe vividly to the faithful the relationship between faith and love, in order to persuade them to demonstrate their faith through love.

3.7 Metaphor of Food

Food refers to ingestible substances which serve to nourish the body. In the bishops' letters, ideas are presented as nourishment or food so as describe meanings vividly. The word of God, faith, and liturgy, for example, are represented as food in the following texts to ensure vivid descriptions:

The word of God as menu

Text 19: That way **the word of God** [as represented in the Bible and the Christian Tradition] will be a rich **menu**, a **balanced diet** to **nourish** the faith of the people of God (WWF, p.50)

Liturgy as nourishment

Text 20: **The liturgy** by its very nature has the power to **nourish** our faith. (*LTF*, p.39)

Faith as prey

Text 21: To be totally ignorant of our faith is to leave our **faith prey to danger.** (*IYHF*, p.41)

In the texts above, the metaphor derives from the use of food terminologies to represent abstract entities. In text 19, the word of God as contained in the Bible and the Sacred Tradition is associated with *rich menu, balanced diet* and *nourish*. It corresponds to food. Thus these words are expected to create in the faithful a desire for the word of God, just as they create an appetite for food when they are associated with food. By using the food metaphor, the bishops persuade the faithful to accept both the Bible and the Sacred Tradition as sources of divine revelation.

In text 20, Liturgy is represented as food, capable of nourishing faith, just as food nourishes the body. Food nourishes living things and makes them grow and develop to maturity. Similarly, liturgy is capable of facilitating growth and development of faith. The essence of this metaphor is to explain clearly to the faithful the importance of participating in liturgy celebration.

In text 21, faith is conceptualized as prey to danger. Prey refers to animals hunted as food by another. If they are not always at an alert, they will constantly lose their lives. In the same way, the faith would be at the risk of losing their faith if they are ignorant of it. This metaphor is used by the bishops to explain vividly to the faithful the need to grow in the knowledge of faith through reading of the Bible, Church documents, approved theological books, listening to sermons, attending retreats, etc.

3.8 Metaphor of Body Parts.

These are metaphors in which parts of the body are used to conceptualise ideas. For example, in the bishops' letters, spirit and faith are conceptualised as eyes, Bible as bone, diocese as heart, Scripture and Tradition as feet, Latin and Eastern Churches as lungs, etc. Some of these metaphors are found in the following texts:

Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scriptures as feet

Text 22: The Church walks on the **two feet of the Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scriptures**. (*WWF*, p.50)

Latin and Eastern Churches as lungs

Text 23: The reality is that the Catholic Church breathes with **two lungs: Latin and Eastern**. (*FFF*, p.23)

Diocese as having heart

Text **2**4: It is our objective in this pastoral…to promote the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness among us as a Church by addressing the divisions in the presbyterium, in parishes and among the religious and other rough edges that have constituted a deep wound in the **heart of the diocese**. (*GCTR*, P.6)

In the texts above, metaphor of body parts is realized in the conceptualization of Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scriptures as feet, Latin and Eastern Churches as lungs, and diocese as having heart. In text 22, the meaning of feet is transferred to Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scriptures to show their place in the Church. Feet refer to the part of the body that give standing support to the legs. The Sacred Tradition and the Sacred Scriptures are to the Church what the feet are to a living body. Just as the body moves about by means of the feet, the Church operates through these sources of divine truth, and just as the body cannot stand balanced and comfortable on one foot, the Church cannot operate fully with only the Scriptures or the Tradition. By using this metaphor, the bishops demonstrate the complementarity of the two as sources of divine revelation.

In text 23, Latin and Eastern Churches are conceptualized as lungs of the Catholic Church. Lungs are two respiratory organs in animate organisms, which perform their respiratory function in unity. This meaning is mapped onto Latin and Eastern Churches as the two great families of the Catholic Church, united in the one Communion under the Bishop of Rome. This metaphor is used by the bishops to explain clearly to the faithful the identity of the Catholic Church.

