

AN ETHICAL APPRAISAL OF THE FAMILY AS AN AGENT OF PRIESTLY FORMATION IN AFRICA

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Abstract

The family is the first unit of human formation among the various units of formation in every age. It is a unit that is indispensable in the grooming of the child. The way a child was brought up within a particular family can go a long way to influence his general attitude towards life. If the child was exposed to a good and favorable formation within family, the child is bound to be positively disposed toward others, because the child would not only have passed through the system, the system would have passed through the child. If it is the other way round, then it will manifest in the child's general attitude towards life as a whole. It has been discovered that with the disengagement of moral and religious education in schools, the moral fabric of societal life is progressively depreciating at an alarming rate. A lot of children and young people are now living without the basic and rudimentary knowledge of morals and religion. The only emphasis on education in many developed countries is intellectual knowledge, devoid of human formation. Most modern societies depend so much on the positive laws of the state to groom children and direct the affairs of their lives. This is having a toll on products of post primary schools, which are the raw materials for formation at the level of the Seminary. It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts an ethical appraisal of the role of the family in the formation of the candidates for the priesthood. This paper adopts the analytical and hermeneutical methods of analysis. It concludes

that a proper attention to the role of the family, will produce better candidates for formation and reduce incidences of behavioural dysfunctions in priestly ministry within the society.

Keywords: Family, Formation, Agent, Seminary Formation, and Africa

Conceptual Elucidation.

Family: The concept ‘family’ depicts a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, or adoption, constituting a single household and interacting with each other in their respective social positions, usually those of spouses, parents, children, and siblings.¹ The family plays the role of development with the relationship of the parents and the Children; it is basically the “original cell of social life”², where values are transmitted, and the basic level of socialization from which the human person gets the first bits of education. The family is the key and basic unit of development, a key aspect of the family is the role of formation, the family serves to form the members of this social unit, a place or ideal situation where the more experienced members, the parents and over time, elder siblings pass on the necessary basic values and ideas that require proper and adequate cultivation. The family passes on the first form of education to the young ones,³ helping them form their primary and basic conceptions of the human life. “It is the most basic unit of the Church”⁴

Formation: The concept of ‘formation’ basically references development, in context, the process of shaping a person. Further, formation basically is a series of holistic developmental strategies aimed at improving the human person in different and basic facets of life, as the Advanced English Dictionary would refer to formation as fabrication into a particular shape, this is the basis of the formation of the human person, forming the person into a particular and certain shape, a shape of primarily, all round brilliance. Formation, as implicitly stated earlier is an all-round activity which implies that it covers varying aspects of the personality be it emotional, physical, moral, social, cognitive, behavioural etc. Also, the instruments of formation are diverse, there are varying social groups that have a role to play in the formation of the human person, the Family being the basic unit that helps forms the perception of the human person, that presents the lenses by which the person sees the world, it is as though the grassroots, as though the background from which the development process takes its root, the human person would always have other instruments and factors, the peer groups and other social institution but a pivotal agent would always remain the family.

The Seminary Formation: The formation in the seminary is one that is structured to meet all areas that are necessary for a holistic human formation. The four cardinal areas of formation in the seminary are the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation. These are areas that are sacrosanct and intrinsic to ensure a balanced and full grown man, ready for the priestly vocation. These areas of formation are very integral to the actualization of the goal of an authentic formation.

The Human Formation: According to the Synod fathers, “the whole work of priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation.”⁵ “This therefore reveals the importance of human formation, as it represents the foundation upon which every other formation is built. The young men are first human beings, and would in their vocation deal with human beings. The letter to the Hebrews notes that “every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God” (Heb. 5:1). In order that his ministry may be humanly as credible and acceptable as possible, it is important that the priest should mold his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ the redeemer of man.”⁶ Future priests should therefore cultivate a series of human qualities, not only out of proper and due growth and realization of self, but also with a view to the ministry.³ The seminary hand book adds that maturity in human formation entails a two-fold demand, namely, increasing knowledge of oneself in all humanness as a creature, with particular strengths and weaknesses and understanding this within the framework of the relationships which forms the context of the priests life.⁴ An understanding of humanity of an individual, and a conscious acceptance of the human nature, towards a conscious effort to be better, and to grow helps in undergoing a human formation devoid of pretense and hypocrisy, one that is open to learning. As the priest grows both in the knowledge of himself and in his relationship with others, he will be more deeply formed into his priesthood. The seminarian is therefore formed to work on himself and mold himself better into the image of Christ, and by extension, work on his relations with men, so as to become a healthy and lovable conduit of God’s mercy and love for humanity.

