

THE BOOK

“The present work on FORMATION, THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD AND THE MODERN AGE: *Festschrift in Honour of Rev. Fr. Anselm Jimoh* Edited by Francis E. Ikhianosime and Gregory E. Ogbenika, is a realization of one of the greatest dreams of our time- the dream of keeping the fascination of the centrality of God in priestly formation alive and attractive even in modern times. [This work], therefore, beats the drum for this harvest of thoughts from the best minds you can ever imagine. It contains a college of perceptions crystallized as a thought contribution by various authors, which will survive the physical structures of generations yet to come. [This work] sounds the drum for a piece by productive academics whose productivity is marked by happy versatility, rich variety, unfailing originality, consistent incisiveness, high voltage reasoning, limpidity of style and unwavering logic.”

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F. E. Ikhianosime & G. E. Ogbenika



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It gives great delight and pleasure to have completed this volume, *Formation, the Catholic Priesthood and the Modern Age: Festschrift in Honour of Rev. Fr. Anselm Jimoh*, and for this we are grateful. Different persons are worthy of thanks who cooperated with us during this work. First, we want to thank the Silver Jubiliarian in whose honour this book is written and dedicated; Rev. Fr. Dr. Anselm Jimoh. We can say, the idea of putting this volume together would not have been a reality without his influence, contributions and personality. As we celebrate with him, We are thankful to God for him for this milestone achievement in his priesthood. We also want to thank the various contributors to this volume. We are immensely thankful to contributors who have contributed from their various fields of specialization and study particularly Frs. Stan-William Ede, Ferdinand Okafor, John Odeyemi, Paul Adaja, Anthony Omodunbi, Lawrence Adorolo, Michael Olofinlande, Oseabulu Odenore and Leonard Anetekhai. We are also grateful to priests who are currently in formation and have shared from their wealth of experience, particularly, Anthony Akalue, Kenneth Adesina, Peter Egbe, Francis Ikhianosime and Gregory Ogbenika. We are also grateful to lay contributors particularly Prof. Isaac Ukpokolo, Dr. Simonmary Aihiokhai and Dr. Emmarex Okhakhu. We specially appreciate Prof. Isaac Ukpokolo for his editorial direction, suggestions and involvements. We extend warm sentiments of thanks to Rev. Fr. Prof. Anthony Kanu for reading through the papers and writing the foreword to the text. We also thank those who contributed resources towards the floating of this publication. We also appreciate the role played by Mindex for the publication of this book. The summation of this exercise is the offering of thanks to the Almighty God for His

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enablement and grace that guided the entire process leading to the publication of this book. To Him be glory and honour and power forever and ever, Amen.

Francis IKHIANOSIME and Gregory OGBENIKA

PREFACE

This idea of publishing a book was mooted to celebrate the 25th priestly anniversary of Rev. Fr. Anselm Jimoh, PhD and also to contribute to knowledge in a field the silver jubilarian has spent most of these years; which is formation. For the last 25 years, Fr. Anselm Jimoh has been around the corridors of formation; preparing and teaching young men who have made a choice to become priests. Fr. Anselm Jimoh is a profound academician with specialty in epistemology, particularly in African epistemology. His contributions in this field of academics have been so immense that he has risen to the academic rank of an Associate Professor of Philosophy. He has taught philosophy in three seminaries, namely, Seminary of All Saints, Ekpoma, St. Albert the Great Seminary, Abeokuta and Ss. Peter and Paul Major Seminary, Bodija- Ibadan where he is currently the Head of the Department of Philosophy. He has devoted time, interest and efforts in sharpening African epistemology, defining its parameters and theorizing largely about its nature. All these, he has done within the ambience of formation. His contributions are not just notable they are influential. Hence, with him reaching a milestone age in his priestly ministry, it became an auspicious time to have a book of reading in his honour as well as contribute to knowledge in the area of formation. Furthermore, since there are ubiquitous literature on formation, this volume has adopted an approach that would address extant challenges, while satisfying the primal motive for this publication; a robust book on formation in our modern age. Thus, a title which would satisfy these directions was adopted, namely:

FORMATION, THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD AND THE MODERN AGE – Festschrift in Honour of Rev. Fr. Anselm Jimoh.

Formation is indisputably a critical variable in the preparation and eventual ordination of priests. The Catholic Priesthood has been the

spotlight of many conversations in recent times from the good to the ugly. Although the priest or priest-to be is called to be set apart, this is first a call from the people. As a man called from the people, he is not completely immune from the challenges of society. The formation then helps to shape, prepare and dispose of the priest-to-be to the gospel he is called to embrace. The Church invests richly in the formation of seminarians and priests because of this critical importance. The formation covers four essential aspects of the priest, namely, the Spiritual, Human, Social, Intellectual and Pastoral Life. Hence, it becomes expedient, to have a rich resource on formation, granted many factors influence it today, consequent on the signs of the modern age. This demands that new approaches and perspectives are evolved to make the priest of today as relevant as ever.

This book, therefore, reflects on some of these issues and perspectives to formation in the modern age. The challenges of the modern age to formation cannot be exhausted in one volume, however, care has been taken to look at some areas of critical importance in our social context. Also, contributors to the issues are scholars who have made research in those areas of allocation or they pertain to their area of expertise. The contributions are generally analytic and prescriptive in approach and the subscription of individual authors on certain issues are not necessarily a reflection of the collective view of other contributors of this volume. The idea is to evolve a systematic approach to the issues rather than viewing them from a stereotypical lens. The goal is to see the issues from a wider perspective and therefore evolve viable ways to provide answers to current intriguing questions. This volume, therefore, promises to be both contemporaneous and also a propitious literature on formation in our modern age. It is believed that the Silver Jubilarian who has contributed immensely to knowledge in different ways, particularly to formation, would find this book a memorabilia in his honour in making contributions to knowledge particularly in the area of formation. It also would serve as a Launchpad to mirror the years ahead on issues of formation as well as assist pastoral agents in charge of formation with rich materials to peruse.

Francis IKHIANOSIME and Gregory OGBENIKA

FOREWORD

Pope Francis, during his address at the Congress on *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* organized by the Congregation for the Clergy on October 7, 2017, stated that the theme of priestly formation is decisive to the mission of the Church. He taught that priestly formation depends firstly on the action of God in our life, and not on our activity. It is a work that requires the courage of letting ourselves be formed by the Lord, to transform our heart and our life. He employed the biblical image of clay in the hands of the potter (*Jer* 18: 1-10) and the episode in which the Lord says to the prophet Jeremiah: “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause you to hear My words” (*Jer* 18:2). Observing the potter who works the clay, the prophet understands the mystery of God’s merciful love. He discovers that Israel is conserved in the loving hands of God Who, like a patient potter, takes care of His creature, places the clay on the wheel, models it, forms it and, in that way, *gives it shape*. If He realizes that the vase has not turned out well, the God of mercy once more puts the clay into the mass and with the tenderness of a Father, begins to mould it again.

Consequently, God, therefore, is the patient and merciful artisan of our priestly formation and, this work lasts a lifetime. Every day we discover with Saint Paul that we carry “this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us” (*2 Cor* 4: 7), and when we detach ourselves from our comfortable habits, from the rigidity of our mindsets and the presumption that we have already arrived, and have the courage of placing ourselves in the Lord’s presence, then He can resume His work in us: He forms us and transforms us.

The present work on FORMATION, THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD AND THE MODERN AGE: *Festschrift in Honour of Rev. Fr. Anselm Jimoh* Edited by Francis E. Ikhianosime and Gregory E. Ogbenika, is a realization of one of the greatest dreams of our time- the dream of keeping the fascination of the centrality of God in priestly formation alive and attractive even in modern times. This foreword, therefore, beats the drum for this harvest of thoughts from the best minds you can ever imagine. It contains a college of perceptions crystallized as a thought contribution by various authors, which will survive the physical structures of generations yet to come. This foreword sounds the drum for a piece by productive academics whose productivity is marked by happy versatility, rich variety, unfailing originality, consistent incisiveness, high voltage reasoning, limpidity of style and unwavering logic.

In this piece, the Authors, like artists, combine originality with insightful imagination. They have substantially treated the historical, conceptual, basic and substantive issues on priestly formation with such an envious distinction. Their coherent, systematic and encyclopedic approach has the capacity to expand the intellectual and professional horizon of their readers. You can only applaud at the end of each chapter and wait to applaud again at the end of the next chapter.

I, therefore, present to you a monumental, learned, lucid, patient and comprehensive piece. And I strongly recommend this book for all who treasure good literature on priestly formation; and most especially for anyone who wishes to be abreast with important debates and developments within the parameters of formation. Experts, researchers, beginners and casual readers are bound to treasure the usefulness of this piece.

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CHAPTER 1

Prejudicial Dysfunctions, Epistemic Practices and Priestly Formation: Anselm Jimoh and the Pursuit of Genuine Knowledge

Francis Eshemomoh IKHIANOSIME

Introduction

The seminal work of Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*¹, has become the *locus classicus* in contemporary discourses in social epistemology for analysing the different ways there can be dysfunctions in our epistemic practices. Fricker explores two main ways of dysfunctions in our epistemic practices. The first occurs in testimonial transaction, wherein a speaker can have a deflated credibility from a hearer owing to prejudice on the hearer's part. A deflated credibility can be due to a "negative-identity-prejudicial stereotype" a hearer has about a speaker. In such a situation, prejudice plays a negative role. In the history of epistemology, the debate of testimony being a source of knowledge is intractable and vexed. Although there are vigorous queries on whether testimony is an autonomous source of epistemic authority, it is nevertheless, arguably true that much of what we know is testimonially acquired; from information from books, teachers to what others tell us. But, prejudice plays a facultative role on how we accept or refute the claim of a person or an epistemic agent. For instance, if S has an ill-founded idea that P is a liar, because as at the last time S asked P if he drinks alcohol, he replied in the negative, not knowing that S had asked P, the question to test his sincerity, because

about two years ago, S had seen P at a function drinking a bottle of beer, but, unknown to S that P had exchanged the contents of the alcohol with a non-alcoholic substance earlier because there were no glass cups around. Then, S concluded that P is a liar on that basis. While S has grounds to believe P is telling a lie and so concludes that P is a liar, S's claim for P is ill-founded. In such a situation, S can become prejudiced to whatever P says. This can be a prejudice that deflates S's degree of credibility for P. Prejudice, therefore, can block the flow of knowledge and weaken the chances for achieving truth. Prejudice can manifest itself in varied ways. Fricker calls this kind of situation where prejudice shrinks a hearer's credibility, testimonial injustice.

The second dysfunction in epistemic practice is what she calls, hermeneutical injustice. In her precis to the epochal seminal work in question, Fricker explains that this occurs "at a prior stage, when someone is trying to make sense of a social experience but is handicapped in this by a certain sort of gap in collective understanding – a hermeneutical lacuna whose existence is owing to the relative powerlessness of a social group to which the subject belongs. Such a lacuna renders the collective interpretive resources *structurally prejudiced*".² The dysfunction referred to by Fricker as hermeneutic injustice often has a cultural or historical context. For instance, in an environment where smokers are regarded as perverts because of the cultural understanding of smoking, in such a situation, a smoker would be morally deflated or disdained when he talks on some moral matters for instance. This can lead to 'hermeneutical inequality'.

The two forms of injustices identified by Fricker abound from wrongs or negative influence of prejudice. Nevertheless, the philosophical understanding of prejudice is not necessarily negative. The work of Fricker, therefore, has opened up new considerations of harms and wrongs in epistemic practices. Her work has become a launchpad for discussing different social environments, how epistemic accounts are formed, and how epistemic transactions are interpreted. This work attempts to discuss how prejudicial dysfunction can either lead to credibility deficit or excess in the formation of priests, taking a seminary as an epistemic community. In the formation of priests, a lot rests on judgments and assessment from different evaluators/Formators. These reports ultimately form the

basis for discernment and judging of the suitability of a candidate for the priesthood. Like every testimonial or hermeneutic practice, the goal is understanding or knowledge in the long run. Prejudice can either stand in the way as a positive or negative element. This work, therefore, set to establish some ways there can be dysfunctions in an epistemic environment of priestly formation. This work analyses the understanding of prejudice from a philosophical standpoint and further progresses to analyse epistemic practices in priestly formation. Granted that the goal of every epistemic practice and epistemology is a holistic vision for knowledge and truth, the last part of this work devotes attention to how Anselm Jimoh, the silver jubilarian as an academic, has been involved in the pursuit of this agenda in epistemology, taking note of some of his contributions in pursuing the vision for a genuine knowledge in epistemology and also in creating a clearer understanding of what the priestly ministry should be as an epistemic subject in particular.

Philosophical Understanding of Prejudice

Prejudice as a philosophical concept is historical. Anja Steinbauer argues that the first philosophical musings about the concept 'prejudice' (*praeiustitium*) started during the classical age with Cicero. He talks of prejudice as the opposite of the truth, associated with an error. For Cicero, prejudice is born out of manipulation.³ He cites the legal context to explain for instance, that once a juror had listened to a particular case over and over, so once a trial happens and a lawyer is citing a version of that case, has little to do to convince them of the veracity of his words. Thus, the case in question takes its merit from the understanding of previous accounts listened.

During the period of the Enlightenment which was marked by the Renaissance, the understanding of prejudice as manipulation was abandoned, and rather, the concern was with the problem of prejudice. Francis Bacon's doctrine on prejudice was equated with "idols of the mind" (*idola*) which the intellect must be purified from if it can get knowledge. This understanding of prejudice (*idola*) which the mind must get rid off continues with the works of Descartes. According to Descartes, the first act of the new philosophy is to free the mind of prejudice. Descartes explains: "I yet apprehend that they cannot be adequately understood by many, both because they are also a little lengthy and dependent the one on other, and principally

because they demand a mind wholly free of prejudices, and one which can be easily detached from the affairs of the senses”⁴ With the Enlightenment, prejudices takes on a negative connotation as prejudice. In the light of this thought, Voltaire regards prejudice as an opinion without judgment.⁵ This transfusing understanding of prejudice as a prejudged opinion continued and was also a fashionable term during the French Revolution which denoted “all errors of the mind, which, in the worst cases, could only be eradicated by means of the guillotine!”⁶

The views on prejudice during the Enlightenment period sometimes confused the preliminary thought of an individual on an issue for a conclusive claim. Hence, the misgiving and labelling of prejudice as errors that blurs understanding. It is against this background that Gadamer evolves his philosophy on prejudice which argues for a beneficial and valuable role of prejudice. With Gadamer, Prejudice as a philosophical concept was immune from his negative garb. Gadamer explains the positive validity, the value of the provisional decision as a prejudgment, like that of any precedent”⁷ Cynthia Nielsen argues that “Gadamer’s focus on the positive value of prejudgment is part of his critique of Enlightenment rationalism, which claimed that judgment is legitimate only when methodologically justified. Absent such justification, a judgment is rendered baseless. Thus, all appeals to tradition and the authority of others – where accepting authoritative voices is misunderstood as relinquishing the use of one’s own reason- are considered invalid and irrational”⁸.

Gadamer argues that prejudice aids understanding. He notes that anyone trying to understand something or a text projects an initial meaning and it is this that guides the actual meaning of the text. Gadamer appeals to binary opposition to establish the value of prejudice. The theory of binary opposition is seen as a fundamental organizer of language, culture and human philosophy. In simple terms, this theory explains that we derive the meaning of a thing or concept by an appeal to its opposite. For instance, we can understand darkness more with the concept of light, etc. It is in this sense, Gadamer explains that fore-meanings or what is understood as prejudice helps to protect a text from a misunderstanding from the start. In this case, the actual meaning of a text becomes more valuable and meaningful, only with the presence of fore-meanings. With

prejudice, what is required in openness. The reader must remain open in reading the text. He notes clearly:

A person trying to understand something will not resign himself from the start to relying on his own accidental fore-meanings, ignoring as consistently and stubbornly as possible the actual meaning of the text until the latter becomes so persistently audible that it breaks through what the interpreter imagines it to be. Rather, a person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something. That is why a hermeneutically trained consciousness must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's alterity.⁹

Even with Gadamer, prejudice is not a terminus in understanding, it is only a pathway to getting meaning. We must take note of the window he offers for this, and that is "openness". However, he fails to realize that prejudice can, in fact, be the clog on the wheel of openness. This becomes as he describes it, "the tyranny of hidden prejudices" and this makes us deaf to understanding and actual meaning oftentimes. Prejudice, therefore, can either be positive or negative. From the Gadamerian understanding of prejudice, the concept can be epistemically neutral as it pertains to forming judgment or knowledge. Judgment has its dignity if it has a basis and has a methodological justification.¹⁰ Prejudice becomes negative if it has no epistemological foundation and lacks adequate methodological justification and it is positive if it acts on the contrary to aid judgment and knowledge. However, Gadamer stresses the historical situatedness which shapes our understanding; our language, customs, social and familial ties, etc. These historical situations are what make up the prejudices for him. He writes: "The self-awareness of the individual is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life. That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than his judgments, constitute the historical reality of his being". Our prejudices, therefore, for Gadamer, form our historical reality. As Nielsen puts it, "Our prejudices orient us in a certain direction and direct us to specific concerns and questions"¹¹

Gadamer maintains that prejudice could be due to human authority or over hastiness. It is either we have respect for persons

who hold them and so fall into error or we are overhasty ourselves. Authority within the period of Enlightenment was a major source of prejudice which was refuted and countered. The Enlightenment critique was primarily directed against religious tradition in Christianity, where for instance, the Bible is treated as a dogmatic literature and not historical and so anything that comes out of it was seen as authoritative and this formed a bedrock for prejudice. The Enlightenment rather critiqued much of these as a way to free man from the trammels of prejudice by subjecting every claim to the judgment seat of reason. Tradition and Authority were, therefore, twin elements that fanned the embers of prejudice. This is what Miranda Fricker calls Social Power.¹²

Fricker's conception of power is at the basis of discussing her notion of prejudice, particularly her notion of "Identity prejudices". Prejudices of this kind function as a monocle through which everything the person says or does is refracted. This is a kind of distorting the lens. According to Fricker, power which she generally also understands as social power is a capacity we have as social agents to influence how things go in the social world.¹³ Social power understood as a capacity persists through periods even when it is not being realized. Thus, power can exist whether operative or inoperative. Although, some scholars contest this understanding of power¹⁴. Furthermore, power can either be agential or structural, that is, it can either be possessed by an individual or a structure or group and it functions principally for control: either positively or negatively. And then, power is socially situated. Thus, Fricker's working conception of Social Power is, "a practically situated capacity to control other's actions, where this capacity may be exercised (actively or passively) by particular social agents, or alternatively, it may be operated structurally".¹⁵

Be that as it may, Fricker singles one form of social power which is identity power. Whenever there is an operation of power that depends on some significant degree upon such shared imaginative conceptions of social identity, then *identity power* is at work.¹⁶ Identity power comes to play on account of a certain position or class a person occupies. It is a form of authority and is a tool of control and sometimes silencing of the lesser other. For instance, identity power can be prominent in a patriarchal culture where women's voice are diminished. In such a situation, when a woman speaks on an issue,

her position is not highly reckoned with, but once a man speaks, it is taken as authoritative. In such a situation, identity power can cause stereotypes. In this case, even before the woman speaks, her position is already distorted by this social stereotype as socially inferior or weaker. To conceive of this differently, if in such a situation, a man accuses a woman of something wrong in such a context, there is a primordial bias to accept the position of the man on the basis of his identity category. What is playing out here is identity power. It so happens in other social contexts. Identity power, therefore, is an integral part of our testimonial exchanges, and it creates stereotypes in how we evaluate the judgments of those in certain identity or power category. Such stereotypes embody prejudices; either creating credibility deficit or credibility excess and this is what Fricker calls “prejudicial dysfunction in testimonial practice”¹⁷ In testimonial exchanges, Fricker notes that prejudice can insinuate itself in a number of ways, but its main entry point is via stereotypes.¹⁸ Stereotypes are generally neutral. They can have a positive or negative valence based on its context.

Epistemic Practices and the Priestly Formation

The understanding of prejudice from the foregoing explains its preponderance in the epistemic transaction whether positively or negatively. The implication of prejudice in such exchanges is that it influences understanding and judgment either positively or negatively. It generally creates a skewed way of viewing people especially in an epistemologically refracted lens and this causes harms or wrongs in epistemic practices and even sometimes injustice as Fricker puts it, both testimonial and hermeneutical. These conversely affect how we form beliefs on people and what we count as knowledge in the long run.

Epistemic practices are understood to mean the different pathways in generating knowledge. Put elaborately, epistemic practices “are the socially organized and interactionally accomplished ways that members of a group propose, communicate, assess, and legitimize knowledge claims”¹⁹ Epistemic practices are therefore basically interactional in which case it is a construction among people. It is also contextual as it involves norms of a particular social system. It is also intertextual in which case it involves communication through a history of coherent discourse, signs and symbols. It is also

consequential in which case it both instantiates power and legitimize knowledge.²⁰ Karin Knorr Cetina expatiates on the concept in point by maintaining that epistemic practices are considered to be included in epistemic cultures, ‘the culture of knowledge settings’²¹, which are linked to and form the basis of a broader contemporary concept, the knowledge society. Epistemic practices, therefore, are related to a frame of meaning which regulate people’s lives. It is this knowledge which determines what people do, how they are related to and what constitutes people’s actions. When we talk of epistemic practices in a given social context or background, we are referring to a framework of how knowledge is formed and applied. We also refer to all those pathways for arriving at these, including interpersonal epistemic transactions. Therefore, as long as there is a social given, epistemic practices necessarily abound. Our concern in epistemic practices in priestly formation is how we form knowledge about others especially with the operation of social power and also how we make sense of our social experiences. Our concern also oscillates around how we think about our epistemic relations if they produce epistemic advantage or disadvantage especially within the context of priestly formation.

In priestly formation, the seminary is the epistemic community in context. Within this epistemic community are students (seminarians); those in training to become priests and Formators; those training the students. There are a number of epistemic transactions that take place within this epistemic community; epistemic transaction between fellow students and between formators and students. The latter is of greater importance because in it there is a power play; the formator seen as superior. The epistemic transaction between the formator and student is important, that it ultimately helps in his overall evaluation and how his vocation is eventually discerned. Since the factor of evaluation is at stake, the whole epistemic practice must be looked to see how testimonial excess or deficit can play a role in judgment and knowledge formation. One area of concern is how Formators listen to their students’ concern and how the students make themselves known to their Formators so as to be helped. Another area is how the student can provide completely irrelevant information or provide a superfluous assessment of themselves and not allowing themselves to be known and assisted in the formation process. This can create a wrong epistemic relationship for assistance and support. The difficulty that can be created is a complicated

epistemic relationship sometimes arising from the compromising of information because of a prejudged understanding that such information can be used negatively against him. This kind of situation has a lot of consequences for the student and for the intended outcome of formation altogether.²² The practical implication is that this can jeopardise the opportunities of being properly assisted and eventually, the essence of the formation is in all defeated.

Another area in the epistemic practice within the seminary as an epistemic community is that there are sporadic cases of communicative failure which can lead to false belief and knowledge formation. This can be due to what I can regard as some gaps in the student-formator relationship. Within this relationship, the power relations play a key role in either the widening of the gaps or its closure. Once there is no proper management of the balance of power, it can lead to silencing sometimes of the student, leading to wrongs or harm in the epistemic relations. Unless there exist an atmosphere of symmetric power relations, sometimes there cannot be openness in the relationship. The epistemic starting point for this discussion is that students (seminarians) can be vulnerable in the epistemic relationship and that prevalent stereotypes and prejudices within the structural framework of the seminary as an epistemic community, some are prejudices they have about the epistemic community which can hamper a holistic and healthy epistemic situation which in turn can hinder proper understanding of the student and eventually influence how he is judged or evaluated. A caveat must be established here that it is not the case that at all times seminarians are epistemically vulnerable or oppressed, but, that they can be susceptible to this based on the imbalance power relation that sometimes exists between the formator and the seminarian.

It suffices to begin by identifying stereotype structures and practices that are generated and sustained in the seminary as an epistemic community. Stereotypes are sometimes brewed from a warped understanding and belief that those who underperform within the system will not always be promoted for the Orders that they are there for, regardless of the context. Also, some are within the seminary community with a fixed understanding and stereotype that not all who begin can finish in the program. This creates a Darwinian survival mentality; the survival of the fittest. Again, since the process of assessment is basically done by formators and so, the students

sometimes could attempt to play a positive image before them, so a positive impression could be formed and consequently influence positively the judgement of them, without it being their true image and personality. The primary work of a formator is not to pass judgment, but to form. Assessment is only part of this process of formation, it is not the principal role. To say that the students think this way, is a structural stereotype from what they have understood and interpreted over time. Thus, the system has foisted a negative stereotype which reinforces a negative attitude in them. Another stereotype can be that anyone who is found out to consistently manifest a negative or an unapproved behaviour would be dismissed from the community. This is an incomplete picture of the process, because, this runs contrary to what a seminary should be or of its formation program. However, this stereotype affects how the students, therefore, open up in the process. These stereotypes portray a wrong image of the epistemic community and of the epistemic relation between the student and formator. These kinds of stereotypes already create prejudice to the epistemic transaction and interaction. Thus, there is epistemic distrust from the beginning of the interaction and this is an epistemic vice.

There are other levels of stereotypes arising from the part of the formator to the student, based on certain understanding and experience in the past. This may sometimes be accidental, not habitual. For instance, to think that people from a certain region are poised to behave in a certain way, based on the experience of others from that area. There is also a case of testimonial excess, where a student who is academically sound is perceived as a morally balanced individual. His academic brilliance can create a situation of testimonial excess and a mirror or lens for seeing every other action of his in the light of brilliance. Conversely, to think that a person who is not academically sound is not suitable enough in other areas and so judged on the basis of that alone. It suffices to say that stereotype can also be created systemically, wherein, much of what is known about the individual are relied upon by information and accounts about him from others, not necessarily a personal experience of the student.

Hypothetically speaking, in a situation where all the reports that have been written about the candidates are by people who have had a negative bias against the candidate in question, then, the Formator may be relying on such a negatively biased report, unknown

to him to make an assessment. And so, if there are any pointers to such situations, whether confirmed or not, the Formator is likely to admit it a sequence and moral difficulty of the candidate. Here, we can find a case where negative bias is perpetuated and judgment formed on the basis of prejudicial dysfunctions. There are also possible situations where judgments about individuals are based on disparaging associations, social groups and one or more objectionable attributes, not just on the basis of an individual situation. When judgments are made on such merits, we sometimes can talk about a version of injustice Fricker talks as the basic form of injustice; testimonial injustice.²³ This situation as Fricker and some commentators on Fricker uphold can lead to credibility deficit; that whatever they say is viewed in this light with some prejudice. This can gradually lead to eroding the epistemic confidence of the speaker or group. If this situation endures, it can lead to a crush of their confidence in their epistemic capacities. “A person or group suffering from such a situation will not expect what they say to be heard, and in time might not speak at all, as the constant assault upon their testimonial practices gradually undermines their epistemic and social confidence”.²⁴ This is the kind of situation that can sometimes lead to silencing of the other or speaker with the constant erosion of his epistemic confidence. This can pose some difficulty in the epistemic practice in the seminary. These are possible instantiations of structural stereotypes that build up our prejudices which eventually influence judgment and knowledge formation in the seminary as an epistemic community. One of the consequences of a negative stereotype is that it leads to a deflated level of credibility to the speakers’ word.²⁵ In our case in point, stereotypes can cause either the student to be suspect of what the formator is saying or on the contrary, it can cause the formator to have a deficit of trust in what the student is saying. In any case, stereotypes create a prejudicial dysfunction and this weakens a complete epistemic situation for either a chance for a fair judgment or a balanced and comprehensive understanding of an epistemic transaction.

Stereotypes as Fricker notes are windows for prejudices and the first it does is the impairment of listening. It functions on how we listen to others. For the lecturer, once he has a negative stereotype of a candidate, how he listens to him becomes lopsided or impaired. The same is true about the student, once he forms a prejudice about a

lecturer, he is always at a losing end, not paying attention to details, but only listening with the wrong aid of his prejudice. He thinks of all the teacher says in the light of this. So, he becomes perpetually suspect of his contributions. This can be a major form of deflection for a wholesome epistemic interaction. This short-circuited interaction necessarily will lead to communicative failure as there would not be an anticipatory openness as Gadamer recommends in dealing with prejudice rather, there would be anticipatory reticence and deflection. This outcome of such epistemic practice can only be incomplete, imbalance and an unproductive epistemic interaction. Formation process in this context is skewed and lead to error. Negative prejudice takes a progression not only for testimonial deficit, but can also lead to hermeneutical injustice. Hermeneutical injustice is the second variant of epistemic injustice outlined by Miranda Fricker. This is the phenomenon that occurs “when the intelligibility of communicators is unfairly constrained or undermined when their meaning-making capacities encounter unfair obstacles”.²⁶ Fricker puts it as “when a gap in collective interpretative resources puts someone at an unfair advantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences”.²⁷ What is needed in this situation are epistemic practices that lead to openness, epistemic trust and testimonial justice.

There is an entirely new way we can evaluate epistemic practices in the seminary as an epistemic community and this can be in the pedagogical exchange; the teaching-learning process. Arguably, the formator as a teacher is considered as an epistemically privileged person possessing epistemic authority. The essence of this authority is to facilitate students’ learning. There are, however, ways within this mutual interaction that there are harms and wrongs due to prejudice both on the part of the student and on the part of the formator as a teacher. Ben Kotzee explains that epistemic harm or injustice could occur in such a relationship “if teachers systematically gave learners less epistemic credit than they deserve due to some negative identity prejudicial stereotype pertaining to learners in a particular setting”.²⁸ Epistemic credit, in this case, is understood as the testimonial value attached to a student. When teachers tend to place more value on some or a group of students at the expense of others, this can cause some level of epistemic harm. Although this is peculiar to many pedagogical settings, there is a tendency to always give more attention to students who are brighter than others who are less

academically inclined. Malcolm Gladwell describes this as the Matthew Effect²⁹ in his book, *Outliers*.³⁰ Kotzee corroborates this point in detailed terms thus:

Teachers may give more epistemic credit to the views of students from epistemically privileged groups. On the testimonial level, they may believe or praise such students more often due to their identity as members of an epistemically privileged group. On the hermeneutical level, teachers, but more so, the school's culture, language and ethos may give more credence to such students' perspectives, engage more naturally with these perspectives and fail to comprehend the perspectives of less privileged students.³¹

Conversely, there is another way that there can be epistemic harm on the part of students to teacher and even causing the student to be at a loss. Once a student has a set of stereotypes about a teacher, it forms some negative prejudices against such a teacher and this becomes refraction that impairs his openness to learning because of his bias. This is another form of a detour in the student-formator epistemic transaction. From our analysis of epistemic practices in a seminary as an epistemic community, prejudicial dysfunctions play roles in impairing proper understanding of an epistemic situation and making the most of an epistemic exchange. The concern to have a wholesome epistemic situation is the concern of analytic epistemology. This leads us to the third part of our conversation, the contributions of Anselm Jimoh to the pursuit of genuine knowledge

Anselm Jimoh and the Pursuit of Genuine Knowledge

The growing breakdown in epistemic practices reflects an increased need and relevance for the pursuit of genuine knowledge which is the goal of epistemology. The term, 'genuine knowledge' is specialized. In the analysis of knowledge, epistemologists talk of legitimate or genuine knowledge to differentiate it from unsubstantiated claims or knowledge that is not warranted. Thus, "genuine", "legitimate", "warrant" are designates to protect the process that leads to knowledge formation. Genuine knowledge is one that is free from the encumbrances of prejudice for instance and scepticism. This explains

the role of justification as a condition for knowledge. Efforts in understanding the justification condition have made some scholars talk about epistemology as a theory of justification. Jimoh Anselm is one scholar who has made substantial contributions to the subject matter of justification in epistemology. He maintains that epistemic justification describes when a person's belief is in right standing with knowledge³². Jimoh notes that epistemic justification clarifies or reduces doubt about the genuineness of our beliefs³³. The question of epistemic justification lends itself to various understandings, interpretations and theories. Justification is so central to our knowledge claims, yet, establishing a paradigm is very herculean.

Regardless of the inconclusiveness on the topic of justification, Jimoh Anselm subscribes to a context-dependent version of epistemic justification. In his article, "Context-Dependency of Human Knowledge: Justification of an African Epistemology", he argues "that knowledge is ultimately dependent on some human and social factors, rather than being an objective, impersonal relation between the object known and the knowing subject."³⁴ The essence of context, consideration of human and social factors are at the heart of overcoming prejudice in our knowledge claims and this is the vision of Anselm Jimoh's philosophical theorizing on justification. Contextualism as a theory of justification reacts against the incoherency of coherentism and foundationalism as theories of epistemic justification. Foundationalism holds that some beliefs are incorrigible and infallible and so do not need to be justified; those beliefs are said to be self-evident or derived from intuition.³⁵ It suffices to say that prejudices act like foundational belief, that the epistemic agent, tend not to seek their justification because they are believed to be self-justifying or intuitive. However, it is precisely for this reason that foundationalism is criticized as an incomplete theory of justification. The most evident albatross for this theory is how some beliefs are infallible. Similarly, in seeking justification and freedom from prejudicial dysfunctions, when all our beliefs are interrogated and a warrant is provided for them, then, our knowledge claims can be genuine. This is precisely the advocacy of contextualism as a theory of epistemic justification which Anselm Jimoh subscribes and promotes.

It suffices to say, that Jimoh Anselm's devotion in epistemology is for clearer grounds of belief or certitude and

dismantling grounds for doubt. This is the focus of what can be regarded as *opus magnum* or one of his most cited work, *Certitude and Doubt: A Study Guide in Epistemology*.³⁶ Through this work, he treats key themes in epistemology which can aid the acquisition of certitude in our knowledge claims and the diminishing or elimination of doubts in epistemology. It suffices to say that Jimoh devotes special attention to African Epistemology. African Epistemology takes to cognizance the epistemic peculiarities of the African man as an epistemic agent. It, therefore, analyses issues, concepts and perspectives in epistemology from an African perspective. In fact, he advanced in one of his papers, “An African Theory of Knowledge”.³⁷ In this work, he reinforces his position advanced by his subscription to the contextualist thesis of justification by further advancing that “our knowledge claims among traditional Africans are not validated in objectivist terms, as required by rationalists and empiricists, but with regards to the habits and customs of the people.”³⁸ It suffices to cite Jimoh in some details:

Justification in African epistemology is culture-bound and therefore context-dependent. The truth-value or falsity of our epistemic claims is ultimately dependent on factors that are human, social and culture-based. An appraisal of the factors discussed above gives us a clear assessment of rational certainty. African epistemologists should consider the role played by the human person and the society in establishing our knowledge claims. There are no epistemic claims whose justification rests wholly on the prescribed objectivist terms of the rationalist and empiricist as seen in traditional Western epistemology. If the justification of our knowledge claims is situated within social practices, we would no longer think of knowledge, truth and rational certainty in abstract terms. Therefore, there would be no need to study these concepts independent of the factors alleged as necessary conditions for human knowledge.³⁹

The submission of Jimoh with reference to the justification of our knowledge claims is that both the social and cultural parameters must

be assessed and analysed if we must get at genuine knowledge. This is giving a place to the context in seeking justification. When we have an objective lens with which we want to see or pursue certainly, we cannot but create stereotypes or have set foundations with which each situation is judged. This is what fosters prejudice; making judgements from stereotypes. If we can examine issues and epistemic contents within each given context, as Jimoh advances, we certainly would be on a path for a holistic epistemic portrait in our epistemic practices.

The contributions of Jimoh apart from advancing a picture for our search for certitude has also helped in reconstructing, what he considered as fractured indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). By indigenous knowledge system, Jimoh explicates is “the system of investigating, understanding, assimilating and attributing African conception of reality that is distinctively African and philosophical.”⁴⁰ As part of his project in pursuit of genuine knowledge and certainty, Jimoh seeks to also reconstruct the fractured epistemological template by which Africans evaluate their epistemic experiences. This was a kind of objective lens with which they investigate, interrogate and evaluate knowledge practices. Western logic, models and paradigms were the objective epistemological lens African hitherto used. This he believed caused epistemological silencing⁴¹, which is also known as epistemic injustice. This epistemic injustice which was caused by the bequest of a monochrome logic of western epistemology as either a lens, foundation or stereotype for evaluating African indigenous knowledge practices fractured our African epistemology. His efforts at a reconstruction of the fractured epistemology were advocacy of taking the African context, culture and circumstances to cognizance. This is a further search of genuine knowledge in African epistemology and the breaking down of the walls of stereotypes and prejudices which impair our vision for a holistic epistemic picture.

It suffices to say that Jimoh’s quest for genuine knowledge is also evident in his contributions to the priestly formation and vocation. One very notable important contribution to this is in his article, “Priestly Formation in the Face of Contemporary Challenges in Nigeria: Lessons for Consideration in Auchi Diocese”⁴². He highlights some misgivings in priestly formation today and advanced ways for a correct understanding of what it should be. He notes: ‘redefining the priesthood is not an option. If things are not as they should be, the option is to go back to the roots and make them what

they ought to be”.⁴³ It is clear that the vision of Jimoh over time has been the reconstruction of fractured epistemic templates both for how we arrive at knowledge claims and what the priesthood should be.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has discussed common dysfunctions in our epistemic practices and how they lead to prejudice. It has been elaborately stated in this paper that prejudice refracts our understanding and impairs us from achieving a holistic epistemic picture. Although prejudice, at least, philosophically speaking is not itself negative, however, when used as an end, a judgment in itself, it always brings about an incomplete or partial understanding. Stereotypes reinforce prejudice and until we get rid of stereotypes, our understanding will keep being impaired by prejudice, what Francis Bacon calls the “idols of the mind”. Taking a seminary as an epistemic community as this work has established, both stereotypes and prejudice can refract a balanced view of things and the consequence is harms and wrongs done at certain levels. Apart from various harms and wrongs certainty or genuine knowledge also becomes scarce. The pursuit for knowledge that is warranted has become exigent in contemporary analytic epistemology since the epochal challenge by Edmund Gettier⁴⁴ that the tripartite traditional conditions for knowledge, namely, “belief”, “truth” and “justification” although individually and jointly necessary, are not always jointly sufficient for knowledge. With Gettier’s hypothetical interrogation of the traditional understanding of knowledge, it has become expedient to tighten the grounds for our knowledge claims. This is the concern for “genuine knowledge”. Prejudice can sometimes lead to knowledge but one that is not warranted. Hence, the focus in contemporary analytic epistemology for genuine knowledge.

Anselm Jimoh, the silver jubilarian is a consummate epistemologist who has pursued the vision for genuine knowledge in epistemology as an intellectual focus in general and in different epistemic contexts in particular. With his advocacy of epistemic contextualism, he has made clearer the vision for genuine knowledge as an epistemic possibility. Through his works, he has pursued activism against the objectification of means for knowledge. He further has self-engaged in a reconstruction of fractured epistemic portraits of different epistemic pictures, including those fractured by

stereotypes and prejudice. His epistemic template of contextual-dependency for justification of our knowledge is what this work has advanced for a reconstruction of the fractured epistemic situations in priestly formation. In synopsis, therefore, in priestly formation, the taking of an individual context, background and situations are important if we must get the best from the formation process. In our epistemic transactions in priestly formation, if we undermine context, there would be different harms, wrongs and deficits that would be incurred in the process. Therefore, each epistemic interaction must be subject to individual contextual clarification, interrogation and justification. If we keep having beliefs that are foundational or incorrigible, then we cannot make the most from our epistemic exchanges. But, if we subscribe to the advocacy of Anselm Jimoh for context-based interaction and justification in our epistemic practices, then, even if we cannot get a complete or holistic epistemic picture or certitude, we are sure to have diminished the embers of errors and wrongs in our epistemic exchange. The resultant outcome would be a healthy outlook and basis for discussing other issues in priestly formation.

Endnotes

¹ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

² Miranda Fricker, "Precis- Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing" in *Theoria*, 61, 2008: 69-71

³ Anja Steinbauer, "The False Mirror: A Brief History of Prejudice" in *Philosophy Now*, Issue 123, December 2017/January 2018, retrieved on October 13, 2019

[https://philosophynow.org/issues/123/The False Mirror A Brief History of Prejudice](https://philosophynow.org/issues/123/The_False_Mirror_A_Brief_History_of_Prejudice)

⁴ René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, ed. Stanley Tveyman, New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 36, translated by Elisabeth S Haldane and G.R.T Ross).

⁵ Voltaire on Prejudice as cited in "Prejudice, Philosophies and Language: Spinoza and His strategy of Liberation", Conference Proceedings in *Nordicum-Mediterraneum, Icelandic E-Journal of Nordic and Mediterranean Studies* https://nome.unak.is/wordpress/volume-12-no-3-2017/conference-proceeding-volume-12-no-3-2017/prejudices-philosophies-language-spinoza-strategies-liberation/#_edn2

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- ⁶ Anja Steinbauer, “The False Mirror: A Brief History of Prejudice” Ibid.
- ⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second, revised edition, London: Continuum, 1975. p. 270
- ⁸ Cynthia R. Nielsen, “Gadamer and Fricker on Prejudice and Testimonial Injustice” in https://www.academia.edu/40149778/Gadamer_and_Fricker_on_Prejudice_and_Testimonial_Injustice
- ⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 271
- ¹⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 273
- ¹¹ Cynthia R. Nielsen, “Gadamer and Fricker on Prejudice and Testimonial Injustice” Ibid.
- ¹² Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 9-17
- ¹³ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 9
- ¹⁴ Michael Foucault contests this understanding of power as operative even when not put into use. Foucault generally holds that power exists only when put into action. See, Michael Foucault, *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Press, 1982.
- ¹⁵ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 13
- ¹⁶ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 14
- ¹⁷ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 14
- ¹⁸ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 14
- ¹⁹ Gregory J Kelly and Peter Licona, “Epistemic Practices and Science Education” in Michael R. Matt *History, Philosophy and Science Education*, Dordrecht: Springer International Publishing, 2018. 139-165.
- ²⁰ Gregory J. Kelly and Peter Licon, “Epistemic Practices and Science Education” Ibid.
- ²¹ Knorr Cetina, K. “Knowledge Cultures” in M. Jacobs and N Weiss Hanrahan (Eds), *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2005. 65-79. See also, Inger Eriksson and Viveca Lindberg, “Enriching ‘learning activity with ‘epistemic practices’- enhancing students’ epistemic agency” in *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, 2016, 1, DOI:10.3402/nstep.v2.32432
- ²² Ian James Kidd and Havi Carel discussed this kind of situation happening in conditions of illness or healthcare and medicine. This is discussed in at least two of their papers, namely, Ian James Kidd and Havi Carel “Epistemic injustice and Illness” in David Coady and Miranda Fricker (eds.), *Applied Epistemology*, a special issue of the *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 33 (4), 2016, 172-190. Also, Havi Carel and Ian James Kidd, “Epistemic Injustice in medicine and Healthcare, in Ian James Kidd, Jose Medina and Gaile Pohlhaus, (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2017, 336-346.
- ²³ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 35

²⁴ Ian James Kidd and Havi Carel, “Epistemic Injustice and Illness” in David Coady and Miranda Fricker (ed), *Ibid*, 177. See also, Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 47-48.

²⁵ See, Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 17

²⁶ Jose Medina, “ Varieties of Hermeneutical Injustice” in Ian James Kidd, Jose Medina and Gaile Pohlhaus, *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, *ibid*. 41.

²⁷ Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, 1

²⁸ Ben Kotzee, “Education and Epistemic Injustice” in in Ian James Kidd, Jose Medina and Gaile Pohlhaus, *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, *ibid*. 326

²⁹ The Matthew Effect is based on the biblical principle of St. Matthew “for unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.”—Matthew 25:29

³⁰ Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008, 15-34

³¹ Ben Kotzee, “ Education and Epistemic Injustice”, 327

³² Jimoh Anselm, “On the Question of Justification in Knowledge Enquiry” in *Nasara Journal of Philosophy (NAJOP)*, 2.1, 2017, 9-25

³³ Jimoh Anselm, “On the Question of Justification in Knowledge Enquiry” 10

³⁴ Jimoh Anselm, “Context-Dependency of Human Knowledge: Justification of An African Epistemology” in *West African Journal of Philosophical Studies*, vol. 2, 1999, 18-37

³⁵ Kolawole Owolabi, “The Nature of Epistemology” in *Issues and Problems in Philosophy, Kolawole Owolabi (ed.)*, Ibadan: Grovacs Network, 2000, 64.

³⁶ Jimoh Anselm, *Certitude and Doubt: A Guide in Epistemology*, Ibadan: Ebony Books and Kreations, 2013. This text has been revised and expanded in its second edition, Jimoh Anselm, *Certitude and Doubt: A Guide in Epistemology*, Benin: Floreat Systems, 2017..

³⁷ Jimoh Anselm, “An African Theory of Knowledge” in *Themes, Issues and Problems in African Philosophy*, Isaac Ukpokolo (ed), Switzerland: Palgrave Macmilliam, 2017, 121-136.

³⁸ Jimoh Anselm, “An African Theory of Knowledge”, 135.

³⁹ Jimoh Anselm, “An African Theory of Knowledge”, 138

⁴⁰ Jimoh Anselm, “Reconstructing a Fractured Indigeneous Knowledge System” in *Synthesis Philosophica*, 65 .1, 2018. 5–22

⁴¹ Jimoh Anselm, “Reconstructing a Fractured Indigeneous Knowledge System” *Ibid*, 5

⁴² Jimoh Anselm, “Priestly Formation in the Face of Contemporary Challenges in Nigeria: Lessons for Consideration in Auchi Diocese” in J. A. Onimhawo and F. E. Ikhianosime (eds), *Diocese of Auchi at Ten: History, Growth and Perspectives*, Ibadan: Safmos Publishers, 2013. 31-53.

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CHAPTER 2

Philosophy and Priestly Formation

Isaac Ehaleoye Ukpokolo

Ought not a Minister to have, First a good understanding, a clear apprehension, a sound judgment, and a capacity of reasoning with some closeness.... Is not some acquaintance with what has been termed the second part of logic, (metaphysics), if not so necessary as [logic itself], yet highly expedient? Should not a minister be acquainted with at least the general grounds of natural philosophy?

John Wesley, *Address to the Clergy*¹

Introduction

I consider it simply appropriate to bring into a discourse titled ‘formation, the Catholic priesthood and the modern age’, some candid reflections on the place of philosophy in priestly formation, particularly as attempts have been made in some quarters to represent certain aversion to reason when matters of faith come up. This is known to manifest not only in popular arguments and street conversations but even among pastors, preachers and teachers at Bible schools and Christian communities as noted above by John Wesley. From manifest experience, to embrace faith without reason would either produce a fundamentalist mindset or a fanatical disposition, while of course, reason without faith would either lead to agnosticism or atheism. After all, an act of faith is an intelligent act.² And in Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 155) we are admonished that

“in faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace: believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace. And, I take it to be a privilege to be invited to do an essay in this regard, particularly in honour of a renowned philosopher, teacher and preacher of our time. For me, that an essay on philosophy and priesthood is relevant in contemporary times, stands evident in the light of a number of encounters I have personally had. I would mention just two of many occasions. First, many years ago, I was introduced by a Professor of Medicine at the University College Hospital (U.C.H) Ibadan to a woman who was introduced to me as the wife of the founder of “Faith Clinic,” a worship centre at Ibadan city. Hearing that I am a philosopher she exclaimed: “So, you don’t believe in God?” Yet, I could not readily relate my identity as a philosopher with atheism. I took the time to explain to her and allay her fears. Well, I hope I succeeded. The second instance occurred in Israel, while on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, leading a group of Catholic Charismatic Renewal members, where I was serving as National President of the Group and Co-ordinator of Anglophone West Africa. The Tour Guide could not hide his astonishment when I disclosed to him that I am a teacher of philosophy, not only in a university but also in a Catholic Major Seminary in Nigeria. His question was, “How do you manage the marriage between philosophy and Catholic Charismatic spirituality?” My response was simple, “Philosophy and Catholic Charismatic spirituality are faithful spouses in me; complimenting and mutually assisting”. “Philosophy endowed me with reasoning capacity, leading me to the reasonableness of faith”. Catholic Charismatic spirituality, on the other hand, intervenes in my encounter with reality, with truths, and the good when reason becomes impotent and unable to lead me on. For instance, we say seeing is believing, but I dare to say, it is not. We must believe that a thing is possible before we should believe it even though we saw it (John 20:29)³. And so, in this essay, I attempt to highlight the place of philosophy in priestly formation. For the avoidance of doubt, it is not possible to establish in one essay of less than five thousand (5,000) words, all that philosophy has to do in priestly formation. I would just attempt to identify specific areas in philosophy, and how these areas stand relevant to the training of priest for the church. Thus, I do not intend to go into the history of the relationship between

philosophy and priestly formation, or how and when it started, I would rather attempt some highlight in the relationship.

I begin with the question of methodology, wherein critical thinking and sceptical attitude are brought in as philosophical ideals. I then go further to represent certain epistemic modes required for dealing with the surrounding reality. Next is an attempt to establish the need for a given metaphysics at every point in our daily experience. The essay goes further to examine some ethical stances in relating with others. Finally, I present in a nutshell, that philosophy in its appeal to reason, does not deny the application of faith in our daily experiences, and vice versa. All these, stand necessary not only as points of direction for pastoral ministries outside the Catholic Church but even in the Catholic Church that is usually seen as the church wherein the ideal church subsist.

Priestly Formation Project

The entire training of students (at priestly formation) should be oriented to the formation of true shepherds of souls after the model of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd. They are therefore to be prepared for the ministry of the word: that they might understand ever more perfectly the revealed word of God; that, meditating on it they might possess it more firmly, and that they might express it in words and in example; for the ministry of worship and of sanctification: that through their prayers and their carrying out of the sacred liturgical celebrations they might perfect the work of salvation through the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments; for the ministry of the parish: that they might know how to make Christ present to men, Him who did not “come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45;cf. John 13:12-17), and that, having become the servants of all, they might win over all the more (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19). Therefore, all the forms of training, spiritual, intellectual, disciplinary, are to be ordered with concerted effort towards this pastoral end.⁴

Perhaps, a rather succinct statement of the above representation of the project of priestly formation is that, the entire training is meant to produce men of proven integrity, strength of character and wisdom of the ancients as espoused in the scripture as well as in the teaching authority of the church dedicated to the service of God and his people. It is however very pertinent to note that such candidates are taken from among men – from specific human contexts, which inevitably influenced them; and to these same contexts, the priests are sent for the service of the people.⁵ Yet, the life and ministry of these men must adapt to every era and circumstance of life.⁶ Such is the ground, as well as the goal of priestly education - to bring forth the ‘seed’ of God in the person. The term ‘education’ to be sure, derives from the Latin word *educare* or *educare*, which means ‘to bring out’. And so, to educate a person is to bring forth a reality that lies latent in the being. Thus understood, the idea of education invokes a certain kind of Platonic innatism assisted through effective instruction and learning to be brought forth to manifest in words, thoughts and actions. It could be added here, that, the term education derives from the same root as ‘exodus’ implying a sort of liberation.

The foregoing conception of education as a process is brought to bear on the candidate for priesthood in the Seminary.

As generally understood, the word ‘seminary’ derives from the Latin *semine* which means ‘seed’. The seminary is thus the ground – the nursery – wherein the seeds are sown: the seminarians as it were are seeds, nurtured and carefully bred through watering, pruning, fertilizing, weeding and even grafting until they bloom with the best of values both in Faith and Reason.

The Place Of Philosophy

According to Bertrand Russell, the conceptions of life, and the world, we call “philosophical” are a product of two factors: one, inherited religious and ethical conception; the other, the sort of investigation which may be called “scientific”.⁷ Individual philosophers have differed widely in regard to the proportions in which these two factors entered into their systems, but it is the presence of both, to some degree, that characterizes philosophy.⁸ The point here is that faith and reason are not necessarily mutually exclusive as it is believed in certain quarters of human culture. Philosophy is something overlapping between theology and science.⁹ Like theology, it consists

of speculations on matters as to which definite knowledge has, so far, been unascertainable: but like science, it appeals to human reason rather than to authority, whether that of tradition or that of revelation.¹⁰ Thus understood, definite knowledge belongs to science, while all dogmas as to what surpasses definite knowledge belong to theology. Yet, interpenetrating the spaces of science and theology is philosophy.

For the purpose of clarity, philosophy by its etymology is the love of wisdom. But this is not the same thing as love of knowledge, in the sense in which an inquisitive man may be said to love knowledge; “vulgar curiosity does not make a philosopher.” And so, properly defined, philosophy is the love of the ‘vision of truth’. And here lies the meeting point of faith and reason.

In the light of reason, philosophy employs the aid of critical thinking, endowing the human person with the power of disciplined thought life, an important fruit of college education. Critical thinking fosters high-order active, intelligent evaluation of ideas and information. More precisely, it is the general term given to a wide range of cognitive skills and intellectual disposition needed to effectively identify, analyse and evaluate beliefs and truth claims; to discover and overcome personal preconception and biases; to formulate and present convincing reasons in support of conclusion, and to make reasonable, intelligent decision about what to believe and what to do.¹¹ Put somewhat differently, “critical thinking is governed by certain intellectual standards such as; clarity, precision, accuracy, relevance, consistency, logical correctness, completeness and fairness.”¹² All these, present philosophy as an activity – a critical, rational reflection on already existing beliefs employing the tools of logic, language and rigour. By these we get easily acquainted with ideas as Friedrich von Schelling would say:

the fear of speculation, the ostensible rush from the theoretical to the practical, brings about the same shallowness in action that it does in knowledge. It is by studying a strictly theoretical philosophy that we become most immediately acquainted with Ideas, and only Ideas provide action with energy and ethical significance.¹³

From the above, those ideas that provide human actions with energy and ethical significance are arrived at through theoretical philosophising employing the tools of critical thinking.

