

The New Evangelization in the Light of *EVANGELII GAUDIUM*: a Template for Pastoral Formation and Ministry

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Abstract

This topic is an attempt to address the myriads challenges in human formation for effective pastoral ministry using the Joy of the Gospel (*Eangelii Gaudium*) as a template to achieving the ideals of the New Evangelization. This reflection shall attempt to define what the New Evangelization refers to its origin, methods and characteristics involved and what informs the call for the new evangelization. It shall alter alia make efforts to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel joyously today. The approach employed are positivistic and social analysis.

Keywords: Evangelization, Evangelii, Gaudium, Template Pastoral, Formation

Introduction

In convoking the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Benedict XVI reminded Christian communities of the primary task facing the Church at the start of the new millennium. The evangelizing mission received from the Apostles, to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and forming them as witnesses (cf. *Mt 28:19-20*) and the mission which the Church has carried out and to which she has remained true over the centuries is today facing social and cultural changes that are profoundly affecting a person's perception of self and the world, and consequently, a person's way of believing in God. No one is left in doubt that the church has been experiencing her climate change over 500 years now. In the words of pope Francis, to evangelize is to make the kingdom of God present in our world (EG 2013; no. 176), it is not just a spiritual reality, but it concerns the human person in all his dimensions (2013; 1no. 78).

Why the New Evangelization

To my mind the new evangelization is about Catholics renewing their

enthusiasm for the faith, intensifying their efforts to believe what they teach and practice what they believe that is to live out their faith boldly in the face of the challenges of the present moments. Basic in the demand of new evangelization is the fact that to be in the kingdom of God in every generation with its cultural and social experience needs spiritual renewal and ongoing conversion. We notice more and more challenges such as materialism, modernism, secularism, technology-gone wild, amorality, and wide spread of relativism like wild fire across nations and societies. To a great extent, this challenges our catholic spiritual and cultural values, some of which cannot be considered no matter what. As a result of these, Benedict XVI said "our own time must be increasingly marked by a new hearing of God's word and a new evangelization" (quoted from the word of the Lord, no. 122).

I will like to consider some practical challenges or reasons that suggest the rising needs for the new evangelization especially as it concerns Nigerian church and Africa at large.

The Persecution of Christians

Christians are in fact the most persecuted religious group in the world today, with the greatest number of victims. Increasingly, Christians are harassed, arrested, interrogated, fined, imprisoned, or killed because of their religious beliefs and practices, including spreading the faith, which is discouraged or outlawed by some governments. The persecution of Christians is not limited to the Middle East. The Pew Forum found that Christians suffered some form of harassment in 139 countries between 2006 and 2010, more than any other group. Other speakers at the hearing testified about violence against Christians in Indonesia, Vietnam, Nigeria, Myanmar, Sudan and Eritrea, China, North Korea, Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkey, among other states. Conversion laws in India, restrictions on worship in China and denial of education or employment in various countries were cited as other forms of persecution against the world's Christians. Christians suffer imprisonment, torture and arrests, structural discriminatory policies, unemployment, blasphemy laws etc (Pew Research; 2019).

This structural discrimination is further evidenced by the way in which some governments in Muslim-majority countries issue, or fail to issue, church construction and renovation permits. For example, in January 2015, Turkey received positive international commendation for granting a permit for the construction of a Syriac Christian church in Istanbul (Thomas; 2015, 15). While significant and positive, this was the first and only construction permit granted to a Christian church in Turkey since 1923. Turkey is not alone in this regard. This is also known to occur in Egypt, where church construction projects, unlike

mosque construction projects, require a special permit from the president of the country and “long, arduous rounds of papers requiring years on end” (Morsi; 2013, 45). In Sudan the government has used eminent domain to bulldoze churches and has denied church construction permits “on the grounds that buildings of that type cannot be allowed in areas where Muslims constitute a majority.” Similar public harassment is the case in Nigeria in states like, Borno, Kano, Sokoto, Yobe among others.

Internal Climate Change in the Church

The Church is in a climate change experience because of the myriad challenges within her ranks and files. A bestselling book reveals it all with a title: *Infiltration: The Plot to Destroy the Church from Within* published in May 31, 2019. The author, Taylor Marshal claims that over a century now the church has been infiltrated by organized freemasonry, modernism and liberalism in order to change the church's doctrines, liturgy and mission from what is supernatural to something secular. This means that the enemies of the church today are not from outside but those within her structures.

