AFRICA AND HER SAINTS: A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF AFRICAN HOLINESS, CHRISTIAN MARTYROLOGY, AND THE PATH TO NIGERIA'S FIRST BEATIFICATION

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Abstract

Africa's contribution to the Christian tradition of sanctity is ancient, deep, and too frequently overlooked in Western-centred histories of Christian holiness, from the martyrs and theologians of the North African church — Augustine of Hippo, Athanasius of Alexandria, Cyprian of Carthage, Perpetua, Felicity, and many others — to the Uganda Martyrs of the nineteenth century and the beatification of Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi in 1998.

Research Problem: *Despite this extraordinary gallery of recognised Christian saints who have enriched the universal Church, no systematic account has traced Africa's contribution across the successive waves of Christian evangelisation or situated Blessed Tansi's beatification, Nigeria's first, within that broader historical pattern.*

Methods/Theory: *The article adopts a historical-survey approach, examining the three successive waves of Christian evangelisation in Africa identified by Kii (2002), the saints each wave produced, the causes that were lost, and the contemporary challenges and opportunities facing the African Church in its effort to write its own martyrology.*

Results: *The survey identifies the specific historical challenges that led to the eclipse of the first two waves of African Christianity, while showing that the third wave has already produced Blessed Tansi and may yet produce additional Nigerian saints.*

Conclusion: *The third wave is better positioned for permanence than its predecessors.*

Key Contribution to Knowledge: *This permanence is primarily because the third wave is generating saints from within Africa's own cultural soil rather than importing them from elsewhere, offering a historical framework linking the continent's evangelisation waves to its record of sanctity.*

Recommendation: *The African Church should build on this indigenous momentum by actively documenting and advancing further causes for sainthood rooted in its own communities, rather than continuing to rely on*

imported models of holiness.

1. Introduction

Africa's contribution to Christian sainthood represents one of the most historically significant, yet systematically underexamined, dimensions of global Christian history. Scholars of African Christianity including Hastings (1994), Baur (1994), and Robert (2009) have documented the broad historical sweep of Christianity's presence on the continent, from the early centuries of the Common Era to the contemporary explosion of African Christianity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Yet a critical gap persists in this literature: no comprehensive historical survey has systematically examined the pattern of rupture and continuity in the production of saints across the three successive waves of Christian evangelisation in Africa, nor has the theological and cultural significance of Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi as Nigeria's first beatified figure been adequately situated within this broader historical framework.

Existing scholarship on African Christian history tends to treat the North African saints (Augustine, Athanasius, Cyprian, Perpetua, Felicity), the Uganda Martyrs, and Blessed Tansi as largely separate topics, located within distinct historiographical traditions patristics, East African church history, and biographical hagiography respectively. This fragmentation obscures the deeper continuity of a tradition of African holiness that spans nearly two millennia and reflects, in each of its expressions, the encounter between the Christian Gospel and African humanity at a particular historical moment. The conditions of possibility for the production of saints and the factors that have historically constrained that production remain insufficiently theorised in the existing literature.

This study addresses this problem by providing a historical and theological analysis of African Christian holiness across three successive waves of evangelisation. It aims to demonstrate that the production of saints in each wave is closely linked to the degree of inculturation achieved, and that the collapse of the first two waves offers instructive lessons for understanding the third wave's potential for permanence.

Specifically, this study aims to:

(i) Examine the three successive waves of Christian evangelisation in Africa and the saints each wave produced.

(ii) Analyse the historical conditions that led to the collapse of the first two waves of African Christianity.

(iii) Identify the factors that distinguish the third wave and its production of saints from its predecessors.

(iv) Assess the significance of Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi as Nigeria's first beatified figure within the broader tradition of African holiness.

(v) Articulate the conditions necessary for the third wave to consolidate its gains and sustain the tradition of African sainthood.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Histories of African Christianity

The foundational scholarship on African Christian history is broad and multi-layered. Hastings's (1994) magisterial survey of the church in Africa from 1450 to 1950 provides an indispensable resource for the institutional and missionary history of African Christianity during

the critical period of the second and early third waves. Baur's (1994) comprehensive overview of two thousand years of Christianity in Africa complements Hastings by tracing the longer arc from the earliest centuries to the modern period. Robert (2009), writing from a missiological perspective, examines how Christianity became a global religion, with significant attention to the African contribution to that transformation.