In addition to critical thinking as a mindset, is the closely related disposition of scepticism. This is perhaps one of the reasons why it is assumed that philosophy or reason is averse to faith. However, it is important to stress here that, the sceptical attitude referred to here is not the reckless rejection of Absolute Deity by the atheist, neither is it the methodic doubt of Rene Descartes, who derives the existence of the Absolute Deity from the ego rather than the ego from the existence of the Absolute Deity. This scepticism of philosophical prescription is not the scepticism of David Hume who in attempt to take empiricism to its logical conclusion rejected the essence of causality, the practice of induction and the projection that the future could resemble the past, thereby creating a problematic at the very foundation of scientific knowledge. Of course, it is not the scepticism of the Sophist indicating some reckless current of relativism and its related tyranny. The scepticism here referred to in philosophical prescription is the scepticism of George Santayana. His words:

Scepticism is an exercise, not a life; it is a discipline fit to purify the mind of prejudice and render it all the more apt, when the time comes, to believe and to act wisely; and meantime the pure sceptic need take no offence at the multiplicity of images that crowd upon him, if he is scrupulous not to trust them and to assert nothing at their prompting. Scepticism is the chastity of the intellect, and it is shameful to surrender it too soon or to the first comer: there is nobility in preserving it coolly and proudly through a long youth, until at last, in the ripeness of instinct and discretion, it can be safely exchanged for fidelity and happiness.¹⁴

From the above, philosophy prepares a mind to engage its reality – material, social, spiritual-, with care and caution, fairness and modesty, firmness and rigour, and yet, a readiness to consider what is before it. In other words, the mind encounters the environment with a certain epistemic mode characterized by respect for ‘the other’. What

this means is that philosophy equips the candidate undergoing priestly training and formation with certain methodological skills, cognitive mode, metaphysical grounding and moral attitude. This is the contribution of philosophy to the wholistic development and formation of the priest.

Having highlighted the nature of the methodological skills (critical thinking and sceptical attitude) in the preceding paragraphs, it is now time to examine the cognitive or epistemic mode onto which the candidate is introduced. Here the question is that of 'epistemology', or 'theory of knowledge'. And, the history of epistemology reconstructed as a judicial hearing would be deciding one singular question: How is reliable knowledge possible? And by extension, how are we to differentiate knowledge (episteme) from mere opinion (*doxa*) as we are more rationally right to depend on knowledge rather than opinion. The one who possesses the knowledge, possesses knowledge of something, that is to say, of something that exists, as what does not exist is nothing.¹⁵ To be sure, knowledge or '*episteme*' is always true and is infallible, as it is logically impossible for it to be mistaken. However, opinion or '*doxa*' can be mistaken. Opinion cannot be of what is not, for that is impossible; nor of what is, for then it would be knowledge.¹⁶ If this is so, an opinion must be of what both is and is not. But how is this possible? Bertrand Russell responds:

particular things always partake of opposite characters: what is beautiful is also, in some respects, ugly; what is just is, in some respects, unjust; and so on. All particular sensible objects, so Plato contends, have this contradictory characters, they are thus intermediate between being and not-being, and are suitable as objects of opinion, but not of knowledge. "But those who see the absolute and eternal and immutable may be said to know, and not to have opinion only. Thus we arrive at the conclusion that opinion is of the world presented to the senses, whereas knowledge is of super-sensible eternal world; for instance, opinion is concerned with particular beautiful things, but knowledge is concerned with beauty in itself."¹⁷

To this extent, philosophy arms the human mind with the capacity to transcend particular, sensible, transient, context-dependent objects and phenomena to locate the pure, eternal immutable reality. In the light of this epistemic mode, the mind is able to engage the vision of truth which is the task of philosophy.

The foregoing present a strong link between epistemology and metaphysics or ontology which has to do with the nature of reality in itself or the study of being. Ontology, for instance, has been characterized as the study of the most general kinds that exist in the universe. Usually, the emphasis has been on demarcation: which candidate for existence really does exist. Aristotle and Plato disagreed in their answers, and philosophers have gone on disagreeing ever since. Think of W. V. O. Quine's Ontological aphorism, "to be is to be the value of a variable."¹⁸ Ontology in itself is an aspect of metaphysics, that branch of philosophy that inquires into the general fundamental normative principles of reality, and how this can be distinguished from appearance. The conception of the reality we have is very functional in the way we relate with the world and our environment in general. It is my belief that every position held and maintained rests on a given metaphysics be it personal, social, political, intellectual, moral or relational, all must rest on some metaphysics, although one may not know this. Thus, it is very important to have epistemic consciousness of one's guiding metaphysics.¹⁹ In examining the nature of reality, we do not aim at a detailed knowledge of particular things, such as the special sciences might give, but rather at an outline conception of reality within which all knowledge of particular things must fall, and by which such knowledge must be judged. There are certain general conceptions which make up at once the framework of knowledge at the framework of existence. Such are the categories of being and cause, change and identity, space and time: and our knowledge of particular things would depend on the conception we form of these basic categories. On its part, epistemology has shown them to be principles of thought while metaphysics on its part inquires into their real significance. Metaphysics as an area of discourse consist in a study of the ontological meaning of the categories, either in themselves or in their specification, thereby marking off its field of concern from that of the special sciences.²⁰

Part of the reality encountered by our minds is human. And so, philosophy projects that branch of discourse that aids the human person to relate with other human persons. This is the area of ethics or moral philosophy concerned with bringing to the fore, those general fundamental normative, immutable principles of behaviour, distinguishing right from wrong, just from unjust, good from evil as we relate with one another. Of course, it has been argued in some quarters, that the moral life did not begin by laying down general principles or conduct, but by forming codes of concrete duties. Duties to parents, children, neighbours, and nations. These were the concrete forms in which the moral nature first manifested itself, and in which also is still finds its chief expression. In this respect, it is argued, the moral life is analogous to the mental life, which does not begin with abstract speculative principles, or with theories of knowledge, but with specific acts of knowing. In both alike, the knowledge of principles was second and not first; and in both alike principles were implicit from the beginning.²¹ And so, it is suggested here that, these implicit nature or principles from the beginning makes the search for some overarching ground totalizing framework of reference for moral actions not only necessary but innate in us. And such is the object of focus of the human mind to which a seminarian is exposed. These are normative, axiomatic and fundamental assumptions, precepts, theories and procedures of right action.

Three of the leading moral ideas are: the good, duty, and virtue. Each of these is essential in a system which is to express the complete moral consciousness of a people. Where there is no good to be reached by action, there can be no rational duty, and without the notion of duty, the idea of virtue vanishes. Furthermore, where there is no sense of duty, but only a calculation of consequences, we would have merely a system of prudence. This may be good enough in a way but lacks moral quality. Such conduct may be natural and allowed but it is not virtuous. For in such conduct, we miss the reference to a moral agent. It is a matter of wit and shrewdness only and is not a manifestation of virtuous character.²² These later attitudes and dispositions the seminarians are trained to approach with leprosorial disdain.

Faith And Science

The life of the Catholic Christian and indeed, the life of a priest in the Catholic Church is a life of faith. It is a form of life in which the individual agent understands himself first as a contingent being whose existence and those of other beings (human and non-human) proceeds from the Being of the Supreme God who originates and sustains the entirety of reality. Since the Priest more specifically receives a vocation to propagate this faith in the providence of God who sustains all things in the universe; one who aspires to be a priest, therefore, must as a matter of necessity be an exemplar of faith in God.

Yet, the man of faith also lives in a contemporary world that is also driven by the advancements of science. By science, reference is made here to the totality of knowledge which comes to us through the deployment of *ratio* – reason. Here, a distinction is therefore made between matters of faith and science. Given the differing *methods* of faith and science (reason) the debate about the compatibility (if any) of the both has continued even unto contemporary times. We are better off when we conceive of faith and science as being endowments given to the human person by God. Hence, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason. Since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind, God cannot deny himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth. In this connection, Pope (St.) John Paul II in the opening of his encyclical letter, *Fides et Ratio* stated that “faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”²³ Reason here is not restricted only to the activities of the natural sciences; it rather includes the logical ratiocinations that are typically characteristic of philosophical inquiries into ultimate reality.

Insight from the Catechism of the Catholic Church is apt in this regard:

Methodical research in all branches of knowledge provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith are derived from the same God. The humble and preserving investigator of the secrets of

nature is being led, as it were, by the hand of God in spite of himself, for it is God, the conserver of all things, who made them what they are.²⁴

The Seminarian, therefore, is not formed only to perform parochial duties without the use of reason. I dare to say here that the entirety of the mission of a priest is short-circuited if his activities are not moderated by the use of reason which itself is God's own gift. The onus is therefore on formators to underscore this important aspect of a holistic formation of priests which combines faith in God with the rational faculties which the same God has bequeathed to humanity. The one in formation too must gradually develop an understanding of the complementarity of the gifts of faith and reason and the importance of both gifts for the nurturing of a divine vocation.

Concluding Remarks

It would be rather odd to end this reflection without pointing out some practical signposts by which philosophy is identified in the training of priests. First of such is that the activity of philosophising aids us in the task of apologetics²⁵ – the task of giving a reasoned defence of Christian theism in the light of objections raised against it and offering positive evidence on its behalf (1 Pet. 3:15). This has to do with making a reasoned articulation of the faith and be ready to disarm any attacks mounted against it. Second, philosophy also is meant to aid us in the task of polemics. Whereas apologetics involves the defence of Christian faith, polemics is the task of criticizing and refuting alternative views of the world.²⁶ Third, philosophy is very central to an expression of the image of God in us. This image refers to God as a rational Being.²⁷ Fourth, philosophy in priestly training curriculum permeates systematic theology and serves as its hand made in several ways. It helps to add clarity to the concepts of systematic theology.²⁸ A fifth consideration is that the discipline of philosophy facilitates the spiritual discipline of study. Study is itself a spiritual discipline, and the very act of study can change the self.²⁹ Anyone who undergoes the discipline of study lives through certain types of experiences where certain skills are developed through habitual study: framing an issue, solving problems, learning how to weigh a piece of evidence and eliminate irrelevant factors, cultivate the ability to see important distinctions instead of blurring them, and so on. The discipline of

philosophy also aids in the development of certain virtues and values. Sixth, philosophy can enhance the boldness and self-image of the Christian community in general.³⁰ Finally, discipline is most essential for the task of integration - to blend or form into a whole. In this sense, integration occurs when one's belief, primarily rooted in scripture, are blended and unified with propositions judged as rational from other sources into a coherent intellectually adequate Christian world views.³¹

I have in this essay attempted to show that the various elements of critical thinking, which itself generates a positive form of scepticism, and the need to understand the importance of ontology in the grounding of reality, are all crucial to the development of a culture of philosophising which in itself is always at the service of the Christian gospel and its ministers. The necessary connection between ethics and human relation was also briefly drawn in view of the nature of the ministry of Priests to which seminarians aspire to embrace. I have insisted here on the complementarity of faith and reason in the human quest for truth and meaning. These various elements highlight the importance of philosophical reasoning to priestly formation. Indeed, these various elements are means to a wholistic formation of priests.

I like to restate that priestly formation is always a continuum which does not cease at ordination to the priesthood but continues through a lifetime. Just like the Church that is always being reformed, the Priest too continues to be reformed by applying himself to the demands of faith and reason as the times demand. The result of such continuous reformation is always a Christian community whose roots grow deeper in the soil while bearing a variety of good fruits for the wellbeing of God's creation.

Endnotes

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CHAPTER 3

Christianity at the Forefront of Philosophy and Science: Priestly Formation and the Praxis of *Eruditio*¹

Stan-William Oshiozekhai EDE

Human formation ought to have as its aim the fuller development of priests' humanity so that their humanity can be a "bridge" for communicating Jesus Christ to men and women today ... Human formation entails contact with the culture: the arts, sciences, and politics of human life. These studies and involvements keep priests in touch with their own lives and the lives of those whom they serve.²

Introduction

The myriads of contrasting opinions that have trailed the agelong questions of existence and essence inevitably engender endless arguments regarding the *fons et origo*, hypostasis and goal of nature. The argumentative enterprise thereof has for many centuries been borne on the wings of dialectics between faith and reason, a core ground for the infinite catalogues of diverse and divisive views about the universe and our place in it. The calls for a separation between the two categories of faith and reason have been well-matched or sometimes even outmatched by the quest to strike a healthy balance or lasting accord between them. Such a quest which is believed to be a potential icebreaker for the unity of ideas and universal harmony has been one of the most challenging tasks of humankind.

In contemporary times, the scientific, technological and internet revolutions have taken the challenge beyond the intellectual realm, situating it within the very core of our day-to-day existence. Attempts to create a chasm between religious truths and scientific truths is changing the world, evident not in the gradual loss of the sense of the sacred but also in the befuddled clime that currently besets the human sense of morality. This will get worse if we do not confront the general misconceptions that reason and faith on the one hand, and religion and science, on the other hand, are contraries on bipolar ends of the spectrum respectively, and incapable of meeting without conflict. What is frequently lost in all these misconceptions, however, is that both the history of philosophy and the history of science are rich with Christian thinkers and scholars, and at the same time the progress of both disciplines have been facilitated and enriched through the centuries by Christian thinkers and scholars.

As a matter of fact, from the early history of Christianity till date, Christian scholars have been at the forefront, made remarkable breakthroughs, and registered indelible impacts in the disciplines of Philosophy and Science. While great Christian philosophers and thinkers like St. Augustine, St. Anselm and a host of others are very well known, there is incontrovertible evidence that Christianity provided the ideal culture for the origin of Modern Science.

This paper will discuss a few Christian philosophers and scholars whose works made a leading impact in the discipline of philosophy, and some of the top scientists who happen to be Christians whose works also revolutionized modern science. The aim is not only to show that Christianity has been, and is still, at the forefront of philosophy and science, but to sound a wake-up call to today's generation of seminarians and priests who have been trained in philosophy and various other disciplines, to engage in active *eruditio*, so as to perpetuate the trend and to imprint positive impacts upon the changing world for the overall betterment of humankind. That is to say, besides the religious functions of saving souls, we can commit the fruits of our training to active scholarship and scholarly productions, tirelessly until those efforts combine into a supernova force that is strong enough to rewrite the world's changing narrative and restructure the world on the prop of a healthy faith albeit human and technological progress.

1. The Biblical-Christian Perspective On Philosophy and Science

For a Christian, the logic and assumptions of philosophy, as well as the characteristics and assumptions of science are founded on the belief that the universe was created by the Almighty God who is faithful and consistent.

The creation of the universe by the all-powerful, intelligent God (cf. Gen 1:1-2:4, Wis 13:2-9) explains why the universe is so intelligible and open to our scientific investigation. In addition to the belief that the universe was created by God, both the Old Testament and the New Testament of the Bible are so rich in 'cosmology' and 'cosmological' motifs that serve to explain the world and the real effects behind the natural order of things.

In the Old Testament, motifs drawn from astral reflection are almost certainly present in places like Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. Although the worship of heavenly bodies are regularly condemned, yet the foundational text of Gen 1:14 leaves room for positive engagement with ancient astronomy, which could, of course, stretch easily into more astrological speculations based on the 'three-heavens' scheme of creation. The first heaven is the firmament, the part closest to the earth (cf. Gen 1:8), the second heaven is the home of the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon and stars (cf. Deut 4:19), and the third heaven is where God the Most High dwells (cf. Isa 14:13; also 2 Cor 12:2). The supremacy of YHWH meanwhile, could be effectively demonstrated by noting that he is the creator of the heavens and the earth, the one who calls the stars by name, the Lord of the heavenly host.³ Drawing upon the Old Testament foundation, the New Testament carries the cosmological reflection even further. In the *Prayer of the Community*, the creation is chanted as one of the *Magnalia Dei* (Acts 4:24; cf. Rev 4:11; 10:6; 14:7),⁴ with a plan for the fullness of time in which God will unite all things, both in heaven and on earth, in Christ (Eph 1:10). When perspectives from both the Old Testament and the New Testament are brought together, one would imagine that the Holy Grail of biblical cosmology was the precise determination of the number of 'layers' or 'tiers' of the cosmos, with early theological debates raging between two, three, four, seven, nine or more layers. This provided a fundamental setting upon which future philosophers and scientists would research and

propound theories regarding the nature of the universe, and the principles governing the manifestation of things in nature.

It is important to note that the cosmological reflections of early Christians thinkers and writers fit analogically into modern cosmological theories. The ‘three heavens’ scheme, for instance, has been variously interpreted. Concomitant with the aforementioned categorization is the view that they refer to the regions below the moon, above the moon and above the sun – or might be a tripartite division of the night sky, with the Milky Way at the apex, with other regions dropping into the north and south. St. Paul, for instance, used this particular schema in 2 Cor. 12, just as one can explore the use of *hyperouranos*, ‘the heaven above’, and duly compare it with Plato’s self-consciously fictionalized depiction of the ascent of the soul in the *Phaedrus*.⁵

Generally, the cosmology of the New Testament writers provides a solid basis for the philosophical and scientific reflections for so many who came after them, many of whom would eventually become leading figures in the fields of Philosophy and Science.

2. Christian Scholars in the History of Philosophy and Science

Many Christian scholars and Catholic clerics throughout history have made significant contributions to philosophy and science. The Catholic Church, in particular, has produced many philosophers, scientists and mathematicians, from among clerics, religious brothers and the lay faithful. There have been many others as well from other Christian denominations, and so we group all of them together using the broad categories, such as “Christian Philosophers” and “Christian Scientists”. Some notable Christian philosophers and scientists include such illustrious names as Paul of Tarsus, St. Augustine, St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Albert, Nicolaus Copernicus, Gregor Mendel, Georges Lemaître, Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, Rene Descartes, Pierre Gassendi, Roger Joseph Boscovich, Marin Mersenne, Bernard Bolzano, , Robert Grosseteste, Christopher Clavius, Nicolas Steno, Athanasius Kircher, Giovanni Battista Riccioli, William of Ockham, S. L. Jaki.

We must also not fail to mention the Catholic Church herself and some of her groups and associations from the medieval times to the present, amongst which are religious orders such as the *Jesuits* (esp. in Philosophy and Science), the *Dominicans* (Philosophy and

Science) the *Opus Dei* (esp. Philosophy and Communication), *the Salesians* (esp. Classics and Communications), *the Legionaries of Christ* (esp. Philosophy, Bioethics and Science vis-à-vis Neuroscience). We shall briefly discuss a few of the scholars and one of the religious orders mentioned above.

(a.) Paul of Tarsus (died 67 AD)

Over the centuries in the history of thought and scholarship, there have been scores of philosophical thoughts, discourses and treatises from renowned theologians who were also distinguished philosophers. We have the examples of St. Augustine, St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas Aquinas, Teilhard de Chardin, Paul Tillich, etc. No serious mention is usually made of St. Paul when philosophers are being counted or cited because he has always been regarded as a theologian, one of the finest the world has ever produced, and the greatest Christian evangelizer of all time. Recently, there is a growing trend in which scholars have begun to identify standard philosophical principles and theories in the writing of St. Paul, and more people are beginning to appreciate the great philosophical resorts inherent in the thoughts, teachings and writings of St. Paul who hitherto, was viewed and studied mainly within the theological endeavour.⁶

Earlier, we have hinted on Paul's contribution to science through his cosmological theories. Within the same framework, Paul contributes enormously to Philosophy, but it suffices to say that his views and contributions to Philosophy and Science are intertwined.

Much of the Philosophy of Paul is centred on the "Concept of Truth", on which he based various other reflections on the meaning and purpose of life. For St. Paul, there was always "truth in order to goodness". Goodness has its perfection in God, and the real truth is the perfection of certainty realized in God, and knowing God as the Ultimate Being who created and rules over the universe.⁷

A careful study of Paul would reveal that Paul has both idealist and realist views of truth. From the realist perspective, Paul's concept of truth has some bearing with the philosophy of Aristotle as interpreted by St. Thomas Aquinas. Realists argue, in line with common sense, that truth is the conformity of mental images and ideas with what is "out there". If two people see a dog, one might say,

“That is a dog”, while the other says, “That is a fox”. The first statement is true because it conforms to reality; the other is false because it does not. This is more or less in a logical tune with the “*adequatio intellectus et re*”, that is, the correspondence theory of truth, wherein what is in the mind or what is stated corresponds to what the case is in reality.⁸

Also for St. Paul, besides observing and reasoning about the physical world, one can attain truth by reasoning from abstract principles, via a committed procession from the depth of faith, rising through the gradation of love unto its highest expression, realized only in the Almighty and Infinite God, the Creator of the universe and Lord of time and history. Faith constitutes the abounding ground for the abstract principles upon which the reasoning progresses, as well as for making the perception real, because “faith” Paul says, “is the assurance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen”, and “*for those who have faith or believe, all things work together unto good*” (cf. Rom. 4:16; 5:2; cf. Heb. 11:1; 12:2).⁹ That is actually his main standpoint on truth – the idealist intent. In this, St. Paul resembles Plato. Plato believes that the human mind could arrive at the truth only by apprehending certain ideas existing in a realm apart from everyday reality.¹⁰

A synthesis of the Pauline thought, therefore, is that everyday reality owes its existence and meaningfulness to the One, Infinite and Omnipotent, God, the author of the universe, “*in eo vivimus, movemur et sumus*” (“in whom we live and move and have our being” (cf. Acts 17:28). Following from this, every human person who exists is baseless and empty until he discovers the truth and lives in it; to discover the truth is to know God and serve him with an abiding faith (cf. Rom 3-5).

(b.) St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274)

Thomas Aquinas was a Catholic priest of the Dominican Order, theologian and philosopher, one who is said to have had the greatest influence on both philosophy and theology in all of history.

The mainstay of Aquinas’ philosophy is a rethinking of Aristotelianism, with significant influences from Stoicism, Neoplatonism, Augustinianism, and Boethianism. It also reflects some of the thinking of the Greek commentators on Aristotle, and of Cicero, Avicenna, Averröes, ibn-Gabirol, and Maimonides. This may

suggest that we are dealing with an eclectic philosophy, but actually, Aquinas reworked the speculative and practical philosophies of his predecessors into a coherent view of the subject which shows the stamp of his own intelligence.¹¹ The impact of his effort will, however, be far-reaching covering all the various aspects and branches of philosophy, even through centuries after his life.

One of the significant hallmarks of Aquinas' work in philosophy is the conscious tendency to seek the middle ground on questions that have been given a wide range of answers. This spirit of moderation is best illustrated in his solution to the problem of universals. For centuries, Philosophers had debated whether *genera* and *species* are realities in themselves (e.g. Plato, Boethius, William of Champeaux) or mere mental constructs (Roscelin, Peter Aberlard). What made this odd discussion important was Aquinas' conviction that these universals, such as 'humanity', 'justice', 'whiteness', 'dogness', are primary objects of human understanding.¹²

Thomas' spirit of compromise as a philosopher was balanced by another tendency, that of innovation. His original Latin biographers all stress this feature of his work. Thomas introduced new ways of reasoning about problems and new sources of information, and he handled his teaching in a new way, and thus stood in advance of his contemporaries in the philosophical endeavour.

(c.) Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543)

Nicholas Copernicus was a brilliant Renaissance man in every sense of the title, a mathematician, astronomer, physician, artist, translator, scholar, jurist, governor, military leader, diplomat, economist and a Third Order Dominican. He attended various European universities and became a Canon in the Catholic Church in 1497.¹³

He was the first astronomer to formulate a heliocentric - sun-centred - model of the solar system, i.e. the first mathematically based system of planets going around the sun. He demonstrated in the book *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres*, published just before his death, that the motions of the planets could be explained without presuming the Earth was the centre of the system. His uncle was the Bishop of Warmia, to whom Copernicus served as secretary and in whose castle he lived and began work on his heliocentric model.

His new system was actually first presented in the Vatican gardens in 1533 before Pope Clement VII who approved and urged Copernicus to publish it around this time.

(d.) Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)

Described as the “father of modern physics”, the “father of modern science” and the “father of modern observational astronomy”, Galileo di Vincenzo Bonaiuti de’ Galilei was a pious Catholic, who travelled to the Jesuit College in Rome in 1611 to argue his support of a Copernican sun-centered universe (galaxies and stars as other suns were unknown in Galileo's time), even though the Church favoured the Ptolemaic and Aristotelian earth-centred theories. He took his telescope with him to Rome so that the philosophers and mathematicians could view Jupiter's moons for themselves, which he considered strong support for heliocentrism. The next year the clergy denounced his views and he was forbidden to advocate or teach Copernican astronomy.

Galileo's writings on astronomy proved to be invaluable in the study of the Earth and stars, challenging a past system of backward science that leapt from disorganized speculation drawn from a set of already established outcomes. These writings on astronomy attempted to draw conclusions about the Earth and the Heavens based on lengthy, meticulous recordings of his observations and subsequent data gathered from his findings. His work in the field of astronomy is certainly suggestive of Galileo's "modern" approach to science as a whole.

Prior to Galileo's time, the Milky Way was believed to be nebulous. Galileo studied it and found it to be a multitude of stars packed so densely that they appear from the Earth-like cloud. He noticed and located many other stars lots of distance away and impossible to be seen with the naked eyes. Among the stars he observed is the double star *Mizar* in Ursa Major in 1617.

His most important works were experiments and investigations in the realms of physics. During those eighteen years, he changed the foundations of traditional physics – or, as others see it, established an entirely new science. However, remarkably few people outside Padua realised this. For various reasons, he did not make his results public until well into old age, and when he did finally become famous all over Europe, it was for quite different things.¹⁴

The formulation of the concept of *Inertia* has been described as Galileo's greatest contribution to Physics. The concept states that: an object in a state of motion possesses an "inertia" that causes it to remain in that state of motion unless an external force acts on it. In order to arrive at this conclusion, Galileo had to abstract from what he, and everyone else, saw.

With regards to objects and their state of motion, Aristotle held that objects at rest remained at rest unless a force acted on them, but that objects in motion did not remain in motion unless a force acted constantly on them. Galileo carried out a catalogue of experiments and came to the conclusion that Aristotle's theory was inconclusive, perhaps incorrect, because the frictional force between surfaces of inclined planes and the object objects sliding down these planes (hidden force) is not properly accounted for. In Galileo's observation, when an object is pushed across a surface, two opposing forces act on each other, the force associated with the push and the force that is associated with the friction that acts in the opposite direction.¹⁵

Galileo also made a number of contributions to technology. Between 1595 and 1598, Galileo devised and improved a *Geometric and Military Compass* suitable for use by gunners and surveyors. For gunners, it offered, in addition to a new and safer way of elevating cannons accurately, a way of quickly computing the charge of gunpowder for cannonballs of different sizes and materials. As a geometric instrument, it enabled the construction of any regular polygon, computation of the area of any polygon or circular sector, and a variety of other calculations. Under Galileo's direction, instrument maker Marc'Antonio Mazzoleni produced more than 100 of these compasses. In 1593, Galileo constructed a thermometer, using the expansion and contraction of air in a bulb to move water in an attached tube.¹⁶

In 1630 Galileo returned to Rome seeking approval to publish his *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, which was published in Florence in 1632. He was ordered to appear before the Holy Office for papal trial. He was confined to house arrest for the rest of his life. In 1992 that Pope John Paul II apologized for the Galileo affair, affirming that the Earth is not stationary or the centre of the universe - or even the solar system.

(e.) Rene Descartes (1596-1650)

Descartes was a French mathematician, scientist and philosopher who has been called the “father of modern philosophy”. His school studies made him dissatisfied with previous philosophy: He had a deep religious faith as a Roman Catholic, which he retained to his dying day, along with a resolute, passionate desire to discover the truth. At the age of 24, he had a dream and felt the vocational call to seek to bring knowledge together in one system of thought. His system began by asking what could be known if all else were doubted, suggesting the famous “*Cogito ergo sum*” (I think therefore I am). Actually, it is often forgotten that the next step for Descartes was to establish the near certainty of the existence of God for only if God both exists and would not want us to be deceived by our experiences can we trust our senses and logical thought processes. God is, therefore, central to his whole philosophy and mathematical principles. What he really wanted to see was that his thoughts be adopted as standard Roman Catholic teaching.

In essence, Rene Descartes and Francis Bacon (1561-1626) are generally regarded as the key figures in the development of scientific methodology. Both had systems in which God was important, and both seem more devout than the average for their era.

(f.) Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

Pascal was a French mathematician, physicist, inventor, philosopher and theologian. In mathematics, he published a treatise on the subject of projective geometry and established the foundation for probability theory. Pascal invented a mechanical calculator and established the principles of vacuums and the pressure of air. He was raised a Roman Catholic, and in 1654 he had a religious vision of God, which turned the direction of his study from science to theology. Pascal began publishing a theological work, *Lettres provinciales*, in 1656. His most influential theological work, the *Pensées* ("Thoughts"), was a defence of Christianity, which was published after his death.

(g.) Gregor Mendel (1822-1884)

Mendel who was a monk, and later elected Abbot of his monastery, was the first to lay the mathematical foundations of genetics, in what came to be called “Mendelianism”. He began his research in 1856

(three years before Darwin published his *Origin of Species*) in the garden of the Monastery.

Our modern understanding of how traits may be inherited through generations comes from the principles proposed by Gregor Mendel in 1865. However, Mendel didn't discover these foundational principles of inheritance by studying human beings, but rather by studying *Pisum Sativum*, or the common pea plant. Indeed, after eight years of tedious experiments with these plants, and – by his own admission – “some courage” to persist with them, Mendel proposed three foundational principles of inheritance. These principles eventually assisted clinicians in human disease research; for example, within just a couple of years of the rediscovery of Mendel's work, Archibald applied Mendel's principles to his study of *alkaptonuria*. Today, whether you are talking about pea plants or human beings, genetic traits that follow the rules of inheritance that Mendel proposed are called Mendelian.¹⁷ On the cell theory, Mendel was indebted to Unger's work on the role and behaviour of cells in pollination, and his observation of the production of new varieties through cross-fertilization, in particular, the notion that his involved the union of just two cells. Through his experiment with pea plants, Mendel further explored the question of how the union of two cells produced a new organism, the enigma of generation. He concentrated on what, until then, had remained overlooked: the importance of considering pairs of observable characters and the statistical law governing the pattern of their reappearance in the off-springs.

The impact of the genetic theory is no longer questioned in anyone's mind. Many diseases are known to be inherited, and pedigrees are typically traced to determine the probability of passing along a hereditary disease. Plants are now designed in laboratories to exhibit desired characteristics. The practical result of Mendel's research is that it not only changed the way we perceive the world but also the way we live in it.¹⁸

(h.) Georges Lemaître (1894-1966)

Georges Lemaître was a Catholic cleric, who earlier in life had discerned his call to both the priesthood and the life of the mind as a research scientist around the time of his high school graduation. In July of 1913, Georges Lemaître earned his bachelor's degree in

mechanical engineering and began work as a mining engineer.¹⁹ He studied theoretical physics, and in 1923 was ordained as an Abbé. The following year, he pursued his scientific studies with the distinguished English astronomer Arthur Eddington, who regarded him as “a very brilliant student, wonderfully quick and clear-sighted, and of great mathematical ability.” Lemaître then went on to America, where he visited most of the major centres of astronomical research. Later, he received his PhD in physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.²⁰

Georges Lemaitre was born in Charleroi, Belgium at a time when most scientists thought that the universe was infinite in age and constant in its general appearance. Some theories, such as those by Isaac Newton and James C. Maxwell suggested an eternal universe. Indeed, when Albert Einstein first published his theory of relativity in 1916, it seemed to confirm that the universe had gone on forever, stable and unchanging. Lemaitre reviewed the general theory of relativity. As with Einstein's calculations ten years earlier, Lemaitre's calculations showed that the universe had to be either shrinking or expanding. But while Einstein imagined an unknown force – a cosmological constant – which kept the world stable, Lemaitre decided that the universe was expanding. He came to this conclusion after observing the reddish glow, known as a redshift, surrounding objects outside of our galaxy. If interpreted as a Doppler effect, this shift in colour meant that the galaxies were moving away from us. Lemaitre published his calculations and his reasoning in *Annales de la Societe scientifique de Bruxelles* in 1927. Few people took notice, however.

It could actually be said from the foregoing that Lemaitre was the first person to propose the theory of the expansion of the universe, which is now popularly misattributed to Edwin Hubble. What is known as Hubble's Law actually was derived by him and he made the first estimation too of what is now called the Hubble constant, which he published in 1927, two years before Hubble's article. He founded the Big-Bang theory of the origin of the universe which is today called the “hypothesis of the primaeval atom”²¹

Among the many things that can be said of Lemaître legacy, is a statement in 1933, by Rev. Vecchierello, O.F.M. which is still valid today:

It is a point of great interest nowadays when there are so much loose thinking and still looser writing and talking about the non-existence of God ... to see a man who is both a priest and a scientist fraternizing on the most intimate terms with the world's most illustrious scientific geniuses. He not only associates with them, but he is their peer, and in that is the lie given to the old and empty charge that the study of science means the loss of belief in religion. Lemaître, of course, is usually an object of great curiosity — not so much to his coreligionists as to many not of the faith who marvel at the "phenomenon" of a Catholic priest being a scientist, yes, not only a scientist of the regular run, but a genius whose theories are most daring.²²

Perhaps Lemaître's greatest gift to the world is a Religion-Science/Faith-Reason intellectual framework. In addition to its logical, practical benefits compared to an openly hostile science-religion approach, it also is filled with optimism and hope.²³

(i.) Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955)

Teilhard de Chardin was a French idealist philosopher, palaeontologist, geologist and Jesuit Priest. He did a lot of work in the aspect of creation and evolution, advancing arguments to prove creation in the midst of scientific facts, and he settled for 'evolutive creation'. God is the creator and preserver, the active Centre of centres upon which the evolutionary process derives motion for action and sustenance.²⁴ His life-long search was for synthesis: of reason and authority, of matter and spirit, between past and future, between body and soul.²⁵

Teilhard's basic premise is that all of reality, the whole of the cosmic order is in movement (evolution), by the very fact that God who is Almighty Creator "makes things make themselves". Evolution as he saw it is a process in space and time that generates new levels of a more complex organization. All observable phenomena of the universe are involved in this process, particularly the phenomenon of man. But evolution is not only a process in which the material or

quantified aspects of the matter have moved from the simple to the more complex; it is also a process in which primitive psychism has moved to more intense consciousness. Man presently climaxes the process of evolution as the most complex expression of cellular structures and the most intensely conscious.²⁶

In his characteristic way of further explicating his ideas, Teilhard explains the situation thus:

The whole of the cosmic order is moving towards a goal (the *Omega Point*), gradually progressing from one stage of development to another, each one more unified than the preceding. The highest stage of material development is life. The highest stage in the development of life is human life. With human life, consciousness achieves a level of self-reflection. We not only *know*, we *know that we know*. Human existence, therefore, represents a new and unique order of being.²⁷

Teilhard's perspective on Omega Point takes account of a personal, transcendent centre to the creative-evolutionary process. This centre is outside and above the process – or to use more traditional language, is transcendent to it. Omega Point is active in history, not only through the provision of motive for action but principally through its own personal effectiveness. Teilhard names this active “Centre of centres”, God.²⁸

(j.) Stanley L. Jaki (1924-2009)

Stanley L. Jaki, a Hungarian-born Catholic priest of the Benedictine Order, was Distinguished Professor at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey. With doctorates in theology and physics, for more than forty years he specialized in the history and philosophy of science. The author of over fifty books and over four hundred articles, he served as Gifford Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh and as Fremantle Lecturer at Balliol College, Oxford. He lectured at major universities in the United States, Europe, and Australia. He was an honorary member of the Pontifical Academy of Science, *membre correspondant* of the Académie Nationale des Sciences, Belles-Lettres et Arts of Bordeaux, and the recipient of the Lecomte du Noüy Prize for 1970 and of the Templeton Prize for 1987.

Jaki was profound and persuasive in upholding the view that thinkers and writers of the Enlightenment period up to the present have been mistaken about Christianity and science. He refuted their submissions that Christianity was opposed to, and even oppressed, science. Instead, he argued that Christianity has made a great positive impact on science. In *The Savior of Science* (2000), Jaki revealed the Christian foundations of modern science. According to him, Christian monotheism alone provided epistemological underpinnings for the scientific endeavour, where other ancient cultures of Greece, China, India, and the early Muslim empire failed to make an impact.²⁹

Following Jaki's four-point reasons for the unique birth of modern science in Christian Western Europe, explicated in the book *Christ and Science*,³⁰ the noted conservative thinker Russell Kirk has this to say: "Modern science, Father Jaki points out, rose from the natural theology of medieval Christian learning—a fact that *philosophes* and positivists sedulously ignore."³¹ Father Jaki was sturdy in defending the view that Catholicism has been and is still a blessing to science, not an obstacle, as many erroneously claim.³²

Through the rest of his life, Jaki spearheaded the move aimed at establishing a friendly relationship between science and religion. He wrote more than two dozen books on the subject, expressing the notable theory that modern scientific inquiry can only exist alongside Christianity because modern science arose from within a Christian society, a society which alone afforded it the opportunity to thrive. For this, he was awarded the Templeton Award, which is given to those who do outstanding work in affirming a spiritual dimension to reality.³³

After rising to be one of the most significant scientific minds in modern times, S. L. Jaki died in Madrid on April 7, 2009.

Conclusion

Belief in God has a much longer history than does the practice of philosophy or the 'scientification' of science. These Christian thinkers and scholars we have discussed above, many of whom were Catholic priests and who were products of their age, serve as models for our own age when the scientific study of the universe, technological revolution and contrasting standards of morality have become real issues within the gamut of our collective existence,

posing serious challenges to people's faith in the one true God as the creator and sustainer of the universe and the process of the natural order. Our model Christian scholars familiarized themselves with the philosophical and scientific theories of their day and did not hesitate to appropriate them into their theological reflections, even giving them pastoral applications. They professed God to be the creator and sovereign of the heavens and the earth, through intellectually active engagement with the world and its objects.

As the contemporary world continues to drift on the slopes of manifold crises – the crisis of faith, crisis of values, crisis of morality – and a host of other maladies, it behoves today's generation of Clerics who have been trained in Philosophy and various other disciplines to follow the lead of the likes of those discussed in this paper by putting our training into active use for the service of the global community. We should not be afraid to actively and critically engage the philosophical and scientific systems of thoughts in today's world with an eye to building a better world in which universal progress can be sustained.

Endnotes

¹ This paper is dedicated to my Formator, Vocations' Director and Lecturer in Logic, Epistemology and Analytic Philosophy during the period of my Seminary Formation, Rev. Fr. Prof. Anselm Jimoh, as he marks the Silver Jubilee of His Priestly Ordination.

² JOHN PAUL II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 43; US CATHOLIC BISHOPS, *The Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests* (2001).

³ S. M. McDONOUGH – J. T. PENNINGTON, (eds.), *Cosmology and the New Testament* (London: T & T Clark Int., 2008) 2.

⁴ P. SMULDERS, "Creation: Theology", in: K. Rahner (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Theology: A Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, London: Burns & Oates, 1975, pp. 313-319.

⁵ Cf. E. ADAM, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 2000) 3ff.

⁶ A. M. HUNTER, *The Gospel According to Paul*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966) 1ff.

⁷ A. M. HUNTER, *The Gospel According to Paul*, 43.

⁸ J. OMOREGBE, *Epistemology: A Systematic And Historical Study*, (Lagos: Joja Publishers, 1998) 43.

⁹ Cf. The Letters of St. Paul to the Romans 4:16; 5:2; cf. the Letter to the Hebrews 11:1; 12:2. Although it remains a major question in Biblical scholarship who the author of the Letter to the Hebrews is, the view by some that its has some connection with the Pauline school of disciples, rings a bell that brings a worthwhile intertextual connections between the quoted text and related texts in Paul's letters.

¹⁰ J. M. COOPER – D. S. HUTSCHINSON, *Plato: The Complete Works*, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997).

¹¹ V. J. BOURKE, "Thomas Aquinas, St." in P. EDWARDS et al. (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co, 1967) 105-116.

¹² V. J. BOURKE, "Thomas Aquinas, St.", 105.

¹³ Although Copernicus was highly engaged in ecclesiastical life, there are not extant documents to show that he he was ever ordained a priest. The fact that he was one of the four candidates to the assume the episcopal seat of Warmia in 1527 gives credibility to the supposition that he was ordained a priest. Cf. "Nicolaus Copernicus", in *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia* [Available at: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04352b.htm> (Accessed 21 August 2019)].

¹⁴ A. NAESS, *Galileo Galilei: When the World Stood Still*. Trans by James Anderson (Springer, Berlin 2005) 33.

¹⁵ G. GALILEI, *Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences*. Trans by H. Crew – A. de Salvio (William Andrew Pub, New York 2001).

¹⁶ Cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galileo_Galilei

¹⁷ I. MIKO, "Gregor Mendel and the Principles of Inheritance" in *Nature Education* 1(1):134, 2008.

¹⁸ E. MAYR, *The Growth of Biological Thought*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1982, 720-740.

¹⁹ A. BERGER (ed.), *The Big Bang and Georges Lemaître* D. Reidel Publishing, New York, 1984, 365.

²⁰ S. SOTER – N. TYSON, *Cosmic Horizons: Astronomy At The Cutting Edge*, A Publication of The New Press. © 2000 American Museum of Natural History.

[Available at : http://www.amnh.org/education/resources/rfl/web/essaybooks/cosmic/p_lemaitre.html (Accessed: 14 August 2019)].

²¹ Wikipedia online: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges_Lema%C3%AAtre

²² H. VECCIERELLO, *Einstein and Relativity. Lemaître and the Expanding Universe*, St. Anthony Guild Press, Paterson 1934, 23.

²³ J. R. LARACY, "The Faith and Reason of Father George Lemaitre" in *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, Ignatian Press, San Francisco, CA 2009, 50-59.

²⁴ T. DE CHARDIN, *The Appearance of Man*, (trans. by J. M. COHEN) (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1956).

²⁵ D. CARROLL, "Creation", 183.

²⁶ T. DE CHARDIN, *The Appearance of Man*.

²⁷ T. DE CHARDIN, *The Phenomenon of Man*, (trans by Bernard Wall) (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1959) 77-183.

²⁸ D. CARROLL, "Creation", 252-253.

²⁹ S. L. JAKI, *The Savior of Science*, William. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 2000.

³⁰ S. L. JAKI, *Christ and Science*, Real View Books, Royal Oak, MI 2000, 23.

³¹ R. KIRK, "The Rediscovery of Creation", *National Review* 35 (10) (27 May 1983), pp. 640-41.

³² T. D. WATTS, "Cosmology and the History of Science" in *Social Justice Review (St Louis, MO)*, Vol. 100, No. 7-8, July-August 2009.

³³ Tyler Huckabee, "Nine Groundbreaking Scientists Who Happened to be Christians" [Available at: <https://relevantmagazine.com/god/9-groundbreaking-scientists-who-happened-be-christians/> (Accessed on: 26 August 2019)].

CHAPTER 4

The Vocations Director and the Discernment of Vocations: Some Considerations for Priestly Formation

Ferdinand Nwanagu OKAFOR

Introduction

The twenty-first century is associated with advancement in information and communication technology (ICT), like the fourteenth century which came with the Renaissance that was associated with new knowledge and the scientific method which revolutionized virtually all sectors of life including the Church and priestly vocation. The discernment of priestly vocations has become a herculean task for all those who are engaged in the discernment and formation of vocations to the Catholic Priesthood. With the challenges that are rocking the priesthood today ranging from sexual abuse, Protestantism, materialism and secularism, the question: “How Vocation Directors and Formators in the Seminaries discern genuine vocation or discover candidates with genuine vocations” has become a front-burner question. This is the aim of this essay. This paper, therefore, attempts to discuss this topic issue with theoretical and practical insights and further make some proposals, that is believed would enhance the discernment process. Without being overly presumptuous, it suffices to clarify some of the key concepts in this discourse.

The Concepts of Vocation, Vocations Director and Discernment

Denotatively, the term, “vocation is from the Latin word *vocātiō* which means a call or summons. It is an occupation to which a person is specially drawn to, or for which they are suited, trained, or qualified.”¹ In the 15th century, the term was first attributed to a spiritual calling.² It was used in reference to those in the clerical order. It was Martin Luther who arguably later broadened the understanding of the term to mean all Christian calling and every state of life. Thereafter, John Calvin gave it the notion of industry and commerce. It was the English Puritans in the seventeenth century who eventually stretched the meaning of vocation to include any job or trade.³ In ecclesiological understanding, vocation is associated with “divine call addressed directly to a man’s soul, inviting him by means of a secret divine voice, to enter the clerical state.”⁴

On the other hand, when the term Vocations Director is employed, what easily comes to mind is any priest who has been given the mandate to recruit and present candidates for priestly ordination. In reality, this is a shortfall from the true meaning and task of who a Vocations Director is. The principal task of directing vocations rests on the Bishop. He is the first representative of Christ in priestly formation.⁵ However, just as candidates are ordained to share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, so as to assist the Bishop in his priestly functions; a priest who is chosen and assigned the responsibility of directing vocations is, in reality, assisting the Bishop. Therefore, a Vocations Director is a priest who has been assigned to recruit, direct and guide and evaluate the suitability of the candidates to the Sacred Catholic priesthood. The role of a Vocations Director is to direct and guide young boys or young men who express the desire to become priests, as well as future priests (Seminarians) so that they may discover their calling to the priesthood as well as the nature of the calling. As the name implies, the Vocations Director has the obligation of *directing*. However, his function is not only to direct but also to inspire vocations in young boys; as well as to form and lead by word of advice, encouragement, explanation and example of life, those who express the desire to serve in the clerical orders as deacons or priests; and where one is discovered not to be a suitable candidate or have the ability to serve in the clerical order, he sincerely advises the candidate to withdraw and embrace another state of life. The function of a Vocations Director and Formators is not about telling candidates what they need

to do, rather it is much more of modelling and encouraging vocations to the priesthood. To be able to function properly, it is important that they are exposed to some years of pastoral experience and formation course or seminars periodically. The Vocations' Directors and Formators should endeavour to rid themselves of personal biases, tribalism, injustice, emotions that may prevent them from truly evaluating the qualities that a candidate exhibits.

St. Francis de la Sales emphasised the need for a guide for those who would enter upon and advance in the devout life. He referred to the Spiritual guide as a heaven-sent Angel, like the Angel who guided Tobias on his journey.⁶ The role of a vocation director is not in any way short of the task of guiding and accompanying candidates to the priesthood. This kind of journey together must be characterised by genuine love, mutual trust, prayerfulness, openness and sincerity to one another, and docility to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Although in every Diocese or Religious Congregation, the task of directing of vocations is primarily assigned to a particular priest, nevertheless, every priest is in a certain sense, a Vocations Director. Therefore, every priest must inspire vocations to clerical life and provide exemplary leadership and influence, as well as guide and direct every candidate who aspires to the Catholic priesthood. All the priests are united with the Bishop and share his responsibility in seeking and fostering priestly vocations. Together with the Bishop, they are *agents of formation*.⁷

Be that as it may, since the earliest Christian teachings, there has been a strong nexus between the human relationship with God and his ability to truly discern reality.⁸ As far back as the earliest days of the Israelites, the notion of discernment was already invoked. The criteria for discerning a true prophet from a false prophet was already expressed, which were: leading the people to God and fulfilment of prophecy (See, Deut 13:1-5; 18:21). In the early days of the Church, St. John also warned the Christians of his community against false spirits. He admonished them to test the spirits whether they are from God (1 Jn 4:1-6). This process of testing of spirit is called discernment.

Discernment as an English word was borrowed from an Old French word *discerner*. *Discerner* was from two Latin words "*dis*" meaning apart, and "*cernere*" meaning to separate. *Discerner* in its Old French original, meant "to separate, divide, distinguish or discern."⁹

Discernment can be employed both in the secular as well as in ecclesiological sense. In this secular sense, it refers to the act of evaluating or judging or reviewing a decision.

In an ecclesiological sense, it is the act of prayerfully evaluating or judging a decision through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The concept when employed in vocations to the priesthood and religious life, refers, therefore, to the act of prayerfully evaluating or judging the suitability, motive, behaviours, the ability, as well as the natural and supernatural qualities of a prospective candidate to priesthood using both human reasoning and divine enlightenment. McIntosh (2004), outlined faith, impulses, discretion, divine will and illumination as the elements of discernment.¹⁰ The purpose of discernment is to know God's will. According to McIntosh (2004), "human relationship with God was distorted, and the ability of human persons to see God's ways in the world was drastically impaired-they could no longer recognise God's truth shining forth in creation because they were no longer rightly acquainted with God."¹¹

Discernment of Vocations and Evaluating the Suitability of Candidates

Priestly formation refers to the art and process of providing orientation, guidance, and training regarding priestly life to a candidate who aspires to the clerical order. Priestly formation is an essential aspect of the priestly vocation. In view of the crises rocking the Catholic priesthood and taking into consideration the challenges posed by the world of information communication and technology, it has become expedient to evolve new methods or techniques in formation. The task of formation and the selection of formators should be taken more seriously than ever before. Vocations Directors and Formators should be truly Formators and not just lecturers or chosen to fill up the gap.

Often times in the selection and formation of candidates, one is tempted to judge whether a candidate is called instead of judging the suitability of the candidate. This has often led to a serious error in the selection of candidates for the priesthood. It is a dangerous venture to create a dichotomy between discernment of call and deciding the suitability of candidates. Deciding the suitability of candidates is in itself a process of discernment. Using the words of Blowick (1932), "the true doctrine of vocation is so straightforward and so simple that the question of 'deciding a boy's vocation' is reduced to the exercise

of prudent judgement and sound common sense.”¹² It is important that vocations directors and formators in the Seminary know the nature and meaning of sacred calling in view of pastoral ministry, so as to be able to play their role well.

The selection and evaluation of a candidate for the priesthood will be more difficult for Vocations Directors and Formators if the essence of priestly ministry is not put into consideration. In evaluating the suitability of a candidate, basic virtues that candidates are expected to cultivate as well as the current challenges in priestly ministry should be brought to the fore at the point of evaluation. Right from the early centuries of the Church to the seventeenth centuries, as far as the issue of raising men to the status of pastoral leadership is concerned, the emphasis of the Church was always on the *suitability* of a candidate. This is what St Paul emphasised in his letters to Timothy and Titus regarding the choice of Overseers, Deacons and women who rendered special services in the early Church (**1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:22; Titus 1:5-10**). In recent times, the Church has also emphasised this *suitability* of candidates in her documents on the formation of future priests. However, it seems some Vocations Directors and Formators have shifted their focus from this trend of determining the suitability of a candidate to the clerical state, and have given room to bias and personal feelings. In matters of the priestly vocation, there are already basic requirements which are available in the various documents on formation to the priestly ministry. Vocations Directors and Formators should, therefore, acquaint themselves with these documents. The task of directing vocations and formation of the candidate is to determine whether given the behaviour manifested by a candidate and evaluating such in the light of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church if such an individual will be able to fulfil the priestly functions.

Basically, in the discernment of vocation, the central issues are the mission of Christ and the good of the Church, faith and community building, and the salvation of souls of the Christian community. These issues revolve around pastoral leadership. The process of discernment is to determine if the candidate has the human, physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional, psychological, moral and pastoral ability to fulfil the role of a pastoral leader and make disciples for Christ. The suitability of a candidate is evaluated and determined based on the observable human phenomenon, while the calling is the function of the

Church through an appropriate authority (the Bishop). Here, the role of the Vocations Director and the presbyterium can never be underestimated. No doubt, “the vocation to the priesthood is a divine call; it is given by God. But God has empowered certain accredited ecclesiastical officials to issue it in his name. These alone can validly administer divine vocation.”¹³

In the selection and formation of candidates for the Catholic priesthood, nothing should be overlooked. The first stage in the process of formation of candidates for the priesthood is *recruitment*. The challenge in this recruitment process is often the pressure from priests and the parents of the candidates, who may want to prevail on the Vocations Director or Formators to consider a particular candidate for admission and to continue to ensure his stay in formation, even when he is not suitable for the priesthood. Once parents, friends or relatives are the ones fronting the process of admission of a candidate or making an enquiry on behalf of a candidate into the Major Seminary, that is already in itself a red-alert that should be foreclosed. One who is 18 years old should be able to take basic steps that are necessary for the pursuit of his career or vocation. The first consideration for selection and formation of candidates for the priesthood is the *genuine intention* and *desire* to be a priest to serve the Christian Community. It should not be the intention and desire of the parents, brothers, relatives, friends, or the parish priest or a priest who is a friend to the intending candidate. It should be a personal desire to serve in the clerical state. The true test of one’s love for God is the capacity to live for God and for others. Priestly life is one of service, sacrifice and commitment. It is a call to live not for oneself but for God. As Jesus Christ gave up his life for us all, and St. Paul poured out his life as a libation for God (2 Tim 4:6), so too, those who aspire to the sacred orders should be ready to sacrifice themselves totally to God, and should be seen manifesting this life of sacrifice already. J. Blowick (1932) identified the following: a supernatural attraction for the priesthood, a strong and permanent inclination, good intention, possession of natural and supernatural gifts that will enable a man to properly discharge the sacred duties of the ministry, as signs of an authentic vocation.¹⁴ This *genuine intention* and *desire* to serve in the clerical order must be expressed throughout the period or years of formation.

The work of formators will be most difficult if candidates who already manifest unsuitable behaviour or are known to possess terrible

behaviours such as stealing, lying, deceit, homosexual tendencies, fornication, materialism, and greed, moneygrubbing, nonchalant attitude towards the Holy Mass and Church devotions, are sent to the Seminary for formation. Sometimes, it is difficult to identify such candidates once they are already in formation. And when such is discovered later in the penultimate years of formation, sentiments of sympathy begin to wade in. At this point, evaluation becomes a matter of sympathy to the individual and his family, but to the detriment of the Church and the souls of those who will be entrusted to his care. If one knows the power or influence in little things to shape or change situations, then one will know that nothing should be undermined. This is not to undermine the possibility of one with such vices to experience conversion. Experience has however revealed that candidates with these vices or dispositions can hardly be opened to the process of encountering Christ in formation and be purified in the process of formation. The human person is a mystery whose life can be influenced by any situation. There are at least four results of those who are ordained into the priesthood. First, those who from the beginning manifested good behaviour but acted badly after ordination. Secondly, there are those who manifested good behaviour as candidates and still remained good priests after ordination. Thirdly, there are those who did not manifest sufficient good behaviour but were admitted on trial but in the process of formation were transformed are good priests and fourthly, there are those who gave red-alert as candidates but were admitted with sympathy with the hope of being properly formed, but they found their way into priesthood without getting changed or converted, and their performance in the priesthood was a reflection of the red-alert they manifested.