The new wave of clerical sexual abuse revelations left the world in shock. From Australia to Chile to Germany to the United States, horrifying reports revealed thousands of cases of child molestation by members of the clergy. This new wave of revelations in 2018 was disturbing not only because it exposed the persistence of abuse but also because it implicated high level church officials in the abuse and its cover-up. Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, the former archbishop of Washington, resigned from the College of Cardinals in July when credible accusations came to light that he had sexually abused a minor, and harassed seminarians he supervised. In late August, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, a former papal diplomat, published a letter accusing Pope Francis of knowing about McCarrick's sexual abuses for years but did nothing rather helped to cover them up. Viganò's bombshell concluded by calling on the pope to resign. This shows that the church is bitterly divided between progressive and conservative wings.

The Growth of Pentecostal Churches

The fastest growing Christian groups around the world are the evangelical or as it commonly called Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. Pentecostalism has become an increasingly prominent feature of Africa's religious and political landscape. The movement's growth has been particularly dramatic since the era of decolonization in the nineteen fifties and sixties.

World Christian database reveals that in West African states, Nigeria experiences the fastest growth in Christianity with Pentecostal churches playing a large role in this development. Nigeria is said to have the world's third

largest population of Pentecostals with over 4.2 million members mostly among the young people after Brazil which has over 24 million and the United States with well over 6 million adherents. The Gospel preached by Pentecostal Churches with emphasis on material prosperity has so inundated the landscape that some young Catholics have become confused and have become more materialistically focused than spiritual.

Though Pentecostal churches use methods that are aggressive; often it settles for merely verbal or emotional responses in which people profess an experience of Christ as their personal saviour. The above experience to my mind reveals a great thirst for the living word of God. To nourish ourselves with the living word is to be first servants of the Word in all our formation and planning in the work of evangelization. This is surely a priority for the church at the third millennium new evangelization. The experience drafting of catholic members to the Pentecostals Christian church is a “wake-up call” for a renewal of fervour, both for holiness and for evangelization, rooted in the continuing reality of Pentecost.

The Challenge of Leadership without Evangelical Transparency

Leadership is everything in any institution. As much as we may want to ignore it or try to work around it, great leadership remains critical to building a great parish new evangelization (Barga; 2014, 56). If the centre of Christianity shifts from the western world to developing countries, that means that the leadership of Church is going to shift from the Western world to the third world. For African Catholics, the New Evangelization is a challenge to form better leaders in the church and society. The old image of African church as mission land under the tutelage of European and North American bishops and priests and sisters is beginning to fade away if not gone for good. Between 1962 and 2012 African-born priests for instance have risen from just 15,000 to more than 40,000. Seminaries are bursting with vocations. There were 26,000 religious women from Africa in 1962, compared to 68,000 today. For faith to thrive, its leadership needs to seat up and lead this teaming Christians with the heart of Christ whose motto is service until death. For a deeper commitment of all Christians to the body of Christ, we need leaders who are just, accountable, transparent, pastorally committed to the welfare of the flock entrusted into their care. This will greatly mean faithfulness in leadership appointment in the direction of fairness and justice as the hallmark its business (LG no. 9, RM no. 9).

A great challenge before church leaders in African is the use of authority. The misuse of authority is longer business as usual. The shape and functioning of authority associated with leadership has changed fundamentally. A power-based leadership has been reshaped. Authority structures have become flatter, more a circle than a pyramid. Automatic deference is outdated; upward

appraisal and scrutiny from the grassroots is the norm and style. Unquestionable obedience is a thing of the past model. An open evangelical transparency and participatory style in social and political life is the standard expectation. Unearned authority is less and less relied upon in the home, school, church, workplace and society as a whole. What this model requires from now is that leaders, particularly religious leaders have to earn the right to a hearing. They have to prove their legitimacy and credibility and compete for people's time and attention (Ruwaichi; 2016, 93). This culture and style of leadership is already in existence in the west. Africa must learn that no matter the time.