These foundational works, however, tend to foreground the institutional and missionary dimensions of African Christian history rather than examining the production of saints as a theological and cultural phenomenon. They provide the historical scaffolding but do not systematically analyse why some waves of African Christianity produced recognised saints while others did not, nor do they examine the relationship between inculturation and the generation of saints. This is the gap the present study addresses.

2.2 African Hagiography and Martyrology

The literature on specific African saints is rich but fragmented. Studies of the North African saints Augustine, Athanasius, Cyprian, Perpetua, Felicity, and the Desert Fathers are predominantly located within the discipline of patristics or early church history, and rarely engage with the specifically African character of these figures' holiness. The Uganda Martyrs have generated a substantial body of scholarship, celebrating both the theological significance of their witness and their importance for modern African Catholic identity, culminating in their canonisation by Pope Paul VI in 1964 (South African History Online, 2026; Uganda Martyrs Shrine, 2026). Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi has been treated primarily through biographical study, most notably Isichei's (1982) detailed biography, which remains an indispensable resource for understanding Tansi's life and spirituality.

What the literature lacks, however, is a study that connects these different periods and figures into a single historical narrative of African holiness. Isichei's biography of Tansi does not situate him within the longer tradition of African sainthood; scholarship on the Uganda Martyrs does not systematically link their witness to the North African tradition; and patristics scholars rarely engage with the contemporary African Church's hagiographical project. This paper contributes by weaving these separate strands into a unified historical narrative.

2.3 Inculturation and African Christian Identity

The theological literature on inculturation provides a crucial theoretical resource for understanding the production of saints in each wave. Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation Ecclesia in Africa (1995) articulates the theological vision for an African Church that is authentically Christian and authentically African a vision whose canonical expression requires, as John Paul II declared at Tansi's beatification, the production of saints who have "made [the faith] truly African and Nigerian" (Wikipedia, 2026). Pengo (2000) examines the identity of the African Church in terms of witness and mission, while a growing body of African theological scholarship including work from Ukpong and other inculturation theologians examines the relationship between Christianity and African cultural categories.

This literature demonstrates the centrality of inculturation for the contemporary African Church but does not adequately address the specific question of how inculturation relates to the production of saints. The present study fills this gap by showing that the saints produced in

each wave reflect the degree of inculturation achieved in that wave, and that the collapse of the first two waves was partly attributable to the failure to translate the Christian message into authentic African cultural categories.

2.4 Identifying the Gap

In summary, while the existing literature provides valuable resources for understanding the history of African Christianity, the production of African saints, and the theology of inculturation, no study has systematically examined the pattern of rupture and continuity in the production of African saints across the three waves of evangelisation identified by Kii (2002). Nor has the significance of Blessed Tansi as the first Nigerian beatified figure been adequately situated within this broader historical framework. This paper fills these gaps by providing a comprehensive historical survey that connects the North African saints, the Uganda Martyrs, and Blessed Tansi as a continuous tradition of African holiness, while analysing the conditions that enabled the production of saints in each wave.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative historical research design, utilising a historical survey approach to trace the development of African sainthood across three waves of Christian evangelisation. The study is based entirely on secondary sources historical monographs, theological documents, papal encyclicals, biographical studies, and official Vatican documentation on beatification and canonisation processes. No primary fieldwork or archival research was conducted. This approach is appropriate for the study's objectives, which require synthesis and critical analysis of existing scholarly and ecclesiastical documentation rather than the generation of new empirical data.

3.2 Source Selection Criteria

Sources were identified and selected according to the following criteria:

Publication Date Range: Sources range from early patristic texts through contemporary theological documents and historical studies. The primary chronological focus is the period from the first century CE to the present, with particular attention to the nineteenth century (third wave) and the late twentieth century (Uganda Martyrs' canonisation, Tansi's beatification).

Geographic Focus: Sources were selected with particular attention to North African Christianity (first wave), West and Central African Christianity (second wave), and sub-Saharan African Christianity (third wave), with a specific focus on Nigeria and Uganda.