In *Pastores Dabo Vobis* the Holy Father, St. John Paul II of blessed memory talks about “affective maturity”, which for him, is the result of an education in true and responsible love, and notes that it is a significant, and decisive factor in the formation of candidates to the priesthood.⁵ Affective maturity presuppose an awareness that love has a central role in human life.⁶ In his encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis*, St. Pope

John Paul II notes that Man cannot leave without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is meaningless if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate innately in it.⁷ This therefore implies that the seminarian is groomed and grows in love in all its entirety, physical, psychic and spiritual, with a human maturity subsumed in clear training in freedom, expressed in heartfelt obedience to the truth of one's own being, and to the meaning of one's own existence.⁸

Spiritual Formation: The formation of the human person, finds its fullest expression in spiritual formation. When it is carried out in the context of an anthropology which is open to the full truth regarding the human person, it leads to and finds its completion in spiritual formation.⁹ The hand book of the Seminary of all Saints adds that spiritual formation sets the foundation for the attitudes, habits and practices of the spiritual life in a lifetime of priestly ministry especially as regards priestly celibacy.¹⁰ As a result of this, the *New Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, notes that initial admission to the seminary should be preceded by a spiritual and ecclesial programme, in which a serious discernment of the motivation in responding to a vocation can be undertaken.¹¹ This programme which is referred to as the Spiritual Year is a programme that is set aside for the spiritual formation of aspirants to the priestly vocation. For one year, the aspirant is engaged in spiritual exercises that also help in his discernment of his vocation. The major seminary, however, continues in this spiritual grooming as the daily schedules of the seminary contain different spiritual activities that are a necessary ingredient of his vocation.

The seminarian also has access to a spiritual director to whom he meets for guidance and counseling, on spiritual matters. The essential content of spiritual formation specifically leading towards the priesthood is well expressed in the Vatican Council's Decree *Optatam Totius*: Spiritual formation (...) should be conducted in such a way that the students may learn to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through his son, Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.¹² Those who are to take on the likeness of Christ, priest by sacred ordination should form the habit of drawing close to him as friends in every detail of their lives.¹³ Prayers and study of the word of God and the attendance of Holy Mass are core spiritual activities for all seminarians and priests in formation.

Pastoral Formation: The whole formation imparted to candidates for the priesthood aims at preparing them to enter into communion with the charity of Christ the good shepherd. Hence their formation in its

different aspects must have a fundamentally pastoral character.¹⁴ This means that one major aspect of formation in the seminary is the pastoral formation, where students are trained to be true shepherds of soul after the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore seminarians are engaged in evangelical activities and are also posted to parishes.

The *Handbook of the Seminary of All Saints* notes that seminarians are introduced to the apostolic life by hands-on-experience in areas such as parish and campus ministry, counseling, parish religious education programmes, diocesan tribunals, vocation offices, hospital ministry, serial ministry to the poor and the disadvantaged etc.¹⁵ Through these field experiences the seminary is helped to understand the apostolate, and is prepared to make a more matured commitment to the priesthood of Christ.

Intellectual Formation: This aspect of formation is, perhaps, central to the whole project of formation in the Church. This is a very vital aspect of the priestly formation that cannot be overemphasized. In *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, St. Pope John Paul II of blessed memory notes that “Intellectual formation has its own characteristics but it is also deeply connected with, and indeed can be seen as a necessary expression of, both human and spiritual formation: it is a fundamental demand of human intelligence by which he participate in the light of God’s mind and seeks to acquire wisdom which in turn opens to and is directed towards knowing and adhering to God.¹⁶ The challenges of the rapidly developing world and the intellectual demand of a highly knowledgeable society makes it important for the Priest to be a man of great intellectual fecundity and knowledge to meet the challenges of evangelism to highly intellectual people. The synod fathers notes that “if we expect every Christian to be prepared to make a defense of the faith, and to account for the hope that is in us (Cf 1 Pet. 3:15), then all the more should candidates for the priesthood and priests have diligent care of the quality of their intellectual formation in their education and pastoral activity. For the salvation of their brethren and sisters, they should seek an even deeper knowledge of the divine mysteries.¹⁷