Multiplication and Proliferation of Ministries in the Catholic Church

An overview of the religious situation in Nigeria suggests that the recent socio-economic and political situation has been a symptomatic of the endemic multiplication of Nigeria's religious landscape. The church is now a procreant ground for all kinds of religious ministries especially within the catholic Christian faith. Ministries gave rise to the proliferation of men and women religious communities in Nigeria today. Good as ministries are, a sign of the needs of the Christian people, nevertheless, their motives and modus operandi remain questionable. The implication is that the practice of Christianity in modern Nigeria is deviating from its intrinsic worth and value, at some motives which are at variance with its fundamentals. Fake ministers, prophets, evangelists and sundry clergy-men are ubiquitous, vending individually framed, and false imagination in place of Divine revelations and favours.

The birth of ministries within the catholic church could be signs of decline in spirituality and that could be concomitant with the crave for materialism in our churches. This is the background of the emphasis on faith by works; works without spiritual favour. The preference for faith by works (materialism) is diminishing spirituality toward eternal life. many a times prayers from certain class of priests are considered influential and powerful than that of others as though everything depends on the individual in question. This is why new evangelization is needed to correct the wrongs in ministries that are mere aberrations.

Evangelii Gaudium as Template to Pastoral Formation and Ministry in the New Evangelization

The second part of this paper is focused on Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium*, that is the Joy of the Gospel. Indeed, the gospel is good news that must be proclaimed joyously. In this document, Pope Francis offers us the fundamental and key guidelines for the living of the New Evangelization drives. This experience of the first Pentecost is lost in the church today. The Holy Spirit has never departed from the church, rather, the church has taken leave of the presence of the holy spirit by not giving much attention to things that really

matter to the kingdom of God. So much division and power scrimmage have taken a centre stage in the life of the church, as a result the centre could not hold because things have fallen apart. Permit me therefore to share with you some key pastoral issues raised in the 224 page-document of Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* whose main purpose is to present us with a pragmatic guidelines for attaining the task of the New Evangelization which in my view is the new Pentecost towards proclaiming the gospel with joy of the Holy Spirit. This document has seven major themes:

Temptations of Priests and Pastoral Workers

Today we are seeing in many pastoral workers, especially consecrated men and women, an inordinate concern for their personal freedom, relaxation and pursuit of riches, which leads them to see their work as a mere appendage to their life, as if it were not part of their very identity. Poverty frightened the rich young man in the gospel who had kept all the commandments but saddened when Jesus told him "Go, sell all that you have and give it to the poor". Poverty is a mother that gives birth to greater confidence in God and the wall that protects us from all worldliness.

The holy Father affirms that diocesan seminarian for instance must form a clear "priestly" identity, understanding that as a servant of Christ he ultimately becomes the servant of all. Often "identity" is reduced to mere appearance. The priest acts *in nomine ecclesiae*, which ultimately is acting *in persona et in nomine Christi*. His identity is nothing more than the identity of Christ. Nothing more and nothing less. By his ordination, he is the sacramental icon of Jesus Christ. The new evangelization is the Church's mission to bring people an authentic, complete experience of Jesus Christ. This cannot happen without the priesthood. Yet, priests need to discern how to fashion their priestly identity without diminishing their own God-given gifts and without distracting people away from Christ to their own personhood.

Peace and Dialogue for Common Good

Pope Francis remarks unambiguously that the good shepherd is one who smells like the sheep. We smell like the sheep if we are close to the people in their daily struggles and challenges. This interior attitude of compassion we read in the gospel when Jesus saw the people they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd. Thus, a priest is a man of mercy and compassion, close to his people and a servant to all in constant communion with them. Priests who are aseptic, those who are from laboratory all clean and tidy do not help the church says pope Francis. The church is a field hospital where many wounded by world illusions are healed by the wounded healer himself. Catholics want to see their shepherds acting, leading and responding. As a result of poor leadership in many of our parishes, the sense of being "Catholic"

is reduced to liturgies without spirituality, spirituality without mystery, and a community life often energized more by fundraisers than by prayer. This manifest itself in the building of structures rather than investing on people.