Thematic Relevance: Sources were selected on the basis of their direct relevance to Christian sainthood, hagiography, martyrology, and the history of Christianity in Africa. Sources that do not directly address these themes were excluded.

Source Types: The study draws on historical monographs, theological documents, papal encyclicals, biographical studies, official Vatican documents on beatification and canonisation, and encyclopaedic reference sources.

3.3 Data Collection

Sources were gathered through library and database searches using terms including "African Christianity," "African saints," "martyrology," "inculturation," "Uganda Martyrs," "Cyprian Tansi," "beatification," and "North African church." Key scholarly monographs were identified from the footnotes

and bibliographies of foundational texts such as Hastings (1994) and Baur (1994). Official Vatican documents were sourced from the Vatican Press and the Tansi Postulation Office (2026). Contemporary updates on canonisation causes were sourced from EWTN Vatican (Okeke, 2026).

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns across the selected sources. Sources were read and re-read for familiarisation, and key themes were identified both deductively from the three-waves framework (Kii, 2002) and inductively from the sources themselves. The primary themes identified were: (1) the characteristics of each wave of evangelisation; (2) the saints produced in each wave; (3) the historical conditions affecting each wave's survival or collapse; and (4) the significance of inculturation in enabling the production of saints. These themes were then cross-referenced to identify patterns of continuity and rupture across the three waves.

Validity was ensured through triangulation of multiple sources, including scholarly monographs, official ecclesiastical documents, and biographical studies, as well as comparison across different historical accounts of the same events.

3.5 Summary Table of Key Sources

Source Type	Key Works	Relevance to Study
Historical Monographs	Hastings (1994), Baur (1994), Robert (2009)	Broad historical context for African Christianity
Biographies	Isichei (1982) on Blessed Tansi	Detailed information on Tansi's life and spirituality
Papal Documents	John Paul II (1995, 1998), Paul VI (1964)	Official Church statements on African saints and the third wave
Vatican Documents	Congregation for the Causes of Saints (1996)	Official documentation on the beatification process
Theological Works	Pengo (2000), Kii (2002)	Inculturation and the three-waves framework
Encyclopaedic Sources	Britannica (2026), Wikipedia (2026)	Accessible overviews of key figures and events

4. Theoretical Framework

4.1 Kii's Three Waves Framework

The organising theoretical framework for this study is Kii's (2002) three-waves model of African Christian evangelisation. Kii (2002: 111) identifies three successive waves of Christian presence on the African continent, each characterised by a distinct historical period, geographical focus, and relationship to African cultural identity:

First Wave (c. 1st–7th century CE): North African Christianity, centred in the Mediterranean littoral and in Egypt, spreading as far as Ethiopia and Chad. This wave was expressed primarily in Latin and Greek, drew strength from the Pax Romana, produced the great theologians and saints of the early Church, and ultimately collapsed under Islamic expansion beginning in the seventh century.

Second Wave (15th–17th centuries): The Portuguese missionary penetration of West and

Central Africa and East Africa, producing Christian communities, ordained native clergy, and even a black bishop, but ultimately overwhelmed by the advance of Islam in the East and political intrigues in the West.

Third Wave (19th century–present): The modern missionary movement beginning in the nineteenth century, accompanied by a more sustained engagement with inculturation, producing communities with greater institutional self-sufficiency and, crucially, saints drawn from within African cultural contexts — most notably the Uganda Martyrs and Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi.

4.2 Justification of the Framework

Kii's three-waves framework is valuable for the purposes of this study because it moves beyond the institutional and chronological categories of much existing African church historiography to focus on the structural conditions that enable or constrain the survival and flourishing of African Christianity. Unlike Hastings's (1994) predominantly institutional survey or Baur's (1994) broad chronological overview, the three-waves framework draws attention to the underlying cultural and theological dynamics particularly the question of inculturation that explain why some expressions of African Christianity have endured while others have not.

4.3 Engaging Alternative Frameworks

The three-waves framework is not without its critics and alternatives. Hastings (1994) organises African Christian history along primarily chronological and institutional lines, with particular attention to the relationship between Christianity and colonialism. Robert (2009) employs a missiological framework that foregrounds the dynamics of cross-cultural transmission. Isichei's (1982) biographical approach to Tansi offers a micro-historical perspective that contextualises individual holiness without situating it within the broader pattern of African Christian waves.

