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Abstract of Paper: *From African Synods I&II to Pope Francis: Continuing the Reform and Renewal of Vatican II?*

This paper will identify the three main themes in the reform of the church which began at Second Vatican Council in the documents of African Synod I & II and in Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium*. These three main themes are: an openness to history and social change; a commitment to dialogue and cultural pluralism, and a missionary conversion which leads to a closer following of Christ, a deepening of faith and liturgical life and which brings about prophetic witnessing for social and cultural transformation. The paper will argue that by embracing these themes in both theological education and in pastoral life in Africa, the Church in Africa sought to realize in concrete history the fruits of the eschatological reign of God. Building on these three themes, the paper will identify how African church leaders, and theologians have articulated these themes in the statements of SECAM, in the two African synods and in the writings of selected African theologians and church leaders. The paper will show the strengths and weaknesses in these writings and the internal and external forces which hamper or amplify the challenges and opportunities for the reform and renewal of the Christian faith and life in Africa in the light of the Gospel. The paper will conclude by showing how the practices and priorities of the early church could shape the emerging patterns and shape of Christian identity in Africa and thus provide a groundswell for reform in the Church. Using five proposals as a concrete pathway for moving into the future in African Catholicism, the paper will conclude with an optimistic tone on the great things which God is doing in our personal and group histories through the exponential growth in the number of African Christians. It is important then for the Church in Africa to embrace the momentum of Christian expansion in Africa and the challenges which God's people face in Africa with hope and thus inspire God's people to do the work of God with courage, faith, humility and praise.