Inclusion of the Poor in the Church and Society

Another theme highlighted by the Holy Father is centred on care of the *Anawin* that is the poor in the society. The poor are at the centre of the Gospel, are at heart of the gospel, if we take away the poor from the gospel, we can't understand the whole message of Jesus Christ (Guisepp; 2016, 85). For instance, Pope Francis demands that as agents of evangelization, in proclaiming Christ, we need to radiate peace, joy to all we meet by living a peaceful and joyful lives ourselves. He urges that to be in touch with the suffering and plights of the poor around us is intrinsically evangelization itself. He warns that to cut ourselves from others is a slow form of suicidal mission. That our expression should be sincere and practical. The Pontiff points out that a happy person is one who seeks and desires the happiness of others. Such a person he affirms is the true missionary after the heart of Christ, the missionary par excellent. The Holy Father further observes that to be in touch with evangelization properly, we need to be evangelized first by the poor who offers us daily opportunity for conversion of heart towards obedient faith like our Blessed Mother. The document expects that the agents of new evangelization need to be men and women of mercy by associating with the weak and vulnerable who live at the edge of the society clouded by materialistic influences. The priest is a man of mercy and compassion after the heart of Christ. At the presentation of his strategic pastoral plans for the mission of the kingdom, Jesus expresses that he has come to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and to set the oppressed free (Lk 4:18). The poor in our parishes and communities are the girl child, vulnerable women, the uneducated, the unemployed young people, the sick who cannot afford medical bills, the homeless. Without the poor placed first on our pastoral programs, we fail the law of love for which we enter the vineyard. Solidarity with the poor must be lived as the decision to restore to the poor what belongs to them (EG. 189).

Reform of the Church Structures for Missionary Transformation

Church structures are not there for their own sake; they are not an end in themselves. They are at the service of that element which constituted the first stage of the coming to be of the community and that is the interest they have in Jesus Christ. Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation seeks a renewal of structure which should be more mission oriented because there are ecclesial structures which hamper efforts at evangelization (EG no.26). He also says emphatically: "excessive centralization, rather than providing helpful communion, complicates the church's life and her missionary outreach (EG 32).

The Holy Father recognizes the difficulties faced by laypeople when they do not find space in the local churches, owing in part to an excessive clericalism and bureaucracy (EG 102). We need to be men of mercy especially in the confessional box which often turns out to be a torture chamber. In like manner, Pope Francis calls on us to re-examine various rules and precepts which were effective in their time, but today no longer answer the yearning of our people. Though there are fundamental beliefs and morals which cannot be changed, but the manner of preserving them may have to be adapted to a changed culture, stubborn refusal to read *the signs of the times* is the road to disaster.

Mere administration" can no longer be enough, we need to be viable and accessible missionaries. This is the spirit brought into evangelization by the first missionary fathers, the SMAs, OSAs, CCSps priests. We cannot afford to kill that power of the spirit in our time. The priest must be in collaboration with the laity in the governance of the parish. Our role is to encourage parishioners' involvement in parish and school finance councils and other consultative bodies of the parish. Collaboration enriches the church with diversity of talents and spiritual and human gifts. Our role should be one of continually reaching out to different parishioners and getting them involved. Such continued diversity increases the pool of participants and ensures new ideas to renew and transform the mystical body of Christ. Parish structures or things like Mass, confession, devotions are of course necessary to sustain people's interest in Jesus but what basically constitutes the parish is not the structures which the people use, but the people who use them and the interest which they have in Jesus of Nazareth (Lyon; 1987, 10).

Church as People of God on Mission of Evangelization

In Pope Francis' vision of the church, "the People of God is incarnate in the peoples of the earth" (EG no. 115). By virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. *Mt* 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The informal division between active and passive members of the church is irrational and non-theological. When we involve the people in evangelization we tap from their cultural riches, gifts of the spirit, their talents and potentials. It was for this reason that Pope Paul VI commented that most Catholics are pretty good at what he calls silent witness of our lives.

The aim is to avoid falling into the temptation of homogenizing the faithful or treating them as a mass with no life or history. To know and serve people implies knowing their origins, their particular way of being and thinking and

respecting the fact that “each people is the creator of their own culture and the protagonist of their own history” (EG no. 122). Lack of interest in people in the parish is a sign that we are only after our self-interest. Make effort to know their cultures, learn their languages, eat their food and so be close to them.