Priestly ministry goes beyond cultic and liturgical functions. It entails the proclamation of the Gospel, the celebration of the sacraments and pastoral leadership, which is to guide the Christian community in the name and in the person of Christ.¹⁵ P. Bernier, summarizes ministry to include five basic tasks: *Building community*, *Storytelling* (Proclamation), *Prophesying*, *Nurturing*, and *Missioning*.¹⁶ Priestly ministry is a call to pastoral charity and leadership, and it is rooted in the vocation to the mission.¹⁷ Leadership according to R. L. Daft, is an influence of relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes and outcomes that reflect their

shared purposes.¹⁸ Central to this definition is the fact that leadership is an influence relationship. The call to the priesthood apart from being a call to service is also a call to provide exemplary leadership to the faithful. Leadership is an essential aspect of the priestly vocation. A candidate to the priesthood should possess leadership qualities that will enable him to influence the faithful with the gospel message. This dimension of the priestly vocation is often not taken into consideration. It is important that prospective candidates understand the power that is inherent in the Priestly pastoral role. Leadership is a gift and a call to service, and it is an inherent part of the call to the priesthood. Not everybody possesses the gift of leadership.¹⁹

The focus of priestly vocation is *Mission, Service, and Leadership* (MSL). The challenges in the priestly ministry today revolve around bad leadership. That is, the faithful can no longer find exemplary leadership in some priests. St. Paul in order to emphasize the importance of leadership in the early Church, admonished Timothy thus: “Let no one reproach you on account of your youth. Be a model to believers in the way you speak and act, in your love, your faith and purity of life. Devote yourself to reading, preaching and teaching, until I come” (1 Tim 4:12-13).

Bernier holds the view that the fundamental purpose of the New Testament ministry is to preserve the self-identity of the Christian community as the community of Christ as well as to discover the gospel in the changing circumstances of life.²⁰ Those who were appointed elders in the early Church were appointed not so much so that they might celebrate the Eucharist, but that they might guide and conduct the community and proclaim the Gospel.

Right from the time of Moses down to the New Testament era when the Church was still evolving, all those who were appointed leaders were to essentially lead the people and help them to sustain their faith in God. Whoever, therefore, must be admitted to commence the journey to sacred Priesthood or promoted to the Sacred Orders should be seen to manifest authentic vocation and exhibit evidence of his ability to perform the priestly function and lead the faithful in faith. The sacrament of Holy Orders is not an individual sacrament, like Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the sick, which are received for the benefit of the recipient. Like the sacrament of Matrimony, the Sacrament of Holy Orders is both *individual* and *social*, hence the need to ensure that there are no

irregularities and impediments, because the recipients will fulfil a social function, which is not primarily for the benefit of the recipient but that of the entire Christian Community. Therefore, good intention alone is not sufficient to assume the office, but certain requirements are necessary and are insisted upon by the recipient.²¹

In the early days of the Church when celibacy was not regarded as part of the life of presbyters, the consideration for choosing a presbyter basically was *the styles of life*,²² centuries later, when celibacy became mandatory for those who are admitted into the clerical order, there was a shift from the *styles of life* to the *states of life*.²³ Today, in the selection of candidate the *styles of life* and the ability to assume *the states of life* of a priest are elements to be considered in determining the suitability of a candidate. The candidate before being admitted into the Seminary, and even while in formation in the Seminary and outside of the Seminary, should manifest the evidence of his *genuine intention* and *desire* to serve in the clerical state in his *styles of life*, disposition and readiness to embrace the clerical state. Intention and desire have a correlation in one's behaviour and outlook. It is an aberration for one to desire the priesthood, yet adopt worldly mindset and style. It should not in any way be assumed that the candidate will change after ordination. The evaluation of the candidate to determine his suitability should go beyond keeping the Seminary rules. His *actions* and *inactions*, his *behaviours* and *dispositions* should be scrutinised and interpreted in the light of the Gospel, the teachings of the Church and the challenges of the church and the situation of the world today, and how his *actions* and *inactions* and behaviour reflect and promote the Gospel message or bear witness to the risen Lord.

Also to be considered is the initial conversion of the candidate as well as openness to ongoing conversion. The initial conversion is evident in the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation, and the manifestation of the *Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Love*. These manifest in his prayer life, Christian devotion and service in the Church, as well as his detachment from the world. It is not enough to only be baptised, one must be open to conversion. Otherwise, after ordination one may behave worse than a non-Christian and do more harm than good to the body of Christ, as Alexander the Coppersmith did to St. Paul (**2 Tim 4:14**). Initial conversion will help a candidate get rid of such vices like stealing, lying, deceit, homosexual tendencies,

fornication, materialism, and greed, moneygrubbing, nonchalant attitude towards the Holy Mass and Church devotions.

Natural and supernatural endowments of the candidates while in formation should be evaluated. The priesthood is a call to pastoral leadership. Whoever must assume this status must be seen to possess some leadership qualities and must be free from canonical impediments and irregularities, which include: amentia, psychic illness, apostasy, heresy, schism, attempted marriage, voluntary homicide, procured abortion or cooperated in abortion, self mutilation or mutilated another, attempted suicide, or has performed an act reserved for those in the sacred orders.²⁴ Those who practice homosexuality or have deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support “gay-culture,” are not to be admitted into the Seminary.²⁵

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation “*Pastores Dabo Vobis*” enumerates four dimensions of priestly formation: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation.²⁶ These four aspects are so important that neglecting or undermining any of these dimensions is to do great harm to the entire work of formation and the Church at large. The crisis in the priestly ministry today can be linked to an improper formation in these four areas. Therefore, only those candidates whose human, moral, spiritual and intellectual gifts, as well as physical and psychological health and right intention, show that they are capable of dedicating themselves permanently to sacred ministries are to be admitted to the seminary.²⁷

The tendency to sometimes downplay the intellectual capacity and formation of the candidate often arises. References are often made to St. John Mary Vianney, the *Cure of Ars*, who was regarded not to be intellectually bright, yet, was a model of holiness and pastoral life. The world we must know is constantly evolving, and the Church expresses herself in every age in order to adequately meet the pastoral needs of the world. In the age of the Martyrs, Martyrdom was seen as a means of proving one’s holiness. After the age of Martyrs, monastic life and celibate living became the ultimate way of attaining holiness. We are no longer in the era of John Mary Vianney when the priestly function was basically the celebration of the sacraments and proclamation of the Gospel within the liturgical assembly. With the age of Information Communication and Technology, the world where the Church and clerics minister has become more sophisticated. It is no longer enough to celebrate the Sacrament and proclaim the gospel within the liturgical

assembly. The Church must move away from the liturgical assembly into the world. The Church needs to understand and interpret the mandate of Jesus Christ in light of the present-day world. "Go into the world and preach the Gospel" (**Mk 16:15**) must be understood as *a call for the Church to diversify her apostolate in the world* in order to effectively fulfil her mission of bringing Christ into the world. To this end, a myopic view of the world and reality will be dangerous to the Gospel message. Besides, it is only a person with a sound mind and intellect, who is constantly open to learning that can sufficiently present the Church's teaching to answer the questions of the modern-day human being. Experience has shown that one with low intelligence suffers low self-esteem and myopic in world view. Such a person finds it difficult to forgive and is more tribalistic, and so he excludes those who are not from his tribe or race from benefiting from his goodwill.

Since the candidate for the priesthood is trained to be a leader, whose life can influence the followers, it is important that the candidate is prudent in his actions. A candidate who is not prudent will be a bad leader and a negative influence. According to Thomas Reese (Jesuit priest), "Nothing chases a person out of the Catholic Church and away from Christ faster than a bad priest. The priest does not have to be a child molester. He may simply be arrogant, patriarchal, insensitive or just stupid. More people leave the Catholic Church because of bad priests than because of disagreement over dogma."²⁸ "A good priest can spend years building a parish community, inspiring active participation in the liturgy, recruiting volunteers for the parish ministries and to help neighbourhood poor. A new pastor can destroy all that works in a few weeks."²⁹

It is not sufficient for a candidate to be spiritual. He must be devout. Sometimes the spiritual life of a candidate is mistaken as a sign of suitability, to the detriment of other requirements. Yet, such a candidate is unforgiving, malicious, and does not see the need to tame his emotions. One who has not been able to tame his emotions, no doubt, will be a scandal both in his words and in his attitudes.

The task of directing vocation and forming candidates for the priesthood is an onerous one. And those who are appointed to carry out this task should be carefully selected. They should be people with mature minds and sincere in their approach to issues and evaluation of any candidate. These qualities do not necessarily come with years in

the priesthood or biological age. It is much more a personal disposition informed by one's background or situations in life.

Priestly vocation apart from being a gift to the recipient, it is also a gift to the Church as a whole for the benefit of her mission. The Faithful are also agents of the priestly vocation.³⁰ So, in every diocese, there should be a vocation team comprising of Priests and Lay faithful who carry out the recruitment and evaluation of Seminarians.

Concluding Remarks

The formation of Seminarians today has become much more difficult than ever before. Similarly, the role of the Vocations Director has equally doubled. The Vocations Director acts as a sentry for the Church within his Diocese, Religious Congregation, or society of apostolic life for which he is appointed, and as a guide for the candidate to the priesthood.

The Vocations Director acting as a sentry on behalf of the Church ensures that bad elements do not creep into the Priesthood. This role has become so important as the devil masquerades to be an angel of light (**2 Cor 11:14-15**). No doubt, he inspires his messengers as candidates to the priesthood, to be his ministers in order to carry out his mission of stealing, killing and destroying the Priesthood and the souls of Christians who believe in Jesus Christ (**John 10:10**). Wherever the children of light are gathered, the devil too sends his angels there (**Job 1:6**). Clear evidence of inordinate missions abound in the priesthood today, with some young men trying to become priests at all costs. At any level of formation, after careful observance, where a candidate is found to be unsuitable for the clerical orders, he should in love and for the good of the Church be advised to withdraw. It does not matter how many years he has spent in formation. He should not be promoted in sympathy. To deny one ordination is neither a denial of life or heaven. However, it is important that Vocations Directors and Formator cultivate the virtue of patience in the formation of candidates. With the challenges facing family life, the task of formation will require greater patience than ever before.

The key players in the process of formation are the Vocations' Director, the Formators in the Seminary and the Presbyters of the Diocese or Congregation the Seminarian belongs. This is why it is expedient that the Vocations' Director knows personally the individual candidate as well as the family background of those being admitted.

This can be achieved if there is a synergy between the Vocations Director and the other priests in the diocese. Also, a candidate should be well known in his parish. So no candidate should be recruited who is not well known in his parish. In the early Church, elders were chosen from their community and appointed for service in their community.

Conclusively, the vocation to the priesthood is both divine and human. It is the prerogative of the Bishop to ordain young men who have been adequately prepared for the priesthood. In reality, the Bishop may not really know, at a direct level the level of suitability of those he ordains. He acts on the reports that are presented to him. The Vocations Director and the entire presbyterium should work together to ensure that reliable candidates are admitted for formation.

Endnotes

¹ Cf. "Vocation" in <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vocation>, accessed September 12, 2019

² Online Etymology Dictionary

³ Hahnenberg, E.P, *Awakening Vocation: A Theology of Christian Call*, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010, 3.

⁴ Blowick, J, *Priestly Vocation*, Dublin: M. H Gill and Sons Ltd, 1932, 1.

⁵ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 65.

⁶ [https://Introduction to Devout Life](https://Introduction%20to%20Devout%20Life) in Catholicity.com, retrieved 19/9/2019.

⁷ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 41.

⁸ McIntosh, M. A, *Discernment and Truth*, Newyork:The CrossRoad Publishing Company, 2004, 4.

⁹ See, "Discernment" in Wiktionary, <https://en.m.wiktionary.org>

¹⁰ McIntosh, M. A, *Discernment and Truth*, 5.

¹¹ McIntosh, M. A, *Discernment and Truth*, 4.

¹² Blowick, J, *Priestly Vocation*, vii.

¹³ Blowick, J, *Priestly Vocation*, 238.

¹⁴ Blowick, J, *Priestly Vocation*, 2

¹⁵ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 43.

¹⁶ Bernier, P, *Ministry in the Church*, (2nd ed), New York: Orbis Book, 2015, xii-xiii.

¹⁷ Bernier, P, *Ministry in the Church*, *Ibid*, xii

¹⁸ Daft, R. L. , *The Leadership Experience*, MA: Cengage Learning, 2018, 5

¹⁹ Bernier, P, *Ministry in the Church*, xii.

²⁰ Bernier, P, *Ministry in the Church*, 38.

²¹ Blowick, J, *Priestly Vocation*, 315.

²² Bernier, P, *Ministry in the Church*, 92.

²³ Bernier, P, *Ministry in the Church*, 93

²⁴ *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 1041.

²⁵ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction Concerning the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission into the Seminary and to the Holy Orders*.

²⁶ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn 43-57.

²⁷ *Code of Canon Law*, Canon 241.

²⁸ Thomas Reese, “Bad Priests, of all kinds, chase people away from Christ and the Church” in *National Catholic Reporter*, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/signs-times/bad-priests-all-kinds-chase-people-away-christ-and-church>. Retrieved 22/019/2019.

²⁹ Thomas Reese, *ibid*.

³⁰ *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 41.

CHAPTER 5

Forming Future Catholic Priests in a 'Pentecostal World': Challenges and Prospects

John Segun ODEYEMI

Introduction

Modern Ecumenism and Pentecostalism are two different phenomena which have occurred in the Christian world in the last hundred years. Even though Pentecostalism was criticized initially by the established churches as theologically unsystematic, lacking in doctrine and dogma, yet its appeal and rate of growth remain undeniable, giving birth to a totally new ecclesial community. This growth is now recognized and acknowledged among the World Council of Churches as perhaps the new '*Pentecost*' of our age. Some make the claim that Pentecostalism will be the new face of Christianity within a few decades and into the next millennium. Using Nigeria as a template, this essay investigates the relationship between Pentecostalism and Catholic seminarians in formation. These seminarians will be priests within an existing but fragile ecumenical union. Hence, there is the need for a framework by which one can critically explore Pentecostalism's future challenges and prospects vis-à-vis future Catholic priests.

In the spring of 2016, Missio Aachen, in Germany awarded me some grant to pursue a study of the impact of Pentecostalism in West Africa with a specific focus on ecumenism. I had grown up in

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation. This country is also the most diverse in terms of language and ethnic affiliations, it happens to be home too for Pentecostalism in West Africa. Growing up within these complexities of ethnic, lingual and multiple religious identities made me query the idea of the production of multiple meanings within Christianity. It is necessary to state, that these multiplicities of the production of interpretations cut through traditional missionary founded Churches, the African Independent Churches(AICs), the evolution of classical Pentecostal Churches, the birth of Charismatic and Neo-Pentecostal bodies and currently the newest form of Pentecostalism which I refer to as *Pentecôtistes nouvelle génération; (PNG)*.¹ Let me clarify that Pentecostalism in Nigeria and in West Africa, from my fieldwork across Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone has its own peculiarities and distinctiveness from Pentecostalism in the global West.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Pentecostalism in sub-Saharan Africa had become a phenomenon that no serious scholar of religion could ignore. Through its evolutionary stages from the 1920s, Pentecostalism for various reasons, which we shall explore later, continued to grow and expound thereby impacting the societies it exists in on all fronts; culturally, economically, socially, politically, and religiously. Consequently, it is said that "the Pentecostal genre of Christianity is becoming the dominant form of Christianity in contemporary Africa."² Cephas Omenyo, reflecting on the genre which in and of itself is not mono but existing in pluriformity, states, "The variety and diversity of African Pentecostalism is palpable. It is sometimes suggested that we should speak of 'African Pentecostals' rather than 'African Pentecostalism' because of the existing complexities of categorization."³ The diversities spoken of here deserve another script and research, starting from classical to Neo-Pentecostals of contemporary times. It can be argued that Pentecostalism is the fastest-growing religious phenomenon around the globe currently. Some call it a revival of traditional Christianity, which is said to have grown lukewarm. Cardinal Walter Kasper calls this a "third wave of Christian history" or a third phase where the mission is no longer '*ad gentes*' – to the nations/peoples of the world, but '*inter gentes*' – between peoples of same religious commitment.⁴ This growth is adduced to evangelical movements, Pentecostal Churches, and Charismatic movements.

West African Pentecostalism may be popular, but it has considerable baggage of problems to deal with. For now, a brief reflection suffices; Pentecostalism is a proliferation and further splintering of the Christian Church that was born out of the 16th century Reformation. As young as Pentecostalism is within Christianity and the history of the Southern hemisphere, it continues to suffer multiplications and splintering or breakaway factions. In all of the West African countries I visited, most notorious are Ghana and Nigeria, where the Pentecostal billboards and signposts litter the city skyline. Television and radio broadcasts are filled daily with competing Pentecostal Churches, founders and general overseers jostling for adherents and making promises of deliverance, healings and breakthroughs. Particularly, in Nigeria, this splintering becomes a battle for bodies and minds of people, every new assembly vying for social relevance and survival. Within the raucousness, some of these newly founded and self-appointed church ministers create a fundamentalist following deeply steeped in proselytizing. The Jesuit theologian, Roger Haight sees some of these movements not only individualistic and fundamentalist, but extremely suspicious and exclusivistic of other Pentecostal assemblies. Haight avers, "... so individualistic is their anthropology and piety that they scrupulously avoid all social involvement except for an extreme conservative type; and so independent and at times hostile to the interests of the mainline churches that they reject any ecumenical cooperation."⁵

The various ecclesial communities may be witnessing an explosion in numbers across the continent currently but they risk an implosion in the future due to present inaction. The authenticity of a true Christian spirit lies in its witnessing, the power of her truth, her forthrightness in speaking against unjust structures and not the domination of the poor. An appeal to divine authority for a 'gospel of prosperity', the collection of tithes, the promise of deliverances, revivals, night vigils etc., may not be a veritable vehicle of truth that builds real and enduring faith. If the Church cannot speak this language of freedom and be at the forefront of the liberation of the people, political and economic forces will take the driver's seat. When a new and progressive era dawns in Africa and in Nigeria,

particularly, Christianity runs the risk of becoming irrelevant, as it has happened to some other continents.

It is important, therefore, that seminarians pay attention to the complexities that will mark ecumenical relationships between Pentecostals and Orthodox Christian faiths. This initial formation prepares future priests to be disposed to ecumenical exchanges, which by now should be seen as inevitable. Refusal of ecumenical exchanges denies the unifying action of the Holy Spirit in the Christian community. It is the same Holy Spirit that vivifies the proclamation of the Goodnews. It is this sort of unity that gives the Christian message credibility and makes for authentic and lasting conversions. According to Killian McDonnell, at a more pragmatic level, it is exactly the Church's credibility that is called into question, "At the level where most persons experience the Church... it is the want of holiness, the lack of fruit, and the manifest disunity which make her efforts at evangelization ineffective and constitutes a threat to the power of the gospel."⁶ McDonnell states further that a real commitment to Jesus consists of entering into a community of human persons totally committed to resisting popular values "which see the ultimate goal in an ever-increasing, ever higher, standard of living, of resistance to mindless consumerism, and to social values which sanction racism and the exploitation of the poor."⁷

The Specificity of Nigerian Pentecostalism: A Staring Point for Ecumenical Formation in the Seminaries

The first step towards understanding any natural phenomenon is a careful study of its history and growth. For seminarians to be adequately prepared to engage Pentecostalism in ecumenism, it is important, given their philosophical, theological and scholastic studies to engage in academic research and when possible fellowship and joint acts of praying or worship. The following is an abridged history that is illustrative of the Pentecostal movement in Nigeria.

Western and European scholars tend to locate the origin of the renewal of Pentecostalism solely to the Azusa Street mission of 1906, born out of an African American prayer group in Los Angeles.⁸ Some other scholars from South America, Asia and Africa trace a different historical origin different from the Azusa mission. For instance, Ogbu Kalu in his seminal work on Pentecostalism clarifies that from the very beginning, "African Pentecostalism did not

originate from Azusa Street and is not an extension of the American electronic church.”⁹ For Kalu, African Pentecostalism was as a result of the response to missionary enterprise by the indigenous African Christians (also known and referred to as African Independent Churches, (AICs)).¹⁰ Citing the Ethiopian movement as an example, which was an attempt at a recovery of African identity through religion; Kalu makes the claim “Ethiopianism was a muscular movement that operated with a certain theodicy claiming that God has not deserted Africans to their humiliation but has raised a people to restore Africa’s lost glory.”¹¹ This, Kalu perceived to be an African spirituality that will be anti-structure, anti-colonialism which will give birth to a vibrant nationalism. It will empower and energize African Pentecostalism post-independence. So, the first question to be asked is, how will seminarians understand and perceive African spirituality in relating to their own scholastic and format theological training?

Despite the foregoing, there is a clear distinction between the Pentecostal movements through the decades, which makes contextualizing a necessity but labelling difficult and unnecessary. In proper context, therefore, one can historically begin to see the emergence of African Pentecostalism, revivals and identity from 1900 to 1960. Various indigenous ‘Prophets’ were already crisscrossing different parts of Africa from 1910 when European missionaries were gathered in Edinburgh to discuss further mission work in Africa. Kalu sums up this all-important clarification as follows,

From the historical discourse, it can be demonstrated that the movement in Africa did not start from Azusa Street... I conclude that a charismatic wind blew through the African continent in the post-independent period that first hit the youth and women, and later overawed the resistance of the mainline Churches. In each country, certain socioeconomic and political factors determined the pattern of the early concerns. But various strands connected across national boundaries.¹²

This argument does not exclude a variety of missionary influences. What remains clear according to Kalu is that the emergence of

missionary evangelical Pentecostalism came to Africa to find these religious impulses already in existence. While they initially coexisted, various factors forced a separation. African Pentecostalism took its roots from the indigenous impulses.¹³ It would be difficult to argue successfully that it has remained the same ever since.

With the emergence of this new face of Pentecostalism, a topological distinction is made between the AICs, the first wave of neo-Pentecostalism and the current mega auditoriums, and jet-flying Pentecostalism. The development and timeline seem to be one and the same along the West African Coast and in Africa generally.¹⁴ Brigit Meyer concludes that given the current state of African Pentecostalism and its classifications and categories it can give way to, “albeit contested, processes of de-essentializing such notions as African, authentic, or local, de-temporalizing tradition, deconstructing modernity, blurring the boundary between religion and politics, and even de-universalizing religion.”¹⁵ Whatever the case might be, Pentecostalism, especially of Nigerian persuasion continues to expound and enlarge. For instance, J.D.Y. Peel notes, “The Yoruba¹⁶ have exported their brand of Neo-Pentecostalism all over sub-Saharan Africa, especially to major cities like Nairobi and Johannesburg. And in Europe too, whether to serve mainly their own in the diaspora or to light the Pentecostal fire in a native white population (as with the Embassy of God in Ukraine.)”¹⁷ All over Europe and America, Pentecostals offer a chaplaincy of welcome and safe haven for the throngs of African migrants.

The contention of the relationship between future priests, who are now seminarians takes on another extension worthy of consideration; as we begin to experience a ‘reverse re-evangelization’ of the West by African priests, pastors and preachers, it is important to pay attention to ecumenical relationships in the diaspora. The Pentecostals believe there is a trend which constitutes a “major paradigmatic change in the Christian mission, popularly labelled a ‘reverse mission.’ African Pentecostals are convinced that God’s mandate to them is to reach out to the entire world. This conviction is captured by their including words such as ‘global’, ‘international,’ and ‘world’ in their nomenclature.”¹⁸ And the history of European missionaries’ relationships in the evangelization of Nigeria is well documented and not much of it reflects ecumenical embrace or friendship. In the United States, Catholics, Evangelicals and African

Pentecostals are already experiencing tensions based on proselytization. There is much work to be done in this area so as to bridge the existing widening gap between Christians in the diaspora.

From my personal experience, most Africans who arrive in Europe and America and who practice the older forms of Christianity usually have problems with ‘sombre and solemn’ liturgies they encounter in their new homes. Unlike the celebratory and lively worship back home, the migrants encounter a cold and impersonal style. In some instance, their white hosts fail to extend a hand of welcome and sure enough, they begin to “shop” around. Once they find the Pentecostal communities, they immediately feel at home. They network and are helped to settle down, get accommodation, jobs, social security cards and even for the illegal immigrant, he or she finds welcome and fellowship. Pentecostals in the diaspora fulfil a role the older generational Churches are unable to fill. Gradually, Pentecostalism is beginning to impact the host European and American communities. Perhaps the Pentecostals will be at the forefront of the re-evangelization of the global West. Here, the challenge for training future Catholic priests in the new evangelization of the next century becomes a paramount task to be fulfilled.

A Pentecostal Perspective on Ecumenism

Nigerian Pentecostals generally seems ambivalent when it comes to the question of ecumenism. Neo –Pentecostals in the West who are beginning to build a viable theological base are willing to engage in ecumenical encounters better than evangelical and Neo-Pentecostals found mostly in the Southern hemisphere. Based on my fieldwork and research findings, Pentecostals in West Africa think that ecumenism is important, but in reality, I did not find many instances of ecumenical associations between Pentecostals, Catholics and other denominations. There are a few instances where Pentecostals had to work with other denominations borne out of immediate expediency. For instance, in Sierra Leone, immediately after the civil war and the aftermath of the Ebola decimation, a coalition between churches was formed to try and respond to the humanitarian needs at the time.

This sort of situation found in Sierra Leone is one of the examples that show the state of Christianity in its supposed glorious upsurge on the face of the continent. Interestingly, Frank Macchia calls attention to ‘the tongues of Pentecost.’ Macchia avers, “The tongues of Pentecost may provide a pregnant metaphor for a distinctly Pentecostal reflection on ecumenical exchange with Roman Catholics.”¹⁹ Macchia clarifies further, “The tongues event of Pentecost exposes the scandal of both a complacent sectarianism that offers no need to strive for unity and a complacent Catholicism that is convinced such unity already exists.”²⁰ Because the Pentecostals lay claim to the centrality of ‘tongues’ as it was given on Pentecost day, Pentecostalism cannot be sectarian, therefore must be ecumenical. Macchia goes further to state,

The event of Pentecost by nature resists domestication as a metaphor that inspires the narratives of just one movement or segment of the people of God. Pentecost is an ecumenical event. It should make Pentecostals feel uneasy and insecure within the closet of Pentecostal piety. It urges them to come out of that closet and to discover ‘Pentecostalism’ in communions other than their own, especially in ways unfamiliar to them. It reminds them that being Pentecostal in the full sense of the word means transcending the boundaries of the Pentecostal movement in directions unexpected and quite dramatic. It means, in part, facing the ecumenical promise and challenge implied in the presence of the Roman Catholic Church.²¹

To focus on the mystery and transcendence of tongue-speech, according to Macchia is an important theological foundation for understanding and affirming diversity among the various Christian traditions. Language, culture and doctrinal traditions are relative to the mystery of God who is present in these diversities of traditions where diversity stands for the communion of free humanity with a free self-revealing God. Macchia, therefore, concludes that “such diverse communions can fellowship and work together as equal partners as they dialogue across ecclesiastical lines. Tongues as a prodigium that breaks in upon us from God’s spirit functions on one level as a kind of ‘anti-language’ that reveals the utter futility of any effort to attribute status to anyone language of faith.”²²

Allan H. Anderson, one of the most acknowledged theologians to have carried out thorough research on Pentecostalism views the connection between ecumenical work and contemporary Pentecostalism as almost void. Anderson posits that despite the belief of evangelicals and Pentecostals dating back to Azusa Street, it was presumed that this new surge of the spirit will become an *Apostolic Faith*. This idea, that the Pentecostal movement will sweep over the known Christian Church holds sway till date, and more so in the nerve centre of neo-Pentecostalism of the Southern hemisphere. Anderson asserts that Pentecostals saw unity in a spiritual sense, but not unity in creed or doctrine. Anderson alludes to one area in which ecumenism seems to function even if not profoundly taken to heart; the interaction between Pentecostals and Charismatic Renewals in the older Christian traditions. Anderson argues, “At the grassroots level, the Charismatic movement brought people together from many different denominations in an unprecedented way... ‘A sense of unity was generated through the sharing of the divine experiences in the spirit which washed away denomination barriers at the grassroots level’...”²³ Anderson concludes that the greatest weakness of modern Pentecostals is their inability to embrace their potentials for ecumenical diversities and unity.

The Task of Ecumenism Today: Roman Catholics, AICs, Pentecostals Relationships

Our theological ‘elders’ forewarned us when in 1986 they gathered in Mexico for the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) that the task of Africa’s theology must be ecclesial, cultural, political and liberating. They posit the following wise words,

.... we begin our common methodology of theologizing as people who feel in our bodies not just our own hearts but the pain of others. We theologize together and individually from our suffering and humiliation. We stand by our prior agreements to do theology and live our faith from the energy that flows from ecumenism and to which we pray our theology should make a contribution. Together we define

poverty, in the comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, as whatever robs human beings and groups of peoples of their humanity. All who are impoverished because the culture they created has been trampled upon by others, all who's right to be human is challenged by socio-political, economic, and religious structures and demands that humiliate, all who have to struggle to have their humanity recognized and respected – all these *are poor*.²⁴

It is to these poor that the Goodnews about the kingdom of God must be preached. It is to them that the Christian Church must serve, and not dominate, plunder or subjugate further than where they have already been marginalized by the corruption of governments and multi-million dollar corporations.

From my experience and fieldwork in West Africa, the relationship between Catholics, African Independent Churches and the Pentecostals in ecumenical work is not easily navigated. It is different from one socio-cultural milieu to another. In most situations, these relationships are based on mutual suspicion and disregard. While Catholics are accused of worshipping images and idolizing Mary, the indigenous African Churches are accused of syncretism and the Pentecostals are perceived to be proselytizers and con artists. At best their relationship can mostly be described as a mutual tolerance or intolerance. The possible avenue by which these Christian traditions can ever come together is usually under the auspices of the association of Christian Churches in each particular Church or region as the case might be. In Nigeria for instance, (and this Nigerian example is almost the exact template of the same situation along with the governments and peoples of the coastline of West Africa), Christians come together under the auspices of the Christian Association of Nigeria, (CAN). Before CAN, the Nigerian Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission (NARCC) had existed as an ecumenical body, wherein joint days of prayers for unity are held, and theological discussions ensued.

Upon the arrival of the Pentecostals and in the light of the unstable economic and political situation in the country, it was imperative for the various Christian blocs under CAN to have a common voice facing the new political realities in the nation. There

have been calls to prayers nationwide and several communiques and papers presented commonly from CAN in response to burning social issues at different times. Most researchers who have made significant contributions to the study of Neo-Pentecostalism usually do not make concise connections between Ecumenism, the Christian Church, Pentecostalism, politics and social impact. It is true that many government officials along the West African coastline are known to frequent prayer camps and Pastors.

According to John Mansford Prior, Pentecostalism is yet to understand “the imperative of channelling its formidable power into the needs of the temporal world, towards the gospel call to transforming the social order according to the plan of God.”²⁵ John Prior asserts that Pentecostalism “has confined itself to a spirituality of conversion, of holiness and fellowship, failing to galvanize its adherents into a force of advocacy and action against the structures of sin.”²⁶ Pentecostalism with its numbers is naturally expected to collaborate in ecumenical efforts particularly when it speaks to social justice issues; on paper, West African Pentecostals (pastors and adherents) agree that ecumenism which pays attention to social justice issues is essential. However, in reality, this is not true. This question can also be asked of the older Christian traditions. It can be asked of those who design the curriculum for seminaries in the training of future priests. The preaching of the gospel can no longer be without its political and liberational dimensions.

Future Priests, Ecumenism and Pentecostalism: Prospects and Challenges.

There is a complexity in approaching the question of anything in the future since no one knows the future. We can try to predict possibilities in the future, but there are too many factors at play beyond human control that can reshape the future. The future of Catholic priests and Pentecostals at home and abroad, engaging in ecumenical work is bleak. The reality is that both sides view each other with suspicion. The future as far as it can be perceived puts a great challenge on the part of the priests of the next generation. Again, there is an urgent need to review the curriculum in the seminaries especially as it affects Homiletics, evangelization and

managing ecumenical outreach. Awareness is essential as the future of Catholicism in the global west may now be the missionary responsibility of the next generation of Catholic priests. The following points are the essentials that I consider a necessity for preparing men who will bear witness to our catholic and apostolic faith in the very near future.

- Pentecostalism is a reality of the Christian Church today. We have all to learn to live together as we lay claim to proclaiming Christ to the world. Pentecostalism in Nigeria and on the West African landscape is still very amorphous in nature to be approached in an ecclesial setting. The onus is on the existing older traditions to continue to extend the hands of fellowship to those in the Pentecostal assemblies willing to work with others in an ecumenical setting.
- There is an urgent need for our seminaries to undertake a theological and ecclesiological understanding of Pentecostal teachings, to review its hierarchical/governmental structures. To understand Pentecostalism in its various forms is a step forward in building a relationship, that lessens the existing tension and mutual suspicion.
- For the Christian message to endure on the continent, the Pentecostals cannot afford to make the same mistakes their older brothers of the older traditions have made in the past; the idea that it is cosy and safe within their own assemblies, thereby becoming exclusive and not desirous of interacting with other Christian Churches. The Christian Church in sub-Saharan Africa faces a silent but potent threat from globalization and extreme liberalism. As cultures collide and penetrate each other through technology and the new wave of the internet and electronic media, a common front and ecumenical handshake across the divide is a necessity for the Pentecostals and other Christians.
- In the West African region what makes ecumenical work, a must is the unrelenting insurgency of extreme and radical Islam. In Nigeria, the hotbed of Boko Haram insurgency, and in Ghana and Sierra Leone, skirmishes have been recorded between radical Islamic Jihadists against Christians and sometimes against moderate Muslims. In Nigeria for instance, there are public statements, unrefuted by the federal

government that there is an agenda to Islamize the entire country by Jihad. In this volatile situation, presenting a common ecumenical front in protecting the Christian population is a necessity.

- It seems the future of Christianity lies in the soil, sons and daughters of Africa, yet the issues, which disunite us, are more than the issues that unite us. Ecumenical work, especially in constant dialogue, is the only way forward if the new Pentecost breathing in the panting heart of Africa will reverberate and will engage in the new evangelization of lands previously home of Christianity, out of which the good news came to us.
- Catholic seminaries hold a wealth of spiritual and intellectual traditions in the training of future priests. This process must now be updated to include methods and approaches by which the priest to be is equipped in religious dialogue broadly. The interaction of traditional Christianity with the new face of Pentecostalism is only one stage in the dialogical process. There are Muslims and traditional religions to encounter and embrace, especially in regions such as ours so deeply polarized and divided. Catholic seminaries must begin to produce priests for the future who will take leadership roles in these dialogues.²⁷

Conclusion

A seeming lack of interest on the part of Pentecostals in questions of political engagement, the struggle for liberation and freedom from political oppression and social justice, widens the gap and makes ecumenical work more difficult. In Nigeria, one gets a sense of a disconnect between social involvement and evangelism in the Christian Churches generally. While the Pentecostals fill up auditoriums and stadiums for revivals and crusades, most of them are unable to put programs in place which supports social services.²⁸ Both Pentecostals and the older Christian traditions are guilty of building social services like schools and hospitals, which most of their congregants cannot afford monetarily to use. This is very prevalent across the board on the West African coast. It is easily

noticeable in private secondary schools, polytechnics and universities owned by Pentecostal pastors or General Overseers (GOs). This extreme lack of social consciousness builds a wall that wedges any kind of effort at an ecumenical embrace. According to Anderson, for the Pentecostals, “There has not been a clearly articulated theological foundation for social ministry.”²⁹ Contrarily, they seem to focus on what Anderson refers to as an ‘otherworldly’ spirituality that avoids ‘worldly’ issues. Most prominent and at the forefront of Pentecostal evangelism is material wealth, suppression of demonic forces, healings and miracles, and speaking in tongues – all of which will not feature on the agenda of an ecumenical meeting.

In this work, I examined the possible connections between Catholic seminarians, who will become future priests, contemporary Pentecostalism and the notion of a possible ecumenical engagement towards social, political and religious reconstruction. While acknowledging Nigerian Pentecostalism and its phenomenal growth over the last few decades, it could well be said that it is the future face and phase of African Christianity. However, there is the distressing news; Nigerian brand of Pentecostalism lack a coherent ecclesiology especially as it focuses mostly on "health and wealth" doctrines. If Nigerian Pentecostalism would thrive, it must connect and reach out ecumenically, by committing itself to social justice issues. It is also clear that there is work to be done to adequately equip young seminarians ordained into Catholic ministry in the coming decades as they encounter their brothers and sisters of the Pentecostal persuasion. We all know where we are today, but where we shall be tomorrow is in the hands of God. We can only pray and work assiduously, and together so that “His kingdom may come.”

End Notes

¹ John Segun Odeyemi. *Pentecostalism and Catholic Ecumenism in Developing Nations: West Africa as a Case Study for a Global Phenomenon*. (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2019), 52

² Cephas N. Omenyo. 2014. “African Pentecostalism” in Cecil M. Robeck Jr and Amos Yong (Eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*. (NY: Cambridge University Press), 132

³ Ibid.

⁴ Johannes Muller & Karl Gabriel (Eds.) 2015. *Evangelicals, Pentecostal Churches, Charismatics: New Religious Movements as a Challenge for the Catholic Church*. (Quezon, Philippines: Claretian Publications), 9-10

⁵ Roger Haight, SJ. "Responding to Fundamentalism in Africa: Three Questions for the Mainline Churches." In the *New Theology Review: An American Catholic Journal for Ministry*. Vol 7, no.1, Feb. 1994, 60

⁶ Killian McDonnell. 1978. *The Charismatic Renewal and Ecumenism*. (NY: Paulist Press), 16-7

⁷ *Ibid.*, 18

⁸ This also is debated by some other scholars who give credence to the missionary work of Charles Parham in Texas where Pentecostal charisms had already been experienced before the Azusa street prayer meeting. Of the Azusa street ministry, Thomas Rausch writes, "It was extraordinary in a number of ways. First, those coming to the mission rejoiced in extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, including an ecstatic form of worship. Second, though it originated in an African American prayer meeting in a still segregated Los Angeles, the congregation was soon interracial, with blacks and whites praying and singing together. Third, from its beginnings the movement spread like wildfire. Within six months, members and others interested in the Azusa Mission had founded several new congregations in Los Angeles and its environs. Its participants held meetings in neighboring communities, often in tents or rented storefronts. By September, its evangelists had traveled from San Diego to Seattle, by December they were active across the country, and at least 13 missionaries had been sent to Africa. In the next two years the movement spread to Mexico, Canada, Europe, Africa, even to Northern Russia. cf. Thomas P. Rausch. "Catholics and Pentecostals: Troubled history, new initiatives." *Theological Studies* 71, no. 4, 2010, 928

⁹ Ogbu Kalu. *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction*. 2008 (New York: Oxford University Press), viii

¹⁰ Other designations for the AICs include African Initiated Churches, African Indigenous Churches, and African Independent Churches.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Kalu surmises the situation at the time in the following succinct words, "Classical Pentecostals appeared early in the African religious landscape and operated with a muscular indigenous agency to charismatize Africa ... The crucial point is that none of the classical forms of Pentecostalism became important in the religious landscape until they benefitted from the spiritual renewal of the 1970s.... and certainly counter the impression that 'new crusaders' recently forayed into Africa bearing the insignia of fundamentalism.

Pentecostalism emerged from the indigenous response of Africans to the missionary message; the missionary input from evangelical ministries such as Scripture Union, Campus Crusade, and such; from the increasing missionary forays of Pentecostals from the holiness tradition and Pentecostal denominations from various countries who utilized the labors of African agents; and from interdenominational parachurches, bolstered by the educational institutions of many American Bible colleges and many evangelical evangelizing outreaches. Cf, 64

¹⁴ Meyer expounds on the all too common features of the new Pentecostal leadership in the following way, “Many PCCs present themselves as ultimate embodiments of modernity. Building huge Churches to accommodate thousands of believers, making use of elaborate technology to organize mass-scale sermons and appearances on TV and Radio, organizing spectacular crusades throughout the country-often parading foreign speakers – so as to convert nominal Christians, Muslims, and supporters of traditional religions, creating possibilities for high-quality Gospel Music, and instigating trend-setting modes of dress all create an image of successful mastery of the modern world. Meyer, Birgit. “Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches.” *Annual review of Anthropology*. 33, no.1, 2004, 459

¹⁵ Ibid, 467

¹⁶ The Yoruba nation is the most dispersed ethnic group in Nigeria through the trans-Atlantic slave trade. They inhabit the South Western part of Nigeria. Among the Yorubas, the first impulse of Charismatic- Prophetism and indigenous forms of Christianity was born in Nigeria.

¹⁷ J.D.Y. Peel. *Christianity, Islam, and Oriṣa Religion: three traditions in comparison and interaction*. 2016. (California: University of California Press), 214

¹⁸ Cephas Omenyo. “African Pentecostalism” in Cecil M. Robeck Jr and Amos Yong (Eds). *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*. Ibid, 144

¹⁹ Frank D. Macchia. “The Tongues of Pentecost: A Pentecostal Perspective on the Promise and Challenge of Pentecostal/Roman Catholic Dialogue.” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, December 1, 1998, Vol.35, Issue 1.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 2

²² Frank D. Macchia. Ibid., 8

²³ Allan Heaton Anderson.. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism (2nd Ed.)* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 252

²⁴ K.C. Abraham (Ed.) “Third World Theologies: Commonalities and Divergences.” Mercy Amba Oduyoye, contributor, *Commonalities: An African Perspective*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990.), 103

²⁵ John Mansford Prior (Maumere-Flores). “How Does the Catholic Church Deal with the New Religious Movements in a Constructive Way? (Focus on Asia)” In

Johannes Muller & Karl Gabriel (Eds.) *Evangelicals, Pentecostal Churches, Charismatics: New Religious Movements as a Challenge for the Catholic Church*. Op.Cit, 255

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Most of this section can be found in my book earlier cited, John Segun Odeyemi. *Pentecostalism and Catholic Ecumenism in Developing Nations: West Africa as a Case Study for a Global Phenomenon*. Op. Cit.

²⁸ While one must not make a blanket statement or over generalize on this matter, it must be stated that there are in the more established Pentecostal Churches, some who have some welfare plans for economically disadvantaged members. For instance in Nigeria and Ghana, there are clear evidences to show that some needy Pentecostal members are provided raw food, they are given financial support to pay hospital bills, school fees or in some instances some amount to start a personal small scale business. The problem lies with when you look at the wider picture.

²⁹ Ibid. Allan Heaton Anderson, 278

CHAPTER 6

**The Primacy of *Logos* and Priestly
Formation in Nigeria: Context and
Content**

Paul Olátúbòsún ÀDAJÀ

Introduction

A Priest must be convinced of two things. The first is the Faith. Faith in this sense means that his primary orientation must always be towards God. This is very similar to the understanding of Joseph Ratzinger when he avers that faith is “taking up a position, as taking a stand trustfully on the ground of the word of God.”¹ Essentially, Faith will, therefore, mean one “entrusting oneself to that which has not been made by oneself and never could be made and which precisely in this way supports and makes possible all our making.”² The second is his vocation. Vocation must also be understood in the sense of its etymology which means “to call, to name, to summon.”³ At the background, a call is a tensive dynamic. One is always called *from* something or somewhere. One is also especially in the Christian sense of vocation called *for* something. There is, therefore, a call from something and a call for something. Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s statement that when “Christ calls a man; he bids him to come and die” should, therefore, be understood not in the sense of annihilation but a death to something that makes living for something else possible.⁴

The certainty of a Priest’s faith and vocation is not of a static dimension. It is a certainty that abides in a spectrum. It is a tensive certainty. A certainty that is subject to doubt. However, the permanent

character of this doubt is that one's orientation of always towards God. In the words of the anonymous writer of *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

You must also know that this darkness and this cloud will always be between you and your God, whatever you do. They will always keep you from seeing him clearly by the light of understanding in your intellect and will block you from feeling him fully in the sweetness of love in your emotions. So, be sure you make your home in this darkness. Stay there as long as you can, crying out to him over and over again because you love him. It is the closest you can get to God here on earth, by waiting in this darkness and in this cloud.⁵

This jarring subjection of a Priest's certainty to doubt has been captured best in the words of Cyran that "Faith consists of a series of contradictions held together by grace."⁶

This certainty of Faith and Vocation in the life of a Priest was what I saw some twenty years ago when I got to All Saints' Major Seminary, Uhiele-Ekpoma for my Priestly formation. That was where I met Fr Anselm Jimoh. The relationship has been one of respect of a brilliant scholar and of considerable distance since he was my formator and will always be. I do hope that the following pages I write will be a respectable testimony of what I have learned from Fr. Anselm Jimoh.

My aim in this paper is to argue that it is upholding the primacy of the *Logos* in the context and content of Priestly formation guarantees the faith and vocation of the *formandi*. What this paper will not do is to argue that the present priestly formation efforts in Nigeria (of which I am a grateful beneficiary) is outdated or unproductive. My aim is to highlight our present remarkable efforts and argue that we can make them more productive with a better understanding of our context.

The Nigerian Context and Content

The Nigerian context today is that of a schizoid anthropological crisis. The average Nigerian is today locked in two worlds. We live in our own world, but our lives are characterized by continuous contact and interaction with the West. This contact was and has never been of equal partners and yet the inequality of that contact is both the source of repulsion and attraction in this relationship. The most enduring effect of this contact has been a confusing picture of the human person that subsists afterwards.⁷ We are neither here nor there. We are neither fully

Nigerian nor Western. With us, “nothing is purely local, nothing is purely foreign, everything is remotely global.”⁸ Our orientation is to the West for an idea of humanity, but the Western idea of humanity is also sufficiently diseased. The crucial reality that determines the fate of so many is that we are more than ever submerged by ‘white material,’ but still, have only limited access to its trade secrets.⁹ Our bodies live in the land on the Niger yet our souls are all over the world. Our source of pride lies mostly on setting our feet outside our shores. Home is never enough, not just for the young (which is normal) but also for the old. That we have even thrived at all in the midst of this is nothing short of a miracle.

Our desires as Nigerians seem to have an anthropological disorder that is not only painful but crisis-ridden. Unfortunately, it is a problem that ravages the African continent. The human person has never been so poor and yet our understanding of the human person has never been so impoverished. Benedict XVI describes this anthropological crisis by saying that like the rest of the world, Africa is experiencing a culture shock which strikes at the age-old foundations of social life, and sometimes makes it hard to come to terms with modernity.¹⁰ I must note here that though both the West and Africa are facing an anthropological crisis, they are of different kinds. Everywhere the modern person, after all, suffocates in a world that offers everything except answers to the deeper ‘why’ questions.¹¹ In the West, this crisis is borne out of a large-scale rejection of values that have mainly held the West together. Ratzinger notes that “in this central question of man which still remains of the greatest importance, all the human problems of our time converge.”¹² However, in Africa, the anthropological crisis started as a result of the ‘violent’ disruption of life as it was known before the contact with the West. Since this contact is still ongoing and will be ongoing for a while, it is the most significant background that shapes this anthropological crisis. This does not mean this contact is directly responsible for everything in Nigeria presently, it simply means that our presently anthropological crisis is simply incomprehensible without the context of this contact.

Ela captures the reality of this contact when he states that:

The problem is further complicated by the fact that the current generation does not necessarily look to African cultural traditions for answers to all its questions. Because the young people of today have emerged from

school systems conveying alienating messages and few have experienced initiation rites, the totality of the African universe is not open to them, and they cannot draw on the knowledge transmitted by the great masters of oral tradition.¹³

Every African (Nigeria inclusive) value that has held for centuries can no longer be taken for granted. Our value of family life is so overrated and exaggerated nowadays that we are often ashamed to admit it. How do we explain our respect for life amid the bodies lying in many parts of Africa? Suicides which in the past was a rarity and mostly occurs in the case of honor is now not only common but also has roots in the depression holding sway in many African societies.¹⁴ How do we understand the richness of the Ubuntu philosophy with the xenophobia in South Africa? How about many of our inter-tribal conflicts which now have a dimension that we could never have imagined. The context of the Western contact has also transformed our capacity for conflict. For instance, a conflict between a citizen of Nigeria and South African would have been unimaginable 200 years ago. We also deal today with the crisis of advanced fee fraud in which Nigerian scammers are the role models who even have biblical links.¹⁵ How do we fit our increased level of poverty, human trafficking, kidnapping, prostitution into our understanding of the human person? What has happened to our ideals of Orúkọ rere dára ju wúrà òun fàdákà?¹⁶ One of the saddest realities that mirror the anthropological crises in Nigeria and across Africa is child soldiers. How did we really get so low in our idea of the human person?

A further appreciation of this contact between the West and Nigeria has also introduced some ideas which could not have been imagined without this contact. The value of Western medicine which has helped us understand more some of our common ailments like malaria cannot be overestimated. The fear and killing of twins were also a scourge which came to end with this contact. This contact has also transformed our world in terms of art. Our array of the musical instruments has also been expanded, thanks to this contact. Also, the rise of soccer in the continent especially Nigeria is unimaginable without contact with the West. For the most part, in Nigeria, this game keeps us united. In some cases, this contact has been for good and in some cases, it has left us for the worst. However, the worst outcome of

this contact is the anthropological crisis our country suffers from today. Yet, I am not sure we can resolve this crisis outside the context of this contact.

While the context of Nigeria today is the anthropological crisis, the content of that crisis is Pentecostal. While Pentecostal is immediately thought of a religious phenomenon, my understanding of this phenomenon extends beyond the religious connotations. It is a national phenomenon, especially in Nigeria. However, this non-religious aspect of this phenomenon can be well understood if we put attention to its religious manifestation.

Nigeria has some of the biggest Pentecostal churches in Africa if not in the world. The pentecostal presence in Nigeria is not limited to the religious space. It has spilt into politics, organized crime, and education. A good number of private universities are owned by Pentecostal churches (or more accurately Pastors).¹⁷ Anthonio Spadaro describes Pentecostalism as “the belief that God wants his followers to have a prosperous life, that is, to be rich, healthy and happy. This type of Christianity places the well being of the believer at the center of prayer, and turns God the Creator into someone who makes the thoughts and desires of believers come true.”¹⁸ Spadaro makes an obvious link between the prosperity gospel and the American Dream. This trend is not absent in Nigerian brand of Pentecostalism like John Odeyemi argues that most prominent and at the forefront of Pentecostal evangelism is material wealth, suppression of demonic forces, healings and miracles, and speaking in tongues.¹⁹ In a sense, material prosperity. Hence the main prayers here are for “financial breakthrough, success in business or advancement by promotion at jobs, opening and begetting the “fruit of the womb,” success in exams, securing a life partner, and even the securing of travelling visa documents.”²⁰

Many scholars argue that the rise of Pentecostalism can be linked to both factors of indigenous traditions and the social-economic conditions in Africa. Ebenezer Obadare in, *Pentecostal Republic* avers that “not only does the Pentecostal worldview draw directly from indigenous traditions of witchcraft, but Pentecostalism also presents a unique blend of more traditional and modern perspectives.”²¹ Odeyemi also thinks that “one of the earliest things that made Pentecostalism appeal to a wide range of people is its experiential African world view of mystical and diabolical causalities. The African mind is always alive and aware of these realities.”²² He also thinks the socio-economic

realities have a part to play in this case since this form of Christianity thrives because it provides a creative response to many destabilizing aftereffects of failing or failed political systems.²³ The present socio-economic as a result of these failed political systems include a plethora of problems like ethnicism, poverty, illiteracy, irresponsible and corrupt governments.”²⁴

The idea that the problems that confront Africans are sociological and a result of our socio-economic realities has led to African theologians arguing that theologizing in Africa must always carry a political character. Emmanuel Katongole for instance argues that “the faith crises in Africa is neither primarily nor predominantly cultural but political.”²⁵ My concern is that seeing African problems as largely political is playing directly into the hands of the Pentecostal orientation. One way it does that is to see religion as primarily as a message of socio-political redemption and hence lead to an exaggerated concentration on a form of liberation theology on the continent that neither liberative nor touches the question of the human person. This is evident as one scholar noted that “Third world theologians are agreed that theology must be liberative and has to be a critique of “injustice, inequality, corruption, and authoritarianism.”²⁶ Éla also notes that “at a time when Africans, like other peoples, are facing the shock of technological and cultural modernity, *liberation of oppressed must be the primary condition for any authentic inculturation of the message.*”²⁷

While it will be foolhardy to deny the socio-economic realities in Nigeria, I want to argue that the origin of these problems is not sociological but anthropological. In fact, the argument that our challenges are sociological in character is to play directly into the hands of the Pentecostal context of Nigerian life. While I am not against a theology that critiques the power structures in Africa, we must always acknowledge that the fact that politics is related to human salvation, does not mean that human salvation can be realized through politics.²⁸ This is because a Christianity that defines itself essentially in terms of social ‘involvement’ has contours that are too blurred and ignores a lot about the human person.²⁹ Such a Christianity has attempted to bring God down to the level of a *Deus ex machina* who becomes superfluous through the advance in man’s own capacity.³⁰ I also think that more importantly, it is all scratching the problems on the surface. This is because our challenges are deeper than the social and political

dimensions, though, that is the more visible symptoms that we can observe. We are dealing more with a human person that is broken at the level of the understanding of the human self.