The seminary is not only a place for spiritual and human formation, but also a place where there is a rich investment in intellectual rigor and exercises. The peculiarity of the priestly vocation is one that demands that the seminarian is equipped with philosophical and theological knowledge. The young man in formation is exposed to the different schools and areas in philosophy that helps him delve into existential questions and rationalizations about the world and creation in general. The seminarian is exposed to a high level of education and academic activity befitting of every higher institution of learning, to learn

undergraduate courses in philosophy, so as to come out a philosopher of refinement, knowledge and understanding, balanced intrinsically by studies in theology, (knowledge of God) which is in fact the goal of his philosophical endeavor. Therefore, like all other young men and women undergoing undergraduate studies in philosophy, the seminarian undergoes rigorous intellectual exercise in philosophy, but this rime with a purpose and a goal to be able to wither the storm that comes from a proliferation of knowledge that could pose a challenge to faith and learning in the knowledge of God.

The Holy Father, John Paul II of blessed memory explains this further when he notes that “the theologian is first and foremost a man of faith. But he is a believer who asks himself question about his own faith (*fides quarens intellectum*), with the aim of reaching a deeper understanding of the faith itself.¹⁸ This is what philosophy helps to do, as it asks so many questions on existence and God. The need for philosophical studies geared and channeled towards a better understanding of the Christ is of the essence, as the philosophical traditions of the seminary are studied up to the point of supplementing theology, through the inclusion of various Christian philosophers and their philosophy that possesses a theological touch.

Theological formation is therefore very vital as it is the destination of all philosophical studies and the focal point of the intellectual studies of a seminarian. For John Paul II, theological formation is both complex and demanding. It should lead the candidate for the priesthood to a complete and united vision of the truths which God has revealed in Jesus Christ and of the church’s experience of faith.¹⁹

Who are the Agents of Priestly Formation?

Throughout the course of the formation of an intending Priest, there are various persons, structures and institutions he comes in contact with which shape his personality and necessary qualities that place him in a better position to exercise his clerical responsibilities. The role of these agents cannot be treated with levity because in the long run, the impact of these agents go a long way to influence the candidate’s conception of what the Priestly Ministry entails and how he is to go about the exercise of the ministry. There are so many people involved in the work of formation. But for the purpose of this paper, we would like to identify the main agents or units involved in the work of priestly formation. They are the key instruments being used by the God and Church to ensure the formation of future priests for the Church. We shall examine some of these salient agents which shape and influence Priestly formation and

their respective roles in the whole formation process. These are as follows:

The Family

As stated earlier, the family plays a pivotal role in the early upbringing of the child. It is the primary or primordial unit or agent of formation of the child. The attention paid by the family to the upbringing at the early stage of the growth of a child makes a lot of difference in the maturity of the child. The more attention given, the better for the child, the less attention given, goes a long way to affect the development of the child. This does not apply to the early stage alone, but at every stage of the development of the child. The whole gamut of formation should be wholistic. There is this tendency for some families to pay attention one or some aspect(s) of the child's formation to the detriment of the others. A lot of parents pay particular attention to the intellectual formation at the expense of human and spiritual formation, which is so important in the life of the child. They do this by sending their wards to the best school that are famous for academic prowess in the society without minding what they are able to offer in the areas of values and their relationship with the creator.

It is of paramount importance for the family to give priority to the wholistic formation of the child till the child attains the age of fending for himself or herself, which is the age of reason, the age at which they can now take complete responsibility for their actions:

The fecundity of conjugal love cannot be reduced solely to the procreation of children, but must extend to their moral education and their spiritual formation. The role of parents is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable²⁰.

Having enjoyed tutelage under the guidance of their parents in a wholistic manner, it is most likely that the child would take the path for which he has been brought up while growing up. This also applies to the seminarian who is in formation. While on holidays with the family, the onus is on the family to guide and support him as he undergoes formation. In the most of numerous distractions that could arise while on holidays, it behooves of parents to ensure that attention is paid to the seminarian's well-being so that he may not be swallowed by the negative influences that abound all over our contemporary African society.