Preaching Homily

The gospel is a joyous encounter and not a moment for show. The pontiff expects of us priests and priests to be, to deliver good homily that transforms the lives of the people and our lives too. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* writes: “The homily is the touchstone for judging a pastor's closeness and ability to communicate to his people” (2013; 135). Homilies and teaching can clearly make a difference in people's lives as they face many struggles; financial insecurity, troubled marriages, sexual abuses, pornography, addictions, job pressures and the like. Homilies are not meant as sleeping pills or siesta time, and Sunday morning boring. He once gave a story of a mother who asked her four-year-old son why he remained quiet while the priest was preaching. He responded, “So I don't wake the others who are sleeping.” Homily is one of the important encounters people have with Christ, a happy experience of the Spirit, a consoling encounter with God's word, a constant source of renewal and growth. Its purpose is to enter into the mystery of faith, and it surpasses all forms of catechesis. The pope warns about homily becoming a form of entertainment, and he is hard on some TV preaching of the Gospel because the TV preachers preach themselves rather than Jesus Christ. We preach Jesus Christ and the kerygma, and for this we need to remember that Jesus is the message and we the messengers, not the opposite. Elsewhere in his catechesis, the holy father emphasizes that our homilies should not be an occasion to terrorize people but to give hope and joy of the gospel. Priestly formation provides us with the principles of preparing to preach good homily but often we prefer to mimic the Pentecostal televangelist preachers.

Spiritual Motivation to Service

Evangelii Gaudium urges us to always say, “No to spiritual worldliness.” This is where we seek our own self-interest than that of Christ. It takes on many forms, such as ungodly dependence on certain kinds of persons and groups into which it seeps (EG 93). The holy father warns against the Dives syndrome where we become unaware of the suffering and poverty of the people. We multiple Sunday collections without payment attention to the living conditions of the people, their apathy, and the donor fatigue they manifest. He observes that “there are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter” and that “sometimes we are tempted to find excuses and complain, acting as if we could only be happy if a thousand conditions were met. Today we erroneously estimate the worth of a priest by what he owns and the lifestyle he lives. This contradicts the principles of the New Evangelization.

Pastoral Ministry that Promotes the New Evangelization in the Light of Joy of the Gospel

Good Leadership is Good Evangelization

Catholics want to see their shepherds acting, leading and responding. As a result of poor leadership in many of our parishes, the sense of being “Catholic” was reduced to liturgies without spirituality, spirituality without mystery, and a community life often energized more by fundraisers than by prayer. The touchstone of new evangelization as articulated by Pope Saint Paul VI said that “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (Evangelii Nuntiandi 41). Servant leadership with vision is key to establishing the church on the rock for which Christ prayed for Peter that his faith may not fail and that he might strengthen his brothers.

Good Priestly Formation Provides Effective Evangelization

Indeed, every generation of seminarians and every generation of Catholics have their challenges. The job of a seminary is to prepare seminarians for the new and old realities of pastoral ministry and to serve real people with real needs. The realities of yesterday and today include many; marriages end in divorce; people are losing their jobs in record numbers; young people are afflicted by drug and alcohol addiction, insecurity to life and property, and old people suffer for lack of care at homes and hospitals resulting in distressed families. Immigrants, so many of them Catholic, are seeking to be American citizens, to live dignified lives. Prison populations are at their highest; how many young people live in detention facilities? These are the vineyards where evangelization must take place. Seminarians are being formed to understand that ministry does not just occur in the sacristy or rectory. They need to be out among the faithful, shepherding them to Christ and serving them with a Gospel that cries out for justice. When a priest truly understands his identity, his role as shepherd and spiritual father, then he can lead his parish without fear of offending anyone.

In the words of James Wehner, the Church must know both the culture that seminarians come from and how to prepare them to be priests in the culture where they are to be sent (2012,14). In this direction, Pope Saint John Paul II considering the formation of seminarians in the spirit of new evangelization affirmed that “God promises the Church not just any sort of shepherds, but shepherds after his own heart. . .the new evangelization needs new evangelizers, and these are the priests who are serious about living their priesthood as a specific path toward holiness” (*Pastores Dabo Vobis* no. 82). In other words, the new evangelization begins with new evangelizers who are authentic pastors of the church leading the flock in a clear, decisive manner to Jesus Christ. This is what every seminarian strives to be as a future pastor.