In text 24, diocese is conceptualized as having heart. Heart, as internal organ of the body, is the centre of life in animate organisms. It is responsible for pumping of blood in the body. Without the heart, there will be no life. By conceptualizing diocese as having heart, the bishops place it in the same position as animate organisms. Just as a wound to the heart constitutes a threat to life, divisions among the members of the diocese, which are conceptualized as deep wound, are a threat to the unity of the diocese.

3.9 Metaphor of Health

Metaphors of health are those involving the mapping of the ontology of medicine onto other fields. In the bishops' letters, Sacrament of Reconciliation, for example, is conceptualised as medicine, abuse of power as syndrome, religious indifferentism as virus, fear as disease, etc. The aim is to make concrete and vivid descriptions. Instances of these metaphors are found in the texts below:

Sacrament of Reconciliation as medicine

Text 25: In the meantime, the Church will continue her mission of sanctification and one of the potent means is **the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Penance)**, a veritable **medicine** which the Catholic Church has from her Divine Master… (*FFF*, p.46)

Fear as disease

Text 26**: It [fear]** sometimes **paralyses** and renders one useless. Evidently**, fear**-**syndrome** has almost become a culture in our age (IYHF, p.36).

Religious indifferentism as virus

Text 27: …it is becoming increasingly difficult to keep track of the affiliation of some Christians who have contracted the **virus of religious indifferentism** which destroys the very fabric of Christianity, the stability of communion.… (*FFF*, p.53)

The above health metaphors result from using health terminologies in areas, other than health.

The association of the Sacrament of Reconciliation with medicine, in text 25, is a rhetorical device adopted by the bishops to give concrete and vivid message. The meaning of medicine as a substance used to cure illness is transferred to the Sacrament of Reconciliation making it correspond to medicine and the penitent to a sick person. Consequently, just as medicine gets rid of sickness in a sick person, the sacrament gets rid of the penitent's sins. The essence of this metaphor is to explain vividly to the faithful of the efficacy of this Sacrament in the remission of sins, in order to persuade them to avail themselves of its benefits as they strive towards repentance. In the ideology of the Catholic Church, a person who commits sin is expected to visit a priest to make a confession, and the priest, based on the powers conferred on him by the Church through his ordination, absolves him of his sin.

The metaphor in text 26 derives from the use of the words *paralyses* and *syndrome*. To *paralyze* is a health terminology associated with disease. It means to cause loss of muscular function in any party the body, while *syndrome*, also a health register, refers to a group of symptoms that indicate the presence of a disease. These meanings are carried over to the domain of emotion, such that fear is conceptualized as a disease which paralyses and renders one useless, and which has its own syndrome, like most diseases. The use of this health metaphor enables the writer to concertize his message on the negative effect of fear, and to persuade the faithful desist from fear.

In text 27, religious indifferentism is conceptualized as a virus, a disease causing organism. Just as virus infects the victim with a disease and destroys his body cells, religious indifferentism which is the problem of Christians who go from church to church in search of solution to their problems, destroys the fabric of Christianity. (Christianity is here conceptualized as cloth). The metaphor is deployed so as to give a clear picture of the danger posed by religious indifferentism in order to persuade the faithful to have a change of attitude.

3.10   Metaphor of Meteorology

This involves the use of weather-related terminologies to conceptualize ideas in other fields. In the bishops' letters, Lent is represented as winter, love as atmosphere, and false teachers and prophets as clouds. Consider the following texts:

False teachers and prophets as clouds

Text 28: These **people** [**false teachers and prophets**] are like dried-up springs, like **clouds** blown along by storm… (*FFF*, p.7)

Lent as winter

Text 29: **Lent** is **the winter** of Christian life. (*CTC*, p.5)

Love as atmosphere

Text 30: Today, I enjoin you to live in the **atmosphere of love**. (*TML*, p. 46)

In text 28, *these people* refer to false teachers and prophets earlier mentioned in the discourse. They are represented as *clouds* blown along by storm. *Clouds* is a meteorological terminology referring to a visible mass of particles of dust or smoke in the atmosphere which can easily be blown by storm. This meaning is transferred to false teachers and prophets who are seen as having no substance, as they are not grounded in the truth of the apostolic teachings. The metaphor is used to depict their lack of seriousness and unreliability, to persuade the faithful to beware of them.