What Kii's framework adds, and what these alternatives do not provide, is an explanatory account of why the first two waves of African Christianity ultimately collapsed despite producing saints of extraordinary significance. The framework draws attention to the structural and cultural conditions particularly inculturation and political vulnerability that shaped the fate of each wave, and it thus provides the analytical tools necessary for evaluating the third wave's prospects for permanence.

4.4 How This Paper Extends the Framework

While Kii (2002) developed the three-waves framework primarily to situate Blessed Tansi's significance within the history of African Christianity, the present paper extends the framework by using it to analyse the pattern of rupture and continuity in African sainthood specifically. It explores not only the saints each wave produced but the conditions of possibility that enabled and constrained the production of saints in each wave. Furthermore, it examines the third wave's potential for permanence in light of the lessons drawn from the collapse of the first two. This extension allows for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between inculturation, institutional survival, and sanctity in the African Christian context.

A further theoretical contribution of this paper is the distinction it draws between external factors (political change, military conquest, imperial collapse) and internal factors (theological division, failure of inculturation, ecclesiastical factionalism) in explaining the collapse of the first two waves. This distinction

refines the three-waves framework and provides a more precise analytical tool for evaluating the third wave's sustainability.

5. The First Wave: North African Christianity and Its Saints

The first wave of Christianity in Africa was centred in the Mediterranean littoral of North Africa and in Egypt, spreading from Egypt to Morocco and southwards as far as Ethiopia and Chad, taking advantage of the Pax Romana as the vehicle for the Christian message, which was expressed in Latin and Greek the prevalent languages of trade, administration, and the army (Kii, 2002: 111). By the fifth century, this Christianity had produced approximately 500 Catholic bishops in North Africa alone, a flourishing monastic movement, a rich theological tradition, and some of the most important figures in the entire history of Christian thought.

The saints produced by this first wave were luminaries whose influence on the universal Church has been incalculable. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) born in Thagaste in modern Algeria, educated in Carthage, and bishop of Hippo from 396 to his death is arguably the most influential theologian in the Western Christian tradition, whose feast day is celebrated on 28 August every year (Kii, 2002: 112; Wikipedia, 2026). Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296–373), whom Kii (2002: 112) identifies as "the father of Christian monasticism," was the champion of Nicene orthodoxy against Arianism and one of the most consequential figures in early Christian theological history. Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258) whose name Tansi would later take in his monastic profession was both a bishop and a martyr, whose feast day falls on 16 September. Augustine's mother Monica is also numbered among the saints. The martyrs Perpetua and Felicity Roman citizens from North Africa who refused to apostatise and were killed in the arena in 203 CE represent among the most moving testimonies of early Christian martyrdom.

This first wave also produced, in Egypt and Ethiopia, a monastic tradition of extraordinary spiritual depth the Desert Fathers and Mothers, whose sayings (Apophthegmata Patrum) have been treasured by the Christian contemplative tradition to the present day. Anthony of Egypt (c. 251–356), known as the father of Christian monasticism, was himself an African saint whose influence on the entire subsequent tradition of Christian monasticism including the Cistercian monastic tradition that Tansi would join fourteen centuries later can hardly be overestimated.

6. The Collapse of the First Wave and Its Lessons

Despite this extraordinary flowering of holiness and theology, the first wave of African Christianity was almost completely lost. Kii (2002: 112–113) identifies the decisive turning point: with the capture of Alexandria by the Islamic armies in 641 CE, Islam began to spread rapidly over Africa, replacing Greek and Latin with Arabic and Christianity with a new religion of empire. Kii (2002: 112) advances three explanations for the decisive collapse of North African Christianity under Islamic expansion.

First, the unity and moral fervour of a pristine Islam contrasted starkly with the fractious and worldly character of North African Christianity, which had become theologically diverse and heterogeneous divided between Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, the Malachite (the king's faction), and the Nestorians or Jacobites. Second, Christianity appeared to have lacked an indigenous root: it had failed to incorporate itself into the local culture (Kii, 2002: 113). This failure of

inculturation the failure to translate the Christian message into the authentic cultural categories of local communities left African Christianity vulnerable when the external political and military support that had sustained it was removed. Third, the local population gave their support to the Muslim Arabs, who were more tolerant of their Coptic religious sensibilities than the drive for religious conformity that led to the persecution of the Copts for their adherence to the Monophysite theology condemned at Chalcedon in 451 (Kii, 2002: 113).

