

VoiceAfrique Weekly Update

Catholic News Analysis from Africa by Africans, for Africa and the World

November 17, 2026

Begin your week with Sr. Helen Kasaka, the Pan-African Catholic Review and PACTPAN Updates

Tuesday, 17 November 2026

"Wisdom is like a baobab tree; no one individual can embrace it." — Akan and Ewe proverb

No single person holds all wisdom. We grow wiser when we listen to one another, share our experiences and remain open to learning. This is particularly important for the Church in Africa today. Dialogue, shared responsibility and the gifts of every generation and culture help build a Church that is deeply rooted in the lives of its people.

Dear friends in Christ,

Greetings from Kigali, Rwanda.

Welcome to this week's edition of VoiceAfrique Catholic, bringing you news and reflections from the Pan-African Catholic Theology and Pastoral Network (PACTPAN), the wider Church in Africa and the Vatican.

This week, we reflect on generosity and sustainability in the Church, the importance of engaging African cultural realities in theology, and preparations for the Fourth Pan-African Catholic Congress in Cameroon in 2027. We also look back at Pope Leo XIV's apostolic journey to South America, which included a visit to abandoned elderly people, the celebration of the first papal Mass in the Amazon, and a call for dialogue in a world increasingly marked by division.

Around PACTPAN this week

VoiceAfrique story of the week: After MINURSO – Preventing a human-rights vacuum in Western Sahara

The United Nations Security Council did not renew the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), established in 1991. Its mandate expired on 31 October 2026, bringing an end to 35 years of operations, while the liquidation process began on 1 November. The development raises important questions about the territory's future and the protection of its people.

In his article, *After MINURSO: Preventing a Human-Rights Vacuum in Western Sahara*, Fr Nnaemeka Ali, OMI, examines the implications of the mission's closure. He warns that a diplomatic vacuum must not become a human-rights vacuum. More than 173,600 Sahrawi refugees continue to live in camps in Algeria.

Fr Ali calls on the African Union, the Church and the international community to remain attentive to the situation in Western Sahara and the plight of its people.

Read the full article: https://voiceafrique.org/after-minurso/

PACTPAN communiqué: Preparing for the Pan-African Catholic Congress

Preparations are continuing for the Fourth Pan-African Catholic Congress, scheduled to take place in Cameroon in July 2027. PACTPAN Coordinating Servant, Fr Stan Chu Ilo, has issued a communiqué calling members to renewed engagement and commitment as the Network prepares for the Congress.

Following the communiqué, Sr. Jane Kimathi, Director of Programmes, invited every Unit, Chapter and Programme to hold meetings between 12 and 17 November. These meetings provide an opportunity for members to study the communiqué together, discuss the commitments expected of them and reflect on the responsibilities of their respective leaders.

The discussions will feed into the Core Leadership Meeting scheduled for 20 November. Leaders have also been asked to communicate their meeting dates to the Director of Programmes.

The process is an opportunity to renew commitment, strengthen collaboration and encourage shared responsibility for the Network's mission.

Live from PACTPAN: Give to gain – A generous, sustainable Church

What does it mean to give generously, and how can the Church build a culture of generosity and sustainability?

On Saturday, 14 November 2026, PACTPAN explored these questions during a webinar titled *Give to Gain: A Generous, Sustainable Church*. Sr. Maria Chinelo Nwakafor presented on *Giving that Transforms the Giver*, with Sr. Claris Cowo moderating the session.

The discussion highlighted that giving goes beyond financial contributions. It is an expression of empathy, humility and purpose, encompassing our time, talents, emotional support and prayer.

Reflecting on God's gift of His only Son, participants considered the motivations behind their own acts of giving. They were also cautioned against developing a "saviour complex", which can undermine the dignity and independence of those receiving assistance. Instead, genuine generosity should empower people rather than make them dependent.

The discussion also explored the vow of poverty in religious life, emphasising that it should never become an excuse for stinginess. Generosity must begin within our own religious communities and families and extend to others in ways that enable them to stand on their own feet.

The central message was clear: giving transforms both the giver and the receiver. The spirit in which we give is just as important as the gift itself.