A closer look at the *modus operandi* of Pentecostalism in Nigeria abundantly reflects an anthropological crisis. Odeyemi notes that these new-age pastors are a crossbreed between motivational speakers, marriage counsellors, life coaches—even boot camp instructors and preachers.³¹ These pastors acting on an idea of how a human being should be and wants to create a new person in the shape of their ideas. Interestingly, they are getting successful. Smith, notes the individualistic mentality of Pentecostalism, as many of these born-again Christians are more individualistic than their parents but less isolated than their counterparts in the west.³² Odeyemi avers that “while in the older traditions, prayers seek a connection with the Divine in the self, amongst the Pentecostals, it seeks it in an explosion outside of the self.”³³ It shows we are really dealing with a problem of the idea of the human person. Hence, our social under-development should be seen in its naked reality as representing a fundamental aspect of the anthropological pauperization of the African person.³⁴ It is easy to dismiss rampant kidnappings, persistent corruption, child soldiers, bribery, examination practices and other punishing circumstances as indices of social realities but what does it tell us about the idea of the human person we now hold as a people. Our orientation of the human person seems to be warped for the most part. We have in essence a restless human person whose main yearnings are both disordered, irrational and unfortunately unknown to him/her.

I term this content of this crisis as Pentecostal because the Pentecostal spirit is the most pervasive spirit in Nigeria today. The lure of Pentecostalism for the Nigerian Christian is so much that Pentecostal ideas have filtered into the mainline churches.³⁵ Politically Odeyemi and Obadare argue correctly in their works that, the Pentecostals churches are rarely against the government because they are really thriving with the status quo. There are even Catholic Priests who are publicly linked to government officials. Interestingly, these Catholic Priests’ *modus operandi* in worship and sermon is overtly laden with Pentecostal themes. That is why I think the pervasiveness of the Pentecostal spirit is more widespread, non-religious and more secular than we imagine. This strengthens my argument that we are dealing with an anthropological crisis. We use language like ‘it is well’

profusely even when it is not well. Some even say, 'it is well even inside the well'. There is an unmitigated yearning for success that has no respect for the other person. Interestingly, the idea of success is largely defined within the context of this continuous encounter (contact) with the West. We deceptively look as if we are oriented towards God but actually, we are not. We are oriented towards the West and its diseased idea of life and the human person.

And how does this relate to the Priestly formation? I think two ways. One is the fact that every seminarian today is a product of this anthropological crisis which has Pentecostalism as its content. It is the world in which we move, live and have our being.³⁶ Some are even in the seminary and have as role models some of these Pentecostal pastors. We may therefore not agree with the Pentecostal content out there, but we cannot ignore it. Secondly, this is the content they are being called out from and for. It is a very difficult situation when you combine this context and content. If we do not take time to think about this crisis now, there is a great danger ahead. To combat this situation, I propose the primacy of the *Logos*

The Primacy of the *Logos*.

Logos as a word has a significant wide range in the ancient world ranging from every day to philosophical usage. The root $\lambda\epsilon\gamma$ represents a comprehensive and overarching unity of meanings. These include gather, collect, select, report and speak.³⁷ As a concept, *Logos* was introduced into Greek philosophy by Heraclitus of Ephesus (circa 6th century BCE).³⁸ The fluidity of the interpretation of *logos* is attested by the fact that over time, it acquired a variety of meanings and these include word, speech, language, narrative, statement, pronouncement, question, report, account, sermon, teaching, call, sense.³⁹ An interesting usage of this term was by the Stoics who saw in *Logos* the universal divine reason inherent in the cosmos.⁴⁰ Hence *Logos* moved from a particular understanding to the universal principle of rationality. This means we can now translate this ubiquitous word as wisdom, reason, speech or rationality. While, the Septuagint translates the common Hebrew word *dbr* (word, report, command, thing, matter, affair) especially in the Pentateuch, the connection between wisdom and *logos* was made explicit in the Wisdom of Solomon around first century BCE.⁴¹

Thomas H. Tobin notes that *Logos* is an important concept in Hellenistic Judaism with a complex and long history starting from second century BCE with the Jewish writer Aristobulus.⁴² However, it was in Philo that this concept reached its full flowering in Jewish literature. Philo relying on the Stoic idea of *logos* as the principle of rationality interpreted it to be the intermediate reality between God who was essentially transcendent, and the universe.⁴³ In some instances, Philo's idea of *logos* has been translated to be a metaphor for God's action in the world.⁴⁴ However, Tobin's position on Philo's idea of the *logos* is worth quoting in full.

For Philo, the *logos* served as the intermediate metaphysical reality through which the universe was originally ordered and by which it continues to be sustained in an orderly state. It was not simply a metaphor; it was a real aspect of divine reality through which God was related, although indirectly, to the universe. Although a derivative reality, the *logos* was not created as was the rest of the universe. In much the same way, the *logos* cannot aptly be characterized as either personal or impersonal. Rather it was the source of intelligibility of the universe and so was itself intelligent in a way that transcended the universe and, in that sense also went beyond the categories either of personal or impersonal.⁴⁵

Logos made a significant presence in the New Testament, occurring 330 times but it was in the Johannine literature that its presence is most remarkable. *Logos* was understood in the Johannine prologue in the sense of the historical appearance of Jesus, the eternal and divine giver of life on earth.⁴⁶ Thus, the *logos* of middle Platonists (including Philo) enters into history. Tobin argues that identification of the *logos* with a particular human being was indicative of the author of the Johannine prologue though keeping with the speculative character of Hellenistic Judaism but moving the conversation in a new and quite different direction.⁴⁷ Joseph Ratzinger notes that

John takes up again here a paradigm of theological thought that is extremely widespread in both the Greek and the Jewish intellectual world and naturally adopts a series of connotations that are already developed

within it, so as to apply them to Christ. Perhaps one could maintain, however, that the new element that he imparted the *Logos* concept lies significantly in the fact that was decisive to him was not the idea of an eternal rationality—as the Greeks supposed—or whatever other speculations there might have been previously, but rather the relativity of the existence that is inherence in the concept of the Logos.⁴⁸

As a result of this, Ratzinger sees the Christian faith, not as a renunciation of reason, but rather, is the acceptance of the extreme depth of divine reason.⁴⁹ Whether in the sense of the word or in the sense of a Person, Christianity must never oversee an amputation of reason.⁵⁰ Neither must it entertain within its ranks, a diremption of faith and reason. Faith is not to be placed in opposition to reason since it has always been clear from its very structure that Christian Faith is not to be divorced from reason.⁵¹ Faith is also not the resignation of reason in view of the limits of our knowledge or even circumstances.⁵² Faith “grasps reason in its whole breadth and depth and protects it.”⁵³ When the Christian faith submits to any form of irrationality, not only is religion threatened, reason too is at risk.⁵⁴ In its missionary activity in Africa, Western missionaries failed in many aspects but not in the reasonableness of faith. This is evidenced in the fact the investment the missionaries made into education in Africa.

Today, the Pentecostal content of our anthropological crisis attempts to view religious experiences outside the realm and sometimes against the realm of reason as the new way of approaching the Divine. To be against the reasonable is the new definition of religious experience.⁵⁵ I take as an example, the approach to human health. Elnathan notes satirically that the Nigerian God cures everything from HIV to high blood pressure.⁵⁶ This is not only an attack on reason, but there is also little reason to develop our health sector if a majority of us have that understanding of God and humanity. Our health sector was almost better when the missionaries were among us because they have an understanding of what humanity needs to do in terms of health; that is exactly where the Pentecostal overlords want us. This phenomenon has become a challenge for Priests of the 21st century since unfortunately, we have in our midst today Priests who either intentionally or unconsciously oversee this diremption of faith and *logos*. We also live among people who daily do this. This reality

becomes absurd when one finds cases in which either Priests or laypersons who oversee some liturgical events often pass off this diremption as the “new reason” creating an epistemological crisis.⁵⁷ At the heart of our Pentecostal content is the separation of faith and reason. This is so much evident in not only in the teachings but in many of the Pentecostal attitudes that subsist in Nigeria. When we separate faith and reason, what we have is this anthropological crisis in which ‘gods’ become a tool in the hands of man. That way not only is religion threatened, reason too is at risk.⁵⁸ We have a marriage between faith and any other things ‘out there.’ And God has never stopped calling people from ‘out there’

The Way Forward

My suggestion is that we need to devote a lot of resources in studying the idea of the man that has resulted in Nigeria in the face of this continuous contact with the West. We should risk studying what sort of humanity we now have today. Having this idea of what sort of humanity is prevalent in Nigeria will also help know which ideas we need to hold on in this contact and which one we need to jettison. Our philosophy classes in the Seminary should have a course on the various ideas of the human person that subsists in Nigeria today. As Ratzinger states: “One must know oneself as one really is if one is to know God. The real medium, the primordial experience of all experiences, is that man himself is the place in which and through which he experiences God.”⁵⁹

We can do this most by paying attention to works of fiction that come out of Africa today. Many of these works, aptly express desires or dreams than philosophical sobriety can.⁶⁰ Fortunately, we have an abundance of them nowadays, and they also have been gathering international awards (again the continuous contact).⁶¹ We also must pay attention to the music that trends nowadays. Some of these songs not only reveal the influence of the West but also conceals some of the persistent African ideas.⁶² I think we need in our seminaries courses on contemporary African literature. Future priests sitting down and analyzing the ideas of the human persons we have in this novel will equip them with a good knowledge of the context that they will work in. It will also give them an idea of themselves and how much of these ideas show up in their own thinking. It is a tremendous epistemological and metaphysical task that is necessary. If it is not done, we are going

nowhere. It is easy to think we can change our structures or politicians but if we still have the same thinking about the human person, every change will be an illusion.

After we have studied the humanity that has emerged out of this contact, we must hold this humanity against the standard of the *Logos* both in terms of rationality and in his Person, Jesus Christ. This is because, “Christ is like a signpost indicating where humanity is tending”⁶³ This is the only way we can have in the words of Ela “another history, another society, another humanity, another system of production, another style of living together.”⁶⁴ What Jesus actually wants is not for us to change our bad water/poor water into a cleaner one which is what the sociological interpretation of our condition will do. What is required by our philosophical and theological investigations into our understanding of man in Africa is to change our water, whether poor, dirty or clean into wine.⁶⁵ As Sarah Oakley notes

Theology involves not merely the metaphysical task of adumbrating a vision of God, the world, and humanity, but simultaneously the epistemological task of cleansing, reordering, and redirecting the apparatuses of one’s own thinking, desiring, and seeing.⁶⁶

This may be difficult to even start to think about but as Rumi once wrote “If the nut of the mystery can’t be held, at least let me touch the shell.”⁶⁷

Conclusion

With that, we return to the question of Faith and Vocation as certainties. Our Faith should be rooted in the person of Jesus Christ, the second Adam, from whom alone the Christian picture of man can be correctly developed.”⁶⁸ However our vocation is a calling from a Pentecostal reality which has a distorted vision of man to proclaim a vision of man ‘most human of man’⁶⁹ We, therefore, need men in our seminaries who have their eyes fixed straight on God, and who learn from him what true humanity is because God returns among men only through men who are touched by God.⁷⁰ This reiterates the position that

Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction⁷¹

Endnotes

¹ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger *Introduction to Christianity*, (trans. J.R. Foster. With a New Preface trans. Michael J. Miller, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 69.

² Ratzinger *Introduction*, 70.

³ See *vocare* in John C. Traupman, *The Bantam New College Latin & English Dictionary*, (3d ed., New York: Bantam Dell, 2007), 453.

⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959), 89.

⁵ *The Cloud of Unknowing with the Book of Privy Counsel: A New Translation by Carmen Acevedo Butcher*, (Boulder: Shambhala, 2009), 12.

⁶ Saint Cyran as quoted by Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 173

⁷ While I am of the opinion that Colonialism holds a prime place in the disruption of Life as Africans as we know it (a disruption in which they have little or no say), it is only but the beginning of a contact that continues till date. That is why my focus will be on contact which for me is imperfective in character and not aoristic. Cf. Sandra R. Shimoff, “Banquets: The Limits of Hellenization,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, XXVII, 4. (1996): 440-452. Shimoff notes that “When two cultures compete for allegiance of a single people, the politically weaker culture has three options: Assimilation, rejection or accommodation... accommodation to the dominant culture while maintaining cultural identity and integrity may be the only option that allows for survival.”

⁸ Stephen Smith, *The Scramble for Europe: Young Africa on its Way to the Old Continent* (Cambridge, Polity, 2019), 33.

⁹ Stephen Smith, *The Scramble for Europe*, 79

¹⁰ Benedict XVI *Africae Munus* (http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html) No11.

¹¹ Lieven Boeve, “Christ, Humanity and Salvation” *The Ratzinger Reader: Mapping a Theological Journey* (ed. Lieven Boeve and Gerard Mannion, (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 51-79.

¹² Joseph Ratzinger, “The Dignity of the Human Person” in H. Vorgimler (ed.) *Commentary on the Documents of the Documents of Vatican II: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Vol 5, New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 115-163.

¹³ Jean-Marc Éla *My Faith as an African* (trans. John Pairman Brown and Susan Perry, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009), xv.

¹⁴ Iku ya ju esin is a Yoruba Proverb which loosely translates “death is better than shame.”

¹⁵ Cf. “Letter from Africa: Why Nigeria’s internet scammers are ‘role models’ “, September 23, 2019 in <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-49759392>

¹⁶ A good name is better than gold and silver. (cf. Proverbs 22.1). Though a Biblical Proverb, it has a home even before the biblical in many languages/ethnic groups with an emphasis on honesty as the best policy.

¹⁷ John Segun Odeyemi *Pentecostalism and Catholic Ecumenism in Developing Nations: West Africa as a Case Study for a Global Phenomenon* (Eugene, Oregon, Wipf & Stock, 2019), 55.

¹⁸ Anthonio Spadaro, "The Prosperity Gospel: Dangerous and Different." (<https://lacivitatattolica.com/free-articles/>) Published Date: 18 July 2018.

¹⁹ John Segun Odeyemi *Pentecostalism and Catholic Ecumenism in Developing Nations*, 32.

²⁰ John Segun Odeyemi *Pentecostalism and Catholic Ecumenism in Developing Nations*, 13

²¹ Ebenezer Obadare *Pentecostal Republic: Religion and the Struggle for State Power in Nigeria*, (London: Zed Books, 2018), 22.

²² John Segun Odeyemi *Pentecostalism and Catholic Ecumenism in Developing Nation*, 55.

²³ Odeyemi, *Pentecostalism and Catholic Ecumenism in Developing Nation*, 51.

²⁴ Odeyemi, *Pentecostalism and Catholic Ecumenism in Developing Nation*, 33

²⁵ Emmanuel Katongole, "The Gospel as Politics in Africa" *Theological Studies* 77:3 (2016): 704-720.

²⁶ Mercy Amba Oduyoye "Commonalities: An African Perspective" in *The World Theologies: Commonalities and Divergences: Papers and Reflections from the Second General Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, December 1986, Oaxtepec, Mexico* (ed. K.C Abraham, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990): 100-104.

²⁷ Jean-Marc Éla *My Faith as an African*, xvi.

²⁸ Lieven Boeve, "Christian Faith, Church and the World" *The Ratzinger Reader: Mapping a Theological Journey* (ed. Lieven Boeve and Gerard Mannion, (New York: T&T Clark, 2010): 119-138.

²⁹ Joseph Ratzinger as quoted in *The Ratzinger Reader* 169

³⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, "The Dignity of the Human Person" 157

³¹ Odeyemi, *Pentecostalism and Catholic Ecumenism in Developing Nation*, 52.

³² Stephen Smith, *The Scramble for Europe*, 62

³³ Odeyemi, *Pentecostalism and Catholic Ecumenism in Developing Nation*, 15

³⁴ *The World Theologies: Commonalities and Divergences*, 35

³⁵ Obadare *Pentecostal Republic*, 30.

³⁶ Acts 17:28

³⁷ Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, (1990), 2, 357.

³⁸ Joseph Komonchak, Mary Collins and Dermot A. Lane, *The New Dictionary of Theology* (2000), 601.

³⁹ Balz and Schneider, 357.

⁴⁰ Komonchak, 601.

⁴¹ Thomas H. Tobin, "The Prologue of John and Hellenistic Jewish Speculation" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 52 (1990):252-269.

⁴² Thomas H. Tobin, "The Prologue of John" 256

⁴³ Tobin, "Prologue of John" 257.

⁴⁴ Tobin, "Prologue of John" 266

⁴⁵ Tobin, “Prologue of John” 266.

⁴⁶ Balz and Schnedider, 357.

⁴⁷ Tobin, “Prologue of John” 267-268.

⁴⁸ Joseph Ratzinger *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine for Daily Life*, (trans. Michael J. Miller and Matthew J.O. O’Connell, Edited by Michael J. Miller, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 188.

⁴⁹ Elio Guerriero *Benedict XVI: His Life and Thought* (trans William J. Melcher, San Francisco: Ignatius, 2018), 367.

⁵⁰ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger *Introduction to Christianity*, 139.

⁵¹ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, (trans Sister Mary Frances McCarthy, S.N.D. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 325. My idea of the primacy of the logos is from here.

⁵² Joseph Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe? The Church in the Modern World: Assessment and Forecast* (2nd ed. trans. Brian McNeil, C.R.V, Foreword. James V. Schall, S.J. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 110

⁵³ Joseph Ratzinger, *A Turning Point*, 112.

⁵⁴ Elio Guerriero *Benedict XVI*, 432

⁵⁵ Interestingly, this is also a trend in the Western World where there is now an established distinction between being religious and spiritual. There is also an increase belief (misguided I think) that Psychedelics can induce religious-like experience. This argument holds that at best Psychedelics can replace religion or at worst become its substitute/alternative. This is the position of Michael Pollan “seems to me the great gift of the psychedelic journey, especially to the dying: its power to imbue everything in our flied of experience one heightened sense of purpose and consequence. Depending on one’s orientation, this can be understood either in humanistic or in spiritual terms—for what is the Sacred but a capitalized version of significance?... Religion has always understood this wager, but why should religion enjoy a monopoly?” *How to Change your Mind: What the New Science of Psychedelics Teaches Us about Consciousness, Dying, Addiction, Depression, and Transcendence* (New York: Penguin, 2018), 355. It is obvious that the notion of religion as argued in Pollan’s work does not capture Christianity as I have argued so far. This is not to say Christianity has not overseen some absurd and irrational events. I am arguing that such moments have been corruption of the Christianity.

⁵⁶ Elnathan John, *Be(com) ing Nigerian: A-GUIDE*, (Abuja: Cassava Republic, 2019), 12.

⁵⁷ One of the classes I took with Fr Jimoh is Epistemology.

⁵⁸ Elio Guerriero *Benedict XVI*, 432

⁵⁹ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 354

⁶⁰ Rémi Brague *The Kingdom of Man: Genesis and Failure of the Modern Project*, (trans. Paul Seaton, Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018).

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⁶¹ Chigozie Obioma, *An Orchestra of Minorities* New York: Little Brown and Company, 2019. Ayobami Adebayo *Stay with Me* (New York: Vintage Books,

2018); Akwaeke Emezi, *Freshwater* (New York: Grove Press, 2018). One must also mention a writer like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who has published some bestsellers like *Purple Hibiscus*, *Half of a Yellow Sun* and *Americanah*.

⁶² I find interesting a Podcast *Jesus and Jollof* by ‘two proudly Nigerian women’ talking about the things they love, their stories and life in general. The interesting part is that while they are first generation immigrants in America, they exhibit in their show persistent Nigerian values.

⁶³ Joseph Ratzinger *Dogma and Preaching* 194

⁶⁴ Jean-Marc Éla *My Faith as an African*, 84

⁶⁵ Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 324.

⁶⁶ Sarah Oakley as quoted in Lauren F. Winner *The Dangers of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin*. (New Haven: Yale University Press 2018), 179.

⁶⁷ *The Essential Rumi*, (trans. Coleman Barks, New York: HarperOne, 2004), 65.

⁶⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, “The Dignity of the Human Person” 120

⁶⁹ Aidan Nichols, *The Thought of Benedict XVI: An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, (new ed. New York: Burn and Oates, 2007), 87.

⁷⁰ Joseph Ratzinger as quoted in *The Ratzinger Reader*, 132-33

⁷¹ Benedict XVI *Deus Caritas Est No 1*

CHAPTER 7

Liturgical Formation In Seminaries: A Lesson From *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*

Anthony Olumuyiwa OMODUNBI

Introduction

Few weeks after my ordination to the Catholic priesthood, the diocese of my incardination (Osogbo diocese) organised an orientation program for all the new priests to be involved in pastoral engagement within the diocese. The priest who anchored the liturgy session opened by saying: “you have to put aside what you have been taught in the seminary and learn how we do things in the diocese.” My first intuitive reaction was, why then do we have to spend nine years in the seminary if it is only to be ordained and put aside what we have learnt? He went further to say, “you have learnt theory in seminary and now you will be involved in the practical life of the liturgy.” I was a bit settled at that and was disposed to go through the orientation exercise which was however highly beneficial for my integration into the pastoral life in the diocese. However, after ten years of pastoral ministry and deeper studies in the liturgy, the question continues to pop up querying why the gap between theory and practice in seminary formation? Why what should be learned in seminary not adequately and sufficiently introduce the newly ordained into the ministry? Or in this particular case, why should what was learnt in seminary not be the ‘moulding of a liturgical minister?’

While I do not want to engage in the argument whether priestly formation, especially in Nigeria, is achieving the goal of moulding liturgical minister to meet the present-day challenges or not, this reflection seeks to emphasise that all that is being taught and done

in seminary, especially in the areas of moral, spiritual and intellectual/academic formation, should at the same time have a liturgical focus. While this does not imply that formation should be reduced to liturgy, this reflection argues that prioritizing the liturgical dimension of priestly formation is one of the major ways of bridging the supposed gap between theory and practice. After all, 'the liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the source from which all its power flows.'¹ It is through the liturgy that the work of our redemption takes place;² it is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ and therefore, 'no other action of the Church equals its effectiveness by the same title nor to the same degree.'³ Thus, having seminary formation with a liturgical focus can never be overemphasised.

To justify the position of this reflection, I will consider the meaning of the age-old maxim *lex orandi, lex credendi* as it pertains to the indispensable role of liturgy in the life and faith of the Church, and how it could effectively bridge the gap between worship and doctrine, theology and liturgy, and theory and practice.

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: A Maxim In Context

The late 20th-century discussion on the emergence of what is today called liturgical theology, brought with it a new look at the age-old Latin maxim, *lex orandi, lex credendi*. The discussion which centres around the relationship between liturgy and theology reopened the understanding of the maxim *lex orandi, lex credendi* as it sheds light on the interplay between praying and believing, between Christian worship and doctrine.⁴ Major scholars in the discussion affirm the importance of liturgy in the understanding of the belief of the Church since she prays as she believes. This, however, does not mean that what the Church believes does not affect how the Church prays, as it is evident in the periods of reforms. The proper understanding of the context in which the maxim first appeared is therefore instructive on how it should be correctly understood and used.

The axiom *lex orandi, lex credendi* is the binominal for the phrase '*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*' that is 'so that the law of prayer may establish a law for belief.' The phrase has its root

in the response attributed to a lay monk, Prosper of Aquitaine (a disciple of Augustine), to Semi-Pelagians.⁵ Like Augustine, Prosper of Aquitaine argues in favour of the need of God's grace for the salvation of human beings. For Prosper, the grace of God is needed at different instances and in different degrees in one's life. To justify his position, Prosper argues from the scripture, Church tradition and the liturgy of the Church:

In inviolable decrees of the blessed apostolic see, our fathers have cast down the pride of the pestiferous novelty and taught us to ascribe to the grace of Christ the very beginning of goodwill, the growth of the noble efforts, and the perseverance in them to the end. *In addition*, let us look at the sacred testimony of priestly intercessions which have been transmitted from apostles and which are uniformly celebrated throughout the world and in every catholic church; *so that the law of prayer may establish a law for belief*. For when the president of the holy congregations perform their duties, they plead the cause of the human race before the divine clemency and, joined in the sighs of the whole Church, they beg and pray that grace may be given to unbelievers; that idolaters may be freed from the errors of their impiety; that the Jews may have the veiled removed from their hearts and that the light of truth may shine on them; that heretics may recover through acceptance of the faith; that schismatics may receive afresh the spirit of charity; that the lapsed may be granted remedy of penitence; and finally that the catechumens may be brought to the sacrament of regeneration and have the court of the heavenly mercy opened to them.

That these things are not asked of the Lord lightly or uselessly is shown by the outcome. For God is pleased to draw many out of every kind of error, liberating them from the power of darkness and placing them in the kingdom of his beloved Son, turning them from the vessel of wrath to vessels of mercy. This is felt to be so completely the work of God that the God who achieves it is always given

thanks and praise for bringing such people to the light or truth.⁶

There is need to underscore some points from this citation in order to get its relevance to this reflection.

First, what Prosper refers to as the practice of prayer covers for all of the liturgy and not just a reference to liturgical texts. In the following chapters of his work, he advanced the same argument in relation to ritual actions like pre-baptismal exorcism and exsufflation (symbolic action of blowing out the spirit) to argue that they are actions referring to the fact that there is need for the grace of God even for infants who are brought forward for baptism.

Second, Prosper acknowledges that liturgy is not the only doctrinal source, nor lays claim that it is the primary source.⁷ On the contrary, liturgy, together with the magisterium and scriptures are sources for doctrine. Hence, he used the words '*in addition.*' In the mind of Prosper, none is considered as receiving its authority from the other. Rather, they all corroborate one another. At best, what we can say is that the agreement between the sources further fosters their authority. In fact, in its context, Prosper in his mind simply implies that 'one may have recourse to the prayers of the Church in order to resolve the controversy on grace because they correspond to a biblical mandate (1 Tim 2:1-2), and are the expressions of the living tradition of the Church.'⁸ In other words, 'Church's engagement in rites grounds the articulation of Church's belief'⁹ in as much as it aligns with the scriptures and magisterium.

Third, the writing of Prosper affirms the authority of the liturgy in the facts that it is a universal prayer, the same everywhere and followed by all Catholics all over the world. They are credible because, they are actions of the holy congregation in the presence of God, and the fact that God answers the prayers attests to its authority.

Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: A Principle in Practice

Though the adage, '*ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*' often reduced to *lex orandi, lex credendi* is attributed to Prosper of Aquitaine, the fundamental principle underlying the adage predates Prosper's formulation. The principle is evident in many New

Testament writings and was carried on by the Apostolic Fathers. As an example, the prayers addressed to Jesus in the New Testament Christological hymn (Philippians 2: 5-11), confessing Jesus as the Lord – sharing the divine name KYRIOS used for YHWH – contribute immensely to the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus. In the same way, the Trinitarian baptismal practice in the Matthean community reflected in Matthew 28:19 reflects an instance where the practice of the Church is already constituting in a way the belief of the Church in the Trinity.

Many of the early Church Fathers constantly had recourse to the liturgy in the explanation of the faith of the Church.¹⁰ Ignatius of Antioch drew from the Eucharistic liturgy to argue against the Docetists (who claim that the human body of Jesus is unreal but a phantasm, and therefore cannot really experience suffering). Thus, Ignatius refutes the Docetists that their teaching negates the truth of the Eucharist as the flesh of the Jesus Christ our saviour who suffered for our sins and was raised from the dead.¹¹

Through several references to the liturgy of baptism, early Church writers argue for what developed to the different doctrines related to baptism. For instance, in the argument against Julian Eclanum, who teaches that children are born without original sin, Augustine argues from the implication of exorcism and exsufflation which are carried out during the baptism of Children. For Augustine, the two rites – exorcism and exsufflation – are done to release the children from the power of the devil. And that it is because there is an ailment that we have recourse to the remedy. This same approach of appealing to the liturgy to understand the belief of the Church about baptism is also evident in the post-baptismal mystagogical catechesis of Ambrose of Milan, Cyril of Jerusalem and Theodore of Mopsuestia.¹² These bishops taught the neophytes what they are to believe based on what was celebrated.

In the sixteenth century, the axiom witnessed a modification in its application. During the period of the Reformation, the disputes in the understanding of Christian doctrines led to the reformulation of liturgical texts and practices. For the reformers, what is believed is what should reflect in worship. Believing now modifies and establishes praying. It should be noted that this move is not a denial, but a reversal, of the maxim. The principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi*

was not absent but understood in a different way. A way that affirms the dual movement of the influence of one on the other.

The reversal approach to the principle is also well favoured in the reform of the Roman Catholic liturgy. In his encyclical on the liturgy, *Mediator Dei*, Pope Pius XII modified the meaning of the maxim in this succinct statement:

during the discussion of a doubtful or controversial truth, the Church and the Holy Fathers have not failed to look to the age-old and age-honored sacred rites for enlightenment. Hence the well-known and venerable maxim, "*Legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*" - let the rule for prayer determine the rule of belief. The sacred liturgy, consequently, does not decide or determine independently and of itself what is of Catholic faith. More properly, since the liturgy is also a profession of eternal truths, and subject, as such, to the supreme teaching authority of the Church, it can supply proofs and testimony, quite clearly, of no little value, towards the determination of a particular point of Christian doctrine. But if one desires to differentiate and describe the relationship between faith and the sacred liturgy in absolute and general terms, it is perfectly correct to say, "*Lex credendi legem statuat supplicandi*" - let the rule of belief determine the rule of prayer.¹³

Pope Pius XII acknowledges the symbiotic interplay between faith and liturgy and throws more weight behind the rule of faith determining the rule of prayer. He justifies this claim on the ground that the ecclesiastical authority has the responsibility of organizing and regulating divine worship, 'enriching it constantly with new splendour and beauty, to the glory of God and the spiritual profit of Christians' (MD no.49). The ecclesiastical authority carries out this responsibility by modifying the human elements of the liturgy as the needs of the age, circumstance and the good of souls may require, and as the ecclesiastical hierarchy, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may

have authorized (MD no.50). While the reasons are laudable and appealing, it does not necessarily warrant the reversal of the meaning of the maxim.¹⁴

In a nutshell, either understood in its original context or in the application of the reversal, the axiom, *lex orandi, lex credendi* expresses a deep and mutual relationship between liturgy and the faith of the Church. The liturgy celebrates the faith of the Church. This is where the maxim is relevant to the core of this reflection. The relevance is that if all that is learned in the seminary is to aid in the understanding of the faith and life of the Church, and for the future priest to be equipped for the ministry, what is learned invariably affects how future priests would understand and relate with the liturgy, which is the source and summit of the life of the Church. Therefore, for seminary formation in faith and ministry to achieve its goal, the approach to liturgical formation is key.

Reconsidering the Liturgical formation in Seminaries

The Vatican II Decree on the Training of Priests, *Optatam Totius* (OT) recognizes that the training of priests should ultimately have a liturgical focus. Making the clarion call towards this recognition, the conciliar fathers requested that the entire formation of major seminarians should aim at enabling students to be formed as pastors of souls, following the example of Jesus our teacher, priest and shepherd. (OT no.4). Such formation is described as having a liturgical focus when the conciliar fathers say that ‘the students are to be trained for the ministry of the word... for the ministry of worship and sanctification so that by prayer and sharing in the liturgical celebrations, they may carry on the work of salvation’ (OT no.4). While the document makes the suggestion of the various necessary courses to be undertaken in the seminary to achieve the goal of the formation, the document made two other salient points relevant for this reflection.

Firstly, in the revision of the ecclesiastical studies to be undertaken, the primary aim is to coordinate philosophy and theology in such a way that together they open the minds of the students more and more to the mystery of Christ, which touches the whole of human history, continually influencing the Church, and is particularly at work in the priestly ministry (OT no.14). The mystery of Christ which contains, but not limited to, the work of our redemption takes place

through and in the liturgy (SC no. 2). It is this same celebration of the liturgy that all of the ecclesiastical studies in seminary formation is revised to enhance in the life of seminarians.

Secondly, when the document OT outlines the various disciplines that should be included and their respective relevance to the formation of seminarians, Liturgy was accorded a distinct position - not just one of the disciplines but the focus of all. To underscore this position, OT simply says that 'Liturgy which is to be regarded as the first and ever necessary source of true Christian spirit, should be taught in the spirit of articles 15 and 16 of the constitution on the Sacred Liturgy'. (OT 16). It is pertinent at this juncture to look at the content of the articles of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* referred to:

15. Professors who are appointed to teach liturgy in seminaries, religious houses of studies, and theological faculties must be properly trained for their work in institutes specifically designed for this purpose.

16. Sacred Liturgy is to be ranked among the compulsory and major causes in seminaries and religious houses of studies. In theological faculties, it is to be one of the principal courses. It is to be taught under the theological, historical, spiritual, pastoral, and juridical aspects. In addition, *those who teach other subjects*, especially dogmatic theology, sacred scripture, spiritual and pastoral theology, should – while accepting the intrinsic demands of their own disciplines – expound the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation in a manner that will make clear the connection between their subjects and the liturgy, and the unity of all priestly training.

The request of SC 16 is of great significance which, I strongly believe, its neglect is partly one of the reasons for that gap between theory and practice, what is taught in the seminary and what is practised. All the subjects are expected to shed light, no matter how little, on the understanding and celebrations of the mystery of Christ. Courses that

seem highly unrelated in any way to the liturgy in the past has proven to be of great importance in the understanding and appreciation of the mystery being celebrated. For example, different developments in social sciences – sociology, psychology and anthropology have really developed ritual studies which today offers avenues for better understanding of Christian worship and specifically sacramental theology and practice.

The demands from the teachers of different courses in the seminary further calls for the reassessment of their process of recruitment. Pope Francis was conscious of this need when he writes that those who teach in the ecclesiastical faculties must be distinguished by a wealth of knowledge, witness to Christian and ecclesial life, and sense of responsibility.¹⁵ Though the intrinsic demands of some of these disciplines may not necessarily involve relating it to Christian worship, students are to be prepared in such a way that they have the love of rigorous investigation, observation and demonstration of truth, together with an honest awareness of the limits of human knowledge (OT 15). This will enable them to be better disposed and appropriate whatever is taught in relation to Christian worship.

Moreover, while many of the courses may not directly be related to worship, they could be related to faith and the understanding of human person. In these ways, the courses bolster the preparation of seminarians for liturgy in two ways. On the one hand, since the Church celebrates what she believes, relation of courses to faith invariably fosters conviction and understanding in worship. On the other hand, the human person is the primary subject of worship. A better understanding and appreciation of the human person, therefore, enhance the liturgical ministry of the priest.

Furthermore, to corroborate the importance of liturgy at the core of priestly formation, the conciliar fathers suggested that the spiritual formation of students in seminaries and religious houses should be given a liturgical orientation (SC no.17). This is purposely to aid their understanding of the sacred rites and to assist them to participate in them wholeheartedly. In this same vein, the seminarians are equipped to celebrate sacred mysteries and popular devotion with the spirit of the sacred liturgy (SC no.17).

Forming Priests as Christ-like *Leitourgos*

Seminary formation is geared towards making students like Christ - teacher, priest and shepherd. This expectation of the conciliar fathers is further expressed in the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priest, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (PO) that the sacrament of orders make priests in the image of Christ (PO no.12). This fundamental notion of Catholic priesthood has its effect on how priests are formed. The introduction to the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* expressly stated that ‘the purpose of priestly education/formation is based on the concept of the Catholic priesthood.’¹⁶ While the concept of Catholic priesthood may take volumes of writings to exhaust, I will want to discuss it in this reflection in relation to the foregoing argument of the priest being in the likeness of Christ. Or better put in the light of the understanding of the Catholic priest acting *in persona Christi* at liturgy.

The New Testament highlights the priestly role of Jesus in different ways. He is regarded as the great high priest of the order of Melchizedek who offers both requests and supplications to God (Hebrew 5:5-7). He is our high priest who sits at the right hand of God ministering (*leitourgos*) in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8:1-2). It is pertinent to note here that the author of the letter to the Hebrews refers to Jesus as our ‘liturgist.’ Contrary to the long-held opinion that liturgy is from the two Latin words *laos* (people) and *ergon* (work) resulting in the definition of liturgy as work of the people, Paul Marshal rightly corrected¹⁷ that it is from the words *ergon* (work) and *leitōs* (public). Therefore, the etymological meaning of liturgy is a public work done on behalf of the people. It is in this light that we can better understand the priest as the minister of the word and the mystery of Christ as related in the Vatican II documents earlier cited.

Seminary formation which intends to mould ministers like Christ, our liturgist, invariably aims at forming ‘liturgists.’ It is a disservice to the generations of believers who will be led in worship by him who does not understand what he is doing. In as much as the actions of the priests are to be carried out in the person of Christ, anything less than a formation after a Christ-like liturgist is a sham. Knowing rightly that the liturgy is the exercise of the priestly office of

Jesus Christ, his ministers are to be formed with the same ideal in mind. It will never be overemphasised that having a liturgical focus is the real essence of priestly formation.

The centrality of liturgy in the formation of a priest does not end at his ordination. The conciliar fathers recommend ongoing liturgical formation for priests. This is intended to deepen their understanding of the mysteries they celebrate and to faithfully live the liturgical life (SC18). This is essential so that remaining *alter Christus*, they at the same time remain a 'liturgist' who ministers in the name of Christ.

Conclusion

The maxim *lex orandi, lex credendi* was discussed in this reflection as highlighting the relationship between liturgy and theology, praying and believing, faith and worship. Since in the original usage of the maxim, liturgy, in agreement with scripture and tradition, influences what the Church believes, it is expedient that the formation of liturgical ministers put into consideration the urgent need of appropriating learning in the seminaries to have a liturgical undertone. The understanding of the maxim in its context affirms that the faith of the Church is what the liturgy celebrates. This affirmation guides against two extremes - of liturgical archaism (the idea that the way things are done in the past is always and the only ideal way of worship) and of the fluid liturgy (the idea that liturgy must adapt to modern-day 'beliefs' and its charismatic expressions). The faith of the Church which is celebrated in the liturgy is not a view or an ideology of a movement, no matter how popular within the Church. Therefore, the envisaged liturgical formation of seminarians prepares against the tendency of bringing different aberrations into worship and at the same time guards against rubricism.

Perhaps, if what this paper has discussed is faithfully considered, the attitude of ministers to the liturgy may be more positive and their conviction in the power of the rites further strengthened. These will possibly help to bridge the supposed gap between what they are taught in the seminary and what is expected of them at worship.

Endnotes

¹ Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10. (Henceforth referred to as SC).

² *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 2.

³ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 7.

⁴ For a detailed discussion on the interplay between theology and liturgy, see Michael Aune, 'Liturgy and Theology: Rethinking the Relationship,' *Worship* 81(2007): 46-68, 141-169.

⁵ Pelagianism is the theological position that human beings, are like Adam before the fall. They are born innocent, with absolute free will and absolutely capable of obeying God's commandment and by so doing merit eternal life on their own. It was an extreme position against the Gnostic and Manichean doctrine. Augustine responding to the adherents of Pelagianism argues that human will is not free but sick, human nature is mortally wounded by sin and that from the moment of birth, human beings does not have the capacity to choose the good. This led to the development of Augustine's teaching on original sin. For him, it is only the grace of God that can enable human beings to turn to God. Without this grace, humanity is condemned. Pelagianism was condemned at the Synod of Carthage in 418 and the Council of Ephesus in 431. However, there arose a slight modification of the teaching of Augustine to further emphasise the fact that God created man good and all about the goodness is not lost in the fall, giving rise to Semi-Pelagianism. This doctrine holds on to the necessity of divine grace for salvation, but further claims that even the first step to this is dependent on free will. For further readings on Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism, See Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol.1: *The Emergence of Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 278-331.

⁶ *Capitula Coestini* 8. As translated by Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press 1980), 225-226.

⁷ Some contemporary theologians however see in the maxim a confirmation of liturgy as the primary theology. Aidan Kavanagh, for instance, argues that the liturgy is the primary source for theology. See Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (New York: Pueblo, 1984), 134; Aidan Kavanagh, 'Response: Primary Theology and Liturgical Acts' *Worship* (1983): 323-324.

⁸ Paul De Clerk, "'Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi': The Original Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Age," *Studia Liturgica* 24 (1994): 192.

⁹ Kevin W. Irwin, "Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi – Origins and Meaning: State of the Question" *Liturgical Ministry* 11 (2002): 59.

¹⁰ For elaborate discussion on the application of the principle in early christianity, see Maxwell E. Johnson, *Praying and Believing in Early Christianity: The Interplay Between Christian Worship and Doctrine* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2013).

¹¹ *Smyrnaeans* 6. Translated from Ignatius of Antioch, *Letters*. In Cyril C. Richardson, ed & transl, *Early Christian Fathers* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 114.

¹² For the mystagogical catechesis of Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia, see Edward Yarnold, *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of RCIA*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), 65 -250.

¹³ Pope Pius XII, *Encyclical on the Liturgy: Mediator Dei*, (November 20, 1947), no. 48 (Henceforth referred to as MD).

¹⁴ See Aidan Kavanagh, 'Response: Primary Theology and Liturgical Acts,' 342. He argues that 'with the presence of the verb, *statuat*, in the sentence, it is impossible to reverse the subject and predicate any more than one can reverse the member of the statement: the foundations support the house. Having said that, one cannot really say that the house supports the foundation. One must say something different.'

¹⁵ Pope Francis, Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*: On Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties, Art. 25 par. 1:1, January 29, 2018.

¹⁶ Introduction to *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, March 19, 1985.

¹⁷ Paul Marshall, "Reconsidering 'Liturgical theology': Is there a *Lex Orandi* for All Christians?," *Studia Liturgical* 25 (1995): 129-155.

CHAPTER 8

**Theology of Liturgical Homily: Priestly
Ministry and Challenges in
Contemporary Homiletics**

Lawrence Ekhayemhe ADOROLO

Introduction

The use of the concept, Liturgical homily has its foundation on the liturgy and the spirit of the liturgy which has its profound meaning in the actual celebration. The word liturgy is from the Greek word “*Leitourgia*” and which is from two-component words *laos* – people and *ergon* – work. Thus, the liturgy was a concept used for the work carried out by the people. It means public work of any kind, particularly in the civil life of the people.¹ But as time went on, it became a concept used in the religious services in the temple. Following the etymological meaning of the word, liturgy, we can say that liturgy is the public and official worship of the Church.”² In the history of the Church, this has been a general understanding of the term liturgy as expressed in the worship and the rites.³

The use of this concept culminated in the papal encyclical of Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*.⁴ The document states that: “the Sacred Liturgy is consequently, the public worship which our Redeemer as Head of the Church renders to the Father, as well as the worship which the community of the faithful renders to its founder, and through Him to the heavenly father. It is, in short, the worship rendered by the mystical body of Christ in the entirety of its Head and

members.”⁵ This was the line followed by the constitution of the second Vatican council on the sacred liturgy, which consequently emphasized active and conscious participation of the faithful in the spirit of every liturgical celebration. We must note here that Christ is always present in the Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. Thus, he is present in his word since it is himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read and preached to us in liturgical celebrations.⁶ It is in the homily that the actual power of the Word is made manifest. The term ‘homily’ has a wide range of definitions. For some, it is a biblical sermon; for others, a doctrinal talk, some say its aim is to edify a congregation; others give as its purpose, moral instruction. Even among the Christian churches, there is a diversity of usage. Many protestant still prefer the word “sermon,” even when they refer to preaching that occurs within the liturgy. When they do use the word “homily” they describe it as walking through the text, step by step.”⁷ Roman Catholics on the other hand, now widely use “homily” for the renewed form of preaching ushered in by the liturgical reform of Vatican Council II; it is that form of preaching which flows from and immediately follows the scriptural readings of the liturgy and which lead to the celebration of the sacraments. In current Roman Catholic Parlance “homily” is distinguished from “sermon” where the latter is a form of preaching that is not necessarily connected to the biblical readings and is heard outside the context of the liturgy; homily, on the other hand, is a popular exposition and application of the scripture. A homily must have the following characteristics: biblical, liturgical, kerygmatic and must be familiar.⁸

The word “homily” from its etymology is derived from the Greek word “*homou*” (together) and “*homilos* (a crowd). The word connotes a familiar conversation with a group of people or a pastor conversing with a flock in words and images that they recognize. The crowd is not some haphazard mob of strangers but a gathering of friends, people familiar to the preacher. It is not a conversation of imposition or of persuasion.⁹

However, for the purpose of this work, the liturgical homily should be understood as an interpretation primarily from the scriptural and liturgical sources to show God’s wonderful action in the history of salvation, particularly as it is related to the specific community being addressed. Thus, it is a type of interpretation drawn from the

scripture to make practical application to the spiritual life of the worshipping assembly.¹⁰

This work attempts to discuss the theology of liturgical homily. It seeks first by establishing a clearer understanding of the concept; its nature and theological basis. It further attempts to examine the role of liturgical homily and subsequently to discuss some of the problems in the practice of liturgical homiletics. It highlights some of the common practices today. This paper concludes with some recommendations to advance faithful adherence and practice as a liturgical action in the spirit and mind of the Church.

The Nature Of Liturgical Homily

The word 'homily is not a conversation or persuasion but rather a discussion like the one the two disciples engaged in as they were on their way to Emmaus (cf. Luk. 24:14). In the discussion, one noticed that the Lord's interpretation of the things that went on in Jerusalem "these past days" is different from their own. In every liturgical homily, the preacher shed light on the word of God and makes the heart of the assembly burn. The preacher does not force his preaching upon listeners. The familiar conversation on the road to Emmaus shows that homily is more than information; it is the interpretation that leads to recognition of the good news.

With a backdrop from the Greek etymology of homily which means familiar conversation Chibuko sees the nature of liturgical homily as a familiar conversation on the very mysteries of Christ.¹¹ He notes that liturgical homily consists of the systematic exposition of the scripture readings or of some particular aspects of them, or of some other texts taken from the Ordo or proper of the Mass of the day, having regard for the mystery being celebrated or the special needs of those who hear it.¹² more so the character of the homily should be biblical. It must be on interpretation of the scriptural texts. This is thus a distinguishing mark of preaching liturgical homilies. The aim or paramount importance of every liturgical homily is the spiritual feeding of the faithful. This would justify why the liturgy of the word could rightly be called the "table of the word" this nourishment prepares the faithful for the nourishment that comes up

again at the second table at the liturgy of the Eucharist, which is the “table of the Body and Blood”.

In a distinct and expository fashion, Robert Waznark gave some of the characteristics of a homily which are: biblical, liturgical, kerygmatic and familiar.¹³ By biblical, he means an exposition and interpretation of some sacred texts and that the preaching should have a scriptural basis; by liturgical he meant that the word is made flesh again in the liturgy celebrated; Thus, this preaching is done within the liturgical celebration. ‘Kerymatic’ on the other hand connotes preaching that has a herald metaphor which is beyond the words of a mere human messenger but the word of God spoken through a messenger. “Familiar conversation” talks of a familiar style in the communication of this word, that is a familiar conversation with a group of people or a pastor conversing with a flock in words and images that they recognized.¹⁴ Despite the developing trends of the meaning of liturgical homily today, the above four characteristic marks still help to define and explore the nature of liturgical homily. However, they can be further nuanced in the light of liturgical praxis and cultural shifts. Be that as it may, every homily must be prophetic in nature. Meaning it should be able to move from an interpretation of scripture to life, to the interpretation of our daily life to scripture.¹⁵

By nature, every homily is first to proclaim the Word of God, not our personal irritations or convictions and then preaching about the signs of God in the lives of the people. The homilist should never be the focus of the homily; he should avoid personal references, mixed metaphors, and negative associations. Rather, it should be coherent and brief.¹⁶ Patrick Chibuko discussing the nature of liturgical homily says every homily “should be sufficiently biblical, theological in content and rooted in sound doctrine. It should have a tinge of newness to a familiar topic, should be in time with the liturgical season or occasion, be based on the eternal truth of the Gospel and the Paschal mystery of Christ.¹⁷ Furthermore, the nature of liturgical homily shows that it is not a time the preacher gives his personal views about current theological debates. However, these are useful in the liturgical homily in so far as they help the preacher to unfold the mystery of faith being celebrated and help the faithful to appreciate the faith that they are celebrating and to profess it stoutly in their lives. It should consist of only the exposition of the Word of God as contained in the scriptures in such a way as to bring home its

saving and liberating truth to the hearers, enabling them to understand that truth in relation to their daily lives in the world which Christ came to redeem and which those who are in Christ are called to serve. This ministry of preaching must be done articulately and effectively. It is not at such time the preacher learns oratory or exercises personality power, rather it is the holy spirit who uses the word of the minister to bring home to the hearers the truth of the scriptural message for them.¹⁸ This does not mean that the preacher need not spend hours of prayer and study in preparation of his homily; although it is God who gives the increase, the labour of planting and watering must be done by the human minister (cf. 1 Cor. 3:6). Hence, every liturgical homily must be a proclamation with special relevance to the existential situation of those who are addressed.

Homily by nature is not picking one or the other phrase or idea from a gospel or an epistle and using it as the basis of moralizing which has little or no relation to the rest of the word of God nor any connection with the sacred banquet into which the whole liturgy of the word is supposed to lead the people.¹⁹ Its character should be that of the proclamation of God's wonderful work in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ ever made present and active within us. The object of every homily is to draw from the texts the message of salvation, which they contain and to confront the present congregation with it as if they were hearing it for the first time. In other words, no matter what the text may be, it is always the gospel that we preach, or more precisely, what we proclaim. Hence we must say that whatever we ourselves may feel about it, to turn aside from this proclamation and to substitute instruction or moral exhortation for the direct preaching of the word in the liturgy is foreign to the very idea of liturgical homily and indeed of preaching itself.²⁰

In a nutshell, the preacher does two things in every liturgical homily: to teach and move; to teach the virtues and vices: the virtues to make them loved, practised and cling to; the vices to have them detested fought and flown. You to have to give light to the reason and warmth to the will. Preachers are always to tie their liturgical homily to one of the four fundamentals: faith morals, sacraments and prayer that remain the foundations of the present Roman catechism.²¹

Theological Background Of Liturgical Homily

My attempt here in providing a theological background to liturgical homily will include a biblical foundation (Old and New Testaments), the patristic period, the magisterial and some contemporary theologians on liturgical homily.

Liturgical Homily in the Old Testament: The Old Testament contains a great deal of liturgical celebration and rites presided over by the elders of the people of Israel. The entire bible is borne out of the liturgical celebration of the people and presided over by elders.²² Therefore, the tradition of exposition of biblical readings is found in the Jewish synagogue. It was a tradition of interpreting and applying the scriptural message to the contemporary situation like other elements of Christian liturgy, this particular ecclesial form of preaching which saw an amazing development during the patristic era is rooted in Judaism, especially in the synagogue worship of Jesus's time. This consisted essentially of a liturgy of the word, which is composed of four parts: The reading of the Torah, reading from the Prophets, the Homily and prayer. The synagogue homily being a reflection of the entire biblical tradition is completely original with respect to the other cults. It is associated with the word and its special importance for these people, among whom it is constantly re-actualized in the face of new events and the demands of fidelity to the covenant.

However, two texts give us a very good idea of the function of the synagogue homily and sum up its history. Neh. 8:18 tells us how Ezra read from the book of the law of God interpreting and explaining its meaning so that everyone could understand the reading. Luke 4:21 recounts the words with which Jesus, in the synagogue at Nazareth, introduces his commentary on the reading of Isaiah 6:1-2 "today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."²³

New Testament: The Sabbath bible reading custom which had to be followed by clarifying explanation was for our Lord the main opportunity for preaching the Word of God to receptive hearers and to proclaim his kingdom.²⁴ In the New Testament, we find many elements that lead to the Christian homily.

On the way to Emmaus, the two disciples in their words express disappointment. Then Jesus appears and began to explain to

them the scripture beginning from the Old to the New Testament. At the end of the explanation, there was the breaking of bread and they recognized him. Through the explanation of the word, their hearts were burning with joy and the joy came to fullness in the breaking of bread.²⁵ This is a wonderful example of what happens at every liturgical celebration where a well prepared and delivered homily precedes the celebration of the sacraments. Jesus taught them the full meaning of the scripture. In the feeding of the five thousand people (5000), Jesus taught them before giving them something to eat. He, first of all, taught them and then fed them (Matt. 14:13-21). Also at the last supper, he taught them before the celebration.²⁶

On the same tradition with Jesus, the apostles, therefore, examine the Old Testament for words and events that are fulfilled in the mystery of Christ. The first Christian communities express their faith awareness that Christ is present among them through the word and sacraments of the church. The Acts of the Apostles constantly gives us a glimpse of Paul as he “converses” with his communities assembled in the name of the Lord. At Antioch in Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas, in similar circumstances were ordered by the rulers of the synagogue to direct “a word of encouragement to the assembly (cf. Acts 13:15). One could be right to say that during the apostolic era as we have it in the New Testament; the homily was an effort by the apostles to proclaim the good news of Jesus through whom God has acted and continued to act in our lives.

Patristic Era: The exposition of scripture continued in the liturgical preaching of the early Christian churches. The witness of Justin to the preaching of the homily as an established liturgical practice would always remain a credible reference point for subsequent liturgical tradition. His description of a second century liturgy preaching contains one reliable information which is very old about the homily at Mass: “On the day called Sunday all gather in the same place, whether they live in the city or in the country: the memories of the apostles or the writing of the prophets are read for long as time allows. When the reader has finished, the president delivers a discourse (Logos) urging and exhorting us to imitate these good examples ...”²⁷ The basic characteristic of the patristic homily is that

in Christian homilies three methods are involved; Reading of the sacred text, detailed explanation of what has been read, and contemplation of the mysteries in their realization.²⁸ This was a show of strong desire to proclaim the things of God in human terms. This era was displayed in essence what liturgical homily ought to be, namely an informal conversation by a pastor of souls with his people during a liturgical action based on the biblical texts presented by the liturgy. There was an emphasis on the essential elements of a homily which is derived from the fact that it is given during a liturgical action.²⁹

Furthermore, this era through Origen strove through allegorical exegesis to adapt the scripture to all levels of the congregation through the homily, to describe the familiar style in which preaching is done. It was a style that is direct and free, a manifestation of mystical exegesis of scripture, practical application and final exhortation, but the tone set is one of familiar conversation.³⁰

Also, the systematic reflections in Christian preaching by two greatest homilists: St John Chrysostom and St. Augustine were proud and stimulating during this era.³¹ This, as it were, is not the place to offer an extended exposition of the Patristic Fathers' contribution to the theology of preaching or the relation of preaching to the sacraments. But it suffices to say that their sources and contributions on homiletics provide much valuable information and bedrock for a liturgical homily. The writings of the Fathers of the East and West supply much valuable insight in this regard.³² Therefore, in general, it can be confidently stated that the patristic Fathers of the Church commonly teach that God is actively present in the reading of the scripture and the preaching of the Word of God in every liturgical celebration.