Priestly Celibacy

Priestly celibacy enhances the promotion of the new evangelization. Pius XI emphasizes the importance of priestly piety, stating: “the piety of which we speak is not that shallow and superficial piety which attracts but does not nourish, is busy but does not sanctify. We mean that solid piety which is not dependent upon changing mood or feeling. It is based upon principles of sound doctrine; it is ruled by staunch convictions; and so, it resists the assaults and the illusions of temptation” (*Ad Catholici Sacerotii*, n. 39). Blessed John XXIII, recognizes the bond between ministerial efficacy and fidelity to perfect continence for the Kingdom of Heaven is brilliantly manifested in the Curé of Ars, and that perfect continence is not determined by the demands of the Ministry but that, on the contrary and against every functionalist reduction of the priesthood, it is the Ministry itself, in its widest manifestation, which is moulded, almost as a result of fidelity to Celibacy. Celibacy perfects His charity which is drawn from the purest source, practiced in the imitation of God and Christ, and is no less demanding and real than any other genuine love. It gives the priest a limitless horizon, deepens and gives breadth to his sense of responsibility a mark of mature personality and inculcates in him, as a sign of a higher and greater fatherhood, a generosity and refinement of heart which offer a superlative enrichment”. In a word, “celibacy sets the whole man on a higher level and makes an effective contribution to his perfection” (*Sacerdotalis Caelibatus* 1992; 55). Celibate chastity cries out to the world that God exists, that he is Love and that it is possible, in every epoch, to live totally from Him and for Him. It is for reason that the mother Church chooses her Priests from amongst those who have welcomed and matured, at a level thus measured and therefore prophetic, this pro-existence: existence for Another, for Christ (*Pastores Dabo Vobis* 1992; 72).

Radical Call to Holiness and Piety

The new evangelization involves a radical call to holiness for the individual believer and for the Church. If faith is going to penetrate and form culture, if the Church is going to be a credible voice in shaping culture among so many voices contrary to the Gospel, then the seminarian must embrace radical conversion of heart and mind. If a seminarian is serious about his formation, he will become a holy priest competent to embrace the joys and struggles of pastoral ministry (Wehner; 2012, 15). The radical call to holiness expected of seminarians (and of priests) is a life-long process that does not end at ordination. St. Peter learned the lesson well after the Resurrection when the question was posed again and again do you love me? (cf. Jn 21:15- 17). Every day Jesus asks His priests this question through the pastoral situations the priest must confront. Several elements can be considered by seminarians if they are going to be new evangelizers of the church.

Priestly Identity

The diocesan seminarian for instance must form a clear “priestly” identity, understanding that as a servant of Christ he ultimately becomes the servant of all. Often “identity” is reduced to mere appearance. The joy of being priests and the beauty of fraternity is shown by living and working together as members of the same presbyterate, embracing and understanding and correcting the weak with fraternal charity (Guisepppe; 2016, 49). This is because priest acts *in nomine ecclesiae*, which ultimately is acting *in persona et in nomine Christi*. His identity is nothing more than the identity of Christ. Nothing more and nothing less. By his ordination, he is the sacramental icon of Jesus Christ. The new evangelization is the Church's mission to bring people an authentic, complete experience of Jesus Christ. This cannot happen without the priesthood. Yet, priests need to discern how to fashion their priestly identity without diminishing their own God-given gifts and without distracting people away from Christ to their own personhood.

Ecclesial Communio

If the priest is going to completely serve the needs of the Church, he must be loyal to her and understand why and how Christ configured her. The priest of the new evangelization must really embrace the theological significance of *communio*, putting aside ideological expectations. The priest embodies in himself the mystery of *communio*, as he builds up the People of God in the sacramental ministry he provides. Obedience to the bishop, fraternity with the presbyterate, and genuine love for people are not mere external expectations but an outpouring of faith flowing from the spirituality of the priest. Diocesan priestly spirituality internalizes one's love for the Church so that he indeed becomes a *vir ecclesia* “man of the Church.”