Watch the webinar: https://www.youtube.com/live/1nRMjDp4idQ?si=h9MZd-pq19aKCsGU

Coming this week on VoiceAfrique Catholic: The road to Cameroon 2027

What does it take to prepare for a Pan-African Catholic Congress, and what role do PACTPAN members play in making it a success?

This week, I will speak with Sr. Jane Kimathi, PACTPAN Director of Programmes, in a special episode of VoiceAfrique Catholic. Our conversation will explore preparations for the Fourth Pan-African Catholic Congress, scheduled for Cameroon in July 2027.

The Congress will be held under the theme, *"Behold, I Make All Things New"* (Revelation 21:5), with a focus on *"Arts, Artificial Intelligence and Culture in Africa: Remaining Human, Remaining African, Remaining Christian."*

We will discuss the four pillars of the Congress: THINK, CREATE, ENCOUNTER and CELEBRATE, and how they can guide the Church in responding to a changing cultural and technological landscape. The conversation will also examine the preparations underway and the responsibilities of PACTPAN members in contributing to the success of this important Pan-African gathering.

Follow PACTPAN and VoiceAfrique Catholic for the release of the episode.

Voice Afrique – Le Podcast: Young Catholics as transformational actors

In the second episode, B. Roger Dayamba and Ismaël Dipama continue their reflection on young Catholics as transformational actors in the Church and society.

They explore how young people can translate their faith into action by taking initiative, inspiring others and bringing meaningful change to their communities. The conversation also challenges the perception that young people are merely the future of the Church, affirming instead that they are essential participants in its mission today.

Listen to the episode: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIYorns7CD8

VoiceAfrique Catholic: All Saints, All Souls and African reverence for ancestors

How do African beliefs about ancestors relate to the Catholic understanding of the Communion of Saints?

I explored this question in a conversation with Fr Augustine Ikenna Anwuchie, a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Awgu and a VoiceAfrique columnist. Our discussion examined Igbo cosmology, African traditional beliefs and the Catholic feasts of All Saints and All Souls.

We considered where honouring the departed ends and the worship of the dead begins, whether Christian faith requires Africans to abandon their cultural heritage, and how traditional practices can be discerned in the light of the Gospel. Throughout the conversation, we reflected on the Christian hope of resurrection and eternal life.

Listen to the conversation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwrfVA2XgVw

In the wider Church

South Africa: IMBISA theologians reflect on polygamy and inculturation in Africa

Theologians from the Inter-Regional Meeting of the Bishops of Southern Africa (IMBISA) have met to examine questions surrounding polygamy and inculturation in the African Church.

The workshop took place from 2 to 6 November 2026 at the Padre Pio Spirituality Centre in Pretoria, South Africa. Participants came from Angola, Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe, representing IMBISA's six episcopal conferences.

Their discussions focused on how the Church can respond to African cultural realities while remaining faithful to its teaching, particularly in matters concerning marriage, baptism and access to the Sacraments.

The workshop followed the final report of Study Group 10 of the Synod on Synodality, which examined the pastoral challenges of polygamy in Africa. The study was entrusted to the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM). During the Synod, African participants had highlighted the continuing reality of polygamous marriages and raised questions about their implications for the Church's sacramental and pastoral life.

IMBISA invited Sr Estér Lucas José Maria, FC, to explain the document, to whose preparation she had contributed. The invitation followed concerns raised by some bishops and Church representatives that they had not been sufficiently consulted during the process.

IMBISA Secretary General, Fr Enrico Parry, emphasised the need for the African Church to take responsibility for addressing the issue. "We are the only people who will deal with it," he said.

Participants also considered other cultural practices, including the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference's ongoing reflection on Ubungoma and respect for ancestors. Fr. Ian Mberikwazwo Chitambo, OMI, contributed to the discussion with reflections on inculturation, its challenges and the future of African Christianity.

The discussions highlight the need for theology that takes African realities seriously. They also invite the Church to listen, discern and respond to these realities faithfully in the light of the Gospel.

From the Vatican

Pope Leo XIV returns to Rome after apostolic journey to South America

Pope Leo XIV arrived in Rome on Tuesday, 17 November, concluding his 12-day apostolic journey to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru, which began on 6 November.