The Magisterium: In the Church's magisterium, the ground for the renewed vigour towards the abundant use of the scriptures in the life of Christians was softened especially by Pope Leo XII in his encyclical letter, *Providentissimus Deus* (1833), by Pope Benedict XI in his letter *Spiritus Paraclitus* (1920), and by Pope Pius XII's *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943). Indeed sacred scriptures are of paramount importance in the celebration of the liturgy, especially in the Eucharistic Celebration,³³ for it inspires the other prayers and songs of

the Eucharistic celebration, all the action and signs of liturgy derive their meaning from the scripture.³⁴

With this, it becomes the good wish of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council that easy access to the sacred scripture should be provided for all the Christian Faithful not only by merely reading the Word of the sacred scriptures but above all through exposure to a biblical-based homily. Hence, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) states that the Sacred Scriptures is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. From it are drawn the lessons which are read and which are explained in the homily.³⁵ Furthermore, it says that “by means of the homily, the mystery of faith and the guiding principle of the Christian life are expounded from sacred texts during the course of the liturgical year.”³⁶

The Code of Canon law in canon 767 paragraphs three and four went further to recommend that “if a sufficient number of people are present, there should be a homily at weekday Masses, also especially during advent and lent or on a feast day or an occasion of grief. It is the responsibility of the Parish Priest or the Rector of a church to ensure that these provisions are carefully observed.”³⁷ In the second typical edition of the 1972 Roman Missal, Paul VI added that homily should ordinarily be given by the Priest celebrant.³⁸

The 1981 typical edition of the order of readings of the Mass recalls the most important teaching concerning the homily, describing it more briefly as part of the liturgy of the word.³⁹ But it adds some important direction thus: whether the homily explains the biblical word of God proclaimed in the readings or some other texts of the liturgy, it must always lead the community of the faithful to celebrate the Eucharist wholeheartedly, so that they may hold fast in their faith. From this living explanation, the Word of God proclaimed in the reading and the Church’s celebration of the day’s liturgy would have a greater impact. But these demands that the homily is truly the fruit of meditation, carefully, prepared neither too long nor too short and suited to all those present even children and the uneducated.⁴⁰

Contemporary Theologians: In order to correct obvious anomalies in the liturgical celebration, many contemporary theologians have taken pains to educate both the clergy and the laity on the proper

nature of liturgical homily and how it can be best actualized in our liturgical celebrations.

According to Robert P. Waznak, “every homilist represents its community voicing its concerns, by naming its demons and thus enabling it to gain some understanding and control of the evil which afflicts it. He represents the Lord by offering the community another word, a word of healing and pardon, of acceptance of love.⁴¹ The primary task of the homilist, therefore, is not to explain but to interpret. He seeks to attend to the present moment as revelatory of God’s past events and future possibilities are seen in the light of present theophanies. Waznak concludes by saying that every homily should lead God’s people to recognize a living word of meaning in the Eucharist and in the concrete circumstances of their lives.⁴²

For A.G. Martimort, a homily is a pastoral act because it consists in breaking the bread of the Word; it is a truly liturgical act because it continues the effective action of the readings and forms a single whole with these. Whether delivered by the chief celebrant himself or by another Priest or by a deacon, care must be taken not to weaken the connection of homily with the liturgical action.⁴³ He sees the homily as the most important way of bringing out the “today” of God’s Word in the life of Christian assembly who had gathered for ecclesial prayers and celebration and will soon scatter again and return to the world. A good homily must be first of all a proclamation of joy for what God has done for us and then it should enlighten the concrete life situations of present-day people, revealing where and how this salvation can be achieved and fulfilled.⁴⁴

A very well proclaimed word of God and well prepared and delivered homily nourishes the faith of the people in a great deal. It keeps the celebration alive. They are usually very challenging and never boring. Therefore, the readings and homily are to be celebrated in the same manner as the words of consecration. Just as the word of consecration cannot be altered anyhow, the same applies to the readings and homily.⁴⁵ Hence Chibuko says that “every homily must speak of life, passion, death and resurrection of Christ, namely the paschal mystery. Cross of Christ must not be found missing in homilies especially in a materialistic society that seems to be deviating from the cross and going after a cross-less Christ. The centrality of the paschal mystery of Christ must be sufficiently

emphasized.⁴⁶ He furthermore brought out the power behind the word of God in the liturgy when he says:

Anywhere the Word of God is powerfully proclaimed and preached, (behind a powerful microphone or public address system), enriched with nourishing fruits of deep prayerful reflections, local idiomatic expressions, poetic forms, proverbs and wisdom tidbits, with good liturgical and cultural music to help in digesting the word and signs, the situation is quite different. Attendance at such ceremonies are usually full and the Christian life and culture boom. Then in response, the people are prepared to take up responsibilities to solve social problems because they are now fully armed with Christ and all these, of course, lead to reverence to the Word of God and the sacrament being celebrated.⁴⁷

Thus, the homily heightens the awareness of who we are now as well as who God is calling us to become. Through it, the people receive in their heart a word of encouragement, correction, wisdom, guidance, hope or deeper insight into their selfish claim on their own lives. Consequently whatever we need must be in the homily for those who are expecting to hear it. A liturgical homily must always have a deep personal meaning for those who await it openly.⁴⁸

Homily As A Liturgical Action

The designation of a homily from other forms of preaching implies the fact of one given at a liturgical celebration on a biblical text and by an ordinary minister of homily and by a presiding cleric (cf. sc. 52). Since the liturgical reform of the second Vatican council, the homily is seen to be an integral part of the liturgy of the word. It may be based not only upon the scriptures proclaimed but also upon any of the liturgical texts and upon the mystery being celebrated. This distinguishes the homily from a sermon, which is a religious, but not a strictly liturgical form of oratory and may have no relation to readings or other liturgical elements of the celebration in which it is delivered. The liturgy of the word is prescribed in all the revised liturgical rites, even in the private celebration of the sacrament of penance. The

liturgical rites themselves proclaim that the Christian community is based on God's written word and only in the context of hearing the word can we celebrate the various sacramental mysteries. Thus whether at Mass or during the celebration of one of the liturgical rites, it is always assumed that a proclamation of the word may be followed but at least a brief homily.⁴⁹ The liturgical homily has achieved its esteemed place in all liturgies. The homily has a place and must not be neglected in the celebration of all the sacraments, at Para-liturgies, and in assemblies of the faithful. It will in every case, be a privileged moment for preaching the Word of the Lord: the homily as a liturgical action leads the assembly to celebrate the liturgy more deeply and more fully, more faithfully and be formed for Christian witness in the world. The homily enables the people to respond in faith through liturgical word and gesture. It is in such sense we see the homily as liturgical action.

In a further development, while the homily provides a bold and existential proclamation to the stability of the liturgy, the liturgical ritual gives the homily its rooted-ness in the Gospel and the church's tradition of prayer. More so, the stability of the liturgical context safeguards the homily from becoming an instruction, a non-gospel speech, and an appeal for personal piety over against the needs of the community. The fact of the homily being structured in a liturgical context prevents it from any frivolity preaching can ever degenerate to. Thus, the homilist must know that the exhortation he gives is not any kind but one that should be markedly biblical arousing the faith of the people and based on the particular liturgy being celebrated. We can see a kind of mutual association between the liturgy and homily. While the homily gives the liturgy a structure, the liturgy protects the homily from an aberration. The homily is the meeting point between the word proclaimed and Christ's signs, which converge to accomplish among the faithful the mystery of faith.⁵⁰ The homily in this sense could be said to be interpretative, interpreting the particular liturgy being celebrated. Thus as a liturgical action, homily takes on the features of an actual celebration and draws inspiration from particular rites and ritual. The homily, therefore, as a liturgical action should blend with the overall rhythm of the liturgy celebrated.

Today's Problems with Liturgical Homily:

The homily is where there is one of the major liturgical problems in today's liturgy. The grassroots problem of a liturgical homily is in its preparation and delivery. This problem touches on the purpose of the homily and it is deeply rooted in the question of interpretation. A homily must be able to take the word in its original meaning and translate it into ever-new expressions, courageously using it to confront the most dramatic aspects of our constantly changing culture and crisis in which people find themselves today.⁵¹

Nowadays, insufficient time and lack of adequate preparation characterize the delivery of liturgical homilies. In most cases, the celebrant (homilist) gives only a few minutes to the homily on Sunday or other major liturgical celebrations because of other various parish activities that are taking place within the liturgical celebrations. Due to lack of adequate preparation, the problem of showing off in the process of delivering is very common among homilists. This comes in various ways. Some take the occasion as an opportunity to show off their oratory. In some great liturgical occasions the homily time is now the time for one of those rhetorical exercise with appropriate gestures and vocal inflection which have always delighted the crowd and which like some works of art, exist for the art's sake, that is, in this case for the pleasure that good people take, as they say, in listening to a "man who can speak well."⁵² For some, anything could be spoken of as well and besides the gospel and no allusion is ever made, ordinarily, to the other scriptural texts of the liturgy. Moral exhortation, political comments, financial appeals, and sometimes, but less frequently, a sort of catechism lesson for adult had long since taken the place of the homily

For others, it is the time to speak about social problems in order to win the peoples approval, and for some still, it is a time to entertain the congregation. The situation becomes more problematic when the homilist because of lack of preparation uses the time for delivering a homily for singing, clapping, dancing and even using funny expressions calculated to invoke laughter and applause.⁵³ Furthermore, the practice is now gaining ground in our local churches whereby after the gospel, the choir or the homilist himself intones a chorus, sometimes as long as five minutes or longer in some extreme

cases, before the homily. The homily as an integral part of the liturgy of the word comes immediately after the gospel reading. Thus, it is an unnecessary prolongation of the liturgy to begin a hymn after the gospel which takes a considerable length of time during which many in the congregation do not know whether to keep standing up or to sit down.

Another practical problem facing liturgical homily in today's liturgical celebrations is the lack of effective public address system in our Parish churches. The use of a public address system is to facilitate communication, but this is not always the case; rather, most of the public address systems in our churches are not functioning well. When they are used, the congregation hardly hears the preacher clearly and distinctly, it irritates and alienates the congregation as well as frustrating the genuine effort of the preacher. Hence, the obvious presence of poor public address system in most of our churches militates against the actualization of a good liturgical homily. The consequence of all the identified problems is that the faithful go home after each liturgical celebration with little or nothing to inspire and nourish their Christian living.

Present and Common Practices today:

In a liturgical celebration, the people of God who gather to celebrate await eagerly to hear God speak to them through the mouth of the Priest when he preaches. Even though we can't deny the fact that some priests still take this part of the celebration seriously by the way and manner they preach the Word of God, some others however, have long lost the sense of the mysteries they celebrate in the way they deliver their homily in the liturgical celebration. This point becomes very true, when we consider the singing, clapping, and dancing we often experience during homily time which often results to sweating and losing concentration and end up not getting any spiritual nourishment from the word of God in such liturgical celebration. The only explanation to this in my own view is a desire by the priest to be acclaimed rather than pass across the Good News of Christ. Also, playing to the gallery, that is attempting to impress the people because of poor knowledge of the scripture.

Indeed the present situation of some liturgical homilies today show lack of adequate preparation, failure to use simple language, failure to go straight to the point and inability to relate the Word of

God to the lives of the people on the part of the priests. Priests should be confident of what they say and preach it with authority, power and conviction and without fear or favour or just merely reading abstract ideals that elicit sleep and distraction on the congregation.

The situation now shows that some priests no longer follow the Catholic methodology of delivering a homily. Rather, the Pentecostal influence seems to be more evident in our preaching. Hence, one wonders the effect of the courses of homiletics and liturgy taught during the seminary's formative years. Some priests now use the ambo during the time of homily in our liturgical celebration as an opportunity to preach politics, talk about themselves, reel insults on personalities and attack those whom they feel hinders their progress in the parish. In some instances, there is no single reference to the readings of the day, rather it will be a talk from one political issue to another or talk about fundraising in different forms all in the name of church projects. Though priests should be current on the issues affecting the society in the pages of national dailies and see how they can use the scriptural readings of the day to address the situation, does not mean that priests should be preaching false miracles and healing as we are currently observing in our celebrations now. This practical application is lacking in our liturgical homily today because some homilies are void of adequate preparation, skilful presentation and many often it is not done behind a good public address system. This is very true when you consider the fact that some of the liturgical homilies we listen to today don't have a particular topic or theme for the day. Hence no precise message but repetitions and thus fail to address the people's fears and worries, rather what we see is an overly emotional style of shouting and dancing as well as preaching Christ without the cross.

In some occasions the priests rush their Masses; hence they give little time to preaching the Word of God because they are rushing to meet up another Mass in the other stations or in the same Church. The consequence of this is that parishioners of such parish after Sunday Mass go to other churches where more time is given to the preaching of the Word of God. In some of our celebrations, the liturgy of the word is generally poorly celebrated. The lectors are not properly trained to read effectively. Taking of photographs, video

coverage and other movements which are now practices of the day contribute immensely to the poor celebration of the liturgy of the word. For a proper celebration of the word and for the actual nourishment of the people, such actions and movements should be discouraged in our liturgy. Nobody can give what he does not have. Some priests today are carried away with material things and so are easily distracted. Some are always and only concerned with the structural development of the parish. Thus, they have little or no time to study the scripture, meditate and reflect on the Word of God using the bible and other Church documents and commentaries to prepare their homily. Proper preparations, it is said, prevents poor performance.

However, the obvious truth in the present and common practices in liturgical homily is that some of the liturgical homilies have been pastorally enriching and helpful to the spiritual nourishment of the clergy and lay faithful. On the contrary, some of the liturgical homilies both in content and in style of delivery have been poorly done, and cannot properly elicit faith and inspirations in the spiritual life of the people.

Recommendations:

Based on this in-depth study, it is obvious that a thorough and critical view of the subject matter has been dealt with by showing that the Church is not only to read the word of God but also to see to it that through the homily the Christian life is nurtured, by taking into account the mystery being celebrated and the needs proper to the people of God. Hence some recommendations offered here are to serve as a working tool to improve the content and style of preaching the homily in liturgical celebrations. They are meant first and foremost to promote evangelization and also to help both the clergy and the lay faithful in the actualization of every word of God celebrated in the liturgy. From the foregoing, one could notice that the homily within liturgical celebration poses a very vital challenge to both the preacher and listeners. Thus, these recommendations will in no small measure help the clergy and the assembly to have a better knowledge of the nature of liturgical homily and how it can nourish their spiritual life, and also help in the appreciation of the celebration of the entire paschal mystery of Christ.

- (1) **Liturgical Commission:** The Second Vatican Council recommends a functional liturgical commission for promoting liturgical apostolate. The role of such commission in the liturgical life of any given local Church is indispensable. It will help to regularly assist in the formation and implementation of liturgical guidelines. Such guidelines and implementation will help a great deal in controlling some of the ugly situations we observe in the practice of liturgical homily today.
- (2) **On-going Liturgical Formation of Priest:** Since the homily is a type of preaching generally reserved for the clergy and it is seen as part of the Church's teaching office, there is an urgent need for on-going formation among the clergy which was recommended by the document of the Second Vatican Council on the ministry and life of priests. The ministry of priests involves sanctity and knowledge. Just as priests have monthly recollections and annual retreats of at most a week duration for their spiritual growth, something comparable ought to be put in place to address their needs for on-going theological formation.
- (3) **Proper Liturgical Formation for Major Seminarian:** The seminarians of today are priests of tomorrow who will be given the responsibility of preaching homilies. According to a popular adage: "The morning shows the day". The scripture says "train up a child the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Prov. 22:5). There is a need for proper formation of major seminarians. Since the training of future priests starts from the seminary, there is the need for their curriculum to be updated especially in the area of homiletics. The Church insists that in carrying out various ministries in the Church, the minister must be properly trained. Hence, those to be ordained priests require appropriate formation for the role they are called to play in the Church. In homiletics curriculum, the formation can be general and specific. The general formation will take the form of doctrinal and liturgical formation. They should be equipped with more than a passing knowledge of the Scripture, Sacred

Doctrines, the teachings of the magisterium, liturgical norms and practices etc. Specifically, they should be formed liturgically, this formation will give them some basic understanding of the meaning and structure of liturgical celebration in general and also the relationship between the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. This formation should also involve technical training of the seminarian on how to prepare, and deliver a liturgical homily.

- (4) **Faithfulness to the Church's form of worship:** There is a need to put some order and uniformity in the liturgical celebration especially in the liturgy of the word. This should be consistently followed in the celebration of all the sacraments. Thus, any attempt by the priest to imitate some of the Pentecostal churches in their emotional style of shouting and dancing as well as preaching Christ without the cross should be discouraged. The essence of liturgical celebration is total transformation expressed in the sanctification of the people, the edification of the Church, the glorification of God and witnessing in Christian living.
- (5) **Proper Preparation:** There should be proper preparation by the priest before every homily. In the liturgy, there is no room for improvisation. The homilist should and must not go to the ambo just to say something; rather he should go to the ambo with something to say. A very well prepared and delivered homily will nourish the faith of the assembly a great deal. It will also keep the entire celebration alive and will be appreciated by the assembly. All prepared and delivered homily will be very challenging and never boring. As part of the preparation, the homilist should endeavour to guide against too long or too short homilies. He should be able to strike a balance. A good homilist is one who through his proper preparation sees to it that no more than proportionate time is given to each of the integral parts of the celebration so much so that the actions are kept flowing and performed with dignifying grace. The preacher with proper preparation must approach the ministry of preaching with all seriousness, zeal and utter dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- (6) **A Theme for Every Homily:** In every homily delivered, there should be a theme. A particular topic with a reflection

on the readings or mystery being celebrated should be delivered with depth, precision and especially with contextual relevance. To go through an entire gospel topic can bear fewer fruits because the preacher, who can dwell only very little on every element, cannot develop them or explain to the congregation what he wants to say. Bearing in mind, that the assembly is present and disposed to hear sacred ideas that will influence their lives, the preacher, through his theme and content of his message should be able to present commentary of the readings and an application of same to the concrete situations that make meaning to his listeners. From the theme also, the assembly should be able to draw a connection between the content of the homily and their daily life as Christians.

Conclusion:

This study has evaluated in-depth the nature and actual application of liturgical homily in the life of the Church. It was able to create the awareness that there is a need for improvement in the style and content of liturgical homily today. From the presentation, it was established that lack of preparation by priests hampers proper liturgical homilies in the liturgical life of the Church. From the findings of the study, it is also clear that the Church has everything to gain if the clergy understands the nature and importance of homily in our liturgical celebrations. By so doing, they will be acting in full conformity with the Bible, the theology of the Church, liturgical provisions and the teaching of the magisterium. It is a general call for all to recognize and appreciate the nourishment that every well prepared and delivered homily can bring to the Church and her mission of evangelization.

It is the belief that this work will to a great extent be able to remove any misunderstanding that some might have heard about the nature of liturgical homily before now. Thus, we wish to state that although this work does not claim to be exhaustive of all there is to explore and discuss about the liturgical homily, it still has convincingly spelt out the dynamics and challenges of the clergy in

the preaching of a liturgical homily. However, it can serve as a springboard for further researches in the future.

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CHAPTER 9

**Contemporary Sexual Crises in the
Church and the Challenge for Priestly
Formation¹**

SimonMary Asele AIHIOKHAL

Introduction

Priestly anniversaries are times for great celebrations and deep reflections on the part of the entire Church. Silver Jubilees ought to be celebrated with great pride and hope. I rejoice with Rev. Anselm Kole Jimoh as he commemorates this special moment in his priestly ministry. Many like him continue to be the hope of the Church even at times when ugly narratives of priestly sexual abuse have come to distort all that the Church stands for in our times. I have been asked to reflect on a topic that demands an honest engagement. On that note, let me transition to the purpose of this work.

In this work, I intend to do the following; shed light on some of the trends of the emerging sexual abuse cases; present a critical analysis of the formation styles within Nigerian seminaries with the intent to articulate a new vision of priestly formation that will help the Nigerian Church in particular and other national churches both in Africa and other parts of the world to prevent future scandals, while properly training the men who present themselves to be trained for the ordained state.

Trends of Current Abuses

A critical question must be asked, one that demands an honest response. Does the Church have a sexual ethics problem, one that may be inadvertently contributing to the issues it is faced with today? I am convinced by the multiple evidence available that the response is in the affirmative. The ongoing ideological struggles between experts in the social sciences and pure sciences tasked with investigating the human mind, gender and sexuality on one hand, and church experts and theologians who argue for various theological positions on human sexuality demonstrate the point being made here. The dust seems not to have settled but many in the Church's hierarchy are impatient with the perceived 'slow' analysis of the sciences and would rather prefer a particular reading of religious texts along with their own cultural and personal sensibilities. It might be important to offer a quick note of caution; science can be a gatekeeper of truth for the Church. When healthy relations are built with the scientific community, the Church's doctrinal positions will be greatly advanced and best address the demands of the signs of the times. Science is today teaching us that gender binarism is a limited and sometimes a confusing way to speak of the breadth of our human condition. As noted by Judith Lorber, any discourse on gender ought to be predicated on cultural knowledge, which sometimes varies from one culture to another. In western societies, "until the eighteenth century, philosophers and scientists taught thought that there was one sex and that women's internal genitalia were the inverse of men's external genitalia: the womb and vagina were the penis and scrotum turned inside out."² Lorber further explicates, while looking closely to how gender identities are given in western societies, that the nuances found in the human person, ranging from chromosomal markers, anomalous genitalia, and other physiological differences tended to be rigidly categorized by the duality of male-female; man – woman; and heterosexual – homosexual.³ How is the Church's theological anthropology responding to this new discovery? Is the Church's preference to appeal to biblical texts to buttress a particular type of anthropology or is it to have an open mind to what is being discovered by scientists without making any moral judgement? These are options that lead to quite different and sometimes opposing conclusions.

Again, gender binarism is being challenged by new scientific discoveries in the area of intersex realities.⁴ Based on scientific

discoveries, it is common knowledge that there are “over 70 sex chromosomal” expressions within the human population.⁵ Thus, even language needs to be adjusted to account for such breadth of sex expressions in the human population. Male and female are at best labels of erasure and truncate the pendulum reality science is exposing us to.⁶ One conclusion can be made from these unfolding knowledge of the human organism; our knowledge of ourselves as humans is the knowledge that is not fixed. It is always progressive knowledge. Ignoring all these discoveries and simply upholding what is termed traditional views on gender binarism as was recently done by the Vatican dicastery, Congregation for Catholic Education in its recently released document on gender theory is problematic.⁷ An important question worth asking, when one hears arguments on human sexuality that is based on traditional views, is this: what cultural knowledge heritage is one alluding to and defining as the norm?

The document from the Vatican dicastery fails to address the fact that Christian anthropology is not constructed outside of a cultural locus with all the biases that play out in such a locus. What the document calls “right season” as the defining marker of the Church’s position on what it means to be human must be engaged critically for what it is.⁸ Reason is always culturally determined. The argument proposed in the document is to reject any “separation of sex from gender.”⁹ The Jewish and Greco-Roman cultural influences on how the Church reasons and its vision of what it means to be human ought to be acknowledged as such. The Church’s position does not exhaust the issue at hand. While the Church upholds a Greco-Roman metaphysical grounding of human sexuality, there are also legitimate arguments to be made based on other ways gender expressions are more fluid that are not grounded in metaphysics. Examples of non-metaphysical views of human sexuality can be found among the “Berdache in North America and the Fa’afafine in the Pacific, and the Kathoey in Thailand.”¹⁰ Furthermore, if culture is the place where the divine-human drama is fully experienced, then cultural differences that define gender fluidity as found in different human communities should not be dismissed easily simply because they differ from those that have shaped the Church’s views. Rather than a rigid vision of what it means to be human, these differences can become the

possibility for embracing a richer vision of what it means to be human in a culturally diverse world.

The cautionary note from the American Jesuit theologian, James Martin that “the document is mainly a dialogue with philosophers and theologians, and with other Church documents; but not with scientists and biologists, not with psychologists, and certainly not with LGBT people, whose experiences are given little if any weight” is something that should make everyone to be very concerned.¹¹ To have an informed opinion on an issue demands a deliberate and holistic engagement with all factors shaping that issue. To simply dismiss an aspect of the process and uphold views that are at best one-sided and/or incomplete should not be the approach to the teaching office of the Church should be following. Conclusions like these hurt people who are already at the margins of society and the Church. Perhaps, the following cautionary insight is helpful in shedding light on what is at stake here; “it is important to emphasize that although heterosexuality operates in part through the stabilization of gender norms, gender designates a dense site of significations that contain and exceed the heterosexual matrix. Although forms of sexuality do not unilaterally determine gender, a non-causal and non-reductive connection between sexuality and gender is nevertheless crucial to maintain.”¹²

Thanks to the social sciences we are more knowledgeable about how human conditioning plays out even in the most private aspects of our lives, our sexual preferences.¹³ Even though no current study has been done in the context of Africa, the churches of Africa can also learn from the insights and experiences of those in the western world. It is on that note that I intend to call attention to some insights found in the recent study done on the sex abuse crisis in the United States of America.

There are some observable trends found in the John Jay Report of 2004 by John Jay College of Criminal Justice that was commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The report focused its studies of sexual abuse in the Church between 1950 and 2002. It found out that there were over 10,000 sexual abuse allegations brought against priests and deacons working in dioceses in the United States. It also showed that the percentage of priests and deacons working in the country (109, 694), 4% (4392) were accused of sexual abuse of minors and adults. I

should be clear here by stating the obvious; the report was not extensive enough. It did not study the members of the hierarchy and members of lay religious orders. Recent revelations have shown that the scandal is not just limited to priests or deacons or even to male members of the Church with leadership roles. Female religious communities have had their own share of the scandal as well. The sex abuse scandal is one that affects every aspect of the Church, ordained and lay.

The John Jay Report offers some interesting profile of the abuses and the abusers that may be of use to those interested in revamping priestly formation in the twenty-first century. Grooming tactics were prominent ways the abusers used in carrying out their illicit sexual contacts with their victims. The abusers took time to build a trusting relationship with their victims and then threatening them should they betray their confidence and reveal what abuses were occurring. The age profile of the abusers is also telling. Half of those accused of abuse were below the age of 35 when they first carried out their first sex crimes. Less than 7% of the abusers were themselves victims of sexual abuse as minors. 19% of them were also dealing with alcoholism. 70% of the abusers were formed in seminaries under pre-Vatican II seminary formation programs.¹⁴ What do all these tell us? They point to the fact that there is a very strong case to be made for using insights from the social sciences to address this crisis. These are not just accidental cases that played themselves out without any organic pattern in them. Rather, a closer study of these patterns reveals some innate deficiencies in the formative programmes operative during the years these abusers were in seminary and/or in ministry.

Formation Styles and Lessons to be Learned

My work as an educator has taught me the relevance of viewing formation as something that must be holistic; one that ought to engage the different aspects of human life if it is to have any transformative impact on the ones being formed. In 1992, Pope John Paul II gave to the Roman Catholic Church a post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (I will give you shepherds after my own heart – Jer. 3:15). Here, John Paul II articulates the need for formators of future priests to take seriously the need to tailor their education to

meet the needs of our times. He called for a clear understanding of holistic formation that accounted for the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. It is worth pointing out the bold claim made by John Paul II, who argued for human formation as the core of all holistic formation on which the other three aspects of formation hinge. His vision of the human is also very interesting; it is conditioned on what he calls “affective maturity.”¹⁵ In his words, “Affective maturity presupposes an awareness that love has a central role in human life... We are speaking of a love that involves the entire person, in all his or her aspects - physical, psychic and spiritual – and which is expressed in the ‘nuptial meaning’ of the human body...”¹⁶ Following the release of this document, many houses of formation in the western world and in Africa began the much-needed conversation to figure out how to revamp their formation process to allow for a clear understanding and expressions of these four aspects of formation. I recall vividly, efforts made by some religious communities in Nigeria who began to explore ways of revamping their formation programme to account for this new guidance on priestly and religious formation.

Furthermore, to show how much work still needs to be done even by the religious communities that want to make a difference, it is proper to share an incident that occurred some years ago during my undergraduate studies. During my senior year as a philosophy student in the seminary, a course on human sexuality was introduced as an elective. It was going to be taught as two sessions. One was to be taught by a nun and the other by a member of my religious community. I happened to have registered for the latter. During our first week of class meetings, it dawned on me that what was needed was not just a course but a total re-education of all priests and seminarians for our lack of training in the area of human sexuality. The instructor kept referring to Origen, the great theologian of the Early Church, as someone who had cut off his ‘third leg,’ a euphemism for castrating himself. When I pushed further by asking the instructor to explain how humans mutated from having three legs to now having two, I was made to know that such types of questions were not going to be entertained by him. That was it for me. I realized that the issues at stake were deeper than just taking a class on human sexuality. The anthropological vision that has defined how we perceive ourselves as sexual beings, our comfort level with our own sexual conditioning, our linguistic comfort in carrying out such

discourses all needed to be critiqued deeply and if necessary, transformed radically if the vision of Pope John Paul II was to be realized for the Church, particularly in the Nigerian context. I am not alone in making this observation. Another “reason why renewal and transformation are constantly needed is the fact that our knowledge of reality is constantly increasing and changing and this inevitably affects the way we live our lives. For instance, it makes an enormous difference if our understanding of homosexuality changes from regarding those who engage in same-sex behaviour as either deviant or sick ‘heterosexual’ persons to seeing them as persons whose fundamental orientation attracts them to persons of the same sex.”¹⁷

No one denies the fact that the establishment of structured priestly formation has yielded some positive results. The intellectual formation has been a great success for priests over the centuries. Lovely spiritual practices have been developed through the quasi monastic settings of seminaries. A good sense of community among the future members of the clergy is developed during these formative years. However, with regard to sexual formation, the outcome has been very poor, if we are to be honest with ourselves. Since the Church is made up of men and women, one wonders what dictates the rationale behind having junior seminaries that house young boys who are excluded from substantive interactions with young girls their age? As part of their priestly formation, ought not these young boys be provided with healthy sex education and ways of appreciating personal boundaries in their interactions with each other and with women and girls? As reputable psychologists would opine, dating is part of holistic human formation. Through the dating experience, a young man or a young woman begins to learn how to negotiate appropriate boundaries for themselves and for those they may have feelings for. They learn to appreciate the fact that consent must be clearly given and sustained always, otherwise it is not consent. As these young men and women attain adulthood, their affective maturity aligns itself also with those of the spiritual and intellectual. When one listens carefully to all the traumatic stories of the sex abuse cases involving ordained men in the Roman Catholic Church, one thing is central, these accused have no sense of what healthy affective boundaries entail. Even with the level of intellectual education, they have attained in life, their poor social skills, manipulative

personalities, puerile tricks at luring their victims to enter into a relationship of trust speak to a disconnect between the different levels of their formation. It is as though one of the four integral pillars of formation (affects) is not properly aligned with others. This is not an accidental reality. This distorted alignment is traceable back to the very origins of the founding of seminaries. The establishment of formal structures for priestly formation came from the Council of Trent's attempt at curbing ideas it had deemed injurious to orthodoxy.¹⁸ Men who were to serve the Church were to be trained clearly in ways that the radical ideas of the times could be curtailed.¹⁹ Interestingly, the psychological background for this approach and attitude is intricately linked to a somewhat problematic attitude toward all things that do not fit perfectly well with the stated goals of *raison d'être* for seminaries.²⁰ Issues dealing with human sexuality would necessarily be seen as suspect, especially in a church with a strong Manichaean heritage; one that frowns at the sensual, and considers the sexual as the pathway for tempting and corrupting the purity of the soul. Rather than explore the broad nature of human sexuality as an essential condition for priestly formation for men whose ministerial duties will entail relating with other humans through the breadth of their human affects, a form of spiritualizing of the affects has come to replace that which needs to be addressed in a more pragmatic and concrete manner. Celibacy and chastity are spoken of using the spiritual motifs of the heavenly bride. Theological and spiritual works have flourished over the years in addressing the sexual urges and realities of these candidates for priestly and religious life. A huge mistake on the part of the Church is not to take seriously new fields of knowledge, especially in the social sciences, that deal with the human person as a sexualized being. It is on that note that I want to offer some concrete interventions to help articulate a more robust priestly formation programme for the Nigerian Church and other local and national churches that may be facing similar problems.

Envisioning A New Formation Paradigm

Priestly formation is not for its own sake. It is for the good of the Church. Those who chose to respond to the call to serve in the ministerial priesthood are chosen from the community of the baptized in churches located in particular cultures and societies. Understanding these facts is fundamental in helping to build up a formation

programme that is relevant for the times. Thus, any seminary formation today in the Church, be it in Nigeria or anywhere in the global north, must take seriously the reading of the signs of the times. The Church of the twenty-first century is not going to be similar to that of the twentieth century. We currently live in the age of technology. Different types of community are springing up globally that go beyond previous understandings of that term. New notions of ecclesial structures are being formed. A broader understanding of ecclesial leadership is fast becoming the norm. The laity is becoming very educated theologically and sometimes more informed theologically than the ordained as seems to be the case in the western world. Nigeria is not immune from these changes occurring. The existential and ultimate questions being asked by the young are conditioned by the totality of their experiences in more globalized and pluralistic contexts. With the above in mind, I offer the first of four interventions to help articulate new formative programmes for the future members of the clergy in Nigeria; priestly formation in Nigeria today should begin with a serious reflection on the signs of the times in the country. What does it mean to be a Church in today's Nigeria, where religious and cultural pluralism are key components of the lived experiences of the people? What and how does it mean to be a Church in an era when Nigeria is positioned to become the largest economy in Africa and may become a prominent player in the global economy? How and in what ways can the Church be relevant to a society where women are rightly reclaiming their roles in society? Simply reciting old arguments to address new discourses is at best an insult to people's intelligence.

To read the signs of the times is to position the Church for its role as an agent of the new evangelization. This new evangelization ought not to be focused solely on making Christians out of people. Rather, it ought to go beyond that. It must help people appreciate who they are as sexualized beings. Today, we live in an era of full self-expression. This is the era of the #METOO Movement. This is the era of #BlackLivesMatter Movement. The Church in Nigeria cannot function as though it is isolated from these global social movements and concerns. It should also resist the temptation to want to appeal to catechesis that offers shallow answers to complex issues. Human sexuality is a complex matter, one that must not be seen anymore

from the locus of the problematic. The Church in Nigeria ought to come up with a holistic human formation that addresses the spectrum of human sexuality as embodied in the lives of candidates for the priesthood. To think and operate formation programmes with the mindset that all persons in the programmes are themselves heterosexual persons may not be doing justice to the needs of persons who do not identify with heterosexuality.

A recent poll conducted by The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERS) found out that “39% of Nigerians approve of members of the LGBTQ+ community having equal access to public healthcare, education, and housing.”²¹ The Church ought to be leading this conversation and promoting inclusive social teachings that address the needs of these persons. The best way to account for this is to have a robust formation programme that speaks to these social issues. Making the hermeneutical shift that moves from the problematic to the locus of giftedness can help the Church to see possibilities of hope and new knowledge it may not have been capable of seeing previously. Stated differently, “a Christian theology of creation means that we accept the whole of reality, ourselves included, as given and gift. The task of human freedom is to become who we are and we cannot do that without continually trying to understand better who we are. This is a never-ending process.”²² Thus, reading the signs of the times is itself a form of prophetic response to the call of discipleship that is relevant to our era. The Church must be seen and must also see itself as an instrument of God’s mercy. Pope Francis has made his pontificate a reflector of this theological and ministerial stance. There is beauty in such a strategy. For too long, the Church has embraced a rigid normative approach to human sexuality that is defined radically by western notions of natural law, which, of it itself, is culturally conditioned. A legitimate question the Nigerian Church must respond to is this: are there no cultural insights from Nigeria that can help the Church to embrace a more humanistic, personalistic, and holistic understanding of human sexuality that is not radically limited by the dualism of good and evil or right and wrong that seems to have defined western understandings of sexual identities and expressions? This question calls for Nigerian theologians and the members of the Church to take seriously their responsibilities as educated members of the Church to articulate an Afro-Nigerian theology on human sexuality that speaks to what it means to be human in the Nigerian

context. Without denying the usefulness of the natural law tradition in western societies' construction of knowledge, be it in their philosophical or theological traditions, I am of the view that an African pragmatic ethics needs to be the *modus operandi* for the Nigerian Church. What does this entail? Perhaps, the insight of Kwame Gyekye will help explicate the point I am making here. In his words:

On what grounds are some acts (etc.) considered good? The answer is simply that each of them is supposed ... to bring about or lead to social well-being. Within the framework of Akan social and humanistic ethics, what is morally good is generally that which promotes social welfare, solidarity, and harmony in human relationships. Moral value in the Akan system is determined in terms of its consequences for mankind and society. "good" is thus used of actions that promote human interest. The good is identical with the welfare of the society, which is expected to include the welfare of the individual... It is clear that this definition does not at all refer to the will or commands of God. That which is good is decreed not by a supernatural being as such, but by human beings within the framework of their experiences in living in society.²³

In a very abbreviated form, natural law tradition makes a metaphysical assumption that imputes moral normativity on persons, objects, and actions irrespective of the nuances brought about by context or social locations of the acting subject. On the other hand, African pragmatic ethics situates the moral content of a being, object, or action within their complex relational interactions operating in a concrete community.²⁴

Let me offer a second intervention. Christianity's Achilles heel has always been a bias for a dualistic vision of the human person. Question three of *The Penny Catechism* begins by asking: In whose image and likeness are humans made? The corresponding answer is that it is in God's image that humans are made. Then the next question asks categorically if the likeness of God is "in your [one's] body or in your [one's] soul." The response is telling. "This likeness

to God is chiefly in my [one's] soul."²⁵ For centuries, many Christians have recited these lines and have never stopped to question the theological rationale behind such glaring dualistic anthropology. If the soul is what "chiefly" represents the divine likeness in us, one is thus compelled to ask the question, what then does the body represent? Christian theology has a rich and yet very sad history in depicting the body and all that it represents as a pathway for temptations and the corruption of the soul. What does this mean in light of sexual ethics today? I would say, everything. The sexual crisis the Church faces today can be traced to this disjointed and paradoxical dualism inherent in the Church's theological anthropology. Not being able to see the human body with all its embodied affectivity as epiphanic gifts of God's encounter with creation reduces the Church's capacity to mediate a rich narrative of how God works in and with us in the concreteness of our embodiment. God did not become human "chiefly" in our soul. Rather, the incarnation speaks of a God who chose to become fully one with us in all that we are except sin. In the incarnation, all dualistic arguments are rendered invalid. God became not just a human being but a sexualized being. It is important that theologians take this seriously. If I may be as vivid as possible, the sexualized God-human experienced all the emotions attached to sexual self-discoveries and these entail all the hormonal realities involved. I recall a conversation I had with a fellow theologian some years ago when I made the comment that the adolescent Jesus must have had wet dreams and thought constantly of the persons he had 'crushes' on as do typical adolescents who are going through puberty. I could see my colleague almost having a nervous breakdown. He just could not conceive of his Jesus as being described in such 'dirty' terms. For him, sexuality is a dirty thing and at best sinful. The keyword here is an experience. "Though experience is always open to fallible interpretation, the bottom line is that experience is, and always has been, the most reliable source for discerning God's will."²⁶ It is not the abstract postulations of reason as though the reason has its own embodiment different from its unity with the body.

The Church is in urgent need of a holistic approach to human sexuality, one that must move away from beginning the conversation from fallenness, sinfulness, and evil to a starting point that stresses the beauty, sacredness, and fulfilling nature of being a sexualized

being. There is too much shame in the current theological discourse on human sexuality. The Church should move to a locus of pride in addressing what it means to be fully human. This responsibility must begin with the actual formation of future ministers of the Church. One wonders how those who are called to mediate the fullness of God's life to the Church and world and who are trained to see a fundamental aspect of that divine-human life as innately sinful can themselves be effective in their callings. Are they not being set up to fail even before they begin their ministry? The challenge for seminary formators today is to address the following questions: how comfortable and healthy are the discussions around human sexuality in the curriculum? How matured are the candidates for the priesthood to express who they are as sexual beings, and what concrete ways do they embrace to ensure that their affects are nurtured while also embarking on the formation of the other aspects of their lives? I do not think the Church is capable of bringing about this transformative move on its own. This leads me to offer a third intervention that may be helpful to the Church as it addresses the lacunae present in its vision of the human person.

Human collective wisdom has given us many angles from viewing and understanding our world. Groundbreaking research continues to be carried out in different fields. Disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and many more continue to enrich our collective understanding of what it means to be human in the totality of our embodiment. Even the pure sciences have helped us to understand how our affects and decision-making processes continue to be shaped by the chemical makeup of our bodies. All these discoveries are a wealth of knowledge that can help the Church continue to grow in its theological articulation of what it means to be human. May I offer a very direct critique of a strand in the theological tradition of our church and maybe it might help us to make the much-needed shift to help address the current sex abuse crisis. There is a strong natural law tradition in the Church. Many of the Church's positions on issues dealing with human sexuality, reproductive health, and even the recent document from the Congregation for Catholic Education on gender theory demonstrate a clear bias for a particular way of reading the natural law tradition – one that is rooted in the Greco-Roman philosophical, theological, and cultural heritage. But one has to ask the critical questions, is this particular reading of

natural law done in honest dialogue with these other disciplines and their findings or is this reading of natural law based on an insular approach that preferences a specific narrative even when that narrative has no evidential credence? Why can't the Church appropriate more than one approach to understanding humans as ethical beings that include both the western natural law tradition and the African pragmatic ethical approach? How can one cultural knowledge exhaust the richness of human knowledge of how God interacts with creation?

It is important to note here that at the core of one's being one experiences one's own identity as genderized and sexual being. To simply deny the legitimacy of that self-awareness and existential experience may be a dangerous path to follow for the Church if it is to fully be a medium of hope and life for many who seek its counsel at moments in their lives when they need the nurturing and supporting guidance of its counsel. I opine strongly that the starting point for the Church's position on human sexuality ought always to be an open dialogue with other disciplines. The marriage of reason and faith is not a marriage of convenience. It ought to be one of authentic dialogue, however difficult that dialogue may be. I am not a psychologist. But I have had the honour of knowing persons who struggle with their sexual orientations and gender identities. These are not experiences that come from a place of abuse of freedom as the recent document on gender theory from the Vatican curia seems to suggest. These are existential struggles that sometimes lead to unimaginable trauma that words cannot describe. How ought the Church's vision of human sexuality speak to these realities in ways that holistic embrace of oneself becomes the focus? This is the current challenge that a robust sexual ethics must address. Again, seminaries cannot exempt themselves from this process. Seminary curricula should have a robust number of courses in the social sciences and the natural sciences that shed light on what it means to be fully human. What is a course in theological anthropology that does not speak to the realities of cultural, social, philosophical, scientific, linguistic anthropologies? What does it mean to be made in God's image when the embodied human's social location is not the starting point of any God-human talk? Who is Jesus Christ without his social location as a Jewish man living in an occupied land under strict patriarchal system? Of what value is Jesus Christ to an adolescent who is going through

puberty and struggling with all the hormonal changes in their body if the said Jesus is not presented to him/her as one who went through the same experience and came out of it unscathed? Our theological discourses in the seminaries must now be as pragmatic and concrete as they can be if we are to have a handle on the sex abuse crisis. Our current crisis lies in the strong urge to flee to the utopic state of abstract discourses on what it means to be human. We are not words. We are embodied beings living in the concreteness of the here and now.

I want to begin my fourth intervention for a new paradigm for priestly formation that speaks to our realities today with a question. Why seminary formation? This question is the key to understanding how and why the Church is faced today with the crises of inauthenticity among those ordained and tasked with the responsibility to be the media of God's mercy to God's own people. This question comes also from my own experiences as one who had the pleasure of receiving priestly formation from two very different models, one that is aligned to a more traditional model and another more progressive that seems to be taking seriously insights from discoveries from the social sciences. Before I proceed, let me state it clearly, in no way am I ranking these two models. Rather, I am attempting to see how one can help the other grow even though I am convinced that priestly formation must be contextually shaped to help address the unique needs of the local church. Uniqueness does not mean isolationism.

A critical observation of priestly formation both in Nigeria and in the United States of America validates the following comments: in Nigerian priestly formation programmes that I am conversant with, one can conclude that there is a strong focus on weeding-out candidates for the priesthood who are judged to be lacking in virtue or character needed for priestly ministry. One could argue that the very fact that there are so many candidates for priestly formation along with fewer resources to carryout holistic formation may be contributing to this model. But there are grave implications arising from this model. Rather than helping candidates open up to the formative process with all candidness and knowing they would not be judged but rather helped to become better persons who through an elaborate discernment process may discover later their other callings

away from the priesthood or even to the priesthood, a state of paranoia is created in their lives and they end up being inauthentic and secretive about who they are. Paying attention to the study cited earlier in this work on the state of sex crisis in the Church in the United States of America, one notices that the height of the crisis came during the time when the Church was also experiencing some vocation boom and operating a weed-out model of formation. On the other hand, a different model that is currently being practised by a growing number of dioceses in the United States is what I have labelled the full-authenticity model. It entails a formative process where candidates for the priesthood are invited to self-disclose who they are, and that includes their sexual orientation. Whatever level one finds oneself in the sexual orientation spectrum is received as gifts that can be used to help the candidate to fully live out their calling to voluntary celibacy that the priesthood calls for. For this goal to be realized, concrete steps are taken to help the candidates in formation to embrace their inner truths as sexual persons. There are series of evaluations throughout the formative process and these include expert opinions from the social sciences. Candidates for the priesthood are considered human beings who are on a life journey and that means they need all the professional, formal, and informal support at the different stages in that journey. Knowing that one is in formation not to be judged or weeded out but to be helped to discern correctly and acquire the needed skills, talents, and virtues for the ministry ahead allows for these candidates to open themselves up at their core to the process even if that opening up means embracing their own vulnerabilities. There is beauty in such a process when it is done right.

Lest my readers think that the American model is free from error, let me offer a few comments based on my time in the seminary in the United States and my interactions with seminary formators here in the country as well; American seminary formation today needs to create a culture and climate that appreciates the beauty of intellectual formation. Due to the lack of vocations, there is the temptation to want to water-down the intellectual formation of future priests. There isn't much, if any, philosophical foundation for seminarians before they embark on their theological formation. Even when engaged in theological formation, it has become the trend to see seminarians embracing a cafeteria approach to theological formation. They tend to

reject theologians and their works they have judged for themselves to be unorthodox. Also, American seminary programmes need to take seriously the discoveries in the social sciences on social issues like racism, and systems of oppression. Throughout my time in the seminary, not a single course was offered on such topics dealing with systemic racism and xenophobia. If at all there is an original sin of American society, it is racism. To educate men for the ordained priesthood who are supposed to be sources of life and hope for God's people, and not prepare them on how to address the social sins of the society and the Church in this part of the world, is to diminish their ability to be agents of positive change.

Conclusion

In this work, I have intentionally moved away from the simplistic conclusions that tend to define the current clergy sex abuse crisis as being perpetuated by a homosexual mafia in the Roman Catholic priesthood. There is no evidence justifying such a sensational conclusion. I do not want to give a myth the legitimacy it does not deserve. However, there is clear evidence that the Church has a sexual abuse crisis amongst its clergy. The crisis seems to be growing as we begin to see that it goes beyond just priests and deacons. The entire clergy has a sex abuse crisis on its hands and it needs to figure out how to address this issue. The recent decision of Pope Francis instructing how the crisis ought to be addressed by leaving it in the hands of the bishops and Roman curia is a good place to start the much-needed reform.²⁷ To now require a metropolitan to take the lead in the investigation of a suffragan bishop under his jurisdiction, as directed by Francis in his *Motu Proprio, Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, calls for some honest discernment process.²⁸ It might be wise for the Church to move completely the investigative process of episcopal sexual abuse and priestly sexual abuse to a more neutral body that is comprised of laypeople. This approach will allow for complete transparency that may not always be the case when a bishop is tasked with the responsibility of leading an investigation into the moral/immoral actions of a fellow bishop.

It is worth noting that no institution can reform itself internally. It has never happened even in the history of the Church. One wonders why and how Pope Francis thinks this time around it is

going to be different. Yes, I know that the pontiff is canonically bound to act within the juridical tradition of the Church where the local church has its own autonomy. However, a greater good is now at stake, the integrity of the Church. This greater good calls for a new approach to Canon Law and its inherent tradition. Without reducing other bishops to mere secretaries of the Bishop of Rome, it might be useful for the Church to articulate new canonical regulations that offer to the laity deliberative powers in helping the clergy to be faithful to its commitment to the people of God, especially in matters dealing with monitoring the unfolding sexual abuse crisis among the ranks of the ordained. Each diocese ought to have its own deliberative process with each member having equal deliberative powers to arrive at decisions that should include the reduction of the ordained to the lay state. The fact that the baptism of the laity is what decides their rights and duties in the Church, the members of such a commission should be able to apply disciplines to those found guilty that are currently reserved to the Holy See. This is not going to slip into the ancient struggles between the ordained and the laity. Such fears come from a place of power.

It is time for the Church to abandon narratives and the psychology of power and embrace the psychology of service and humility. The current sex abuse scandal has injured the Church at its very core. How it heals from this self-imposed injury will be determined by its ability to embrace its own vulnerabilities. A church that speaks of vulnerability as the gateway of experiencing the divine must now demonstrate to the world and to itself that it does not only speak the words, it also knows how to live them out.

Endnotes

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³ *Ibid.*, 569 – 570.

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⁵ Christine E. Gudorf, *Body, Sex, and Pleasure. Reconstructing Christian Sexual Ethics* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1994), 4.

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²⁶ Gudorf, *Body, Sex, and Pleasure*, 12.

²⁷ See Francis, *Apostolic Letter. On The Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons*, March 26, 2019,

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CHAPTER 10

The Seminarian and the Digital Age: Implications for Authentic Formation

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Introduction

In his message for the Jubilee year 2000, the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II called for 'New Evangelization' with new methods in the propagation of the Gospel. This pronouncement of the Holy Father ushers in a wind for the adoption of notable tools for evangelization in the 20th century. The 20th century is said to be a century of digitalization. In the modern wake of science and technology, there seem to be an unparallel form of civilization when compared with the centuries before now. This is due to the adoption of the modalities and methods of science and technology.

The digital age began in 1939 with the construction of the first digital computer. In the sixty-five years that have followed, the influence of digitization on our everyday lives has grown steadily and today digital technology has a greater influence on our lives more than at any time since its development¹. This is not to say the age before did not have a share of some level of scientific development. In fact, Thales, Anaxagoras, Rene Descartes and a host of others had a feel of this reality.

However, it is important to note that the media has been bastardized. Some persons see it as an avenue for being immoral. This ranges from the awareness of pornography, sextex, plagiarism and so on. The evil about this is that it is with a click of the button. With the

aid of digitization, scammers and criminals are on the increase. This is why the percentage of cybercrime has gone on the increase in recent years. For this reason, government has brought in different ways to help check and curb its use and excesses. Even non-governmental organizations have waded into helping in savaging the negative effects of digitization.

Everyone has a right to technology. Human Rights are those legal and/or moral rights that all persons have, simply as persons. In the current digital age, human rights are increasingly being either fulfilled or violated in the online environment². The seminarians who are under formation to be Catholic Priests are also exposed to these right and privileges of technologies. The question now is: Will the dangers of the digital age affect the integrity of the Church? Will it undermine what the Church stands for in the formation of candidate for the priesthood? Will the Church in general, and the seminarians in particular, benefit anything from the gains of science and technology? Does digital media pose any threat to authentic formation?

Our aim in this paper is to identify some of the challenges of seminary formation in the digital age. The method to be employed will be analytic, prescriptive and systematic.

The Crises of the Digital Age

Science and technology are a twin characteristics of the 21st century. This is because the relevance and impact of science and technology in this age has marked tremendous success in the society. The 21st century is almost merged with the digital age. In other words, it is almost impossible to separate the reality of science and technology from the 21st century.

Digitalization for the sake of clarification is the process of converting information into a digital (i.e. computer-readable) format, in which the information is organized into bits³. Digitization is of crucial importance to data processing, storage and transmission, because it "allows information of all kinds in all formats to be carried with the same efficiency and also intermingled".⁴

The age of digitization seeks to move from the analogue way of doing things to a more sophisticated form. This in a way has improved economic cohesion and foster human interaction. This

digital transformation and translation is seen and felt in virtually every facet of today's existence. Business moguls and other scientific expatriates excel because of the untiring success of digitization. They all use the potential of digitization to offer humanity smarter and faster services and actively shape their immediate environs with the help of digital transformation⁵. The digital media affects all sectors of society, in particular economies, religious, education, social, political, cultural sphere. At the same time, it has opened up new networking possibilities, and enables co-operation between different persons from different locations. In fact, with the aid of digitization, the world has now become a 'global village'.