Amoris Officium

In *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, the Holy Father speaks about the cultivation of “affective maturity,” since the People of God expect their priest to be able to respond to the signs of the times. The web of relationships maintained by the diocesan priest is a sacramental sign of a pastor who nurtures his sheep. Without reducing priesthood to a popularity contest, the seminarian should evaluate his own humanity, determining how best he envisions the real involvement of self in pastoral ministerial situations. The love of a shepherd for his sheep moves beyond the institutional support of the Church to the individual commitment of the priest who walks alongside his people. The authentic humanism espoused by the new evangelization presumes the individual participation of each person in the lives of others. Priesthood must never be seen as a career rather an “office of love” an unselfish service rendered for the salvation of all. This affective ministry brings about renewal of the clergy, physically, psychologically, spiritually and relationally. Otherwise says Patrick Brennan we shall be much more of bunch of burned-out cases with little to offer (Brennan; 1993,9).

Sacerdos et Hostia

The priest of the new evangelization must be seen as both minister and victim. This implies that, as Christ is simultaneously “Priest and Victim,” the man ordained in the person of Christ ontologically and sacramentally is configured as priest and victim for the People of God. As a victim, the priest must be ever ready to offer his time and resources for the needy. Being simply a priest suggests staying aware and connected to sheep entrusted to your care. Diocesan spirituality is meant to form in the seminarian the sense of service and sacrifice. Priestly celibacy and priestly obedience are signs of the priest's sacrifice freely given for the salvation of others. This service, while incorporating the individuality of that priest, manifests itself in such a way that the priest lays down his life for his sheep. Here, then, the priest is truly “priest” and “victim” for his people. Unless such man is carefully trained, the church will ordain priests who are not indeed victim in situations of the people as the Jeremiah prophecies “if I go out to the country, I see those slain by the sword; if I enter the city, I see those ravaged by famine. For both the prophet and priests ply their trade through the land and have no knowledge” (14:18).

A Teaching Parish

Jesus is popularly identified as a teacher than in any of his pastoral ministries. Canonically, a parish is established in order to teach the word of God. Hence our parishes should embrace teaching ministry to keep the people informed and increase their knowledge of God and the church. It is only when they are adequately informed that can worship and proclaim God with joy. Prophet Hosea said, “My people perish for lack of knowledge” (4:6). A teaching parish is integral to our existence and to the handing on of the Gospel. Sunday and daily homily are key to demonstrate in our time. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* writes: “The homily is the touchstone for judging a pastor's closeness and ability to communicate to his people” (2013, 135). Homilies can clearly make a difference in people's lives. I am often reminded that lives are often shaped by our homilies as people face their many struggles; financial insecurity, troubled marriages, addictions, job pressures and the like. Other ways of teaching include regular parish continuing adult formation in the Faith and opportunities for parishioner witness talks. It is important for priests to teach in other places than the pulpit, such as regular parish lecture series, faith clinic, operation know your faith, Scripture studies and the RCIA. And that requires a lifestyle of regular spiritual reading and study.

Collaboration with the Baptized Followers of Christ

One of the great challenges facing the church in this generation is to foster in all the faithful a sense of personal responsibility for the church's mission, and to enable them to fulfil that responsibility as missionary disciples, as a leaven of the Gospel in our world. This will require creativity in adapting to changed

situations, carrying forward the legacy of the past not primarily by maintaining our structures and institutions, which have served us well, but above all by being open to the possibilities which the spirit opens up to us and communicating the joy of the Gospel, daily and in every season of our life. The priest must be in collaboration with the laity in the governance of the parish. A renewed clergy will not be intimidated by truly collaborative ministry. Truly collaborative ministry is an ongoing process of discerning the giftedness of staff, boards, teams, and councils, and working with each person as living members of the Body of Christ. In partnership with Christ's faithful the clergy does not empower them; it is the spirit that does the empowering. All we can do is facilitate the power and the charisms that are already there in the people (Brennan; 1992, 78). Our role is to encourage parishioners' involvement in parish and school finance councils and other consultative bodies of the parish. Our role should be one of continually reaching out to different parishioners and getting them involved. Such continued diversity increases the pool of participants and ensures new ideas.

Conclusion

The task in our hands formators and collaborators in formation are enormous in the preparation of future clergy that can resist the temptations of social upward mobility, power and consumerism that are instilled into us by the current secularized society. Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium* has set forth a program of renewal for the whole church which I find in the writeup as a key document for formation in the African context. Times has come to evaluate whether we are not expending our energies in the wrong places. May we be opened to the ecclesial renewal aimed by the holy father for the liberation, transformation and salvation of humanity.

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