The lessons of the first wave's collapse for the contemporary African church are sobering and instructive. The richness of its theological and hagiographical legacy Augustine, Athanasius, Cyprian, Perpetua, Felicity, Anthony, the Desert Fathersdid not ultimately prevent the collapse of the communities that produced them. Institutional Christianity in North Africa was overtaken by a combination of external political change and military conquest, internal theological division, and a failure of inculturation. The third wave of African Christianity, of which Tansi is a representative product, must be attentive to these historical lessons.

7. The Second Wave and Its Legacy

The second wave of Christian evangelisation in Africa began with the Portuguese penetration of the Congo, the Cape, and East Africa in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For three centuries, Christian communities were founded, native priests were ordained, and there was even a black bishop named Henry. However, the missions were overwhelmed by the advance of Islam in the East, and in the West they fell victim to political intrigues (Kii, 2002: 113). The fruits of this second wave were almost completely lost, with only the Copts of Egypt and the Ethiopian Church managing to resist and survive.

Despite its collapse, the second wave produced its own contribution to the catalogue of African holiness. The record of martyrdom, priestly faithfulness, and episcopal leadership however brief represents an authentic expression of African Christian sainthood that has not yet received adequate scholarly attention. The story of Dom Henry, the black bishop, and the native priests ordained during this period represents an important chapter in the history of African Catholicism that is only now beginning to receive the scholarly attention it deserves.

Applying the distinction developed in the theoretical framework, the collapse of the second wave can be attributed to a combination of external factors (the advance of Islam in the East, colonial political instability in the West) and internal factors (insufficient inculturation, dependence on external European ecclesiastical structures). As with the first wave, the absence of deep cultural roots left the Christian communities vulnerable when external support was withdrawn.

8. The Third Wave: Contemporary African Christianity and Its Saints

The third wave of Christian evangelisation in Africa began in earnest in the nineteenth century and continues to the present. Unlike its predecessors, this wave has been accompanied by a more serious and sustained engagement with inculturation the translation of the Christian message into African cultural categories and has produced communities with a much greater degree of institutional self-sufficiency. The Catholic Church in Nigeria, which Kii (2002: 3) describes as "a mature Church although relatively still a young Church as compared to

other Churches in the history of Catholicism," is one of the most significant products of this third wave.

The most celebrated saints of this third wave are the Uganda Martyrs the 22 Catholic and 23 Anglican converts who were killed by King Mwanga II of Buganda between 1885 and 1887. The 22 Roman Catholic martyrs were collectively beatified by Pope Benedict XV in 1920 and canonised by Pope Paul VI on 18 October 1964. To honour these African saints, Pope Paul VI became the first reigning pope to visit sub-Saharan Africa when he toured Uganda in July 1969. Their feast day, 3 June, is one of the most widely celebrated in the African Catholic calendar (Britannica, 2026; Saints Resource, 2026).

The beatification of Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi in 1998 marked a pivotal moment in the history of this third wave. Born in 1903 in Aguleri in what is now Anambra State, Nigeria, Tansi was baptised as a young man, educated by Irish missionary priests, worked as a teacher and catechist, and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1937. Renowned for his pastoral creativity, ascetic personal lifestyle, and deep spiritual commitment, he was a beloved figure in his parish communities. In 1950, he joined the Cistercian monastery of Mount Saint Bernard Abbey in Leicestershire, England, where he pursued the contemplative life until his death in 1964. On 22 March 1998, Tansi was beatified by Pope John Paul II at a ceremony in Onitsha, Nigeria, becoming the first West African to be beatified (Nigeria Catholic Network, 2023; Grokipedia, 2026). The ongoing canonisation cause, awaiting the verification of a second miracle, represents the unfinished business of this third wave's engagement with the formal processes of the universal Church (Tansi Postulation Office, 2026; Okeke, 2026).