In text 29, Lent is represented as winter. Winter is the coldest season of the year, a season which most people consider unpleasant because it is marked with low activities and lacks the warmth associated with summer, and so while they wish away the season of winter, they await expectantly the summer season. This meaning of winter is mapped unto the season of Lent making it correspond to winter. Similarly, the Lenten season is a season of sober reflection, a season of low social activities and high spiritual activities such as fasting, prayer, almsgiving, penitence, a season of suffering so to say, as Christians commemorate the suffering and death of Christ during the season. Lent is a season when Christians are expected to get rid of their sins and other excesses of the flesh. As they go through these spiritual activities they look forward to the coming of Easter. The essence of the metaphor is to make the faithful understand the seriousness of the season of Lent. In text 30, *atmosphere* is metaphorically used to mean environment. Just as beautiful and conducive environment makes life enjoyable, so does true love among Christians. The faithful are thus enjoined to live in love for one another.

4. Conclusion

By deploying metaphors in their pastoral letters, as exemplified above, the bishops are able to communicate the substance of their arguments to the faithful. They are able to make their descriptions concrete, vivid, persuasive, and more memorable. The abundant deployment of metaphors in the letters is a feature of religious discourse. As pointed out by Sztajer (online), religious world is a world that goes beyond human cognitive abilities and which cannot be grasped by means of any kind of cognition available. Metaphor, therefore, forms a frame for religious experience to be fully grasped and comprehensible for religious man. It is the main mechanism through which we comprehend abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning (Lakoff, 1993). The bishops have effectively used metaphors in their letters to ensure proper understanding of their messages, and facilitate compliance by the faithful. The high frequency of planting metaphors is a foregrounding of the theme of death and regeneration underlying Christian faith. Just as a seed must die before a new plant springs up, a Christian dies with the hope of rising eternally. Also, that journey metaphors rank next to planting metaphor in high frequency is not accidental too; it is a reflection of the Christian belief that earthly life and activities constitute a journey to eternal life.

Tables:

S/N	DIOCESE	PASTORAL LETTER	NO. CHOSEN	YEAR
1.	Arch-diocese of Onitsha	i. If Only You Have Faith ii. The Measure of Love	2	2006 2005
2.	Diocese of Enugu	i. Okwukwe Ezi Olu ii. God is Calling us to Reconciliation	2	2010 2001
3.	Diocese of Awka	i. Repent and Believe the Good News ii. Call to Conversion	2	2008 2000
4.	Diocese of Nnewi	i. From Faith to Faith ii. We Walk by Faith	2	2004 2003
5.	Diocese of Awgu	i. Living in the Amazing Love of God ii. Living the Faith	2	2008 2006

Table 2.1: Sampled dioceses and letters

Types of Metaphor	CTC	GCTR	WWF	FFF	TML	IYHF	RBGN	LALG	LTF	OEO	Total	%
Planting	6	5	16	12	3	7	2	3	11	12	77	30.2
Journey	4	7	15	7	-	2	2	-	2	6	45	17.7
War	3	-	9	6	9	4	-	1	2	-	34	13.3
Water	-	3	12	4	1	2	2	-	-	-	24	9.4
Building	-	1	5	3	1	4	-	1	2	4	21	8.2
Light	1	-	4	4	-	1	-	1	5	-	16	6.3
Nutrition	-	-	4	1	-	2	-	1	4	-	12	4.7
Body Parts	-	1	3	2	1	-	-	3		-	10	3.9
Health	1	1	2	1	2	1	-	-	1	-	9	3.5
Meteorology	-	-	1	1	3	1	-	-	1	-	7	2.8
Total	**15**	**18**	**71**	**41**	**20**	**24**	**6**	**10**	**28**	**22**	**255**	**100**

Table 2.2: Distribution of metaphors in the letters

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