The Diocesan Bishop/Presbyterate: The Diocesan Bishop is first and foremost the one who discerns the vocation to the Priesthood of any candidate. He is responsible for the seminarian from the beginning to the end of the formative process and ultimately decides if the candidate is fit

enough to be ordained and to exercise the Priestly Ministry.²¹ Although, he may not directly carry out these functions, the Bishop puts the necessary personnel and mechanisms in place to help him carry out this responsibility and that is where the role of the Diocesan Presbyterate (especially the Vocations Director) comes in. During the course of the seminarian's formation, he is bound to come in contact with various Priests in the Diocese who through such encounters help to shape the personality of such seminarian.²²

The Vocations Director is primarily saddled with the responsibility of formation of seminarians in the Diocese whenever they are away from school (the seminary). Under the overall supervision of the Bishop, he monitors the growth of priestly qualities in aspiring candidates and inspires the blossoming of these necessary qualities. As an illustration, here in our Nigerian clime, it is the practice to send seminarians on pastoral work during their holidays or break from the seminary in which the Priests in question are required to observe the seminarian and write a report of what has been observed during the period of his work. It is also the responsibility of the Priest to guide and direct the seminarian on what it entails to possess the necessary priestly qualities. This shows in no small measure the great responsibility placed on the shoulders of the Diocesan Presbyterate in the formation of candidates. The Bishop also intervenes from time to time to examine the progress candidates are making in their formation in all aspects of their formative life.

The Seminary: The seminary, which is a place where seminarians are trained, plays a very crucial role in the formative process as an agent.²³ The seminary which is not only an educational institution for the intellectual formation of Priests also coordinates the various elements which culminate in a holistic priestly personality. In this sense, this means that even if the seminary is an educational institution where seminarians bag degrees in Philosophy and Divinity, it is not just all about that. If not, it would not be different from the secular institutions where people study for degrees. Apart from the intellectual formation, the seminary also takes into cognizance, the spiritual, human and pastoral aspects of the candidate's formation which are geared towards the effective exercise of the Priestly ministry²⁴

The seminary carries out its function through the instrumentality of Formators (basically Priests) and other lay members of the community, including the Lecturers and other relevant persons who contribute to the day to day activities of the seminary. The Formators, though, play a very crucial role as through their actions and encounter with the seminarians, ideas and conceptions about what the priesthood

entails are formed in the minds of the candidates. This is not exclusive of their encounter with other Priests, such as those in their respective Dioceses.

The Laity: The Laity of the Diocese from where the seminarians come also play a crucial role in the discernment process. During his formative years, the seminarian will be privileged to work with various segments of the Laity in his Diocese and beyond. He will be actively involved in the affairs of Pious Societies, Associations, Lay ministers and other lay ministries in the Church. His encounter with these various categories of persons go a long way to help him stand better prepared to relate with these various segments of Christ's faithful by furnishing him with experience and concrete problem solving tools that will help him in the exercise of the ministry in the future.

On the other hand, the Laity also helps the seminarian to sustain himself and give an appropriate assent to the call of God's work.²⁵ They also serve as guardians and can be helpful in helping the seminarians to focus on their call. They can serve as advisers, dialogue partners and counselors to the seminarians which in the long run go a long way to shape the candidate's disposition towards the Priesthood.

The Subject of Formation: Apart from the aforementioned, it is pertinent to note that the candidate is primarily responsible for his own formation, as other attempts to form him will result in futility if the candidate remains closed-in to himself and wrongly disposed to the whole process. This point is well expressed in where it states that:

Each seminarian is the protagonist of his own formation, as he has already been mentioned and is called to a journey of ongoing growth in the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral areas, taking into account his own personal and family background. Seminarians are likewise responsible for establishing and maintaining a climate of formation that is consistent with the values of the Gospel.²⁶

Hence, the seminarian should develop what is referred to as "formative attitudes" such as availability, openness and docility to learn from the different circumstances he comes across in life and in various dimensions of his personality.²⁷ The communitarian climate of the seminary also plays a crucial role in helping the candidate to internalize vocational values interwoven in inter-personal relationships.