The Society of Research in making a distinction between the centuries before and the twenty-first century development due to the growth of science and technology states:

By the beginning of the (twenty-first) century, the notion of progress was closely linked with technological development, and that linkage intensified in the following decades. The automobile and the airplane changed not only travel but the nature of our cities and towns. Radio and then television brought more of the outside world into everyone's home. Knowledge about the causes of diseases brought new treatments and preventive measures. Computer appeared, and soon the transistor made them smaller, more powerful, more accessible, and cheaper... organized research and development., which are increasingly international in character, have greatly increased the production of new knowledge. Deeper understanding of living organisms is leading toward cures of diseases once thought.⁶

The point here is that the modern society has benefitted from the gains of science and technology. This benefits range from the invention and management of automobile and aircrafts down to the dissemination of information with the aid of television and radio together with other media forms of communication. Even the educational sector is not left out since it has benefitted in the way and manner researches are carried out. These researches have helped in no small measure in detecting the causes of some diseases and sickness

and sought ways to combat them by proffering solutions. No doubt that this will also be of benefit to the political sphere of the state, because a state where all of these are evident is said to be an ideal state. Religious leaders will also benefit from it, because they can reach out to so many persons as much as possible from all works of life.

The age is also characterized with different mode of social media communication as evident in the presence of the internet. The internet has a major impact when it comes to providing new opportunities that were not previously available in the past centuries. This internet is a channel in constant development, enjoying high attention and being currently used by more than a third of the global population⁷. Giving all of these benefits of modernization in this digital age, there exist some mismanagement of the potency of science and technology. This is evident in the increment of cyber-crimes and all forms of media violence in this present age. Recent polls have shown by percentage, how crime has grown over time.

Attacks against information infrastructure and internet services have already taken place. Online fraud and hacking attacks are some examples of computer-related crimes that are committed on a large scale everyday. The financial damage caused by cybercrime is reported to be enormous. In 2003 alone, malicious software caused damages of up to USD 17 billion. By some estimates, revenues from cybercrime exceeded USD 100 billion in 2007, outstripping the illegal trade in drugs for the first time. Nearly 60 per cent of businesses in the United States believe that cybercrime is more costly to them than physical crime⁸.

Looking at all of these crimes, the document went further to stress on the need to protect one's information "These estimates clearly demonstrate the importance of protecting information infrastructure"⁹. The reality of cyber-crime in this modern age has brought in the need for cybersecurity in the society. In fact, the 2010 UN General Assembly's resolution on cybersecurity addresses cybercrime as one major challenge. Their preoccupation is on the need to collaborate

with the government of each state to enhance cybersecurity so as to protect critical information for nation's security and economic well-being¹⁰. Hacking of websites established for the collation of election results is a common language in the conduct of elections in most nations of the world today. The 2016 general elections in the United States and the just concluded general elections in Nigeria are still fresh in our memories as instances, where cyber crime and manipulations was perceived to have been adopted in the conduct of the elections by the electoral bodies and even some of the political parties that were involved in these elections.

Even the reality of engaging in sexually immoral act online is another reality with the digital age. Some engage in pornography and other sexual crimes online. Looking at all of these crimes, can one say the digital age is beneficial to the human person? Since the subject of study is its challenges to Seminarians, can one say it is still relevant to The Church and Seminary Formation? A close look at the nature of The Church and the urgency of digitalization will help underscore whether or not the digital age is a challenge to those in formation.

The Church and the Digital Age

The Church is the New Testament (Covenant) people of God united in one faith, one baptism and one Lord¹¹. The Church as a New Testament people has the mission of proclaiming the mercies of God. The Church which is a community of the faithful, has a mission to teach and sanctify her members. In doing this, she is called to be open to the reality and challenges of her time. In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Conciliar Fathers make bold to state that the Church must rise up to the challenges of the present innovations of the society and try to interpret them in the light of the gospel. "The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel"¹².

One of the signs of this present age is the reality of science and technology. This is the age in which seminarians of today are formed. It is from this perspective that the Church calls for the proper education of the faithful to know how to apply some of the products of science and technology. The document on social communication, *Aetatis Novae* says:

Education and training regarding the internet ought to be part of comprehensive programs of media

education available to members of the Church. As much as possible, pastoral planning for social communications should make provision for this training in the formation of seminarians, priests, religious, and lay pastoral personnel as well as teachers, parents, and students.¹³

In his message for the World Communication Sunday of 2010, Pope Benedict XVI calls on the pastors of the Church to embrace the reality of the media in the proclamation of the Word of God. He also warns that they are to make responsible use of it. In other words, the use of the media for the proclamation of the word of God must make them efficient, compelling and focused. In his words:

All priests have as their primary duty the proclamation of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, and the communication of his saving grace in the sacraments ... the increased availability of the new technologies demand greater responsibility on the part of those called to proclaim the word, but it also requires them to become more focused, efficient and compelling in their efforts¹⁴.

There is no doubt, therefore that the introduction of the media to the proclamation of the word of God is in obedience to the mandate of Christ 'Go out make disciples of all nations'. With the aid of the media, the Church can reach out to as many as she can in the world; so it is left for the pastors of souls to embrace the missionary zeal of St. Paul who said "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel(1Cor 9:16). The Church sees the rise of science and technology as a product of man's intelligence and creative skill. It is indeed a new stage of history that must be embraced with bravery and sense of mission. The Conciliar Fathers assert thus:

Today, the human race is involved in a new stage of history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desire, both individual and collective, and upon his

manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and to people. Hence, we can already speak of a true cultural and social transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well.¹⁵

There is no doubt that the reality of science and technology has changed the face of man's culture and social interactions, so in order not to allow humanity to be easily swayed by this wind of change, the Church has as her responsibility, to nurture the faith of her members in the light of this changing culture of science and technology. Any form of neglect in this regard will cause major harm to the flock that has been entrusted to her.

It becomes pertinent to state here that if the Church fails to utilize this powerful means of evangelization, they might end up feeling guilty in the future as *Evangelii Nuntiandi* asserts: The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims from the house tops the message of which she is the depository¹⁶. This is where the instruction from the *Code of Canon Law* becomes pertinent:

While pride of place must always be given to preaching and catechetical instruction, all the available means of proclaiming Christian doctrine are to be used: the exposition of doctrine in schools, in institutes of higher learning, at conference and meetings of all kinds; public declarations by lawful authority on the occasion of certain events; the printed word and other means of social communication.¹⁷

So in order not to feel guilty before the Lord who has endowed the human person with the knowledge of putting together the technicalities of the media, it is important that the Church employ every means necessary for the proclamation of the Gospel. This will help the pastoral ministry of the priest and the seminarians under formation. Now, a close examination of the different areas of priestly formation will be necessary here. This will help to ascertain the different areas in which technological advancement will affect the formation of the seminarian.

The Seminarian and the Areas of Priestly Formation in the Light of Vatican II

The Seminary is an institution where candidates for the priesthood are formed. The institution of the seminary was established by the sixteenth century Council of Trent. Seminaries were charged with the formation of men for the priesthood. The character of seminary education was largely unchanged until the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).¹⁸

The Second Vatican Council has on various occasions dealt with the subject of the life, ministry and formation of priests. The Church through the Vatican II document, has done this in a more solemn way during the synods of Bishops. Already in October 1967, the first General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod devoted five general congregations to the subject of the renewal of seminaries. This work as it were, gave a decisive impulse to the formulation of the document of the Congregation for Catholic Education entitled, “Fundamental Norms for Priestly Formation”. The Second Ordinary General Assembly held in 1971 spent half its time on the ministerial priesthood. The result of this synodal discourse were incorporated as recommendations, which were submitted to Pope Paul VI. The recommendations were read at the opening of the 1974 Synod. And in their recommendations, certain areas of priestly formation were outlined which include the human, spiritual, intellectual and the pastoral. This is a further proof that the magisterium of the Church has always shown interest in the ministry and life of the priests.

The Seminarian who is a candidate for the priesthood is expected to pass through these four areas of priestly formation. Here, an excursus will be made on the four areas of priestly formation. The *human formation* is seen as the *basis* of all other areas of priestly formation. This is because it is the human person who will be formed to act in the person of Christ. One becomes a priest by first becoming a human being, and if one must become a responsible priest he must first become a responsible human being. This further underscores that the essence of human formation is to make a person acquire and develop certain human qualities in order to relate well with his fellow human beings, so that together they all make out of their relationship one human family.¹⁹

The *spiritual formation* has as its target communion with God and the search for Christ. It is a response to the call to holiness of the priest. This demand for personal holiness and other spiritual requirements in the life of priests is obvious. The call to priestly holiness implies the need to constantly look into ourselves so as to be able to discover, the abiding presence of God.²⁰ The priest is called to a life of faith, hope and charity. The essential aspect to be looked into in this quest for holiness include prayer, meditation on the word of God, the love for the Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The Intellectual Formation seeks above all man's intelligent, by which he participates in the light of God's mind and seeks to acquire a wisdom which in turn opens to and is directed towards knowing and adhering to God. This is because if we want every Christian to be prepared in order to make a defence of the faith and to account for the hope that is in us, then all the more should the candidates for the priesthood and priest have diligent care of the quality of their intellectual formation in their education and pastoral activity.²¹

All the elements of Human, Spiritual and intellectual formation, have their cumulative point in *Pastoral formation*. Every priest is a priest not only for his own sake but for the sake of God's people. The formation of the priest must lead him to follow in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd.²² It is to this end that Pope John Paul II speaks of pastoral charity which is the summation of the way of thinking and acting proper to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the church.²³ This pastoral charity has as its component, the need to be selfless in the service of God's people as Christ did when he laid down his life for his sheep.

This task of formation by the church is considered as a continuation of the work of Christ as evident in the gospels where he went up a high mountain to call those whom he desired to be with him (Mk 3:13-15). This means that the goal of priestly formation is: 'Until Christ is formed in you' (Gal 4:19).

Looking at the above areas of priestly formation, does the reality of the digital age have a challenge to authentic formation?

The Digital Age and Seminary Formation: Implications for Authentic Formation

The candidate for the priesthood whose duty is to fulfil the obligation of the pastoral ministry of the Church, must rise up to the present challenge of his time. It is the challenge of the reality of digitalization. He must strive to see this tool of the age as a veritable means to fulfil his God given mandate.

The use of the media has several implications in the life of the seminarians. Junko Yamamoto and Simeon Ananou noted four implications of technology to the life of the human person. These implications are: Cognitive, social, ethical and emotional implications²⁴. On our part we will add the spiritual implication since spiritual formation is one of the four areas of priestly formation. However, it should be noted that these implications will be situated on the seminarians in formation

1. The Seminarian and his Mental State: Cognitive Implication

The use of technology has a way of facilitating our mental state. It makes the mind alert at sending and responding to a message and reacting to issues at large. This is because it is expected that one must think and reflect in order to send or respond to a message. However, it becomes disastrous when one responds to issues via social media when such an individual is absent-minded. This is common when the seminarian is trying to multitask; that is, doing many things at the same time and at that same time typing or sending a message via email, WhatsApp, or Facebook. Multitasking has become a predominant behaviour among technology users. Watching TV and listening to music on a portable device while drafting an email and trying to respond to occasional text messages from friends is becoming a common practice. The question one might ask is, “How well the human brain is able to process and assimilate multiple unrelated information and tasks?” After all, the brain can only process approximately seven spans of information in working memory²⁵. This simply means that doing so many things (more than seven spans of information for the brain) while trying to disseminate information via the media can be dangerous. The candidate for the priesthood must guide against this danger.

The danger becomes more when it is a hurting messages to another person that may affect the person's psyche. Such an atrocious act has a negative impact on the recipient of such a message; and the retraction more often than not makes no difference. Junko and Simeon says “ (In) electronic communication, it is impossible to take back a comment and have it erased from the person's memory when the electronic user has not employed the ability to think before sending, posting or sharing content”²⁶.

For the seminarian to give a healthy post or message, the mental faculty must be a reflective one knowing fully well that it will be received by someone who may not have the mental strength to understand the intention at which a message is sent to them.

2. The Seminarian and Socio-Pastoral Interaction: The Social Implication

There is no doubt that the influence of the media has a way of making one to reach out to numerous persons no matter the distance. Through the aid of cell phones, video chats, e-mails and so on, the seminarian on formation is able to reach out to so many persons within a short space of time. This eventually will be a boost to his pastoral aspect of his life. This social cum pastoral interaction in the digital age is not hindered by location, this is because with the click of a button, one can reach out to those who are miles away. However, it becomes worrisome when one prefers this form of interaction to a face-to-face interaction. It becomes bad when the candidate for the priesthood does not feel the need to give that physical touch to people which Christ, his model, gave to all those who encountered him. Face-to-face interaction is necessary at times because it is not every hurt that can be healed online.

The point here is that it will be difficult to ascertain or identify the cause of a conflict if one does not engage in a one-on-one conversation with the person or persons involved. This is why Junko and Simeon say “it is hard to identify the source of conflict when tone of voice, body language, and facial expression are missing”²⁷. One can be easily misunderstood when there is no physical contact with one another. This is why the seminarian must not lose sight of personal physical touch on the people he is called to socially interact with, no matter how enticing the fastness of scientific gadgets are. He must see that his interaction with people is not hindered in anyway.

On his part, he must guide against *individualism*. This is because the unhealthy use of social media has made people more lonely than ever.

3. The Seminarian and his Emotional Disposition

Social interaction has a way of influencing the emotional disposition of the individual and the Seminarian is not an exemption. The Seminarian must be careful of his integrity and reputation because the media can upload stuffs about him that will leave an indelible mark on his integrity; this no doubt will affect his emotional disposition towards the society. “Technology allows us to upload embarrassing videos and pictures of others (and yourself) on a public platform such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook and it can be sent to hundreds of people with a mobile device. Moreover, such insults can remain permanent. Emotional scars from such humiliation can be extremely severe”²⁸. This point is necessary because the Seminarian must note that *integrity is like a glass once shattered, can hardly regain its original look*. This is so because science and technology has made the world a global village. An offence done in the east coast of the world, for instance, can spread very fast to other part of the world such that it becomes difficult for the Seminarian to easily get off such scandal.

Even sexually inclined messages has a way of influencing the emotional disposition of seminarians. It is important to state that most of the technological gadgets house pornographic sites such that, if one is not careful one begins to act what is seen in that platform.

4. The Seminarian and the Ethical Implication of Research Works

Of the four areas of priestly formation, the emphasis on the intellectual formation is very much encouraged. This is because the intellectual formation of the seminarian, will help him see the need to discern the mind of God. It will help him give answers to the prevailing confusion that has rocked the cohesion of the Church’s magisterium. The media here will be of utmost assistance because it affords the seminarians the opportunity to visit numerous libraries of high repute online for proper research.

It becomes very sad, when the candidate for the priesthood does not see reason to work hard to develop himself academically. It

becomes very pathetic when the seminarian sees the innovation of science and technology as a means for making hazardous researches. One must guide against the unhealthy use of Facebook, Answer.com, medlibrary.org, nih.gov, appers.com, encyclopedia and wikipedia as avenue to cheat academically. In other words, it is against the ethics of research for one to use the social media to plagiarize. Commenting on this, Junko and Simeon say “abundant information from the internet makes plagiarism easy. While a small portion of students admit giving into the temptation to copy others’ work and submit it as their own, a large majority of students perceive cyber-plagiarism as a practice that is prevalent among their peers. The degree of separation between perception and reality in cyber-plagiarism exposes the ethical gap that exists in the academic honesty in the digital age”²⁹.

Plagiarism is an academic fraud that is frowned at all times in the academic arena. Since cyber- plagiarism is a crime punishable by law, the seminarian must guide against his actions; this is because, it will be scandalous for a candidate for the priesthood to be jailed for plagiarism.

5. The Media and the Spiritual Implication of Formation

Spiritual formation is an important aspect of the formation of the candidate for the priesthood. This is where they are called to be in close union with God who has called them; *for cut off from Him, they can do nothing (Cf. John 15:5)*. This simply means that the seminarians must constantly seek God’s face; they must constantly seek His will and do it without hesitation. It is in obeying their maker without hesitation, that their soul is guaranteed a place of rest and happiness for their heart is restless until it rests in God.

There is no doubt that science and technology can also help in fostering worship and close union with God. This is because the social media gadget has the space for the downloading of bibles verses, the psalms, the liturgy of the hours, prayers of the Church, hymns and so on. All of these help to uplift the soul of the seminarian

Be that as it may, care must be taken so that *one does not spend time adopting the spirituality of the media rather than the spirituality of the Church*. In other words, one must be careful not to be distracted with other capacities of the gadget while one is praying for instance. It will be wrong to see seminarians praying the Divine Office with an electronic device and at the same time chatting on

WhatsApp, Facebook or Yahoo messenger. This no doubt will hinder the real nature of effective prayer.

On the other hand, some persons are so engrossed with the workings of technologies that they sacrifice the time for spiritual activities. This is evident when one might have succeeded in downloading or installing somewhat ‘interesting’ applications on their phones, computers or iPad for instance. These applications might have ripple effects as the attention of the seminarians may be drawn to it so much so as to forget that time for prayers and other useful spiritual activities have long passed. Benedict XVI warns the priest and the candidate for the priesthood thus. “Priests present in the world of digital communications should be less notable for their media savvy than for their priestly heart, their closeness to Christ. This will not only enliven their pastoral outreach, but also, will give a “soul” to the fabric of communications that makes up the ‘web’”³⁰.

Looking at all of these implications, can one readily say that technological training of seminarians in this digital age is necessary? The immediate response to this will be positive. This is because the seminarian is formed for the 21st century and as such must be ready to apply himself to every resources at his disposal for the proclamation of the gospel.

This is where educating the candidate for the priesthood on the use of social gadget becomes indispensable. Education is intended to make them more human by stimulating their creativity, cognitive abilities and ethical value³¹. Benedict XVI stresses the important of educating those in formation on how to use the gadgets when he asserts “using new communication technologies, priests can introduce people to the life of the Church and help our contemporaries to discover the face of Christ. They will best achieve this aim if they learn, from the time of their formation, how to use these technologies in a competent and appropriate way, shaped by sound theological insights and reflecting a strong priestly spirituality grounded in constant dialogue with the Lord”³².

As the Holy Father noted, a proper education on the use of the media is very important this is because when technology is not well co-ordinated, it can distract the process of strengthening humanity. Knowledge of a thing will help one know how to use it and how to

teach others to use it. How can the seminarian teach those of the 21st century the ethics of the use of technologies if he himself is not grounded in it? This is where it is necessary to incorporate the ethics of science and technology in the formation of the candidate for the priesthood so that they may make useful impact to this age. The seminarians can only teach people how to use the media when they know its workability.

To be able to meet up with the responsibility of the media in this digital age, there must be proper formation of the “will” in the use of digital gadgets. This will enable the seminarian know how to make good decisions on the use of the media and teach others same. The seminarian must know the ideal place and situation where the use of internet electronic devices are necessary. Those in charge of forming candidates for the priesthood must see to it that the norms of cyber ethics are taught so that the seminarian will be more cautious of their use.

Conclusion

Accordingly, from the above, let us embrace the use of the media with the right disposition. This is because the media which is a product of the digital age has its deep influence on the Church where it will help both her leaders and her members to grasp the reality of life.

The Church has a lot to benefit from the proper use of modern media as Boniface Asuzu citing Harry Skornia says “A non-communicating Church is unthinkable. And to communicate we must use the communication tools of our age not in an half-heated way ... but as a primary (tool)”³³. So there is no gain demonizing the use of the media on the ground of its negative influence alone; a thorough investigation on its positive aspects must be explored so that the richness of the Church will be savoured by everyone most especially the seminarians in formation, who will be the future leaders of the Church. This will help him overcome and meet up with the contemporary challenges of the digital age.

Endnotes

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²⁵ Ibid pp 3-4

²⁶ Ibid p. 3

²⁷ Ibid p. 5

²⁸ Ibid p 5

²⁹ Ibid p. 7

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CHAPTER 11

The Challenges of Priestly Formation in the Contemporary Changing Society

Michael Bunmi OLOFINLADE

Introduction

To respond to the expectations of modern society and co-operate in the vast evangelizing action that involves all Christians, we need well-trained and courageous priests who are free from ambition and fear but convinced of the Gospel Truth, whose chief concern is to proclaim Christ and who are prepared to stoop down to suffering humanity in his Name, enabling everyone, particularly the poor and all who are in difficulty, to experience the comfort of God's love and warmth of the *ecclesial* family¹

This thought of Benedict XVI is adequate to describe the thrust of my reflection which could be understood in line with the formation of candidates for the priesthood in the contemporary world, particularly, in Nigeria. The words, 'proper' and 'adequate' training of the catholic priest are key concerns that are dear to the Fathers of the Church '*ab initio*' till today. This concern is premised on the understanding that the world is a changing place and each era and time has its challenges, and so, formation at any point in time must be 'proper' and 'adequate'. Against this backdrop, diverse formative processes are being employed in the training of priests. The formation, therefore, must be dynamic and never static or stereotype. Priests, therefore, must adapt themselves in a positive way to the society and preserve an integrity corresponding to their call and vocation. Thus, the priest of our contemporary society has a lot of

moral demands, granted the fast-changing society that we live in. The stakes of formation invariably, therefore, can only become higher.

The thrust of this essay is to reflect on the challenges of the formation of priests in order to contribute to the sustainability of priest in addressing issues of this changing society. This is relevant because of the adage that says, (*nemo dat quod non habet*) "you cannot give what you do not possess". Invariably, the question is how would priests be adequately relevant in a world of constant change? It is crystal clear that society is undergoing changes through science and technological developments. This development has continued to revolutionize life in its entirety including pastoral and spiritual life of the faithful. The socio-cultural and ethical issues are taking a new trend, more and more, traditional values are being contested in the light of new developments and some long-established pastoral principles are gradually being seen as out-modelled. The priest in the face of this is meant to evolve new pathways to resolving the challenges to the signs of modern times. The inability for priests to live above the moral bar and demands of society poses some questions on the quality of formation he has received.

The Priest, Dilemma of a Contemporary Age and Change

The priest of today is a product of his age. The contemporary world has become more critical of religious values and principles. There is a rise in secularism and relativism. These twin ideologies have posed more threats to the continued relevance of priest in society. Hitherto, the priest enjoyed high-level clericalism and elitism in society. This can be argued to be the spin-off of the ecclesiastical hegemony and religious dominance from the middle ages. While its effects had whittled down in some parts of the world particularly in Europe and America, in Africa and in Nigeria, the Priest still enjoys a pride of place. Nevertheless, the whirlwind of secularism and relativism is fast thickening that, the priest's moral authority no longer rests on the institution of the Church alone, but, that he needs to justify the institution and call he professes by his way of life and pastoral roles. The society is fast changing with the signs of modern times, the priest also is expected to advance new, positive and viable methods in dealing with issues within his ambience. The basic concern is how the priest can know, evaluate understand and manage pastoral challenges evolving as a result of the change in the society. In fact, the long-

standing docile and loyal attitudes of the faithful are increasingly dissolving by the day. It is a truism that the priestly life demands honesty, integrity and heroic self-sacrifice but without proper discernment in the world of change, this might turn out to be a platonic adventure. Friedrich Nietzsche's popular phrase that 'religion makes people docile and timid in the face of suffering and oppression' is no fast becoming untenable.

It is amazing that these challenges extend to the places where vocations to the priesthood are nurtured; the seminary and our parishes. Based on this reality, the Church is struggling to deal with the increasing rate of change and expectation of the priestly ministry. In the words of Benedict XVI, "how much filth there is in the Church, and even among those who, in the priesthood, ought to belong entirely to him!"² The situation of paradox raises the question of the authenticity of priestly formation in the light of today's changing society. This becomes paramount because a most important and increasingly difficult role is being assigned to priests in the renewal of Christ's church in this temporary changing society.³ This concern for renewal is an age-long desire clearly enounced by the Second Vatican Council Fathers. It states:

The holy council is fully aware that the desired renewal of the whole church depends to a great extent on a priestly ministry animated by the spirit of Christ. It proclaims the supreme importance of priestly formation and affirms some of its primary principles whereby laws tested by the experience of centuries are confirmed and new elements are introduced to correspond with the constitutions and decrees of this council and with the changed conditions of our time.⁴

We shall try to expound what constitutes the Catholic priestly formation as a background to know whether it is proper, adequate and sustainable for the priests to face the challenges of this modern society. The ideological thought of, Joseph Komonchak, come into a play in this context.

The Church is a social and historical reality, so it is essential to a systematic understanding of the Church to employ tools developed for a systematic understanding of social and historical realities. How

can one work out a systematic ecclesiology without working out first such terms as 'individual' 'community' 'society,' 'meaning,' 'change,' 'structure,' 'institution,' 'relationship,' and so on, and the various relationships, that can obtain among these terms?⁵

To further understand the concerns of this paper, it suffices to examine the concept of change in contemporary society in relation to the Catholic Church.

Change as a concept is discussed at different levels in various fields of study due to the fact that nearly everything in existence passes through a process of change. It is on this note that this concept of change is interpreted in different ways but we shall limit the usage in this essay to its description as per its verb which is understood as, 'to make' or 'become different' or 'alter'. This change might affect either external features or internal features of a being, or it could affect both the internal and the external of a being concurrently. Heraclitus⁶ describes the cosmos as being in a state of constant flux (state of becoming).⁷ Everything is constantly changing and becoming other things to what it was prior to that state. This is objective philosophical knowledge of the world, which is in consonance with the scientific description of the physical and human realities. The priest being part of nature, reacts and responds to its natural changing environment.

Mirroring this from the context of incredibly challenging issues in the Church, there is a need for skilled and well-formed and informed priests to carry out the mission of the Church. Perhaps, this was the vision of the Fathers of the Church who searched for an ecclesiology that would explain issues affecting human existence. So, the impulse to work out a systematic ecclesiology demands an understanding of the social and historical realities within and around the Church. This is where the formation of priests must involve a curriculum in ecclesiology that takes to mind these demands and contexts. Therefore, if priests must be people who are properly and adequately equipped and formed to minister in a changing society, his formative discipline must be accommodating of these demands. The Fathers of the Church aver in this light, that formative discipline should include psychology, sociology and pedagogy.⁸ This understanding opens us to look at priestly formation succinctly.

Priestly Formation and Ecclesiastical Studies

The Second Vatican Council decree on the training of priests gives insight into the nature of formation put in place for every Catholic priest to function adequately in every given circumstance. He is prepared by the seminary to act and take proper steps and decision in whatever contexts he finds himself.⁹ The document, *Optatam Totius* explains that a comprehensive priestly formation concerns human, intellectual, spiritual, pastoral formations which revolve around the character, moral, physical and psychological formations.¹⁰ This formation begins in an embryonic state in the minor seminary with the focus on educational, religious and spiritual formations which should methodically and consistently co-ordinate all pastoral action for fostering vocations, and promote it with both discretion and zeal, not neglecting whatever suitable help may be found in the insights of modern psychology and sociology.¹¹ Inculcating inter-disciplinary values are taken seriously in the formation of priests because he lives and functions in human society. “Priestly formation, by reason of the very unity of the Catholic priesthood, is necessary for all priests, diocesan and religious of whatever rite.”¹² It is instructive to know that programme of priestly formation shall be established by the Episcopal Conference, to be reviewed at suitable intervals and approved by the Holy See, so that the general rules may be adapted to the special circumstances of time and place, and the formation of priests will always be in keeping with the pastoral needs of the areas in which they minister.¹³

The fundamental formation begins in the major seminary after completion of the studies in courses in science and humanities which prepare every student of each country for a higher study. In the ecclesiastical studies, philosophy and theology are primary because they open and mould the minds of the students more and more to the mystery of Christ, which touches the whole of human history and continuously influences the Church, and is at work particularly in priestly ministry.¹⁴ The courses of formation make life in the parish in conjunction with evolving challenges less cumbersome in the light of the formation given to priests through these courses. Philosophy transforms the whole process of intellectual discernment of every priest as he embarks on his daily activities.

Philosophy leads students to a solid and coherent knowledge of human nature, the world and God.¹⁵ Modern philosophical

developments and sciences help them to dialogue with people of their time and to equip them to grasp the basic principles of the various systems, hold fast to elements proved to be true and recognize and refute the roots of error.¹⁶ The decree continues that the actual teaching should arouse in the students a love of rigorous investigation, observation and demonstration of truth, together with an honest awareness of the limits of human knowledge. Careful attention should be paid to the close connection between philosophy and the real problems of life as well as to the questions which engage the minds of the students/priests.¹⁷

In the same context, theology helps students to draw Catholic teaching from divine revelation, enter deeply into its meaning, use it to nourish their spiritual lives and be able to proclaim, explain and defend it in their priestly ministry.¹⁸ Basically, philosophical and theological formations provide candidates for the priesthood with the nourishments to translate challenges of life to progress. Aside, prolific scientific training in sacred sciences and other appropriate subjects are necessary to enhance their apostolate in the changing and current society are recommended in the formative years and even after ordination. The exercise of this formation becomes mandatorily as each priest is required to go through practical experiences in the parishes and ecclesiastical institutes under thorough supervision without neglecting the use of their personal initiative in carrying out their assigned tasks. Thus, they should be initiated into pastoral practice by appropriate experiences.¹⁹ Finally, ongoing formation is emphasized because of the daily demands of priestly life that continue to evolve in the trends in society.

It is evidently clear that sustainable formation, personal self-organizing and learning systems are provided for candidates for the priesthood. However, certain elements come into play in this provision in order to bring about positive management of parish daily changing realities. The consideration of nature and nurture is of utmost relevance because personal organization and development play prominence in the handling of the realities of pastoral life. The degree of an interactive dialogue between a person and its environment determines the richness of the responses given to the challenges of life in the priestly ministry. The predisposition of the brain to his environment determines the level of development of human society. Be it as it may, environmental influences are keys to

human living and development but human development and maturity over-rides all factors.

Challenges of Authenticity for Priestly Formation

The 21st century can be regarded as the dawn of the new age which has witnessed new descriptions and definitions of life in many ways different from traditional and orthodoxy understandings. These are expressed in the forms of new doctrines, morality, ethics and values. Precisely, we are experiencing new psychology, sociology and pedagogy and these are rooted in the new visions of secularity, an intricate ideology of human origin, existence and meaning, new crusades on freedom from religion, not freedom of religion.²⁰ As it were, these new convoluted ways of seeing the world anew are being propagated by influential and wealthy personalities and institutions that allow a warm appeal to these doctrines and understandings. With such high-profile accent on these new doctrines, there is a towering attack on orthodoxy and traditional teachings of the Church. Such challenges have had a penetrating influence on priestly ministry. This leaves a major challenge to the vocation. Arguably, there is the conflict of seeing the priestly ministry as a profession or occupation rather than a vocation. In the exercise of the priestly ministry today, some trends leave a lot of people to question the authenticity of their vocation, or at least, the authenticity of their priestly formation. Some of these trends are highly opposed to what constitute the tenets, the doctrines and the teachings of the Church, especially, in the areas of worship, ethics and morality concerning life, marriage, sex and gender. The new trends which raise the questions of authenticity of priestly vocation and formation are enormous that we cannot touch on all of them. Nevertheless, major concerns of these oscillate around the celebration of the Church's liturgy, preaching the word of God, living priestly life and the practice of true charity and love.

The Church in Africa, particularly, in Nigeria as a growing Church, is witnessing an increase in the number of vocations to the priesthood. This trend is termed 'vocation boom'.²¹ Vocation boom poses a serious challenge to the formation of priests in many ways. This includes a shortage of infrastructure, personnel and pedagogical materials. The fear of this challenge was expressed in the year 1995 by the then Archbishop of Ibadan Metropolis, Archbishop Felix A. Job, as *Ubi multitudo, ibi peccati* (there is danger in number). There

would indeed be a danger if, for instance, there are well over five hundred seminarians with only 15 formators. Apart from other infrastructural and provisional constraints, there would be a lack of a personal touch in formation with the seminarians. There is a likely risk of having some people moving through the system anonymously.

This problem can be compounded by a situation of godfatherism. This expresses a situation where a seminarian is not fully disposed to the authentic, proper and adequate formation, knowing fully well that a priest/Bishop will advertently or inadvertently support him, no matter the case.²² Consequently, the student's formation becomes distorted because he lives in deception both to the formation and his supporter. The students who suffer from such pitiable indisposition to formation and growth in their training, more often than not, end up becoming problems in the priesthood and the Church later.

We cannot but briefly express some worries on the seeds of relativism and materialism that are well seeded in our society. Relativism is a subjective way of approaching, viewing, analyzing, expressing, evaluating and judging things, including the human person. Socio-cultural relativism promotes evil personalizing or subjectivizing diverse cases of life because it proposes that each has its unique morality. Thus, each culture and person have texts which determine codes of moral behaviour for them. The case of objectivity or general acceptability of moral responsibility is squashed. This deceptive trend tends to promote materialism as the doctrine because of its subjective tendencies. These phenomena again raise questions and query the authenticity of priestly formation in contemporary society.

Management of Challenges of Authenticity

It is not possible to live without challenges affecting human existence and essence, but the mode of handling and managing them are prominently significant in life. The American Philosopher, Thomas Kuhn expresses similar thoughts, that, "Though history is unlikely to record their names, some men have undoubtedly been driven to desert science because of their inability to tolerate crisis. Like artists, creative scientists must occasionally be able to live in a world out of joint".²³ In this context, priests must learn to be positively creative in the face of a crisis in order to remain faithful to their life and ministry.

Crises should not destroy them, rather should strengthen them. It is on this basis that adequate formation is expedient to prepare them for situations of such. To achieve this objective, the wisdom of the Fathers of the Church should unreservedly be implemented.

Taking into account the candidate's age and development, each candidate's motivation should be tested, as should his freedom to choose. His spiritual, moral and intellectual stability should be examined, as should his physical and psychological health and any possible hereditary traits. The same goes for his ability to carry the burden of the priesthood and perform his pastoral duties.²⁴

It is in the light of this strict measure and precaution that the challenges in the priestly formation could be addressed in a positive line. Since formation becomes indispensable in the life of a priest, I would suggest what psychologists refer to as self-organization and learning, which is an early learning process in animals is to be imbibed. Whatever is learnt at this point becomes a reference point for the animal. Thus, a priest should continuously refer to what was learnt at the formative stage of his priestly formation. The best-explored examples of this type of learning have been studied in birds. "Young birds learn the songs of their parents, memorize the patterns of their plumage, and later select their mating partner accordingly."²⁵ This is experience-dependent learning which could be of assistance in the formation of candidates for the priesthood. It is at this juncture, we would delve briefly into the subject of auto-formation.

Auto-formation speaks volume on the personal responses of the candidate to the formation recommended and given by the ecclesiastical authority. The basic concerns would be: how is the candidate responding to formation? What is the level of the candidate's response? These responses would determine the degree of development and maturity of each priest to be. Taking a leap from the learning-pattern of birds referred to in our earlier discussion, a candidate should be matured enough to learn and navigate his priestly life and ministry from the formation tools provided by the seminary.

A constant review of learning could serve as a leverage for ameliorating the challenges to the authenticity of priestly formation.

This becomes essential because of the wind of change and development in the world.

Conclusion

It is not an exaggerated claim that the Church provides ample and adequate materials for priestly formation but then, the situation in the Church in Nigeria leaves a lot for concern. It is on this note that those concerned with formation should pay adequate attention to those areas of challenges. Perhaps, a quota system should be applied to address the issue of over-population in seminary or for the recruitment of formators to enrich the system. In like manner, adequate material provisions should be provided for the training of seminarians. Furthermore, care must be taken in the selection of candidates to be sent to the seminaries as Formators. It should not just be on the basis of intellectual capability but also of personal disposition, having the grace to mentor, teach and being exemplary should be considered. It is essential to mention that instructive and deliberative statues must be created to review some of the present conditions of formation in the country today to meet with current challenges in society. This can only be a sustainable mechanism to address the challenges to the authenticity of priestly formation today. The positive resultant consequence is that it will create an avenue to preserve and sustain *sensus ecclesiae* in the area of priestly formation. Finally, a proper discernment is required for these steps to be accomplished in the Church.

Endnotes

¹ Benedict XVI, *Priests of Jesus Christ*, (Oxford: Family Publication, 2009)

² Benedict XVI, *Light of the World, the Pope, the Church, and signs of the Times (A Conversation with Peter Seewald)*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010, 34.

³ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, (Decree on the ministry and life of priests), 1.

⁴ Flannery, A. *the Basic Documents, Vatican Council II, Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations*, Optatam Totius (Decree on the Training of Priests),

⁵ Ormerod, N. J., (Schultenover, G. D.) *Vatican 11, Did Anything Happen?* (New-York: Continuum, 2008), 155.

⁶ Heraclitus is of the Pythagorean or Italian School of Philosophy, 546.

⁷ Composta, D. *History of Ancient Philosophy*. Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1990., 33-44

⁸ *Optatam Totius*, 1.

⁹ *Optatam Totius*, 1

¹⁰ The details of these formation are found in the booklet entitled, *the Gift of the Priestly Vocation (Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis)* published by the Congregation for the Clergy, 2016.

¹¹ *Optatam Totius*, 2.

¹² *Optatam Totius*, 2

¹³ *Optatam Totius*, 1

¹⁴ *Optatam Totius*, 13.

¹⁵ *Optatam Totius*, 13.

¹⁶ *Optatam Totius*, 13.

¹⁷ *Optatam Totius*, 13.

¹⁸ *Optatam Totius*, 13.

¹⁹ *Optatam Totius*, 21.

²⁰ Kresta, A. *Dangers to the Faith, Recognizing Catholicism's 21st-Century opponents*. Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 2013, 13.

²¹ Vocation boom is an unprecedented increase in the incoming number of applicant/candidates to the priesthood. It is opined by some individual that this stream of candidate is anchored on economic and developmental woes of the nations in Africa, which suggests a future slim in the flow of number.

²² This becomes a major challenge as some candidates hid under the guidance of individual person to disguise as good candidates to the priesthood. Occasionally, things turn around to expose the deceptive traits of such characters.

²³ Kuhn, T. S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 3rd ed.* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996, 78-79.

²⁴ *Optatam Totius*, 6.

²⁵ Klivington, K. *The Science of Mind*. London: The MIT Press, 1989, 177.

CHAPTER 12

**Seminaries and Priestly Formation:
New Options in the Light of Modern
Challenges**

Kenneth Adewole ADESINA

Introduction

Every organization or community of human beings that have an objective or goal to achieve must as a matter of necessity eschew a programme of formation that will empower its protagonists in the task of attaining the overall goal. This plan must take cognizance of the peculiarities and intricacies that define the identities, collective and individuals, of all the human, material and procedural elements involved in the quest to attain the set goal.

It is within this general purview of orientation for goal achievement that we want to look into seminaries and priestly formation, examining their status vis-à-vis the goal and focus of the Church as regards the Catholic priesthood. How can we situate the Catholic priesthood within the mission of Christ and his Church? What is the relevance of the seminary to this mission and how does it help in ensuring adequate preparation for the challenges and demands of the priesthood.

In doing justice to the above puzzles, we shall be highlighting the various aspects of formation in the seminary, paying greater attention to the practical presentation of the contemporary situation in the seminary. Similarly, we shall be dwelling on the modern challenges facing priestly formation in the seminaries, with a view to proffering new opportunities for

enrichment to a system that is poised to maintain efficacy and relevance of its core values in every age and situation.

Seminaries: Relevance to Priestly Vocation

When Jesus called his apostles, he already had the plan to entrust his mission to them. At the moment of their call, the apostles were not ready for that mission, so, they spent time with Jesus, they listened to him; they were with him on his journeys and witnessed his miracles. All these prepared them for the mission that would be entrusted to them later. Similarly, “the priestly vocation is a continuation of the call to the disciples; the Lord continues to call out to young men to participate in his salvific mission as priests”¹.

The seminary becomes a place of encounter between Jesus and the disciple he calls. The relationship between them is expressed by the word: “vocation”, a word that is derived from the Latin verb *vocare*, which signifies: “to call”.² Within the context of priestly formation in the seminary, the word “vocation” can be considered from three different perspectives: the calling authority, the person called and the manifestation of that call.³ At the first instance, it is an invitation given by Jesus himself; the second instance shows it to be both a positive response and willingness to participate in the life of the one who calls; then the last connotes peculiar and active participation in the mission for which one is called.

Thus, as a nursery for vocation, the seminary prepares young people to become protagonists of the salvation that Christ makes available to the world. Achieving this goal will require a formative programme that is cognizant of the intricacies that surround the people, institutions and the peculiarities of the situations involved in the process of bringing the salvation of God to all nations.

In the realization that the priestly vocation is “a treasure that God always puts in the heart of some men, whom he has chosen and called to follow Him in this special state of life.”⁴ The seminary becomes not just a place, but also an opportunity, process and means of accompaniment that understands the various elements involved in the mission of the Church. It seeks to understand the peculiarities of each individual invited by God to work in his vineyard as priests, and subsequently through

appropriate means, assists the invited young people not only to realize the values inherent in the priestly vocation, but more importantly, help them to discover and develop the necessary attitude that facilitate the attainment of the goal for which Christ instituted the priesthood in the Church.

In the words of Pope Francis, seminary formation "is not a unilateral act by which one transmits theological or spiritual notions. Jesus did not say to those He called: 'Come, I will explain' or 'follow me, I will teach you'; Instead the formation Christ offered to his disciples was 'come and follow me', 'do as I do', and this is the method that even today the Church wants to adopt for her ministers. The formation of which we speak is a 'disciplining' experience, which draws men close to Christ and to conform more and more to Him"⁵

Seminaries And Contemporary Challenges

In meeting up with their responsibilities for the formation of priests, seminaries have structures and formative curriculum that facilitate the attainment of the priestly goal. While we shall be adducing more facts in the evaluative treatment of the present situation of seminary formation, it is pertinent to state that our seminaries have always been very loud in the profession of their faithfulness to the four cardinal dimensions of priestly formation – spiritual, intellectual, pastoral and human. The various stages of formation are aided by an array of effective agents, who ensure that candidates for the priesthood are aided in the acquisition of the values inherent in these four dimensions of formation as eschewed by *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and corroborated by other Church documents.

However, instead of giving a deeper treatment to these already known aspects of formation, this write-up shall be dwelling more on the evaluation of the present situation in our seminaries in order to accentuate necessary points that should be reviewed or reconsidered, abrogated or reinforced.

Without any particular order of importance, I want to start by examining the style of formation adopted in our seminaries.

Pedagogy

In adopting the classic freestanding model of formation where all aspects of formation are conducted in-house,⁶ our seminaries attempt to make the seminarians realize that even though they are in the world, they are not of this world. So, spending more time in 'isolation' from the world, seminarians are equipped with sufficient spiritual, intellectual and moral strength that will enable them to function well in their mission to bring God's salvation to all men.

While there is no denying the fact that seminarians have enough opportunities for theoretical knowledge of what to do and opportunities to learn on the field during pastoral works; it is pertinent to note that seminaries need to do more in the area of training and workshop that would equip the student with practical skills on how to effectively transform their theoretical knowledge into practical situations of life for pastoral efficacy. In order to avoid the identity crisis that may come from this, the seminary formators and the various agents of formation must ensure that the adopted model of formation does not shy away from the reality of the 'field' where the seminarians will later work as priests. It must start inculcating in them, right from the seminary, the reality of the people among whom they are called to minister, and the urgency of getting ready to so mix with the 'sheep' they will pastor, so that they themselves may have the odour of the sheep.⁷

Following this, there is a need for a review of the pedagogical approach in most of our seminaries. While there is actually no need to do away with or reduce the seminary's emphasis on order, structure and discipline, seminary formators must realize, not only that their task actually goes beyond ensuring that candidates are vast and well-grounded in theological truth and priestly spirituality, but also that doctrinal orthodoxy, liturgical celebration, pastoral ministry and priestly spirituality do not sufficiently define optimum formation.

Consequently, it becomes expedient that seminaries get their pedagogical approach right and realize that the project entrusted to them goes beyond 'training of priest', and that their real duty is actually the 'formation of the priest'. More than a mere exercise in semantics, understanding the task ahead of the seminaries as formation of priests, over and above mere training of

priests, will help seminary formators evaluate their pedagogical approach to see if their students eventually are transformed into ‘disciples’ and not just career pastors.

This is a major paradigm change that the new *Ratio* emphasizes and calls for. Notwithstanding the models of priestly formation that is chosen in a seminary, the focus must change from ‘training of seminarians’ to ‘formation of seminarians in discipleship’. This is well captured by Archbishop Eamon Martin when he adduces that “it has to be fundamental then, to every model of seminary, that we all – Seminarians, Rectors and Formators, theologians – on the lifelong journey of discipleship, called to follow Jesus Christ. Consequently, the distinctions between the steps (propaedeutic, initial, permanent), between the roles (of Bishop, Rector, Formator, Spiritual Director), between the dimensions (human, spiritual, pastoral and academic) and between the stages (discipleship, configuration, pastoral) are all somewhat secondary and instrumental to the overall integral formation of each of us as pilgrims along the *Sequela Christi* – under the action of the Holy Spirit and sustained by the grace of God”.⁸

This emphasis on pedagogical approach carries with it a reappraisal of our general understanding of the priestly vocation as a gift – a treasure – gifted by God. In the words of Pope Francis, “this treasure, which needs to be discovered and brought to light, is not meant to “enrich” just someone. The one called to the ministry is not the “master” of his vocation, but the administrator of a gift that God has entrusted to him for the good of all people, rather, of all men and women, including those who have distanced themselves from religious practice or do not profess faith in Christ. At the same time, the whole of the Christian community is the guardian of the treasure of these vocations, destined for his service, and it must be ever more conscious of the duty to promote them, welcome them and accompany them with affection”.⁹

Consequent upon the fact that the priestly vocation is a treasured gift to the entire human race, and that people gifted with such treasure must be assisted to appreciate, value and use it well through a whole process of discipleship, seminary Formators must keep in mind that formation does not end in the seminary. As the *Ratio* puts it, “the experience of discipleship of those called to the

priesthood is never interrupted... the priest not only learns to know Christ, but under the action of the Holy Spirit, he finds himself within a process of gradual and continuous configuration to Him, in his being, and his acting, which constantly challenges the person to inner growth”¹⁰

So, while the seminary formator has a lot of roles to play in the discernment of the vocation of others, he must himself realize that his own discipleship is not ended; he must remain open to further guidance from the Master; and his own attitude becomes an inspiration to the seminarian to allow themselves to be influenced and nourished by the Holy Spirit. Not only from books, but the seminarians will also learn from the humility of their formators that “the priest can never consider himself to be definitively formed... [he] is certainly not the man who arrives at a parish perfectly packaged, with all the answers. There will often be people who are more qualified than him in facing particular problems, and the new challenges that emerge may well be beyond his seminary formation”.¹¹ The priest, who is a formator, can also learn from the students he forms in various ways. In fact, instead of putting up a show of *pseudo* perfection because of its undermining effects on discipleship that characterizes seminary formation, formators must take to heart, the admonition of Pope Benedict XVI that “the faithful expect only one thing from priests: that they be specialists in promoting the encounter between man and God”¹²

The indispensable role of the formators in ‘mentoring’ seminarians is well stated by Pope Francis in an address to the Congregation for the Clergy: “Formation is... not a unilateral act by which someone transmits theological or spiritual notions. Jesus did not say to those he called: ‘Come, let me explain,’ ‘Follow me, I will teach you’; no! The formation offered by Christ to his disciples came rather as a ‘come, and follow me,’ ‘do as I do,’ and this is the method today too, the Church wants to adopt for her ministers.”¹³

Discipleship, both from the side of the seminarians and the formators means a proper understanding that formation is “not about mastering techniques or functional roles, but about following the path of discipleship: internalizing in co-operation with divine grace, the core virtues and ideals of disciples. Put simply, one

cannot be a credible witness, shepherd, healer or proclaimer of the Good News to contemporary culture unless one is rooted in a profound relationship with Jesus with the zeal and attitude of a disciple that will last a lifetime".¹⁴ So, the seminary, both as a school and process of formation in discipleship for both the formators and the seminarians must ensure a steady form of growth in church leadership; inculcating the leadership values that are Christian, opening up to the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit, and understanding the view expressed by St. John Chrysostom that "the most basic task of a church leader is to discern the spiritual gifts of all those under his authority, and to encourage those gifts to be used to the full benefit of all. Only a person who can discern the gifts of others and can humbly rejoice at the flourishing of these gifts is fit to lead the Church".¹⁵

The Challenge of Discernment and Personality Formation

While the spiritual, intellectual, pastoral and human dimensions of priestly formation are well spelt out; there is an aspect that the present reality of formation demands that we pay closer attention. This aspect has to do with discernment, but I will like to put it as emotional formation. It has to be given greater attention in seminary formation, either as a new dimension of formation on its own or as a well-accentuated and integral part of the human formation. This view is coming, not just because contemporary studies have revealed the importance and significance of Emotional Quotient and the influence of the management of emotion in personality formation and overall performance of man (which is not within the scope of this write-up), but more importantly because of its centrality in discernment and pastoral efficacy.

First and foremost, making choices is really not as easy as it looks, but at various stages of life, we have to make choices. What is the basis of the choices we make? Important choices, such as demanded by priestly vocation, are so often accompanied by risks or laden with fear, that one cannot really make them right without courage and sincerity (at the natural level), and without divine assistance (at the supernatural level). Thus, considering the whole complexity that revolves around senses, sensibility, emotion, action and sentiment in the whole process of personality

formation and decision-making, one cannot but ask the important question: how much of attention do we pay to all these in priestly formation?

Not to talk of the post-seminary experiences of priests and the frequent occurrence of depression (or desolation, to use a less stereotyped expression), the seminary formation needs to do more in assisting seminarians to really 'understand' themselves and the intricacies surrounding the decisions they make. Like any sound human being, it is necessary that seminarians and priests understand the art of managing emotions (and avoid being managed by emotions), so that when such emotions are seeking transformation into action through sentiments, they are not only in good stead to make right choices that are in accordance to their priestly aspiration and identity, but more importantly, the adequate formation of their emotion will grant them an openness to sincerely engage every element of formation with openness.

The seminary formation, even if it cannot pay great attention to it, must put seminarians through the basic steps of emotional formation, which include among other things: being sincere in giving a name to one's feeling (feel your feeling); discovering the source of one's feeling (be sincere and intelligent); discerning immediately whether the feeling is good or bad (be attentive and timely); comporting oneself in a coherent mode (be courageous in taking a good decision); paying constant attention to mastering one's feeling (be vigilant and responsible).¹⁶ When this is done, the requirement of the *Ratio* that accompaniment, engagement and discernment should be ensured to put the seminary formative programme into perspective that integrates well into the personality of the seminarian.¹⁷

Considering the place of fear and hazardous effects of being controlled by one's emotion and inordinate feelings, we shall appreciate the effect that emotional formation will have on overall priestly formation, especially in the areas of relationship, of trust between seminarians and the various agents of formation; honest assessment of strength and weakness, and disclosure of these to formators; willingness to receive and accept direction, guidance and correction; and building the capacity to live discipleship ad priesthood consistently.

Recommendations and Areas of Further Development

In addition to giving adequate considerations to issues already raised above, priestly formation in the contemporary Church will be enhanced for greater efficacy if the following points will be treated not only with great attention that they deserved but also given the urgency that will stem the rot that they are creating:

- i. **Call for a *Ratio Nationalis* for Nigeria:** as requested by the *Ratio Fundamentalis*, the Episcopal Conference should put up the necessary machinery that must include a deep and collegial co-operation of all our bishops with the lay faithful and experienced men and women in the area of formation, to formulate a *Ratio Nationalis*. The deep import of this lies in “not only implementing the new *Ratio* in a way that takes account of local traditions, customs and needs, but also courageously moving the whole formation experience beyond past and present methods, so that priests will be suitably prepared to engage and evangelize the secularized contemporary culture”.¹⁸
- ii. **Evaluation of current admission standard and procedures:** While the practice of lowering the standard of admission in areas of low vocation is not the best, we should also be wearied of raising the standard of those to be admitted so high that authentic vocations are destroyed. However, this is expressed without any prejudice to the fact that every aspirant should have the merit of his application considered by competent people, and the fact that greater attention should be paid to the prevalent falling standard of academic (and lack of interest in studies) into our various houses of formation.
- iii. **How to help seminarians acquire a balanced view of the Church:** It should never be taken for granted that aspirants to the priesthood have the right view and image of the Church. It is then pertinent that, even if it will be in a form of a workshop during their orientation programme, seminaries should ensure that seminarians have a good knowledge of basic ecclesiology – the mission of the Church, their place and role in the entire missionary enterprise of the Church. This will enable them to build

- their entire formation into the mission of the Church right from the beginning.
- iv. **How to discern and understand the impact of secular society, culture and values on seminarians:** Since the Church is called to show the Light of salvation to the world, seminaries must not just resign to fate in the acceptance of deficiencies evident in the formation of young people aspiring to the priesthood. The formation team in the seminary must stay ahead of their society to identify values that are inimical to the priestly formation and devise a way of helping seminarians shed the toga of evil or immoral values. However, while a compromise of value is no option, understanding is required to help aspirants understand the need to move beyond such ungodly values – even if the society sees nothing wrong in them.
- v. **An understanding of the characteristics of the age from which seminarians come:** every age has its peculiarities, which can be identified both in strength and weaknesses. It is pertinent that our agents of formation, especially, the formation team of the seminaries, develop a means of proper understanding the young seminarians with the intricacies that define their age and values. Our approach to priestly formation must devise a means of channelling the winning mentality and readiness for challenge of the present-day youth into primary evangelization, and correct their disinterestedness in anything institutional; we must annex their hyper-connectedness in the social media for religious orientation and evangelization, without failing in correcting their weak human relations; and while formation takes cognizance of their naïve view of faith and gifts as personal belongings. It must never fail to teach them in charity, the true meaning of ‘communion’ and help them to strip themselves of self-sufficiency mentality through proper discernment.
- vi. **The notion of human formation:** In addition to issues already raised under emotional formation, seminary formation must pay attention to, and consider formation as a progressive achievement, a lifelong journey of

integration and discipleship, which must take note of the specificity of the individual seminarian. Learning from the experience of the once buoyant and vibrant churches in the western world, the formation must pay attention to the rising tendencies of extreme clericalism and pride. The image of the priest as a servant leader must be underlined and defined to stem the cancerous tendency of viewing the priest as a ‘deputy God’ or a clerical chief.