9. The Significance of the Third Wave's Saints for African Identity

The saints produced by the third wave of African Christianity carry a significance that extends beyond the religious sphere into the domains of cultural identity, postcolonial history, and national aspiration. A comparative analysis of the three waves against the criteria of permanence and inculturation reveals a clear pattern: the first and second waves collapsed primarily because their Christianity was insufficiently rooted in African cultural categories; the third wave appears better positioned for permanence because its saints the Uganda Martyrs and Blessed Tansi are authentically African expressions of the Christian faith.

The Uganda Martyrs demonstrated that African converts were capable of the ultimate witness martyrdom in defence of their Christian faith thereby establishing at the very inception of modern African Catholicism the possibility of African sainthood. Tansi demonstrated that African holiness could be expressed not only through the exceptional circumstance of martyrdom but through the ordinary-extraordinary circumstances of priestly dedication, pastoral creativity, ascetic personal lifestyle, and contemplative depth. Both figures demonstrate the success of the third wave's inculturation: the authentic appropriation of the Christian faith in African cultural contexts.

The Uganda Martyrs died as Ugandans; Tansi lived and died as a Nigerian Igbo man. Their holiness was not a copy of European models but an authentic expression of the encounter between the Christian Gospel and African humanity. As Pope John Paul II declared at Tansi's beatification, he had "received the gift of faith through the efforts of the missionaries, and, taking the Christian way of life as his own, he

made it truly African and Nigerian" (Wikipedia, 2026). This declaration captures the theological significance of inculturation for the production of saints: holiness that is not rooted in the cultural soil of its community cannot sustain the kind of deep popular devotion that is the ordinary precondition for canonisation causes.

Table 2 below summarises the key characteristics of the three waves:

Wave	Period	Key Figures	Outcome
First Wave	c. 1st–7th century CE	Augustine, Athanasius, Cyprian, Perpetua, Felicity, Anthony	Collapsed under Islamic expansion (c. 7th century)
Second Wave	15th–17th centuries	Dom Henry, native priests	Overwhelmed by Islam and political intrigues
Third Wave	19th century–present	Uganda Martyrs, Blessed Cyprian Tansi	Ongoing; appears better positioned for permanence

10. Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that Africa's contribution to Christian sainthood is ancient, rich, and continuous, spanning from the North African church of the early centuries through the Uganda Martyrs of the nineteenth century to Blessed Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi in the contemporary period. Through an analysis of the three waves of Christian evangelisation in Africa, the paper has shown that the production of saints is closely linked to the degree of inculturation achieved in each wave, and that the collapse of the first two waves can be explained by a combination of external factors political change and military conquest and internal factors theological division and the failure to translate the Christian faith into authentic African cultural categories.

The study has addressed its stated research objectives. It has examined the three successive waves and the saints each produced; analysed the historical conditions leading to the collapse of the first two waves; identified inculturation as the critical distinguishing factor of the third wave; assessed the significance of Blessed Tansi as Nigeria's first beatified figure; and articulated the conditions necessary for the third wave to consolidate its gains.

The implications of this study for understanding African Christianity are significant. It provides a framework for evaluating the sustainability of African Christian communities that goes beyond institutional metrics to address the deeper cultural and theological conditions of ecclesial flourishing. For the theology of sainthood, it demonstrates that canonisation is not merely a formal ecclesiastical process but a reflection of the depth of inculturation achieved in a given Christian community. For the future of the Church in Africa, it suggests that the key challenge is not numerical growth but cultural depth the continued translation of the Gospel into authentic African idioms that can generate the kind of holiness that endures across generations.

This study acknowledges several limitations. It is based entirely on secondary sources and does not include primary archival research or fieldwork. Future research might usefully address this limitation through archival work on the canonisation causes of African saints and

ethnographic study of the popular devotion surrounding figures like Blessed Tansi. Comparative studies of African sainthood across different regions and denominations would also be valuable, as would research into the conditions of possibility for additional Nigerian and African canonisation causes.

As Pope John Paul II declared at Tansi's beatification, the African Church is called to be a Church of saints. The third wave of African Christianity which has produced the Uganda Martyrs and Blessed Tansi is still unfolding. The challenge and opportunity for the African Church is to continue the work of inculturation that has made its saints authentically African and authentically Christian, and to ensure that this third wave does not, like its predecessors, recede but instead bears abundant fruit for generations to come.

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