The Family: The family's role, which is sometimes downplayed, is of utmost importance in the shaping of a candidate's personality. The

family serves as the foundation on which every other attempt at building a formidable priestly character springs. A Christian family can truly assist candidates to discover and nurture a call to priestly vocation in the candidate.²⁸ The spirituality of the family could either foster or mar a candidate's desire for priestly service while a dysfunctional family or a family which pays little or no attention to spiritual matters can create a warped mindset in the consciousness of the candidate which further influences his disposition and openness to formation. While it is true that through the extra-ordinary grace of God, genuine vocation to the priesthood can spring from even the most despicable situations, we cannot overlook the influence of environment and family on character formation. If the foundation of the family is shaky, all other agents or institutions of formation will have a hell of a time molding the candidate to suite his call. The all important role of the family will be discussed in subsequent sessions.

The Holy Spirit: While discussing the various inputs of human agents in the formation of a candidate, we must not leave out the necessity of grace and God's intervention because the whole enterprise of Priestly formation is controlled by God Himself who chooses. This fact is all exemplified in Christ's admonition to His Apostles "You did not choose me; I chose you..." (Jn 15:16). Hence, it is the Holy Spirit who forms the candidate through the instrumentality of these various mediators (Patron Wong, 2014). As a result, it is very necessary that all requisite agents of formation should teach the candidate the importance of openness and docility to the actions of the Spirit which inflames the heart with sincerity and clarity of purpose.

An Assessment of the Family as an Agent of Formation

As earlier stated, the role of the family as an agent of priestly formation cannot be over-emphasized. This fact is re-echoed in prominent Church documents on Priestly formation. Emphasizing the foundation-laying responsibility which accrues to the family, a Second Vatican Document says:

Since the reality of the Christian Family is endangered nowadays, much importance should be given to pastoral work on behalf of the family, in order that the families themselves, generously accepting the gift of human life, may be 'as it was a first seminary.'²⁹

In line with the above stand, and in consideration of all necessary elements which promote priestly vocation, another salient document on Priestly formation states:

A very special responsibility falls upon the Christian Family, which by virtue of the Sacrament of Matrimony, shares its own unique way in the

educational mission of the Church, Teacher and Mother. Families can become a first seminary in which children can acquire from the beginning, an awareness of piety and prayer and love for the Church.³⁰

The above statements from the Church's Magisterium accentuate the importance of the family as an agent of Priestly Formation. The life of piety, the consciousness of the importance of prayer, the ability to learn submissiveness to God's will and respect for the Church and authorities all spring forth from the spiritual tradition of a family. If the father and mother in the home develop a culture of family prayers and devotion, the children do not need to be told of the importance of prayers in their lives as Christians. Other salient points that need to be examined are the vocation-friendly nature of the family, how they encourage members to open themselves to a life of service and tolerance by listening to the cares and needs of each member of the family, how much support members get from the family in pursuing a career or vocation which is in view of the happiness of such individual.³¹ All these elements combine to either foster or discourage the sprouting of the vocational seed in the hearts of aspiring candidates to the Priesthood.

As a way of diversion, it is pertinent to assess the concept of the family in our Traditional African culture. The average African is always concerned with inculcating certain societal values and morals in members of his or her family basically for the preservation of the family's integrity in the society which in turn fosters respect among society members for such family. African families do not joke with the moral formation of their wards which are often tied to the religious practices of the family and the communities at large because they recognize that such persons will someday go out as an ambassador of the family or cultural heritage. It is a common African saying to their wards that 'they should know the child of whom they are wherever they go'. This goes a long way to demonstrate the importance attached by Africans to the preservation of the family name which is only possible if the members of such family have a sound moral foundation. Each individual in the family is considered as an ambassador of the family. Hence, the family takes the duty upon itself to embark on extensive social, religious and cultural education of its members so as to avoid the situation where members become deviant in the society as a result of poor education.

If families generally hold forth to this African model of the family, the task of formation of candidates to the Priesthood will be much easier. Not only will they be good Priests but good Christians and patriotic citizens for those who may eventually not make it to the Priesthood.

Another important consideration is that the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph should continue to serve as a reference point to all families.