- vii. **Integration of Formation:** Consequent upon the insistence of the *Ratio* on the centrality of integration and personality, “the process of formation must educate the person in the truth of his being, in freedom and in self-control.”¹⁹ This must not just be assumed, but practical lessons in form of seminars and workshops must be organized to help the integration of the various elements of formation into the personality of the seminarian. It is not enough to evaluate the readiness or otherwise in this regard, seminaries must concretely prepare them for this integration and authenticity that the priesthood requires.²⁰
- viii. **Research and Teaching:** Considering the nature of many seminaries in Nigeria and opportunities of researches and discoveries inherent there, the seminary should form the bedrock of the Church’s response to many challenges. As charity begins at home, our seminary communities should be able to and create time for concrete researches and teaching modules on how to address specific challenges like the transition from seminary to parish experience, dealing with extreme clericalism, careerism, commercialism, healing ministry etc.
- ix. **Seminary Formators:** The importance of the issues already raised will require that our seminaries are properly staffed and that the ratio of seminarians to formator is kept as low as possible. Most of our seminaries do not have enough formators to adequately guarantee the requirement of the *Ratio Fundamentalis*. It becomes expedient then, that more formators are sent to the seminaries; that more priests are sent for further studies to prepare them for seminaries; that the priests in the seminaries do not overstay their relevance to avoid burnout and redundancy;

and that where there are cases of lack of interest to go into formation by priests, their genuine reasons should be considered and addressed.

- x. **Special Needs in Formation:** Among the special needs of the seminaries that must be looked into, I will strongly recommend that each seminary should have a formator that is capable of addressing the issues that pertain to the emotional formation. While this is without prejudice to the presence and need of both Spiritual Directors and Psychologist, I will show a greater preference for a pastoral approach to it.

Conclusion

Over the centuries, the Church has been providing effective leadership to the world, this has been possible so far, because, in addition to the divine grace bestowed on the Church, she has been able to so positioned herself to see things before the world sees, to see farther than the world sees, and to see more things than the world sees. By so doing, she has been able to stay above the destructive and manipulative schemes of the world. This experience has been incorporated into the formation of priests and it has proven beyond doubt to be effective. With the issues already raised, it is my candid opinion that the Church in the contemporary world cannot afford to be disinterested or treat with levity, the formation of priests, and that all aspects and needs of formation must be prioritized not only because this will ensure the relevance of the Church in our time, but more importantly because effective formation remains the only sure path we have towards the achievement of the Church's missionary goal of making disciples of all nations.

Endnotes

¹ Franc Rode, *Il Cristo della Formazione: Manuale biblico e teologico di formazione alla vita religiosa*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010), 190.

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- ² Cf. Charton Lewis, *A Latin Dictionary: Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879).
- ³ Cf. William Addis – Thomas Arnold (eds.), *A Catholic Dictionary*, (London: Kessinger Pub. 2004), 840- 843.
- ⁴ Pope Francis, Address to the Plenary of the Congregation for the Clergy, 3 October 2014,
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141003_plenaria-congregazione-clero.html (Accessed 20/08/2019)
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ Declan Marmion *et al.* (eds.), *Models of Priestly Formation*, p. xxx
- ⁷ Pope Francis, Homily at the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday March 28, 2013,
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html (Accessed 20/08/2019)
- ⁸ Declan Marmion *et al.* (eds.), *Models of Priestly Formation: Assessing the Past, Reflecting on the Present and Imagining the Future*, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2019, p. xix
- ⁹ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/october/documents/papa-francesco_20141003_plenaria-congregazione-clero.html
- ¹⁰ *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* 80
- ¹¹ Declan Marmion *et al.* (eds.), *Models of Priestly Formation*, p. xviii
- ¹² Benedict XVI, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060525_poland-clergy.html (Accessed 20/08/2019)
- ¹³ Pope Francis,
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- ¹⁴ Declan Marmion *et al.* (eds.), *Models of Priestly Formation*, p. 20
- ¹⁵ John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood*, trans. G.W. Butterworth, Crestwood: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1964, p. 44.
- ¹⁶ Cf. Amedeo Cencini, *Dall'Aurora io ti Cerco: Evangelizzare la sensibilità per imparare a discernere*, Milano: San Paolo, 2018.
- ¹⁷ Cf. *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* 43-53
- ¹⁸ Declan Marmion *et al.* (eds.), *Models of Priestly Formation*, p. xvi
- ¹⁹ *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* 63
- ²⁰ *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* 131

CHAPTER 13

**The Parish Priest as a Formator:
Bridging the Gap Between the Diocese
and the Seminary**

Peter Abumhenre EGBE

Preamble

This project is in honour of Very Rev, Fr. Anselm Jimoh, PhD. A man of honour who has given most of his twenty-five years in the priestly ministry to the work of forming candidates for the priesthood. He is also a priest who has had the opportunity to be involved in parochial work. In addition, he was once a Vocations' Director. It will not be an exaggeration to say that his priestly ministry has been one of bridging the gap between the life of the parish ministry and the seminary formation. It is, therefore, appropriate to salute this hero of faith in the catholic church and propose him to all who are in and those who desire to aspire to this ministry to learn from him through these materials presented in his honour.

Introduction

The difference between the life within the Seminary walls and the parish setting can be taken for granted and has in fact in many cases been taken for granted. But the reality of the gap between the two is more existential than imagined. Many seminarians and even priests believe that there is no relationship between the life of the seminary and parish ministry. It is not novel to hear seminarians openly

criticizing the regiment of the seminary formation system and the seemingly unpredictable nature of practical life in parish ministry. It is the opinion of this article that there is a problem in this position that holds or argues that it is natural to view life in the seminary and life in the parish as distinct places for pastoral engagement. If the life in the seminary is like a nurturing ground to live the life in the parish, there should be a connection of semblance between the ‘two institutions.’

The problem that one might observe to be responsible for the seeming lacuna between life in the seminary and practical ministry for instance in the parish is the lack of integration. This lack of integration is not just only the difficulty in synchronizing the two separate realities of the seminary system and the parish setting, but also often due to the fact that many seminarians do not allow the life of the seminary exact the right impact on them while in formation. Many see the seminary training in most part as theoretical and sometimes cumbersome, as compared to the practical and day-to-day simple parish life. One of the major issues that could be raised is sometimes the sacrifice inherent in the seminary formation and the enormous freedom and independence of life in the parish. But there is something missing in the whole system.

Fulton Sheen once opined that –

We who have received the Sacrament of Orders call ourselves “priest”. The author does not recall any priest ever having said, “I was ordained a ‘victim’”, nor did he ever say, ‘I am studying to be a victim.’ That seemed almost alien to being a priest. The seminary always told us to be ‘good’ priests; never were we told to be a willing victim. And yet was not Christ, the priest, a victim? Did He not come to die? He did not offer a lamb, a bullock or doves; He never offered anything except himself (see Eph.5:2)¹

Here we can already understand that the risk of not integrating the life of the seminary and that of the parish potent a great problem for the Church and it is time to address it.

Today, between the seminary and practical parish ministry, for instance, is the belief that – while the seminary is ‘a place of torment and suffering’, the ministry in general including the parish is ‘a place of arrival’. One can make a link between this conception and the civil educational system in our country. One is educated so that he can earn

a living for himself. The seminarian or the candidate for ordination has earned his qualification, so he can think more of how to take care of himself and even make personal investments side-by-side the assignment by the bishop and the two are different. Here no one feels there is a problem; at least by what is obtainable in our time, even authorities seem to be complacent or at best helpless about this monstrous cancer of pastoral decay. What can be done to address this among many problems? There are places where people can now go to school and after training, they seek 'job' in the priesthood. In the name of doing that personal interest in ministries or programmes are often more important than 'official' church assignment. What will be your interpretation of this scenario? There is a need for a true auto-reflection as we get more and more challenged by the realities of our present world order. The true priesthood continues to be a sacrificial offering to God for the transformation of the world.²

In the tradition of the Catholic Church, "... all the faithful are made a holy and kingly priesthood, they offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ, and they proclaim the mighty acts of him who has called them out of darkness into his admirable light..."³ However, some are uniquely called and consecrated through the Sacrament of Holy Order to particularly share in the ministerial duties of Christ through the instrumentality of the Church.⁴ It is the preparation for this particular function of the ordained faithful that is the duty of this paper. It will consider this function and its relevance by way of introduction and look at preparation for such an office of service to God and humanity. The paper will focus on the role of the parish priest as an agent of formation. It is important to state from the onset that vocation to the sacred ministerial priesthood is not a human initiative, but divine election and entrusted to the Church by Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.⁵ Nevertheless, he is like the rest of humanity in everything. "Priests, while being chosen from the midst of humanity and appointed to act on its behalf in what pertains to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins (see Heb 5:1), live with the rest of humanity as with brothers and sisters."⁶

Not even angels can one claim to be capable of fulfilling the function(s) of the priest. It is in fact far removed from the ordinary duties of the human agent. It is the work of God established on earth to

mediate between the Divine and mortals. In his reflection about the importance of the work of the priest, Alphonsus de Liguori states thus: “The dignity of the priest is estimated from the exalted nature of his offices. Priests are chosen by God to manage on earth all his concerns and interests.”⁷ Therefore, to talk about priestly formation and ministry means to talk about such duty that is completely outside the human agent, society and function, but for all of them. “The priests of the New Testament are, it is true, by their vocation and ordination, set apart in some way within the people of God, but this is not in order that they should be separated from that people or from any person, but that they should be completely consecrated to the task for which God chooses them....”⁸

Nevertheless, the ministry of the priest is a service to humanity. It is the work of God among human beings in the sanctification of the earthly kingdom (the world). Divine as this task is, the human agent is still relevant in the dispensing of the work of the mysteries of God at the human and on a daily basis. These demands require candidates to be properly formed before they are ordained priests. The parish priest has a serious role to play here. To the extent that God himself became man, man has become very important in the economy of salvation. The role of a man here requires rigorous education and such education can only be well grounded if it is rooted in the family the cradle of life and nucleus of society.

The parish priest is just one among many other agents entrusted with discerning and helping candidates for the priesthood. Let us examine some of the agents of vocation to the priesthood and their respective roles in the formation period. The first place the human person encounters formation is in the context of the family. The family here in its purest form will include a couple (male and female), their children eventually. This paper does not nurse any bias against persons or agencies who have their own understanding about the concept of the family, but at the same time, the author is of the opinion that the reference to the family is as defined above.

1. The Family

The family is the domestic church and the seed-bed of vocation to the priesthood. It is impossible to have a healthy church and suitable candidates for the priesthood without a ‘worthy’ family. The priest is at the centre of this experience in the life of the parish community. “A

good laity is scarcely possible without truly holy priests. ... – just as it is impossible to have a blossoming of vocations without Christian families which are the domestic churches⁹. The obligation of education of children is crucial to priestly formation and rests squarely on the family. Education begins in the family. Consequently, formation begins with the family. It is incumbent on every family to bring up children in positive values that form the basis of a good and virtuous life of the human person. “Since **it** is the parents who have given life to their children, on them lies the greatest obligation of educating their family. ... The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute.”¹⁰ Since the family is also a product of society, it required that the social order rises to its responsibility of providing the enabling atmosphere for the right form of education to its citizens.

The task of imparting education belongs primarily to the family, but it requires the help of society as a whole. As well as the rights of parents, and those others to whom the parents entrust some share in their duty to educate, there are certain duties and rights vested in civil society inasmuch as it is its function to provide for the common good in temporal matters.¹¹

The function of the priest is the work of the salvation of souls and in fact the salvation of the world at large. It is the mission of Christ through the working of the Holy Spirit to win back creation to God who has made all things good and beautiful. It is a function of the redemption of the world. In the Gospel of St. John, God declared the reason why he sent his son into the world; this was love (cf. Jn.3:16). Just so that the world might be saved, God sent his Son born of a woman (cf. Gal.4:4). It is this work of love that the priest is meant to perpetuate until the Kingdom of God is consummated on earth. “And all these activities, since they flow from the paschal mystery of Christ, will find their consummation in the glorious coming of the same Lord, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God his Father...”¹²

From the foregoing, the presence and role of the priest are crucial in the affairs of the world. It is flowing from here that anything that has to do with preparation for this august role must be nothing

below the best of human effort. The formation of a priest in the Catholic tradition occupies a very high echelon in the priority list of the church's activities.

“The formation of future priests, both diocesan and religious, and lifelong assiduous care for their personal sanctification in the ministry and for the constant updating of their pastoral commitment is considered by the Church one of the most demanding and important tasks for the future of the evangelization of humanity. The Church's work of formation is a continuation in time of Christ's own work.”¹³

To address such a theme as we have is certainly a task long overdue. The role of the parish priest is critical in the formation of individuals for the priesthood. It is in the same vein, that one needs to consider the parish as an entity is an institution.

2. **The Parish**

The parish is a community of people under the care of at least a pastor. In the law of the Church, the parish is not just a spiritual community, it is also a legal institution. “A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor (*parochus*) as its proper pastor (*pastor*) under the authority of the diocesan bishop.”¹⁴ Such a community usually has its own territory. “As a general rule a parish is to be territorial, that is, one which includes all the Christian faithful of a certain territory”¹⁵. It also requires a pastor or a priest to administer such portion of the Christian faithful. It is the obligation of those who are responsible to make sure that it is only suitable priests that are given the task of the parish priest who is the pastor of the souls of the people within his territory. It is the function of the diocesan bishop to appoint a priest to pastor the souls of the people within the parish territory. This is very important because of the grave role the parish plays in the nurturing of vocation to the priesthood. *Optatam Totius* expresses this important point in a categorical manner.

The duty of fostering vocations pertains to the whole Christian community, which should exercise it above all by a fully Christian life. The principal contributors to this are the families which, animated by the spirit of

faith and love and by the sense of duty, become a kind of initial seminary, and the parishes in whose rich life the young people take part.¹⁶

It is important, therefore, to pay particular attention to the good of the family and the parish respectively to guarantee that the vocations that emanate from these institutions truly represent the ideal of the demands of the Gospel.

3. The Role of the Parish Priest in the formation of candidates to the priesthood

The life of the parish is built around the priest. "It is therefore of fundamental importance for the parish to have a priest as its pastor and the title of pastor is specifically reserved to the priest."¹⁷ The parish priest very often acts as a bridge between the diocese and the seminary in the process of discernment of a vocation to the priesthood. The evaluation of the parish priest as it relates to the pastoral activities of the seminarians do have great importance on the process of the discernment of the candidates to the priesthood. The function of the parish priest is to act as a bridge between the somewhat activism in the parish and the seminary. The position of this paper about this is that the relevance of the parish priest is before, during and after the seminary formation of the candidate to the priesthood. He prepares the candidate to choose the vocation to the priesthood. He guides him by mentoring through his training with practical experiences. He tutors him to take on pastoral assignment while in the seminary and as a young priest. He continues to provide him with practical life experiences as he even prepares to assume the role of the pastor himself. In the process of monitoring the seminarian, the parish priest should be careful to ensure that the seminarian does not become hesitant.

Having laid a background of relevance; the next thing is to address the practical importance of the role of the parish priest as a bridge between the Parish and the Seminary in the formation of candidates to the priesthood. Without any doubt, the role of the parish priest cuts across all that the seminary does. In fact, it can be argued that the parish provides a platform first of all for the harvesting of

candidates for formation in the seminary. Secondly, the parish provides the opportunity of *practicum* to the seminarian while he is still in training for the priesthood. Finally, he ends up most of the time in the parish or any other institution primarily as a pastor of souls. Hence, the parish is critical for the concrete realization in practice of all the theoretical principles and guidelines which the seminarian would have learnt in the process of his wholistic formation. “Formation involves an educational process that is both gradual and progressive, one that is not carried out ‘in fragments’ or in isolated segments.”¹⁸ These include human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation. “Inasmuch as it is an educating community, the seminary and its entire life - in all its different expressions - is committed to the formation, the human, the spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation of future priests.”¹⁹ Care should, however, be taken not to divorce training in the seminary from practical discipleship which pastoral experience provides and this is most auspicious in the parish setting.

It is the duty of a parish priest who is also called a pastor to take care of the parish community. Such a task, however, demands a lot of care and practical commitment. It is important, therefore, to make sure that whoever takes this role understands and faithfully carries out his duty according to the required decorum by learning and morals.

The pastor (*parochus*) is the proper pastor (*pastor*) of the parish entrusted to him, exercising the pastoral care of the community committed to him under the authority of the diocesan bishop in whose ministry of Christ he has been called to share, so that for that same community he carries out the functions of teaching, sanctifying, and governing, also with the co-operation of other presbyters or deacons and with the assistance of lay members of the Christian faithful, according to the norm of law.²⁰

As a result of the gravity of the matter stated in the reference above, apart from the fact that he has to be an ordained²¹ minister a pastor “is to be outstanding in sound doctrine and integrity of morals and endowed with zeal for souls and other virtues; he is also to possess those qualities which are required by universal or particular law to care for the parish in question...”²²

This is because of the gravity of the work of the priest; the pastor ought to be exemplary in the requisite virtues of the priesthood so as to be able to positively influence young parishioners and attract them to the Seminary for training as priests. Consequently, local ordinaries are to make sure those who are responsible for the souls of the faithful are carefully selected for such assignment to guaranty the welfare of the formation of the parish from where candidates are selected for training to be priests. “Consequently, it is recommended that the Pastor (*parochus*), or whichever person is responsible for the pastoral setting that receives the seminarian, should be aware of the formative task entrusted to him and should accompany him in his gradual entry into pastoral ministry.”²³ This citation according to the ratio makes specific reference to the diaconal period, but our setting already engages in this task even before the diaconate ordination. It is, therefore, the function of the priest to discern, recommend and get involved in the formation of the candidate to the priesthood.

4. The Seminarian

The Seminarian is usually a male member of the faithful (who ought to be baptized and confirmed), who feels called and presents himself or is presented for training as a priest to be a priest. It is important to indicate some are presented and by parents or guardians. In the case of minors, as they are not matured to make such a decision, they depend on others to be presented. This applies in the case of minors who wish or are made to begin early in life their journey in the training to the priesthood in the minor seminary. This underscores the role of the pastor in the whole process of discerning vocation and eventual training for the priesthood that can occur at any time in life. “This vocation arises in various circumstances and at different stages of human life: in adolescence, in adulthood, and, as the constant experience of the church never fails to show, also in childhood.”²⁴ In the process of formation, the seminarian is a ‘mystery to himself’²⁵. “Seminarians need to be accompanied in a personal way in the various stages of their journey by those entrusted with the work of formation, each according to his proper role and competence. The purpose of accompaniment is to carry out vocational discernment and form the missionary disciple.”²⁶

Accompaniment helps to make the journey of formation to be a shared responsibility.

Furthermore, one needs to point out more about the personal responsibility of the seminarian himself. Receiving or perceiving the call of God to ministry, the seminarian has a responsibility to present himself free and sincere to the church for formation. It is the mind of the church that those to be trained as priests take responsibility for their choice and thus submit themselves for formation.

Each seminarian is the protagonist of his own formation...and is called to a journey of ongoing growth in the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral areas, taking into account of 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 Gospels²⁷

It will be impossible to have a fruitful training process without the free self-giving of the seminarian to the formation in response to God who calls.

The history of every priestly vocation, as indeed of every Christian vocation, is the history of an inexpressible dialogue between God and human beings, between the love of God who calls and the freedom of individuals who respond lovingly to him. These two indivisible aspects of vocation, God's gratuitous gift and the responsible freedom of human beings, are reflected in a splendid and very effective way in the brief words with which the evangelist Mark presents the calling of the Twelve: Jesus "went up into the hills, and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him" (Mk. 3:13). On the one hand, we have the completely free decision of Jesus; on the other, the "coming" of the Twelve, their "following" Jesus.²⁸

Freedom makes the work of formation easy both on the part of the seminarian and on the part of the formators. But of more importance here is the freedom of the one to be formed. The success of formation depends on the openness of the formed and his willingness to follow the master. "Freedom, therefore, is essential to vocation - freedom

which, when it gives a positive response, appears as a deep personal adherence, as a loving gift - or rather as a gift given back to the giver who is God who calls, an oblation...²⁹

Very often the problems that arise can be numerous: in common experience, we have candidates who seem to respond and present themselves for formation who do not really wholeheartedly submit to the formation. Some also come into the seminary with a disposition that makes it impossible for the process of the formation to be authentic and fruitful. Cases abound in parishes and dioceses where seminarians who were highly esteemed in the seminary for discipline and maturity turn to have pretended all through their formation process only to reveal their true colours after ordination. Some seminarians are also caught in the web of the confusion between the principles of their life in the seminary and the remarkable difference they come to experience in the parish setting. What could be done to bridge the gap between the authentic life that the call of the gospel demands on the individual and the reality of the personal experience and his environmental influences? The answer is a structural one. All stakeholders are to be diligent in the discharge of their duties from the family to the parish priest and the individual seminarian who should be honest in the search for God and the direction of such a hunger for God in the right direction.

But since it is necessary for the students to learn the art of exercising the apostolate not only theoretically but also practically, and to be able to act both on their own responsibility and in harmonious conjunction with others, they should be initiated into pastoral work, both during their course of studies and also during the time of vacations, by opportune practical projects.³⁰

If there is a true and sincere commitment on the part of the seminarian and the formators, the gap between the seminary experience and the reality in the parish will reduce if not completely eliminated. What is the seminary?

5. The Seminary

The word “seminary” is from the Latin word *Seminarium*, which means plots where plants are raised from seeds. It means breeding ground, nursery. When is used for in reference to the priesthood, it means a breeding ground for priests. The history of training for service in the house of God dates back to the Old Testament experience when God called different people to serve in his house. Aaron, Samuel, prophets, and the disciples in the early formation of the church. It serves the use of this project to make the above reference to some of the ways in which candidates were formed for service at the altar of God. As we have it today, the role of the seminary is more systematic and theoretical.

6. The Moment of Transition

Once a seminarian has completed his formation in the seminary, he returns to his diocese. Most dioceses do have policies that require pastoral formation while formation in the seminary is going on. Seminarians that are assigned to parochial ministries, that is, pastoral work, function under the supervision of the parish priest. He determines the nature of the work of the seminarian, and ensure that the theoretical intellectual formation is brought to bear in the pastoral field. The Post Synodal Exhortation on Priestly formation reads:

And so pastoral formation certainly cannot be reduced to a mere apprenticeship, aiming to make the candidate familiar with some pastoral techniques. The seminary which educates must seek really and truly to initiate the candidate into the sensitivity of being a shepherd, in the conscious and mature assumption of his responsibilities, in the interior habit of evaluating problems and establishing priorities and looking for solutions on the basis of honest motivations of faith and according to the theological demands inherent in pastoral work. Thanks to an initial and gradual experience of ministry, future priests will be able to be inserted into the living pastoral tradition of their particular church. They will learn to open the horizon of their mind and heart to the missionary dimension of the Church's life. They will get practice in some initial forms of co-operation with one another and with the priests alongside whom they will be sent to work.

These priests have a considerably important role, in union with the seminary programme, in showing the candidates how they should go about pastoral work.³¹

One can say that this is the point where the work of the parish priest and that of the seminary meet. It continues from here and strongly demands that the parish becomes a priority of place when it comes to getting really involved in the work of service as priests and consequently priests to be.

When it comes to choosing places and services in which candidates can obtain their pastoral experience, the parish should be given particular importance ... for it is a living cell of local and specialized pastoral work in which they will find themselves faced with the kind of problems they will meet in their future ministry....These and other pastoral activities will teach the future priest to live out as a "service" his own mission of "authority" in the community, setting aside all attitudes of superiority or of exercising a power if it is not simply that which is justified by a pastoral charity.³²

7. The Dimensions of the Work of the Parish Priests as a Bridge between the Seminary and Parish.

It is clear from the analysis above that the most important role of the parish priest is providing the seminarian with an opportunity to experience first-hand a practical application of the various aspects of theoretical formation he received from the seminary – The human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation. The proper integration of these aspects of formation both by the individual who aspires to ministry and the system that receives and trains him become the hallmark of a fruitful ministry.

7.1 Human

The priest is expected to have the natural human virtues that should dispose of him to function properly as a pastor. Human virtues such as honesty, dedication, fear of God, love of human being, etc. It is the

view of the new Ratio and other church documents that the basis and purpose of formation is priestly identity.³³ Priestly identity is being another Christ.

The priest, who is called to be a "living image" of Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the Church, should seek to reflect in himself, as far as possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the incarnate Son of God and which is reflected with particular liveliness in his attitudes toward others as we see narrated in the Gospels.³⁴

In addition to this – “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. These qualities are needed for them to be balanced people, strong and free, capable of bearing the weight of pastoral responsibilities.”³⁵ This is what the priest is called to be. It is expected that the parish priest having lived such an experience as pastor will be in the best position to guide the seminarian to begin to mirror his life to it through an apprenticeship in the parish with the pastor. All of this will come to its proper expectation if the one who is aspiring is rightly motivated and truly available to be guided in the way of Christ. In order for the human formation to complete and become available for the task of leading others, there is a need for spiritual formation.

7.2 Spiritual

In the words of Thomas Aquinas, “Since therefore grace does not destroy but perfects it, natural reason should minister to faith as the bent of will ministers to charity.”³⁶ It is in this richness of expectation that the life of the church minister to her members. Every Christian is called to holiness³⁷. But there is a peculiarity in priestly spirituality.

The spiritual training should be closely connected with the doctrinal and pastoral, and, with the special help of the spiritual director, should be imparted in such a way that the students might learn to live in an intimate and unceasing union with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Conformed to Christ the Priest through their sacred ordination they should be accustomed to adhere to Him as friends, in an intimate

companionship, their whole life through. They should so live His paschal mystery themselves that they can initiate into it the flock committed to them.³⁸

The parish and the parish priest provide the seminarian with the required atmosphere and living example to carrying out his spiritual exercises. Having been taught in the seminary the practice of meditation and *Lectio Divina* as a routine, the parish now presents the seminarian the opportunity to live out the spirituality developed in the formation ground. It is through the interaction of the seminarian with the parish priest and generally with the parish life that will make the expected accompaniment possible.³⁹ He sees the challenges in the ministry and learns to channel his energy to the required disposition of pastoral integration of the spiritual principles he has acquired in the seminary. With the intellectual and practical applications that he lives in the seminary, the seminarian begins to realize in a concrete way the various aspects of the spirituality of the life of the priest. He also begins to recognize his own personal strengths and weakness so as to be able to equip himself to develop a personal relationship with Christ through an authentic practical spiritual life. This can have a tremendous effect on the seminarian while in training to constantly and in a profound manner improve on his own response to the formation. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* points this out:

It introduces him to deep communion with Jesus Christ, the good shepherd, and leads to the total submission of one's life to the Spirit, in a filial attitude toward the Father and a trustful attachment to the Church. Spiritual formation has its roots in the experience of the cross, which in deep communion leads to the totality of the paschal mystery.⁴⁰

7.3 Pastoral

Pastoral dimension speaks to the willingness of the seminarian to take up assignments such as the teaching of catechism, preparation for the liturgical celebration, solicitude for the poor and organization of lay apostolate groups in such a way for them to function properly. Here the parish priest is to work assiduously to channel the energy of the

seminarian to the vast pastoral need of the parish while guiding against excesses. Just as it is the duty of the parish priest to take care of the pastoral need of the parish he presides over, it is his duty to gradually introduce the seminarian to the dynamics of this task.

The pastor is obliged to see to it that the word of God in its entirety is announced to those living in the parish; for this reason, he is to see to it that the lay Christian faithful are instructed in the truths of the faith, especially through the homily which is to be given on Sundays and holy days of obligation and through the catechetical formation which he is to give; he is to foster works by which the spirit of the gospel is promoted, including issues involving social justice, is promoted; he is to take special care for the Catholic education of children and of young adults; he is to make every effort with the aid of the Christian faithful, to bring the gospel message also to those who have ceased practising their religion or who do not profess the true faith.⁴¹

In the first paragraph of the can. 528 above, one can claim that a lot of the pastoral work in which the seminarian is to be involved under the supervision of the parish priest is expressed. Practical activities to this effect could be the teaching of catechism to the parishioners of different ages and professions. The seminarian can also be given charge of lay apostolate groups in the parish and in fact, the seminarian is a-priest-in-making and should be very intimate with the pastoral life of the priest.⁴²

The seminarian is one who is training to mirror the life of Christ in his own life and conducts among the people of God. So, he must be made to take a serious part in liturgical celebrations. He is not only to participate actively but must also help other parishioners to understand the importance of liturgical celebrations. Principal among these mysteries of the Liturgy is the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass. "The pastor is to see to it that the Most Holy Eucharist is the centre of the parish assembly of the faithful."⁴³ The earlier those training for the priesthood understand and appreciate the role of the liturgy in their training and eventual ministry as priests the better for the Church and for the proclamation of the gospel message.

Another important aspect of the priest's role in the guidance of the practical application of the seminarian's knowledge in the pastoral fields is the ability to visit the parishioners. This is an important part of the formation. Sometimes priests are not aware of the material situation of parishioners. The ability to visit parishioners can help the seminarian to appreciate them and their faith-journey. This is within the requirement of the priest to know his parishioners and introducing the seminarian to this pastoral obligation becomes an opportunity integration of theory into the practical existential situation.⁴⁴

8. Remarks

The topic that has been addressed here is one that has a lot of practical undertones and it is pertinent to give some remarks. Formation for the priesthood has been prime in the church's evangelical mission. The agents of evangelization must be properly formed to respond to the needs of the human race in all ages. It is also true in our time that the world has known a lot of progress and experienced fragmentations. The church has not been exempted from the present human condition. In Nigeria, the effects of globalization also impact on the life of people. The church has tried over time to respond adequately to the imbalances in the world and address their implications on faith expression.⁴⁵ The most recent of such an effort as it concerns the formation for the priesthood is the *New Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionalis*. One of the admirable points raised in the document is the capacity of Local Churches to fashion out their particular programmes based on their own experiences.

It is the opinion of this paper that the Nigerian church needs to use the opportunity of this document to re-evaluate the priestly training process in the country and create more practical synergy between the seminaries and other institutions like the parish through the dioceses. Priests need to be more involved in the work of formation, helping candidates through practical means to integrate their formation in the seminary in the existential life of the parish. The practice of keeping seminarians far away from the priest should be discouraged as there is the most auspicious opportunity that the seminarian has to see closely the realities of the priestly ministry even before ordination.

9. Conclusion

The danger every priest must avoid is the temptation to view the value taught in the seminary as mere transitory in the life of a person. The values are to become intimate habits in the life of the candidate for the priesthood. These habits create the ground upon which the grace of the sacrament of the Holy Orders will build upon. The principle of St. Thomas Aquinas is very helpful in underscoring the fact that it is the mode of the seminarians that the grace builds on: *Quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*. Whatever is received into something is received according to the condition of the receiver.”⁴⁶

The role of the parish priest in the formation of candidates for the priesthood is to help the seminarian gradually integrate and appropriate the principles he has learnt in the seminary. Therefore, the seminarian should be very close to the priest in the parish when on official and even unofficial pastoral experience. The motivation of the parish priest to do this work should come from his love for the church. Failure to ensure that the taught doctrine and spiritual exercises in the seminary are lived out in the parish can cause a crisis of vocation and identity in the individual to be ordained a priest. Unfortunately, in many instances that is what obtains today. But the onus is on the parish and the seminary as great institutions of interdependence opportunity to help individuals aspiring to the priesthood to take their vocation seriously.

Endnotes

¹ Fulton Sheen, *The Priest Is Not His Own*; Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2005. 10

² Second Vatican Council, *Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes*, 1965.

³Presbyterorum Ordinis no. 2.

⁴ Cf. *ibid*

⁵ Cf. Heb. 5:4; Ex. 28:1; Jn. 15:16.

⁶ *Ibid.* nos. 3. & 7

⁷ Alphonsus De Liguori, *Dignity and Duties of the Priest*, Redemptorist Fathers, Brooklyn, N. Y., 1927. 24.

⁸Presbyterorum Ordinis no. 3

⁹ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana Vatican City, 2002. No. 27.

¹⁰ Vat. II., *Gravissimum Educationis*, 28th Oct. 1965. No. 3.

¹¹ *ibid*

- ¹²Presbyterorum Ordinis no.
- ¹³Pastores Dabo Vobis; no. 2.
- ¹⁴Can. 515 §1.
- ¹⁵ Code of Canon Law 518. from the Vatican archive cited on the 31st of September, 2019.
- ¹⁶ Decree on priestly training, *OPTATAM TOTIUS* OCTOBER 28, 1965, no. 2.
- ¹⁷ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana Vatican City, 2002. No. 2
- ¹⁸ Jorge Carlos Patron Wong, *The Stages of Priestly Formation*, in *The Gift of Priestly Vocation in A Symposium For Formation Teams, English-Speaking Seminaries of Canada*, April 4-7, 2019.
- ¹⁹ Pastores Dabo Vobis, no. 61.
- ²⁰ Ibid 519.
- ²¹Can. 521 §1
- ²² Ibid 521 §2.
- ²³ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation, Ratio Fundamentalibus Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, L' Osservatore Romano, Vatican City, 2016. No. 75.
- ²⁴ Ibid no. 12
- ²⁵ Cf. Ratio 28
- ²⁶ Ratio 44.
- ²⁷ New Ratio Fundamentalibus, no. 130
- ²⁸ Pastores no. 36.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Decree on priestly training, no. 20.
- ³¹ Pastores Dabo Vobis. 58
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Cf. New Ration 30
- ³⁴Pastores Dabo Vobis 43
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Aquinas, *Summa Theological*, Part 1, Question 1, Article 8, Response to objection 2.
- ³⁷ Ibid no. 45
- ³⁸ Decree on priestly training, *OPTATAM TOTIUS*, no. 8
- ³⁹ Cf. New Ratio no. 44
- ⁴⁰Pastores Dabo Vobis, no. 45
- ⁴¹ CCL, Can. 528 §1.
- ⁴² Cf. Can. 530.
- ⁴³Can. 528 §2
- ⁴⁴Cf. 529 §1.
- ⁴⁵ Church in the Modern World, nos. 5, 8, 9 & 10.
- ⁴⁶ Cf. *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 75, a. 5; 3a, q. 5.

CHAPTER 14

**On-Going Formation of Priests:
New Approaches To Post-Seminary
Formation**

Hilary Oseabulu ODENORE

Introduction

I recall an interesting conversation I once had with a very knowledgeable layperson towards the end of my seminary formation. This man was trying to make an argument for the similarity between the calling and work of a Catholic Priest and the work of a Medical Doctor. For him, when one considers the length of training and sophistication of the training received, alongside the ethical requirements, and the demands of the job, the Priesthood and the medical profession are very similar. He made bold to say that in the light of the regular updating and stress on specialization, the medical doctor eventually becomes more refined than the Priest. It was at this point that I mentioned the on-going formation of priests, to which he replied; “What is that? Am just hearing of that? What does it mean? But not all Priests have post-graduate studies, do they?”

The on-going formation¹ of priests is a reality that is often misunderstood, unknown and under-appreciated. And this cuts across the board, as not only are laypersons largely unaware of what it entails, even those that should know better, namely the Clerics themselves seem to underappreciate it. This is despite the fact that it is a concept that is crucial to successful priestly ministry, as we read in the words of Pope Benedict XVI’s *Motu Proprio Ministrorum Institutio*

The ongoing formation of priests... is the natural and absolutely necessary continuation of the process of building priestly personality which began and developed in the seminary... with the training programme which aimed at ordination. It is particularly important to be aware of and to respect the intrinsic link between formation before ordination to the priesthood and formation after ordination. Should there be a break in continuity, or worse, a complete difference between these two phases of formation, there would be serious and immediate repercussions on pastoral work and fraternal communion among priests, especially those in different age groups. Ongoing formation is not a repetition of the formation acquired in the seminary, simply reviewed or expanded with new and practical suggestions. Ongoing formation involves relatively new content and especially methods; it develops as a harmonious and vital process which — rooted in the formation received in the seminary — calls for adaptations, updating and modifications, but without sharp breaks in continuity.²

In this paper, we will consider Post-Seminary formation, from the point of view of new approaches to the on-going formation of priests. We will attempt to articulate the mind of the Church as regards on-going formation of priests, according to the four major levels of formation spelt out in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, namely Spiritual formation; Human formation; Intellectual formation and Pastoral formation, vis-à-vis an overview of what currently obtains in Dioceses in the Benin City Ecclesiastical Province (which we will use as a case study of sorts). From this standpoint, we will consider the possibilities for ‘new’ approaches to on-going formation, albeit it will be our argument that we can only consider ‘new’ approaches when we have better understood what should be obtainable.

Definition of On-Going Priestly Formation

When the Church talks about the on-going formation of Priests, she refers to a distinct phenomenon. “The term ‘ongoing formation’ is a reminder that one’s experience of discipleship of those called to the priesthood is never interrupted. The priest not only learns to know Christ but under the action of the Holy Spirit, he finds himself within a process of gradual and continuous configuration to Him, in his

being and his acting, which constantly challenges the person to inner growth”.³

The Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests uses similar categorization for the concept. Here we read;

The activity of formation is based on a dynamic demand intrinsic to the ministerial charisma, which is permanent and irreversible in itself. Therefore this can **never be considered finished**, neither on the part of the Church which imparts it nor on the part of the minister who receives it. It is, therefore, necessary that this is thought of and developed in such a way that all priests may receive it *always*, keeping in mind the characteristics and possibilities that vary with age, condition of life, and assignments. Such a formation must cover and harmonise all the dimensions of the formation of priests. Thus, it must tend to help each priest achieve the development of a full human personality matured in the spirit of service to others, in whatever task he may receive; it will permit him to be intellectually prepared in the theological sciences as well as in the human sciences, insofar as they are linked with his ministry, in order to pursue his function as witness to the faith with a greater effectiveness; that he has a deep spiritual life, nourished by intimacy with Jesus Christ and by love for the Church; and so that he may pursue his pastoral ministry with zeal and dedication. In practice, such formation must be **complete**: spiritual, pastoral, human, intellectual, systematic and personalised.⁴

The watershed Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation that was the fruit of the Synod of Bishops that considered the formation of priests in present-day circumstances also treated the question of on-going formation. According to the Synod Fathers, “The ongoing formation of priests, whether diocesan or religious, is the natural and absolutely necessary continuation of the process of building priestly personality which began and developed in the seminary or the religious house with the training programme which aimed at ordination”⁵ Without prejudice to the best efforts of Bishops and Churches who are

working hard at it, it would appear that in Nigeria, the on-going formation of priests is yet to receive the kind of attention that would help to underline its importance. And can be attributed to two factors.

Culturally, there is the inability to adequately inculcate in both formators and formandees (sic), the fact that Seminary formation is preparation for Priestly life, and not just for Priestly ordination. If the emphasis during Seminary formation is for the Seminary Formators to weed out those who are not suitable for the priestly ministry, it stands to reason that the *modus operandi* would be fault-finding, in place of journeying along with the candidate, to help him answer his call. And when the Seminarians discern that his formators are very interested in seeking out his faults, he will continually seek out creative ways to make sure that these faults are not found out, following the principle of the proverbial *Eneke* the bird⁶. This would lead to pretence and other related vices, just to ensure that one crosses the line. In this manner, priestly ordination, the end-point of Seminary formation, is made to be a *terminus ad quem*, rather than the starting point of another life-long journey that is meant to build upon what was learnt in the Seminary.

On the other hand, and this applies to those situations where there are attempts to accentuate on-going formation, the stress seems to be on the intellectual formation, rather than a holistic approach. On-going formation in such instances, is reduced to further studies after ordination, and in certain cases, even this is not regarded as a right of the individual priest, but a privilege. What is clear is that in such situations, the academic degrees that a priest acquires after ordination, tend to overshadow the need to focus on other aspects of his priestly, resulting in arrested development of the other aspects.

When the Church talks about the on-going formation of her priests, we must be clear that “Programmes, resources, and practices do not constitute ongoing formation. They are necessary instruments but always in service to the larger purpose and direction of formation”⁷. On the contrary, “it is the continuing integration of priestly identity and functions or service for the sake of mission and communion with Christ and the Church”⁸.

A Brief Overview of On-going Formation as it Obtains in our Circumstances

We have seen from the foregoing, that on-going formation of priests is a multi-faceted reality. Before we can consider the possibility of new approaches to it, we have to attempt an x-ray of what currently obtains in our immediate environment⁹. We will do this using the following four questions;

- Who is responsible for the on-going formation of priests?
- When is the on-going formation of priests supposed to take place?
- What constitutes the content of the on-going formation of priests?
- How is the on-going formation of priests carried out?¹⁰

Who Is Responsible For The On-Going Formation Of Priests?

When we talk about the on-going formation of priests, and who should be responsible for it, the casual observer will immediately point to the Individual Priest and his Bishop. This will be a correct answer, although not an exhaustive one.

Pastores Dabo Vobis gives a deeper approach to the question of who is responsible for the on-going formation of priests, by specifying the following agents;

1. The Church itself as a Communion, under its head, the Bishop.
2. The Individual Priest.
3. The Bishop and the Presbyterate.
4. Experts involved in the formation of Priests.
5. The Family of the Priest.¹¹

As stated above, the Priest and his Bishop are two agents that quickly come to mind in this regard, and rightly so. In the words of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the priest's responsibility, "...is linked to their commitment at ordination to serve well the people of God through their ministry and through their own personal faith commitment. Priests in dialogue with their bishop, his representative, or other members of the presbyterate need to map out their plan of ongoing formation"¹².

As for the Bishop, it goes without saying that part of his function as a Shepherd, is to see to the welfare of his closest

collaborators, the Priests. And the ongoing formation of these his sons falls squarely under the title of welfare. By extension too, since the individual priest belongs to a fraternity of priests, it stands to reason that his brothers should be solicitous for the on-going formation of one another. The 'novelty' however, especially given our culture here, lies in the other two agents; the Church as a Communion and the Family of the priest.

We belong to a culture that still has great reverence for the 'man of God'. Catholics generally love and respect their priests, and they understand that they have an obligation to care for the priest since he is the one that represents them in their relations with God (cf James 5:1-4). Often, this care for the priest gets restricted to praying for them and providing for their material needs. It is noteworthy, therefore, for us to remind ourselves that there are other obligations beyond these two activities, one of which is to ensure their on-going formation.

Priests are not there to serve themselves but the People of God. So, ongoing formation, in ensuring the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral maturity of priests, is doing good to the People of God itself. Besides, the very exercise of the pastoral ministry leads to a constant and fruitful mutual exchange between the priest's life of faith and that of the laity. Indeed the very relationship and sharing of life between the priest and the community, if it is wisely conducted and made use of, will be a fundamental contribution to the permanent formation, which cannot be reduced to isolated episodes or initiatives, but covers the whole ministry and life of the priest. ...And so the entire People of God, in each and every one of its members, can and should offer precious assistance to the ongoing formation of its priests. In this sense, people should see that priests are allowed time for study and prayer. They should ask of them that for which Christ has sent them and not require anything else. They should offer to help in the various aspects of the pastoral mission, especially in those related to

human development and works of charity. They should establish cordial and brotherly relations with them, helping priests to remember that they are not "to lord it over" the faithful, but rather "work with them for their joy" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:24).¹³

The Socio-Economic realities in Nigeria have created an emerging attitude of distrust towards Clergymen in recent times. Social media is quick to make viral the mistakes, offences and crimes of self-acclaimed men of God, and in this manner, festering a wave of anti-clericalism that is alien to our cultural heritage. While it has always been a pastime of sorts for parishioners to discuss their priests, the present social conditions mean that such discussions are tending more towards looking for reasons to criticize and condemn them.

But a true Catholic that wants to condemn his/her priest, has to realize that to the extent that the failings being highlighted are rooted in an incomplete formation of the related aspect of the priest's life, then he/she has some responsibility for making sure that such errors are corrected and *lacunae* filled up. This is because we all have a role to play in the on-going formation of the priest.

The family of the priest has its own part to play in the matter. The joy and festivities that colour the priestly ordination of a person, is to some extent the family's way of showing gratitude to God for choosing one of them to serve Him in a particular manner. Beyond the ordination day, however, and without wanting to go into certain negative influences that the priest's family could have on him, the family is to help him fully realize his identity as a true disciple of Jesus, and a minister of God's mysteries in the Church.

By being one with their son in his aims, the family can offer him its own important contribution to his mission. The plan of providence chose the priest's family to be the place in which his vocation was planted and nourished, an indispensable help for the growth and development of his vocation. Now the family, with the greatest respect for their son who has chosen to give himself to God and neighbour, should always remain as a faithful and encouraging witness of his mission, supporting that mission and sharing in it with devotion and respect. In this way, the family

will help bring God's providential plan to completion.¹⁴

It is a truism that these two Agents of on-going formation, have generally not been factored into the efforts in our circumstances. It is one area where improvement can be made, and immediately too, to ensure that priests are given the best possible assistance to fully realize their identity and carry out their obligations.

When is the On-going Formation of Priests to take place? By its nature, the on-going formation of priests is a life-long matter. The ideal is to have a structure that caters for the different phases of life of a priest, and in this regard, there is still a lot yet undone in our circumstances.

The present-day emphasis leans towards the formation of newly-ordained priests or what is commonly referred to as 'junior clergy' (priests of 10 years of priestly ordination and below). It is commonplace in Dioceses in Nigeria, to have programmes and activities designed to help them live up to the responsibilities of the priestly state that they assume after ordination, and subsequently, to acquire skills that will help them to handle greater pastoral offices, as they grow in the priestly life.

Usually, after a priest crosses the threshold of 10 years of ordination, there is rarely any specific programmes aimed at addressing challenges that he might be experiencing, such as burn out, mid-life crises, health challenges that vitiate their ability to fulfil their responsibilities, thereby leading to feelings of inadequacy and frustration. In addition, there is an absence of a strategic plan at the level of the Dioceses to see to their intellectual renewal, and the acquisition of new skills and getting acquainted with contemporary Church modalities for resolving modern-day challenges. Yes, priests are sent to go for studies, and yes, there are workshops, seminars and other activities to impart skills to the priests. The problem is that there is often no strategic plan behind these efforts, hence we tend not to get the desired results.

What Constitutes On-going Formation? Here, we are talking about the content of on-going formation or better still, its aspects of Spiritual, Human, Intellectual and Pastoral formation.

This dimension of On-going Priestly formation is one of the strengths of the Dioceses that are in Edo State. The present-day practice stresses on Intellectual formation and Pastoral formation. Indeed, the intellectual formation is largely aimed at providing priests with the skills to better function pastorally. It is against this backdrop that Dioceses plan for further studies for priests, in order to meet three categories of need;

- a. Ensuring that the Diocese has relevant experts for its proper functioning;
- b. Satisfy the requests of Institutions like Seminaries and other Catholic Institutions of Higher Learning, for experts in ecclesiastical and other sciences;
- c. See to the personal development of priests who may not fall under categories a) & b) above.

These three criteria are usually what informs the choice of persons going for further studies, even though many would argue that what obtains could be better organized and made to operate under a defined system. In this way, the on-going pastoral formation of priests is guaranteed, as the intellectual formation is geared towards better pastoral practices.

As regards the Spiritual formation, this arguably is the strongest of the four aspects in terms of what Dioceses are doing for the priests. Practically all Dioceses in Nigeria have annual retreats for the priests and regular monthly recollections, either at Diocesan or Deanery levels, following the relevant canonical prescriptions¹⁵. However, there is a need for due diligence in this area, lest what has always been an area of strength becomes one of weakness. This is because of the twin evils of absenteeism (especially in the case of Recollections) and the inability of priests to stay *in situ* at the Retreat grounds for the entire period of the Annual Retreat for diverse reasons, disrupting the rhythm that the exercise needs, and losing focus therein.

On the whole, Dioceses have some arrangements for the different aspects of on-going Priestly Formation. While the Spiritual aspect seems to be the most stable in terms of the programmes, to some extent, the Intellectual and Pastoral formation also enjoy

reasonable consideration, while it would appear that Human formation does not enjoy the same level of planning and programming.

How is On-going Formation Carried out? Generally, on-going formation is carried out through courses, programmes and similar activities. This is why we often hear of priests attending seminars, participating in workshops and talks, as well as taking courses that equip them for the priestly ministry. Usually, these activities are carried out by groups of priests.

However, Human and Spiritual formation needs more than such activities, and our Dioceses need to explore other more personalized options, such as mentoring, so as to get the best out of her priests. This is because after all considered, it is the individual priest that needs this permanent formation, and he has to be open to the promptings of the Spirit through these programmes and activities. “For this reason, there should be awareness, especially on the part of those responsible, that all priests must be reached personally, taking care of each one, and not simply having all the diverse opportunities available to them”¹⁶.

New Approaches to On-going Formation

Having attempted an overview of On-going Formation, we recommend the following possibilities as new approaches to on-going formation for priests.

- Increased Episcopal Solitude.
- Systematization of Processes
- Accountability (through the involvement of other Agents of Formation)
- Flipping the pyramid of emphasis.

Increased Episcopal Solitude: The role of the Bishop in the on-going formation of priests is very important. According to *Apostolorum Successores*,

The Bishop is the father of the priestly family and through him, the Lord Jesus Christ is present among believers. For this reason, just as Jesus manifested his

love for the Apostles, so too the Bishop knows that it is his duty to show particular *love and solicitude* for priests and candidates for the sacred ministry. Guided by sincere and unwavering charity, the Bishop should take care **to assist his priests in every way, so that they come to appreciate the sublime priestly vocation, live it with serenity and defend it with vigour, radiant with joy as they faithfully carry out their duties.**¹⁷

All the documents that refer to the Agents of Formation underline the importance of the Bishop in this matter. If we wish to pay attention to the chronology, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* lists the Church and the Bishop as first among the agents of on-going formation¹⁸, and while *The Directory on the Life and Ministry of Priests* places the Priest himself and Brotherly Assistance as the first two Agents, in talking about the Bishop, it acknowledges that he has a very clear responsibility as per the permanent formation of his priests. Hence we read that the Bishop's responsibility;

is expressed both in that which concerns the individual priest, for whom the formation must be as personalized as possible and in that which concerns the formation of all the priests who make up the diocesan presbyterium. In this sense, the Bishop will never fail to foster communication and communion among priests, taking particular care, to guard and promote the true nature of their ongoing formation, to educate their consciences regarding its necessity and importance, and finally, to plan the necessary structure and appropriate persons to carry it out.¹⁹

Bishops have always given their best in the area of ensuring the utmost in terms of the permanent formation of the priests. Nevertheless, the need for increased episcopal solicitude cannot be over-emphasized. This solicitude will make the priest understand that the question of on-going formation is neither optional for them, whereby they may or may not apply themselves to it, nor an imposition from 'without'. The Bishop has to utilize a virile pastoral approach to make the priests better appreciate programmes of on-going formation that are available to them. To this end, we would

borrow from the document of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which spells out the duty of the Bishop in this regard as including the following:

1. Bishop's Direct Responsibility:
 - The receipt of a regular report from those charged with the ongoing formation of priests on the "state of soul" of the presbyterate and any particular concerns
 - At least three contact points with the presbyterate at large, e.g., Chrism Mass, a study day, or a diocesan retreat (as well as the presbyteral convocation when it is held)
 - A periodic conversation held either directly or through the bishop's delegate with each priest concerning his ongoing formation to provide for accountability and encouragement
2. Bishop's Provision for Ongoing Formation:
 - Provides for the adequate staffing of an office for the ongoing formation of priests (bishop functions as the guarantor of encouragement, time, and resources)
 - Appoints a director to organize, ensure funding for, and communicate the resources of human, intellectual, pastoral, and spiritual formation (whether diocesan based or drawn from other institutions)
 - Appoints and oversees a committee of priests (perhaps drawn from the presbyteral council) and others to regularly examine the process of ongoing formation in its various dimensions
 - Supervises the director to establish linkage between the ongoing formation of priests and other diocesan efforts, e.g., evangelization, catechesis, worship, justice and peace, and lay formation
 - Through the mechanisms of diocesan communication, communicates the values, purposes, and activities of the ongoing formation of priests to the people of God²⁰

A cursory juxtaposition of the recommendations of the USCCB above and what obtains in dioceses around us would reveal that while there are some elements already present, there is still much room for

improvement. The Bishop may want to better utilize such offices as the Vicar for Priests, and such organs as the Priests' Welfare Committee/Commission, and expand their responsibilities to include the on-going formation of priests, such that they can better assist him to carry out his role in this regard.

Systematization Of Processes: Following from the above, it is necessary to ensure that the 'Director (Directorate) of On-going Priestly Formation' sees to the systematization of the processes and activities of on-going formation. As we have already seen, there already exists different initiatives as regards permanent formation, but they tend to be unco-ordinated and scattered. It will be the responsibility of the said Director, under the supervision of the Bishop, to see to the planning, execution and evaluation of the different formation programmes in the diocese.

This is particularly important when one considers that the mind of the Church is for such formation to span through the life of the priest. Consequently, it is expected that;

there is a formation that is specific to newly ordained priests, recently ordained priests, priests preparing for the first pastorate, middle-aged priests, priests preparing for retirement, and retired priests. Each group has its specific programme needs. Still, there are core pieces of identity and service that are constant across priests' lifetimes no matter their age or the particular circumstances of their ministry. A part of formation truly does remain ongoing, permanent, or constant.²¹

The volume of work that this will entail for the typical Catholic Diocese in Southern Nigeria, with its attendant high numbers of ordained priests for instance, already points to the need for an office and staff, with files and other hardware that will cater for the organization of information. And before we get fixated on the office space and the equipment needed, it is more important to ensure that the Director himself is trained before undertaking such office. Such training does not necessarily mean frequenting a course in a University. It would suffice to spend time in two or three Dioceses (preferably overseas) that have a defined and functioning programme

for on-going formation and to carefully study their *modus operandi*, with particular emphasis on the content and general orientation of their programmes.