The journey ended in Peru, a country the Pope regards as his second homeland. He served there for many years as a missionary and later as Bishop of Chiclayo. On Monday, 16 November, he celebrated the concluding Mass at Las Palmas Air Base in Lima. According to the Vatican, approximately 1.5 million people attended. He subsequently departed for Rome from Callao.

Four moments from the journey stand out.

A visit to abandoned elderly people

Before the final Mass, the Pope visited a home run by the Little Sisters of the Abandoned Elderly in Callao. He had supported the home during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the visit, he thanked the sisters for their dedication and encouraged everyone to love others as God loves us, while warning against ignoring situations of neglect and abuse.

The first papal Mass in the Amazon

On 15 November, in Pucallpa, the Pope met missionaries and representatives of Indigenous communities before celebrating Mass attended by approximately 100,000 people. He stressed that protecting the Amazon rainforest cannot be separated from caring for the people who live there. He also condemned the killing of Indigenous leaders, declaring: "The blood of these brothers cries out to God and demands justice!"

Popular faith in Cusco

At an Inca site more than 12,000 feet above sea level, the Pope celebrated popular devotion and encouraged the faithful to make their religious festivals schools of fraternity and charity. He also announced a gift of a shroud for the Lord of the Earthquakes, the patron image of the city.

On the flight home

During his conversation with journalists aboard the flight to Rome, the Pope reflected on several issues affecting the Church and the world.

He observed that polarisation has been fuelled by algorithms and, at times, deliberately provoked. He called on the media to contribute to overcoming division, describing the work of healing and bringing people together as an important part of his ministry.

Addressing the shortage of priests in the Amazon, he said the possibility of having more priests, including Peruvian priests serving in missionary areas, remained open. He acknowledged that ordaining married men was one proposal being considered, although it did not have universal acceptance.

The Pope also confirmed that World Youth Day in Korea in August 2027 was the only international trip currently scheduled for that year.

Speaking about his health, he said his surgery a month earlier had gone well and that no further treatment was necessary. He encouraged people to take care of their health, stressing that "Prevention is very important."

Let us continue to pray for the Holy Father and for all the communities he encountered during this apostolic journey.

Looking ahead

PACTPAN webinar: Human dignity and religious freedom

PACTPAN will host a webinar on *Human Dignity and Religious Freedom* on Thursday, 19 November 2026, at 8:00 p.m. Nairobi time.

The webinar will explore questions of human dignity and religious freedom within the Church and society, providing an opportunity for reflection and dialogue on these important issues.

Join through Zoom:

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82574220193?pwd=dwCaaanEMnMDdNhqQzZkMDwWbDkvw0.1

Meeting ID: 825 7422 0193
Passcode: 851558

Tangaza University to host conference on Benedict XVI and the renewal of the Church in Africa

Tangaza University will host a Pan-African International Conference from 19 to 21 November 2026 under the theme *"Constellations of Hope: Africa and the Renewal of the Church in the Vision of Benedict XVI."*

Scholars, theologians and Church leaders will gather to reflect on Pope Benedict XVI's contribution to the Church, with particular attention to Africa. The conference forms part of Tangaza University's 40th anniversary celebrations.

His Eminence Peter Cardinal Turkson will be the Chief Guest. The conference will take place at Tangaza University in Nairobi, with opportunities for participants to attend either in person or online.

The event will conclude on Saturday, 21 November, with a Thanksgiving Eucharistic Celebration presided over by Cardinal Turkson, together with Archbishop Philip Anyolo and other Church leaders.

Register to participate online:

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/cv5dNU5mR2-BKhkjwcuh4Q

A final reflection

As we continue along the road to Cameroon 2027, let us remember that our shared mission depends on our willingness to listen, learn and work together.

May the Lord bless all PACTPAN leaders and members as they reflect on the future of the Network. May He grant us the humility to listen, the courage to commit ourselves and the generosity to serve.

Let us also continue to pray for Pope Leo XIV as he resumes his ministry in Rome, and for all those working to promote human dignity, justice and peace.

May our shared wisdom, generosity and commitment strengthen the mission of the Church in Africa and beyond.

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