Fathers and Mothers should look up to Joseph and Mary in the upbringing of their wards. Jesus Christ, in His sovereignty, subjected Himself to the Headship of Joseph his foster father and learned the dignity of labour as a carpenter. From his foster father, Christ must have experienced how hardworking his foster father was, who provided for his family and lived in accordance with the commandments of God. In His human nature, Christ learned the relevant skills and the use of the necessary tools in carrying out manual labour.³² As a result, St. Joseph and his wife, Mary should be honoured and invoked in the attempt to plant and cultivate the seed of vocation to the Priesthood as he can truly become the head of our domestic Churches which are ‘the family’.

The Role of the Family in the Formation of Future Priests

It is worthy of note that the role of the family in the training and molding of a child’s character is un-negotiable irrespective of the vocation such child wishes to embrace. Hence, we shall examine certain duties and responsibilities of the family in the training of their wards which could in the long run sow the seed of the vocation to the priesthood in their minds.

Religious Education of Children: The Church’s teaching since the commencement of the Second Vatican Council explicitly states that the duty of religious education of children is a shared responsibility between the Ministers and Parents. According to the Code of Canon Law, the right and obligation of parents to procreate and educate their wards arise from the meaning and significance of marital union itself.³³

Since they have given life to their children, parents have a most grave obligation and possess the right to educate them. Therefore, it is for Christian parents particularly to take care of the Christian Education of their children according to the doctrine handed on by the Church. The Second Vatican Document, *Gaudium et Spes*, also emphasizes this point when it states that “parents are consecrated by the sacrament of marriage to a specific function: they are active co-workers in the salvific and evangelizing mission of the Church, a service they perform by their educational duties towards their children.”³⁴

These following documents all add up to the point that parents are responsible for the moral upbringing of their children which serve as foundations for their views about life and principles. A faulty moral upbringing will surely lead to a faulty personality so will a faulty personality lead to a faulty formation of the necessary priestly qualities in a candidate. The Formators can hardly work on a candidate with a faulty personality due to a faulty moral foundation except by the extra-ordinary intervention of the Holy Spirit.

Assist in the Process of Discernment: It is the role of the family to ‘assist’ the candidate in the process of discernment and not to determine or enforce the vocation to the priesthood on the candidate or discourage him from embarking on such a journey. With prayer, advice, mentoring and counseling, the family can play a very important role of formation of the candidate’s attitude towards the priesthood. By the very fact that the candidate grew up in the midst of his family, it is expected that the parents, guardians and siblings understand his character, disposition, principles and attitudes better. This fact places the family in a very good position to help the candidate discern if truly the vocation to the priesthood is his calling. In the whole process, the family must be wary of imposing their wishes on the candidate as this in itself could backfire.

It is common knowledge in Nigeria that some candidates are answering the call of their parents or guardians and not their own call. In some places where the priesthood is regarded as a status symbol or some kind of reputation which brings dignity to the family, some candidates can be placed under unnecessary pressure to become priests without the family members bothering to understand the candidate’s true disposition towards the whole process. On the other hand, some families do not want some candidates to embrace the call to the priesthood and regard it as a wasted life. These perspectives are a misconception of the role of the family in the process of discernment.

Collaboration with Other Agents of Formation: It is the responsibility of parents who have candidates aspiring towards the priesthood to cooperate and collaborate with other agents of formation such as the Bishop, Vocations Director, Seminary, Parish Priest, among others. This collaboration could be in form of material or spiritual support. It is the practice in many Dioceses that the Bishops are in charge of the financial responsibilities of the candidates. However, it is not out of place for parents of seminarians to come together once in a while and donate towards the training of seminarians in order to ease the burden on the Diocese, especially in developing regions like ours in Nigeria. Apart from the material support, it is the duty of parents to pray for the candidates and all those in charge of their formation that the Holy Spirit will guide them in making the right decisions.

In conclusion, parents can also play a crucial role in the encouragement of others, even if not their own children, who have expressed interest in the vocation or call to the priesthood, to embrace the vocation by being sources of testimony to others of the beauty and the dignity which comes with the service of God and his Church. In Nigeria where we have Vocations Committees saddled with the responsibility of fostering vocations in the Diocese, parents of aspiring

candidates can volunteer to be a part of such initiatives, which in itself can be a sign of encouragement to others.

Endnotes

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