It is this knowledge that will guide the Director in setting out the office and determining the responsibilities of the staff in the office. It is through this office also that the Bishop will be able to monitor the progress of his priests along with set parameters. For instance, the USCCB prescribes the following minimum for the priest as regards his on-going formation;

- Fifty-two contact hours of education per year (in other words, one hour per week)
- One week of retreat
- Daily prayer (especially the celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours)
- Monthly celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation, perhaps in conjunction with spiritual direction
- Monthly contact with a priest group or its equivalent.²²

In a diocese of about 50 priests for example, it will be very difficult to firstly organize, execute and then evaluate each priest from the point of view of the minimum for formation for the year, without such an office. Similarly, one can easily imagine the incremental improvements in the lives of priests if the office is well set up and running efficiently, hence its urgency.

Accountability (Through The Involvement Of Other Agents) The word ‘accountability’ suffers from a misunderstanding in Nigeria, and this misunderstanding sometimes means that when it is mentioned in certain circles, there is a semi-automatic negative reaction towards who uses it. However, in so far as accountability refers to “an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions”²³ then its relevance vis-à-vis new approaches to the on-going formation of priests becomes clearer.

The most important factor in on-going formation is the priest himself. It is critical therefore that there be a system to hold him accountable for his actions in this regard. Without prejudice to the

sense of personal responsibility of the priest (which thanks to his initial formation tends to be very high), and to his free will, the Church has to have a way to get assurance that he is taking this seriously, as what negatively affects an individual priest reflects poorly on the corporate identity of the Church in a variety of ways. So, the other agents of on-going formation can assist the priest in this regard.

This is why the Bishop has to receive regular updates from the Directorate of On-going Formation and to pay close attention to those who may not be *pulling their weight*, as this could be an indicator of other deep-seated issues. The Bishop should not hesitate to raise this matter with his priests during pastoral visits and other encounters, as this will provide rich feedback from the priests' point of view, which can, in turn, facilitate the further improvement of the existing programmes.

The Presbyterium shares a special relationship with themselves. "In all the aspects of priestly existence, there appear particular bonds of apostolic charity, of ministry and of fraternity, which serve as the foundation of the reciprocal help that priests give each other. It is to be hoped that co-operation among all priests should grow and develop as regards their spiritual and human life, as well as their ministerial service. The help which must be given to priests in this field can find support in the different priestly associations which tend to form a truly diocesan spirituality".²⁴ Priests should encourage one another to apply themselves to the programmes that can help them make considerable progress in becoming other Christ, as it is often the case that they will be the first to discern when a brother priest is in difficulty.

In addition, the family of the priest should be made aware of their responsibility to journey along with their brother priest, with the same prayerfulness and joy that they demonstrated during his initial formation²⁵. We have already highlighted the novelty of the stress of the family of the priest as one of the Agents of his on-going formation. This has to be put in practical terms in the way they assist their son and brother in striving to become a good and holy priest. One clear way to assist him is not making undue financial demands on him that could distract him from his purpose.

Furthermore, experts in Seminary formation have to be incorporated into Diocesan Programmes of On-going Formation. This

can be advantageous in two ways; firstly, through their interface with priests in the field, they will be able to identify areas of initial formation that can be improved upon, from the standpoint of the lived experiences of priests. Additionally, they are in a good position to play a mentorship role to the priests, and to use the repertoire of their experiences to identify the connectedness between lapses in seminary formation and priestly life, and proffer solutions to the priests.

Flipping The Pyramid Of Emphasis: As we tried to establish much earlier in this work, On-going Formation tends to be identified with further studies. Also, extant programmes in Diocese stress more on the intellectual and pastoral aspects, while there are already regular activities that cater for the spiritual aspect of the priest's formation. The Human Formation does not have these sorts of programmes in the Dioceses, and should we continue like this without any intervention, then it would remain de-emphasized. Thus, there is an urgent need to flip the pyramid of emphasis as far as on-going formation is concerned, so that the human aspect gets the needed attention and pride of place.

In real sense, the Human aspect of on-going formation should come first in terms of emphasis. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* maintains that;

Fuller development is first required in the human aspect of priestly formation. Through his daily contact with people, his sharing in their daily lives, the priest needs to develop and sharpen his human sensitivity so as to understand more clearly their needs, respond to their demands, perceive their unvoiced questions and share the hopes and expectations, the joys and burdens which are part of life: Thus he will be able to meet and enter into dialogue with all people. In particular, through coming to know and share, through making his own the human experience or suffering in its many different manifestations, from poverty to illness, from rejection to ignorance, loneliness and material or moral poverty, the priest can cultivate his own humanity and make it all the more genuine and clearly

apparent by his increasingly ardent love for his fellow men and women.²⁶

It is when the priest is a better person that he can be a better Christian, and then more fully realize his identity as a close disciple of Jesus and a minister of the sacraments within the Body of Christ. This is why his Human formation, which is a life-long affair, cannot be over-emphasized. The goal, as the same document puts it, is that "...the People of God should be able to say about the priest, who has increasingly matured in human sensitivity, something similar to what we read about Jesus in the letter to the Hebrews: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning" (Heb. 4:15).²⁷

In their *Basic Plan for the On-going Formation of Priests*, the USCCB states that a genuine Human Formation has to stress on the improvement of the Priest's capacity to communicate and his capacity for communion; care for the physical body to maintain a healthy and invested life, integration of human sexuality and contact with culture. As regards specific ways of realizing this, it provides that;

The specific means include events, resources, and programmes. For example, human formation, as we have described it, can sometimes occur through a one-to-one dialogue of friendship. At times, professional counselling can appropriately and effectively address human growth issues for priests. It need not be reserved, as unfortunately, it is in the perceptions of some, for the treating of illness. Professionally facilitated groups that focus on interpersonal dynamics can be effective instruments of human formation. Similarly, the human formation can happen in the context of feedback, when individuals are helped to see and appreciate their impact in various situations so that they can learn from that knowledge and confirm what is good and change what is less opportune. Programmes of periodic review and assessment are useful feedback mechanisms. As we have described it, the human formation has a direct, personal, and experiential dimension. Studies can also

foster human formation for priests. An intellectual component in human formation enables priests to understand themselves and others better. Certain courses, seminars, workshops, or directed readings could advance the human formation of priests.²⁸

In an ideal situation, even if there is no other programme of on-going formation in a Diocese, due to the importance of the human aspect, then the activities listed above have to be running in the typical Diocese. Bishops, given their position in the Church, have to make sure that Human formation comes first before the other aspects, to guarantee that the goals of on-going formation as a whole are realized. It is when the priest is truly human, that he can be more holy, an excellent pastor, and a scholar.

Conclusion:

It is often said that *there is no small vulture*. This is with reference to the fact that all vultures are bald, even the newborn among them. And this saying is often used in discussions involving newly ordained/young priests. I was a beneficiary of the saying too, and I choose the word 'beneficiary', because in the context of the discussion then, the saying was meant to boost my morale after some loving parishioners pointed out my error to me in a particular pastoral situation. Interestingly, they went on to say that they understood why I made the error, and they trust that a few years down the line, I will not be making such mistakes anymore.

It is true that there is no small vulture, but there certainly are inexperienced vultures, who despite their baldness, unless they continue their training under the more experienced ones, they would not get the tools needed to become the best possible vultures they could be. The on-going formation of priests is that indispensable mechanism that will help a priest to fully actualize the gamut of potentialities that are in him after he has assumed the priestly identity with sacred ordination. It is our opinion that this aspect of the life of the Church demands closer attention, and the new approaches we have suggested above will go a long way in ensuring that this is the case.

Endnotes

¹ In this paper, we will use the terms Post-Seminary Formation, On-going Formation and Permanent Formation of Priests synonymously.

² Benedict XVI, *Motu Proprio Ministrorum Institutio*, 16th January, 2013.

³ Congregation for the Clergy, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, 8th December 2016, No 80

⁴ Congregation for the Clergy, *The Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, Vatican City, 1994, Nos 73 & 74.

⁵ John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 25th March, 1992, No, 71

⁶ *Eneke* the bird, as we read in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* said that 'since hunters have learnt to shoot without missing, I too have learnt to fly without perching'.

⁷ United States Catholic Bishops, *Basic Plan for the On-going Formation of Priests*, 2001, General Description.

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ What we will offer here is the fruit of participant observation of the Author, as a member of a Diocese, as well having carried out informal investigations into what also obtains in Benin City Archdiocese, and the Catholic Diocese of Auchi. These three Dioceses, which are in Edo State, Nigeria, constitute the 'immediate environment' referred to in the paper. While a more scientific study will offer deeper insights into the issues raised above, we do not reasonably expect it to have results that are completely different from the picture we will try to paint in this effort.

¹⁰ In drawing up these four categories, we are drawing largely from the USCCB's *Basic Plan for the On-going Formation of Priests*.

¹¹ See Nos 78 & 79

¹² USCCB, *Ibid*, No N.

¹³ John Paul II, *ibid*, No 78

¹⁴ *Ibid*, No 79

¹⁵ We read in Can. 276 §1. In leading their lives, clerics are bound in a special way to pursue holiness since, having been consecrated to God by a new title in the reception of orders, they are dispensers of the mysteries of God in the service of His people.

§2. In order to be able to pursue this perfection:

4/ they are equally bound to make time for spiritual retreats according to the prescripts of particular law;

¹⁶ Congregation for the Clergy, *Ibid*, No 80

¹⁷ Congregation for Bishops, *Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops Apostolorum Successores*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano, No 75 (emphasis added)

¹⁸ John Paul II, *Ibid*, No 65

¹⁹ No 89

²⁰ USCCB, *Ibid*, No N

²¹ *Ibid*, No I

²² USCCB, *Ibid*, No N

²³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/accountability> (Last visit 4th September, 2019)

²⁴ Congregation for the Clergy, *Ibid*, No 88

²⁵ The Bishop may choose to devote a part of the Homily during priestly ordinations and Chrism masses to encourage the families of priests in this regard.

²⁶ John Paul II, *Ibid*, No 72

²⁷ John Paul II, *Ibid*, No 72

²⁸ USCCB, *Ibid*, No J

CHAPTER 15

Co-Leadership as a Management Option for Ecclesial Administration

Emmarex Elemeiye OKHAKHU

Introduction

Traditional views of leadership as a top-down process are increasingly challenged by critical perspectives that acknowledge that leadership may involve several people. Using the seminal work of David Sally¹ as the launchpad for this critical conceptual analysis, this research explored co-leadership where members share several leadership responsibilities. The research traces co-leadership through its definitional, management, and ecclesial lens. It challenged the deep-seated traditional leadership of parish functions and Church administration by bringing to the fore some biblical and canonical precepts and considerations that should steer ecclesial thinking in co-leadership. Beyond its contributions to the current leadership research, this work conceives the Church as a living organization with strategies, norms, and discipline; a corporate of sorts in dire need of shared responsibilities and accountabilities. The overview of the existing literature, fused into ecclesial leadership models in the Bible and Post-Conciliar teachings should wake up fresh insights into the Church's understanding of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church in the modern world.

In David Sally work: *Co-Leadership: Lessons from Republican Rome*,² a leadership framework was created for Ancient Rome after a century of kingly successions. In 510 BCE, the Republic was founded and the first pair of Consuls was appointed. From the perspective of battle-as-marketplace and government as-firm-metaphor, Rome was

conceived as a high-growth company with sufficient scale of leadership to ensure a more complex organizational structure. “In addition to the pair of Consuls (CEOs), two Censors (CFOs) were added, two Praetors (COOs), four Aediles (SVPs of production and operations), four Quaestors (Comptrollers), and numerous provincial governors (Regional VPs)”³

However, Sally’s analysis insufficiently explained the social conflicts that consumed the Patricians (Nobles) and the Plebs (Common People), who though were full-fledged citizens of Rome, were denied political opportunities. The Patricians’ monopoly on power “could not withstand the growing numbers, motivation, and wealth of the Plebs, as they organized the own bureaucracy, laws, and rights – a state within a state,”⁴ devolving into more anarchy. This failure and crisis of leadership continued into 367 BCE and further, even when a merger was effected to include the Plebs in every strata of governance.

Power asymmetries in this new inclusive governance only widened the divide between the lame duck and the rising stars, and made cohesiveness and learning impossible to the extent that if a co-leader departs unexpectedly, the others could not forge on to lead the organization. Such leadership lacked flexibility, learning, and continuity: “for when news came that a huge army of Gauls had encamped in [the] Latin territory, Scipio was seriously ill; and the conduct of the war was given by special enactment to Popilius”⁵

Co-leadership, practised in Roman Republic was power shared between the two highest officers of state: the consuls. In this Republic, the consuls shared power at the apex of a power-sharing system in which every official had to have a colleague with equal authority but never trickled down to the ‘subordinates’. Such leadership at best was vertical devoid of parallel ownership. It dictated top-down the minds of the gods that were reverently obeyed. In this world order, co-leaders had no chance of immediately and permanently descending to the group. That decision would have to be made by the ex-Consuls as entrenched in their laws guiding their dictatorship⁶. This model leadership did not lead ‘with’ rather, it led ‘over’ others. This is where Sally’s discourse appeared to have missed the mark. His use of the descriptive term ‘co-leadership’ to capture the leadership of Republic Rome rubs off negatively against its ideal meaning in management and

leadership studies, and begs us for its re-definition and re-conceptualization in modern organizations.

Co-leadership in the Literature

Leadership can be an elusive term to describe but easily identified when practised. Based on its common element of relation-building “. . . a leader is someone who touches another’s future”⁷ Peter Senge, writing in *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*, concurs with this understanding and notes that it is easy to perceive both good leadership and the absence of good leadership. “You can always sense the presence or absence of leadership when you begin working in a new organization”⁸ The stake gets higher when defining co-leadership.

Heenan and Bennis⁹ introduced the concept of co-leadership as an activity that several people can share. This makes the term synonymous with shared leadership. The collective nature of leadership focuses on it as being shared and distributed¹⁰ between formally appointed managers, particularly at lower and middle management levels. Position-sharing within pairs of managers demonstrates an alternative way of organizing leadership within a managerial position. This two-person instance is a “special case of shared leadership”¹¹

In clearer terms, Pearce & Conger argue that:

The key distinction between shared leadership and traditional models of leadership is that the influence process involves more than just downward influence on subordinates by an appointed or elected leader [...]. Rather, leadership is broadly distributed among a set of individuals instead of centralized in the hands of a single individual who acts in the role of a superior.¹²

The concept of ‘shared and distributed’ is defining and emerges, as it is needed since one leader in the traditional sense cannot be the expert in teams composed of people with different expert skills. Rather, the team becomes more effective if the leadership is distributed and all members are allowed to influence the direction¹³. The idea of top-down leadership weakens the concept of empowered teams since shared leadership occurs when the team is exerting influence.

There is empirical evidence that managerial positions are successfully shared in most corporations.¹⁴ Even so, the sharing

formula is fraught with problems. We still witness both ignorance of and resistance to the idea of shared leadership within a managerial position¹⁵ Even in Sweden, where shared leadership has been mostly demonstrated recently has a problem arising from its new Education Act, which forbade school principals to formally share leadership on an equal basis; each so-called school unit has to have only one principal¹⁶. This motivates a discussion about how to conceptualize the phenomenon and its different forms.

Klinga, Hanson, Hanson, and Anderson¹⁷ explored the concept of co-leadership as “one approach to meet the managerial challenges of integrated services --- practiced by pairs of managers – each manager representing one of the two principal organizations in integrated health and social care services”¹⁸ functional and project managers with either dotted or solid reporting lines of leadership. These researchers argue that “to deliver sustainable health and social care, cross-boundary collaboration is needed.¹⁹ In addition, Stein, Barbazza, Tello, and Kluge, stated that collaboration between professionals from different sectors is likely to develop more people-centred and holistic care.”²⁰ Individuals with complex morbidities, such as those with mental illness, HIV, and disabilities, are vulnerable to fragmented care. “A higher degree of cooperation between services or integration of services is required to decrease the fragmentation”²¹

Schools are beginning to imbibe the concept of shared leadership as a partnership, where teachers, staff, parents and students are equal partners. “Creating this balance of power is probably one of the hardest aspects in shared leadership”²² Even so, school boards are working on effective and clear parameters that can empower all members of the group. Hughes and Pickeral believe in the importance of,

safe, equitable, engaging and high-quality school climates. Shared Leadership is when teachers, staff, parents, students and principals collaborate to solve problems. Working together to create an engaging school climate that accelerates student learning is common sense. Where shared leadership exists with youth and adults working collaboratively, there is a student-focused school.²³

Co-leadership, therefore, is a departure from the formal leader to a shared leadership model resulting in shared power and decision-

making. Instead of an 'elite' individual leading the crew, others are invited to share the responsibility for leadership and develop a positive school climate.

In the complex world of health care, it is inconceivable that the traditional top-down, heroic leadership really works. In fact, it would be a disservice to the healing profession. Health care leadership is a "competency-based behaviour that has to come from everyone involved in health care. Doctors work in multidisciplinary teams focused on the needs and safety of the patient where leadership becomes the responsibility of the team"²⁴ While there is a functional leader of the team who is accountable for the performance of the team, the responsibility for identifying problems, solving them and implementing the appropriate action is shared by the team. The key distinction between shared and traditional models of leadership in this scenario is that the influence process involves more than just the downward influence of subordinates by a positional leader. Leadership is distributed amongst a set of individuals instead of being centralized in the hands of a single individual who acts in the role of leader.²⁵

In critical care for patients with cancer, HIV, AIDS, brain aneurysm, or even an automobile accident victim, a community of practice is deployed quickly in a multi-disciplinary fashion. This critical team may include different experts: surgeons, oncologists, anesthetists, palliative care specialists, specialist nurses, general nurses, therapists, radiologists, general practitioners, physiotherapists, nephrologists, cardiologist etc. These individual expert leaders co-jointly make contributions in the planning and care delivery of the patient. "Within a shared leadership model, leadership passes from individual to individual along the patient's pathway of care. This provides continuity of care for the patient without compromising the standards of care"²⁶ No one surgeon, medical director, or clinical expert satisfies the professional training of the individual experts in the interdisciplinary team to lead them in the traditional model. This fact does not diminish the need for a functional leader.

Interdisciplinary teams now characterize effective organizations, taking the burden off one person or discipline to have all the bulk knowledge and experience that solves the complexity of today's problems. The breakthroughs in science, organizations, and people management are more likely to come from the collective interactions, contributions, and leadership between multiple disciplines

rather than a single positional leader. So, what are the specific benefits and drawbacks of co-leadership?

Benefits and Challenges of Co-leadership

Successful co-leadership demands the ability to listen to team members' thought processes, which can challenge your own opinions based on fact. This disposition on a wider scale may lead to better solutions. Such Partnership binds people together toward common goals, sharing a common vision. It elicits human creativity, mutual respect, and allows partnership and compromise to trickle down to the rest of the organization. This concept can shrink factions, silo mentalities, and hero worship.

Co-leadership is a hard process that works when people commit to its discipline. It invites a voluntary commitment and deep desire to be involved in the process. One must clearly want to improve self and believe sincerely that others have good ideas as well. Like in every true partnership, it's imperative to start with the same vision, a desire to keep the conversation alive in spite of disagreements, and springing new compromises. O'Toole, Galbraith and Lawler captured these ideas more aptly: "... co-leadership is much more likely to be successful with clear and agreed differentiation. This isn't a one-off conversation. Make co-leadership sustainable by regularly re-evaluating your roles and effectiveness."²⁷

The concept of co-leadership shift the perspective from viewing leadership as a single-person activity to viewing it as collective constructive processes, which opens space for all participants to express their agency at every stage of the change process, from ideation to implementation. However, Conger and Pearce are eager to mention that they do not view shared leadership as the universal solution to any leadership issue or group setting. The authors argue that:

there do exist some situations when shared leadership is not just non-optimal, but even harmful, e.g. when there is a lack of knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to shared leadership, when there is lack of goal alignment between members of the team, when there is lack of goal alignment between the team and the organization, when there is lack of time to develop shared leadership and finally, when there is lack of receptivity to shared leadership.²⁸

Therefore, the question raised here helps to examine the biblical foundation and appropriateness of co-leadership for ecclesial management. Is co-leadership right for the Church?

Co-leadership in Scriptures

Not all leaders are equal in their giftedness, biblical knowledge, leadership ability, and experience or communication skill. Therefore, those particularly gifted leaders and/or teachers will naturally stand out among the others. This is what the Romans called *primus inter pares*, ‘first among equals,’ or *primi inter pares*, ‘first ones among equals.’ Jesus practised this principle of ‘first among equals’ in His dealings with the Twelve. They were all empowered to preach, heal, and cast out demons, even Judas. However, Jesus singled out three for special attention – Peter, James, and John – *primi inter pares*. And among the three, Peter stood out as the most prominent, the *primus inter pares*. Perhaps, Peter’s personality made him a more outspoken, confrontational, and natural-born leader in the group, and rightfully called the Rock.

Christ insistence that the Church be built on Peter, the Rock and his triple command to ‘feed my sheep’ placed Peter, however, above the others (John 21:15-17). The three commands, although often translated the same way, are subtly different. The first time Jesus says it, the Greek means literally “pasture (tend) the lambs” (v. 15). The Greek word for “pasture” is in the present tense, denoting a continual action of tending, feeding and caring for animals.

The second time, the literal meaning is “tend My sheep” (v. 16). In this exchange, Jesus was emphasizing tending the sheep in a supervisory capacity, not only feeding but ruling over them. This expresses the full scope of pastoral oversight, both in Peter’s future and in all those who would follow him in pastoral ministry. Peter follows Jesus’ example and repeats this same Greek word *poimaino* in his first pastoral letter to the elders of the Churches of Asia Minor: “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers” (1 Peter 5:2). Even so, the eleven were not his subordinates. They were not his assistants. He was simply first among his equals, the chief Apostle, acknowledged so by Jesus Himself. And it was James who headed the Jerusalem Council, not Peter (Acts 15).

In the context of the seven deacons (Acts 6), the dynamics of ‘first among equals’ leadership relationship is observed. These deacons were chosen to relieve the Apostles of certain responsibilities. Philip and Stephen stood out as prominent figures among the five other brothers (Acts 6:8-7:60, 8:5-40, 21:8). Yet, as far as the account records, the two held no special title or status above the others. The concept of ‘first among equals’ is further evidenced in the relationship between Paul and Barnabas. They laboured as partners in the work of the Gospel. They were both pioneers and leaders in missions, yet between them, Paul was ‘first among equals’ because perhaps he was “the chief speaker” and a more dynamic leader (Acts 13:13, 14:12). Paul, the ex-rabbi, definitely more learned, did not boss over Barnabas who could also stand on his own ground in the matter over John Mark.

The advantage of the principle of ‘first among equals’ is that it allows for functional, gift-based diversity within the leadership team without creating an official, superior or oppressive office over fellow leaders; just as the leading Apostles, Peter and John, did not lord it over others. These elders laboured in the Word and exercised good leadership.

However, current Church leadership seems easier without the encumbrance of others. Some leaders would prefer to dominate rather than rely upon the breadth of experience resident in the Church. Others fight hard to maintain unchallenged authority because they have a deep-seated need to be needed. Still, others feel that they are the only ones who could get the job done.

It’s true that this quick dash into Scriptures raises more issues and challenges against heroic leadership, on which the Church thrives especially within the power dynamics of the office of Bishops. It is truer, however, that it is the overall spiritual giftedness of the pastoral team that causes the Church to grow, not just the current leadership form of government. The early Church grew out of the anointing of the spirit and the common life, shared vision of members, not its lordship. Leadership anywhere works best when it is provided by teams of gifted leaders serving together in pursuit of a clear and compelling vision.

Perhaps, Churches more than ever have the dire need to helm-in some of its *primus inter pares* fanfare and seek shared and authentic leadership based on the spiritual gifts and energies that builds the Church. For Christ who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather,

He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness...(Philippians 2:6-7).

The dialogue on co-leadership in the Church begins here. It revolves around the premiums we place on our positions, swayed by positional fanfare or whether we see them as invitations to spiritually build the body of Christ. The Church must decide on which of these values has eternity as a reward; then draw itself closer to the flock of Christ, fusing relationship in Christ and co-leading the affairs of the Church. From this height can co-leadership further cascade to the parish level.

While Episcopal collegiality and parochial co-responsibility are both of vital importance to the life of the Church, and needs to be constantly fostered, it seems opportune at this point to give some serious attention to the question of Presbyteral collegiality in order to balance the various organs of governance in the Church, and to balance the confusion of role and isolation experienced by many priests in their parishes. This is not to imply that the other dimensions of co-responsibility are of less importance; it is simply to address the issue in a more focused fashion.

The very first document issued at Vatican II, *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (#4), speaks of the close bond between the bishop and his presbyterate as they gather around the altar for the celebration of the Eucharist. It speaks thus:

The faithful must be convinced that the principle manifestation of the Church consists in the full, active participation of all God's people in the same liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in one prayer, at one altar, at which the bishop presides, surrounded by his priests and ministers.

The text is significant in that it takes us back to the writings of Ignatius of Antioch, indicating a desire on the part of the Council to retrieve an earlier understanding of the relationship between the bishop and his priests and to reorder ministerial relationships accordingly. It also indicates a desire to relocate collaboration between priests and bishops in the context of the bonds of communion created by the Eucharist.

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church re-echoes the teaching of the document on the liturgy when it speaks of the bonds of communion and affection that are to exist between the body of priests and the bishop. The priests "share in the priesthood and mission of the

bishop.” They are “to see in him a true father” and the bishop is to treat the presbyters as “his helpers, as his sons and friends.” Among themselves, “priests are united together by bonds of intimate brotherhood ... through the medium of reunions and community life, work and fraternal charity.” Priests are also called “to unite their efforts and combine their resources under the leadership of their bishops” (#28).

In The Decree on the Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church, a diocese is described as “a section of the People of God entrusted to a bishop to be guided by him with the assistance of his clergy.” The priests are placed alongside the bishop in the task of preaching, building up the unity of the community, and celebrating the Eucharist. Later, priests are called “prudent co-operators with the episcopal order,” (#11) and are said to “assume a part of the bishop’s duties and concerns” (#15). Therefore, a bishop should treat them “with particular affection” and “regard them as sons and friends” (#16). In discussing the spirit of collaboration that is to exist between the presbyters and the bishop, the Decree says: “to ensure an increasingly effective apostolate, the bishop should be willing to engage in dialogue with his priests, individually and collectively, not merely occasionally, but if possible, regularly. Furthermore, the diocesan priests should be united among themselves and should be genuinely zealous for the spiritual welfare of the whole diocese” (#28). This is the language of collaboration, collegiality and co-responsibility of bishops with their priests and of priests among themselves.

At the beginning of his pontificate, John Paul II stated that “a spirit of collaboration and shared responsibility” (*Redemptor hominis*, #5) characterizes presbyteral councils, a feature of ecclesial life and mirrored the collegiality that existed among the bishops. Towards the end of his ministry, in the post-synodal exhortation, *Pastores Gregi* (#45), he reaffirmed the same thinking, “The presbyters, and among them, parish priests, in particular, are therefore the closest co-operators in the Bishop’s ministry...The Bishop will always strive to relate to his priests as a father and brother who loves them, listens to them, welcomes them, corrects them, supports them, seeks their co-operation and, as much as possible, is concerned for their human, spiritual, ministerial and financial well-being.”

These relationships are totally meant for the service of the Church so that the ecclesial community has an absolute need for the

ministerial priesthood to have Christ the Head and Shepherd present in her. From these relationships emerges the role of the priest. The parish priest is the *cura animarum* of the people of God, the parish, the powerhouse of our faith.

The Priest, Pastor, and Leader of the Parish Community

The ministerial priesthood is the fruit of an election, of a specific vocation: "he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve" (Lk 6, 13-16). Thanks to the ministerial priesthood, the faithful are made aware of their common priesthood and they live it (cf. Eph 4, 11-12); the priest reminds them that they are the People of God and makes them able to "offer spiritual sacrifices" (cf. 1 Pt. 2,5), through which Christ himself makes us an eternal gift to the Father (cf. 1 Pt. 3,18). Without the presence of Christ represented by the priest; the sacramental guide of the community, this would not be an ecclesial community in its fullness. So the priest is an *alter christus*, devoid of all authoritarian powers, politics, and lordship; he nurtures the faithful. He nurtures the common priesthood of the people of God, chosen by God. His role, therefore, is central to the growth of our faith and Church.

Canon 532 stipulates that, despite the requirement for ecclesiastical communion, the *parochus* "*personam gerit*" –moves the juridic person of the parish in all its juridic affairs. In contrast, Canon 393 ties the "*personam gerit*" of the Bishop to the juridic person of the diocese, in all the juridic affairs. This is to say that the *parochus* directs the parish within the broad oversight of the Bishop. In essence, the priest is the daily, on-ground CEO of the parish.

It is important to emphasize that the *parochus* does not exercise his role of CEO, of office-holder, of a householder, on his own. He needs assistance. Moreover, as a member of Christ's faithful himself, he needs to co-opt other members of Christ's faithful to make the parish household a vibrant actuation of Christian communion. And who are the others that he needs to enlist in the life and work of the parish? Canon 519 puts it this way: he is to work for the "co-operation" of other presbyters or deacons and the "assistance" of lay members of the Christian faithful, according to the norm of law.

The co-operation of other presbyters or deacons (transitional or married) has its uneven dynamics that need new learning, healing, and acceptance. The co-operation and assistance of lay members of the Christian faithful needs focused nurturing as well. We submit here the

following: first, that the co-operation of the lay members of the Christian faithful is what makes parishes work. Second that this co-operation is found in the day-to-day functioning of the parish –with parish secretaries, parish catechetical directors, parish business managers, and pastoral associates.

The priest needs seasoned shared leadership to elicit the needed ‘co-operation’ of all in the parish(es) entrusted to his jurisdiction, especially in (a) the parish finance council and (b) the parish pastoral council, where Church laws are explicit.

The Finance Council

Canon 537 states:

In each parish there is to be a finance council, which is governed, in addition to universal law, by norms issued by the diocesan bishop and in which the Christian faithful, selected according to these same norms, are to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 532 [i.e., that the *parochus* is the one who moves the person of the parish].

A point to be made is that the role of the council is consultative. There is nothing in the universal law that requires a *parochus* to consult with the finance council for the validity of his action. But there is no reason why a diocesan bishop cannot issue particular law, requiring consultation with the finance committee for the validity of the action of the *parochus* in certain financial affairs (canon 127). And given the volume of conflicts from Finance Councils, some co-responsibility and joint working are needed.

The parish pastoral council, unlike the finance council, is not an unconditional requirement of law. It is to be made up of the Christian faithful – baptized Christians who are in ecclesiastical communion with the Catholic Church. These persons need not be members of the Latin Church: they can be members of any Church *sui iuris*. Also included in its membership are “those who share in the pastoral care by virtue of their office in the parish: i.e., parochial vicars, deacons, pastoral associates, catechetical and liturgical directors. This membership gateway and that of the financial council opens multiple avenues for the priest to exercise and practice shared leadership, particularly as the

council and the *parochus* are distinct; the *parochus* presides at the meetings. He has leadership responsibilities to be shared with others.

His collaboration, on the flip side, may elicit the rich contributions, the experience of other leaders that can help the pastor grow in leadership. The priest needs his co-responsible team to help develop a vision. Sofield, Loughlan, and Kuhn²⁹ stressed the importance of crafting a guiding vision. The co-responsible team must conceive powerful goals, communicate amongst themselves, and gain enthusiastic acceptance. Champlin³⁰ advocated a three-pronged approach. 1. Gather grass-roots input. Unless people buy into the dream it will not significantly motivate them. 2. Keep repeating the dream. Keep the people focused on the vision by repeating it again and again. 3. Express the vision in some captivating way. Use symbols and appeal to the senses.

The co-joint parish team must thrive on Strategic Thinking. Peter Senge stated that strategic thinking helps grow strong leadership. The leader must articulate and differentiate what is truly essential from what is secondary. Good strategic thinking addresses dilemmas arising from conflict among competing goals and norms. Senge instructs that we must distribute power and authority, but we also want to improve control and coordination, for effective strategic thinking. These factors help organizations (Churches) become more responsive to changes, and helps grow the individual's stable and coherent sense of identity, purpose, and vision. These create a sense of ownership with corollaries to high productivity and creativity.

A pastor who is not using the parish pastoral council to help create a parish vision is probably carrying too much of a burden. Dennis O'Leary reminds us that "the primary responsibility of the parish pastoral council is to assist the pastor in directional and strategic planning. If planning in these two areas is done well, administrative and programme planning by the pastor, staff and programme leaders will naturally follow, and the result will be a more focused and integrated approach to ministry"³¹

Co-Leadership and the Future of Ecclesial Administration: Some Interrogatives

1. Do the tenets of co-leadership threaten the Church?
2. Is the Church more persuaded by power, authority, and prestige than by a sublime desire to grow?

3. Will priests and bishops lose power via co-leadership?
4. Will the people of God feel more empowered to participate in the Church through co-leadership?
5. Can communication and common sense-making of conflicts ensure that the process is democratic, honest and ethical, with a common goal in mind?
6. Can parish council meetings be co-led in ways where individuals' specific experience, knowledge, skills, and competencies complement the decision process?
7. Are priests prepared enough to lead parishes in this light?
8. Are the disciplines of deep listening to other viewpoints, transparency, trust, and co-thinking for the richer good of all, anti-Christian?

Conclusion and Future Research

This conceptual analysis and exploration extend our knowledge of co-leadership as a way of addressing managerial challenges in cross-boundary service cultures, especially in ecclesial settings. Sharing leadership between managers may be of specific interest for future leadership development in the post-heroic bent that we have tried to construct here. Co-leadership enabled environments to provide robust management, broader competence, continuous learning and joint responsibility for services. Therefore, co-leadership contributes to the provision of sustainable integration of faith and practice, the enrichment of the Church. On the individual Christian and interpersonal level, the prerequisites for successful co-leadership are the perception of the management role as a collective activity, continuous communication, trusting environment devoid of personal glories and prestige.

Defining leadership as a collective construction process makes a difference to managers' and co-workers' interaction and learning, which explains why the issue of how to organize leadership is important. Joint leadership, in its far-reaching togetherness, deserves special interest. Future research has several questions left to answer in order to further understand the relatively widespread³² but under-researched issue of shared leadership between managers, especially in the Church.

Endnotes

¹ Sally David, *Co-leadership: Lessons from the Republican Rome*, California Management School Climate Center. 2002.

² Sally David, *Co-leadership: Lessons from the Republican Rome*, *Ibid.*

³ Sally David, *Co-leadership: Lessons from the Republican Rome* 3.

⁴ Sally David, *Co-leadership: Lessons from the Republican Rome* 4.

⁵ Livvy. *The Rise of Rome*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. 1998,126.

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POSTSCRIPT

Tu es Sacerdos in Aeternum – The Priest: A Friend and Servant of God

Leonard Oshiokhamele ANETEKHAI

“Every high priest is chosen and appointed from among God’s people to act on their behalf in relation to God” (Cf. Hebrews. 5,1).

Introduction

The most exciting expression of the true nature of a priest is one that finds its true meaning in the phrase *Servus Dei* – a Servant of God. This expression John E. Rotelle, in his foreword to the book, *The True Priest: The Priesthood as Preached and Practiced by Saint Augustine*, is summed up as ‘Service’. Herein, the Church Father, Augustine understood service as the “true meaning of ordination – service to God in transmitting the message of Jesus to humanity and service to the people of God in helping the power of God’s spirit to enter their lives.”¹

To this act of service and from a biblical understanding, Gerald O’ Collins, and Michael Keenan Jones express that Priests are chosen by God and not self-appointed. This thought finds its meaning in the Old Testament passages of Exodus 25–30, 39–40; Leviticus 8–9; and Number 1–10, wherein YHWH elected priests (and Levites) to serve as His instruments for the benefit of the chosen people. In the New Testament, Jesus also received a divine mandate to serve as high priest of the new covenant. In the same vein, presenting Jesus as a role model, the letter to the Hebrews 4:1 affirms the human nature of a priest who is chosen from among human communities and placed at

their service, and also seen as one representing Jesus Christ ‘who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin’. In both instances, the divine purpose of a priest, as a ‘friend and servant’ is to bring about the sanctification through divine worship and the proclamation of God’s word to His people.²

To fulfil these above objectives, God calls and chooses priests from specific human and ecclesial contexts, and it is to this end that Pope John Paul II believes that a priest is chosen for the service of the Gospel message.³ It is to this act of service that this write-up discusses the priest as a friend and servant of God’s people.

The Priest: Who is He?

As expressed by Karl Rahner, a priest, as the name suggests – is an elder, a *presbyter*, in the community, for the community and from the community (cf. Acts 11, Rom 12, 8; Phil 1, 1; 2 Tim 1, 6ff). By and large, however, a priest in today’s world is not of the older generation in the sense of biological age and length of life; but his relationship of service to the community is of importance and essence to the priesthood, to which he is called.⁴

His vocation in the thoughts of John Paul II is a mystery. A mystery, he termed ‘*admirabile commercium*’; a mystery of a wondrous exchange between God and man. So beautiful a mystery that, a man offers himself to Christ to be used as an instrument of salvation, offering himself as it were as another Christ. Without comprehending this mystery of ‘exchange,’ the human mind cannot appreciate how conceivably the word ‘Follow me’ can motivate a young man, to abandon earthly satisfaction for Christ sake, in the certitude that if he pursues this pathway, he will find utter personal happiness.⁵

Consequently, to be a priest according to the teachings of Saint Paul, Matthew Levering writes that it demands above all to be a custodian of the mysteries of God. Saint Paul admonishes that God’s people should regard their priest, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God through their words and deeds. It necessitates that as servants and stewards, priests are found trustworthy (cf. 1 Cor. 4, 1 – 2). The concept of steward he holds, cannot be replaced by any other. It is deeply rooted in the Gospel, and it recalls the parable of the faithful and unfaithful steward, as explained in Luke 12, 41 – 48). Just like a steward, a priest is not the owner of the ‘field’, but the one

to whom the owner entrusts his goods so that he will manage them justly and responsibly.⁶

It is to this end that Yves Congar in affirming the mission and functionality of a priest believes in the word of Saint Vincent de Paul, that “the Priest is a man called by God to share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ in order to extend the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ in doing what Jesus Christ did, in the way in which he did it.”⁷

Indeed, in the same way,

“the priest receives from Christ the treasures of salvation, in order duly to distribute them among the people to whom he is sent. These treasures are those of faith. A priest is thus a man of the word of God, a man of the sacrament, a man of the ‘mystery of faith.’ Through faith, he draws near to the invisible treasures which constitute the inheritance of the world’s Redemption by the Son of God. No one may consider himself the ‘owner’ of these treasures; they are meant for us all. However, by reason of what Christ laid down, the priest has the task of administering them.”⁸

He has the sole task of administering to God’s people the sacraments and the word, despite the many contradictions’ he faces in today’s world. These contradictions Pope John Paul II expresses as the:

“increasingly witnessing a powerful thirst for justice and peace; a more lively sense that humanity must care for creation and respect nature; a more open search for truth; a greater effort to safeguard human dignity; a growing commitment in many sectors of the world population to a more specific international solidarity and a new ordering of the world in freedom and justice. Parallel to the continued development of the potential offered by science and technology and the exchange of information and interaction of cultures, there is a new call for ethics, that is, a quest for meaning - and therefore for an objective standard of values which will delineate the possibilities and limits of progress.”⁹

Within these contradictions, the yearning for God and a productive, meaningful bond with the priest is so intense and essential in today’s

world that, where there is a lack of a sincere and resonant proclamation of the Gospel message, there is a growing spread of forms of religiosity without God and the proliferation of churches with few or no real disciples of Christ. For the priest and all God's people, the upswing of these spectacles within given societies and nation is not only a ceaseless motive to scrutinise our consciences as to the sincerity of our witness to the Gospel message but concurrently as a sign of how deep and widespread is our Christian faith and search for God.¹⁰

In all, though, the priest holds various meaning to different people, he is understood to be one who has no holiness of himself, but just a servant of God's people who acts as a mediator between God and men. Through the gospel message and faithful lifestyle, he dialogues and brings succour to God's people. He is a servant who brings the love and strength of God to those around him and those whom the gospel message brings closer to him. He is also a friend who warms the hearts of those in need, gives consolation to the broken-hearted, comforts the sick, walks even when it means sacrificing his comfort through the dark with those distressed and in difficult situations.

The Priest As A Friend And Servant Of God's People

A priest is and can be called a friend because of his unique relationship with all God's people. Without misplacing his priestly identity, he is called to be a friend not just of the rich alone, but also of the poor. His duty is that of service, and as expressed by Karl Rahner regarding Hebrews 5, 1, "he is 'appointed on behalf of men', and his whole being is pledged to the service of others. He does not exist for himself: he has a function which orientates him with his whole life, his talk, his action, his example, his sacrifice and suffering, to other human beings. He is an apostle - just that, sent to serve."¹¹

As a friend, a priest must be a fellow bearer of suffering, Karl Rahner believes:

"Though, it is difficult if as individual, we are vigorous, healthy, successful, enjoying life, and be patient with those who are suffering, whose lot is very different from ours, but it is difficult to avoid getting rid of these people quickly, regarding them simply as

hysterical, stupid, naive or sentimental. Really to share the burden here, to listen, to get interested, to let people say the same things a thousand times, to put up with their whining, this is a great natural gift and at the same time a gift of grace. There must be someone in the world who takes all this on himself, patiently, while being hard with himself, at least in certain particular cases.”¹²

This task belongs to the priest who is a friend and being a friend does not eliminate from the priest adversaries who look for at all cost to find fault in him. As conceived by St. John Chrysostom, “the priest must be armed with weapons of steel-intense earnestness and continuous sobriety of life-and he must keep watch in every direction, in case anyone should find a naked and unguarded spot and strike him a mortal blow. For everyone stands around him ready to wound him and strike him down, not only his enemies and foes but many of those who pretend to love him.”¹³

As a servant of God’s people, everyone wants to judge the priest, not as human clothed in flesh, not as a human having same nature as everyone does, but as an angel, free from shortcoming and defects like others. However, if a priest fails to notice his imperfections, and works towards eliminating them as is likely for every human person on his journey through this earthly life, even the best of his homilies and his good deeds would be of no avail to enable him to escape the words of his faultfinders.¹⁴

The strength of being a friend to all God’s people for a priest, even in demanding situations, is sustained by a Christ-like and a common love of neighbour. It is in a true and genuine sense a fulfilment of this Christian love of neighbour that a priest gets fulfilment, not just in his core priestly functions, but also in living out as an exemplary human person. For as human by nature, all God’s people are always essentially related to one another, and this nature develops and is communicated in unique ways according to the diverse strata of our human nature. All humans living within the same social environment through mutual understanding are related to one another via the exchange of objective intellectual goods and values, truth and goodness. Together with the priest, God’s people are ultimately related to each other as person to person and united with

one another by the same Holy Spirit, who elevates, sanctifies and nurtures all humans into the life of one God's people.¹⁵

The above-mentioned demands of being a friend, that is, of relating with God's people, sums up the church's teaching on pastoral charity, which is a priest's total gift of self to the Church in the footsteps of Christ. Christ who '*loved the Church and gave himself up for her*' (Ephesians 5, 25). Relating to God's people through pastoral charity is a virtue by which the priest imitates Christ in his self-giving and service. It is not just what he does, but his gift of self, which manifests Christ's love for His people and determines his way of thinking and acting.¹⁶

The Church Father, St. Augustine of Hippo in his *Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus 123,5* understands this priestly pastoral charity which characterises the exercise of the priestly ministry as an '*amoris officium*', and Pope John Paul II in elaborating this expressed that: "*the priest, who welcomes the call to ministry, is in a position to make this a loving choice, as a result of which the Church and souls become his first interest, and with this concrete spirituality he becomes capable of loving the universal Church, and that part of it entrusted to him with the deep love of a husband for his wife.*" The gift of self has no limits and is evidenced in the same apostolic and missionary zeal of Christ, the good shepherd.¹⁷

It is in this apostolic and missionary zeal of Christ that Christian communities are created and in the words of Karl Rahner such communities are:

"based on mutual exchange of saving, redeeming and deifying truth and on mutual benevolence which can touch the salvation - that is, the deepest core - of the other person; and a community of in exchangeable individual persons. This is and remains obviously the supernatural foundation sustaining the priestly relationship to the other person. If it is true that the priest genuinely possesses and fulfils his priestly nature only when he believes, hopes, loves, is justified and holy, then his relationship to the other person must as such be sustained by that infused, divine virtue of supernatural love in the Holy Spirit which justifies man and places him in an intimate relationship to God himself and his neighbour. This

neighbour is really and truly loved in and with God, for God's sake and in the light of God, and can be loved deeply and intimately only through the supernatural deifying power of the Holy Spirit whom God has given to us in the supernatural life of grace."¹⁸

Within the people of God and the presbyterate, the priestly pastoral charity requires and demands in a particular and specific way that a priest relates with his fellow priests, united in and with his particular bishop, for it necessitates that a priest continuously work in the bond of communion with his bishop and with his brother priests, lest, his efforts of self-denial for the sake of the gospel be in vain.¹⁹

This implies that "whenever a priest becomes unconscious through the vice of pride; that is failing to appreciate humility in his priestly vocation, this most radical relationship with Church authority, and to his fellow-men which exists in God Himself [...], he will also fail to come up to the requirements of his work as a priest. It follows likewise that all inner vitality, closeness, personal esteem for the other person must be included in the 'heart to heart' of Christian love of neighbour."²⁰

To this love of neighbour which should emanate from that of loving Christ and His Church as a trademark of the priestly pastoral charity and true friendship with God's people, Karl Rahner believes:

"should be sustained by supernatural love and, up to a point, represents a quite specific fulfilment of this love. The priest in his mission formally and explicitly wills his neighbour's salvation, his supernatural union with God, and thus expresses and makes official the inner core of love of neighbour, which is to love him in as much as God loves him. From this standpoint too we see how the merely authoritative, official, institutional factor not only does not define and cannot constitute by itself the relationship of the priest to men, but that this real, warm, vital, selfless, genuine love for the other person as such belongs to the priestly relationship to men."²¹

In his dealings, a priest must see things without prejudice and must love God's people with a priestly spirit, and in labour and sacrifice

fulfil his function within the totality of human life and human history as God's sent. By so doing, he fulfils his priestly vocation of service and his proper destiny. For in loving others and showing such love in service, he finds Him, who has called him to embrace the priestly vocation.²²

A priest is not a mini-god and should not pretend to know all. As God's servant "he need not feel threatened in his self-consciousness, self-confidence and self-respect, if there are things in science which he does not understand, if he is not up to date in matters of art,"²³ he must never fail to nurture God's people through exemplary lifestyle. For this reason, which is "for the nurturing and constant growth of the People of God, Christ the Lord instituted in his Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the whole body. For those ministers, who are endowed with sacred power, serve their brethren, so that all who are of the People of God, and therefore enjoy a true Christian dignity, working toward a common goal freely and in an orderly way, may arrive at salvation."²⁴ Such is the life and task of a priest which makes him utterly and genuinely human, and through this task, he must be able to win souls for God. As an individual, a priest must try to be convincing when he comes up against the critical attitude of others. Small and insignificant, he can effectively win over the other only by displaying in the light of his Christian faith that it is worthwhile to be a Christian. In this status quo, he must be credible also as a human person.²⁵

To be human in a Christian way does not only entails conforming to the material world (Rom 12, 2) but also implies that those we encounter as Christians have the chance to realise that being a Christian is not something contrary to human feelings. In this sense, the priest of today must be truly human.²⁶ Being human entail embracing all aspects of the priestly formation and as expressed in the words of Karl Rahner:

"The priest of today must be somehow educated in a broader sense without on that account, pretending to be expert in everything. People expect the priest to be an educated man. Since we took our final examinations, studied philosophy and theology, we have acquired a certain amount of education, but it is not this that people expect of us today. Our education must be more human, and more generally must be

linked with an interest in just those things which interest modern man. We do not need to know everything. We cannot be atomic physicists, psychologists, palaeontologists, sociologists, literary experts and politicians in our spare time. However, it would sometimes be more reasonable to read a newspaper or to settle down with a novel than to play cards. We must be genuine, educated human beings. This also means that our education must not be merely intellectual, but a personal formation of the whole man - including his emotions.²⁷

As a friend and servant of God's people, the priest must be a man of prayer and to a considerable extent, must be one who loves and is not self-seeking. However, without prejudice to the priestly official and mandatory powers, the priest of today, can exercise his calling only when his human nature is evident, and when he is humanly credible and brings his faith to bear in his daily activities of life. He must, therefore, be seen by others as a loving, a selfless and a good man. To these latter attributes and good qualities, no priest would want to be excluded, that is being a good man. However, the question today is how is the priestly life making an effect within the society? As a priest, one must continuously ask himself: Is my heart and love, really in the priestly work? If not, then even in the Sacred priesthood one can just be a 'blaring gong or reverberating cymbal' (cf. I Cor 13, 1).²⁸

The Priest: His Relevance of Being a Friend and Servant in Modern Times

In modern language, to be relevant as a friend and servant of God's people, there are some principles that cannot be avoided which aid the priest to better understand his chosen vocation within the context of a changing society. This essay wishes to advance two basic principles which affect the fabric of our society (Nigeria) today, which arguably are pathways for personal growth and evangelical fidelity, not just those who have been in God's service, but also as a guide for those in formation.

The first principle is that the kingdom of God must be the focus of the gospel message – Christ who has called us centred his

mission on the proclamation of the kingdom of God (cf. Mk 1, 14 – 15), making, therefore, the Gospel message free for all God's people, by giving himself even to the poor of the poorest. This implies for the priest that, the focus of the universal purpose of the kingdom of God carries along with it a moral implication that enables not just to give oneself in charity to others as stated above, but to be responsive in attitude to the plight and situation of God's people. This responsiveness demands a change of personal lifestyle, a change in the extravagance of material possession.

To bring this to light, focusing on the gospel message requires that a priest eschew the many forms of prosperity gospel messages that characterise the Church today all in the name of fame and money. Such a prosperity message, which is a 'brainwashing' of God's people who are supposed to be served, is spiritual enslavement for material gains and does not dignify the human person.

Being a friend and servant of God's people calls priest today (and priest to be) to renounce the appearance and the reality of wealth and to uplift the spiritual life of God's people through the gospel message and not to make them more miserable in their endless effort to seek and find God. Hence, as Pope John Paul II puts it, "the kingdom which Jesus inaugurates is the kingdom of God. Jesus himself reveals who this God is, the One whom he addresses by the intimate term 'Abba,' Father (cf. Mk 14, 36). God, as revealed above all in the parables (cf. Lk 15, 3– 2; Mt 20, 1–16), is sensitive to the needs and sufferings of every human being: He is a Father filled with love and compassion, who grants forgiveness and freely bestows the favours asked of him."²⁹ To this gospel message, a priest is called to be faithful.

The second perspective is the use of authority and power and seeking of notable titles like Jesus warns in Matthew 23: 7 of the scribes and Pharisees, *who love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others*. This principle requires the radical message of equality among the people of God and being God's people manifest a principle of life, solidarity, dignity and love for people especially parishioners who must be treasured and respected as made in the image and likeness of God. What this implies is that the Church to which a priest shares a part is a community of brothers and sisters, where no one can raise himself or herself above others, whether by sort of sacred authority, or teaching

or administration. It goes further to explain Jesus message in John 13, 12–1, when he washed his disciples' feet, telling them that no-one should dominate others because the only person who has and shows real authority is the one who serves others.

As regards the use of authority and power Machteld Reynart expressing the thought of Herman Steinkamp in his book *Die Sanft Macht der Hirten – The Soft Power of a Shepherd* holds that within individuals and communities, “power is always present but often hidden. Power can take, for example, the form of loving care and service, of self-giving and self-sacrifice, of social support or well-intended guidance.”³⁰ Such power Michel Foucault calls pastoral power. For him, it is a “power that fully penetrates and shapes the life of an individual subtly. Foucault viewed it as a new form of power in modern society that no longer can be understood as a hierarchical form of power, characterised by a direct exercise of power by authorities, or described in terms of sovereignty. Foucault used the image of the ‘shepherd/pastor’ as a model for this form of power.”³¹

In defining a true shepherd which a priest in nature should be and the pastoral powers he commands, Machteld Reynaert with reference to Michel Foucault writes that:

“a shepherd is a person who gathers, guides and leads the herd and who assures the herd’s well-being, even if this drives him or her to extremes. The shepherd is responsible for and has to focus on the entire ‘herd,’ but this is only possible when no ‘sheep’ escape. Everything that the shepherd does has to be done both for the benefit of the herd and each sheep. The shepherd has to assure both the general well-being of the herd and the individual salvation of each sheep.”³²

It is to this end of being a good shepherd and pastor, that the priest must know the people in all their various classes, the rich and poor alike; he must know the world of the past and today, but, what is more, he must pattern his life on the new emphasis in the image of his vocation as a priest, a minister of service to God and the people of God.³³

Conclusion

The priest is a gift from God's people to God's people and "without priests the Church would not be able to live that fundamental obedience which is at the very heart of her existence and her mission in history, an obedience in response to the command of Christ: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations' (Mt. 28,19) and 'Do this in remembrance of me' (Lk. 22,19; cf. 1 Cor. 11,24), i.e.: an obedience to the command to announce the Gospel and to renew daily the sacrifice of the giving of his body and the shedding of his blood for the life of the world."³⁴

Conclusively, if one takes a closer look at what modern-day Christian expect from their priests, all we see, in the end, is that they have but one high expectation: they are thirsting for Christ above everything else. Their economic, social, and political needs are all summed up in their spiritual needs. From every and in every priest, God's people ask for Christ and have the right to receive Christ, primarily through the proclamation of God's word.³⁵

In all, a priest must not try to connect others to God and be left out of God's connection. He must, therefore, develop and continue to develop his human personality and priestly qualities to be a fit instrument for the tasks of today, and at the same time he must manifest a sense of community, and nothing on his parts must matter more to the people of God he is called to lead than the priest's personal and living relationship with the Master who has commissioned him.³⁶

Endnotes

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