

CHAPTER 3

HISTORY AND NORMS OF CHURCH DEDICATION IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Joseph Paul IYAMAH

Introduction

This work intend to look at the age long practice of Church dedication as a means of drawing its significance for the faithful, and highlighting the understanding and reverence that must be accorded a dedicated edifice designated for worship. The liturgical ceremony with the symbolic significance and the canonical implication of church dedication will be looked at and what it entails for every Christ's faithful. In view of the above, the paper will look at the spiritual place of a dedicated church for the faithful.

In the document of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, we read:

As in the Old Testament the revelation of the kingdom is often proposed figuratively, so also now the inner nature of the church is revealed to us through a variety of images. These have been taken from the life of a shepherd, from agriculture, from the construction of buildings, and from the family and betrothal; all of which are prepared in the books of the prophets. So the church is the sheepfold, whose single necessary door is Christ.

It is also the flock of which God himself foretold that he would be the shepherd, and whose sheep, even though governed by human shepherds, are continuously led and nourished by Christ himself, the good shepherd and prince of shepherds, who laid down his life for the sheep.ⁱ

According to Fabio Trudu, the Fathers of the Council in the above passage spoke about the different images, which in biblical revelation evokes the reality of the church both in its prefiguration in the first covenant and its attainment in Christian economy.ⁱⁱ In explaining the mystery of the Church, the Fathers further noted that the church has more often been called the building of God (1 Cor. 3:9). Even the Lord likens Himself to the stone, which the builders rejected but which became the cornerstone (Mt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1Pet. 2:7; Ps. 117:22). It is on this foundation that the Church is build by the apostles (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11), and from it the Church receives durability and solidity. In the Scripture, we see varied ways this edifice is adorned by various names: the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15) in which dwells His family; the house of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22); the dwelling place of God among men (Apoc. 21:3); and especially as the holy temple. This temple, which symbolizes the places of worship build out of stone, is praised by the Council Fathers, because it is compared to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem in the liturgy.ⁱⁱⁱ In the Scripture furthermore, Jesus showed awe-inspiring respect for the Jerusalem Temple, for he saw it as a privilege place we encounter God, so he went there often being the dwelling place of the Father, a house of prayer, which explains why he was angered upon discovery that a part of the Temple was being used for commerce.^{iv}

Pope Benedict XVI highlights this proper understanding of the place of worship, which does allow for misuse as an assembly called together to offer worship to God:

The calling together, the assembly, has a purpose, and that purpose is worship. The call comes from worship and leads back to worship. It is worship that unites the people called

together and gives their being together its meaning and worth: they are united in that “peace” which the world cannot give. This also becomes clear in relation to that great Old and New Testament archetype of the *ekklessia*, the community on Sinai. They come together to hear God’s Word and to seal everything with sacrifice. That is how a “covenant” is established between God and man.^v

Terminology and Development of the Theology of the Church

The term church that we use in English language today and *kirche* in German is from the Greek τὸ κυριακόν meaning ‘thing or place pertaining to the Lord’. In French, the term church *église* and in Italian *chiésa* is said to be from the Latin *ecclesia* that is a transliteration of Greek. There are many references to indicate wide ranging use of the concept both in the Old and New Testament: being an assembly convoked for religious purpose in the Septuagint (LXX). This indicates that a process of formation of God’s people took place with the covenant made with Abraham. Now because of the violation of the first, God promise a new covenant with his people. The death and Resurrection of Jesus ratified the new covenant and thus with his new community of followers the church began, separate from Judaism. Many scholars over the years have attempted to offer theological synthesis of what constitute the essential characteristics of the Church. To this attempts we have teachings calling for the church to be understood as a new people of God, the church as the People of the New Covenant, the church as a Spiritual community.^{vi}

The patristic era associated the biblical theme of communion with the Church, in which the image of the church as *Ecclesia Mater*, Church as mother to express the role and responsibility of all the faithful to each other, genuine and effective participation in the community.^{vii} For Ignatius, the church is the “bearer of holy things”^{viii}; for St. Augustine, the church is communion in the Trinity^{ix}; For Thomas Aquinas: “the universal spiritual good of the whole church is contained substantially in the sacrament of the Eucharist.”^x This view of Aquinas according to

Lawlor draws in his ontology of the Church Eucharistic and ecclesiastical communion with the sacramental body of Christ as the supreme sign and ground of the communion of the Mystical Body.^{xi}

However, one of the symbols of the church we have in the New Testament is that of the Church as a dwelling or building that is a temple clearly expressed in Ephesians 2, 20-22: “You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief corner stone. In him the whole structure is closely fitted together and grows into a temple holy in the Lord, in him you too are being built together into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit.”

In the Merriam Webster Dictionary, Church is defined as a building for public and especially for Christian worship. For Pope Benedict XVI, Church building is a place where Christians get together for the liturgy, explaining further that, the Christian church building soon acquired the name *domus ecclesiae*, which is the house of the Church, the assembly of the People of God, and subsequently abbreviated just as *ecclesia* to which the word ‘assembly’, ‘church’ “came to be used, not just of the living community, but also of the building that housed it.”^{xii}

Church in the 1983 Code of Canon Law is understood as a “sacred building designated for divine worship to which the faithful have the right of entry for the exercise, especially the public exercise, of divine worship” (CIC/83, c. 1214). It is the same theological and doctrinal understandings we have in the *Ordo* for the Dedication of Church and Altars when it describes the church as a place from antiquity where the community gathers to listen to the word of God, pray together, receive the sacraments and celebrate the Eucharist.^{xiii}

The term “dedication” according to the New Advent Encyclopedia, which is sometimes used in relation to persons consecrated to God’s service, is more properly applied to mean the “setting aside” of places for a special and sacred purpose. It further explains that though Christians believe that God is everywhere with his Divine Immensity, such faith does not prevent reserving and setting aside a special sacred place where people can come together in communion with their creator and worship Him. What is clear from the above is that dedication of a

building sets it aside as a sacred place for worship. This condition cannot be said of a building that is not dedicated for worship.

Early indications of Church Dedication

The early awareness of dedication are demonstrated in Genesis 28:18, where Jacob set up a stone in a place and dedicated it to God; in Leviticus 8:10, where Moses dedicated a tent to the Lord; and especially in 1 Kings 8, where Solomon built and dedicated the Temple to the Lord. The practice of dedication seems to have continued in the New Testament/Apostolic time. Evidence of this is in St. Jerome's work *Martyrology* where this expression is found: "*Romae dedicatio primae Ecclesiae a beato Petro constructae et consecratae*".^{xiv} Account of dedication in the first three centuries is rare due to church persecution during that epoch. Nonetheless, the first reliable account of church dedication despite its rarity is that in Eusebius, that devoted Chapter 3 of his work to our subject matter with the titled: "The Dedication in Every Place". We have the following description of dedication event:

After this was seen the sight which had been desired and prayed for by us all; feasts of dedication in the cities and consecrations of the newly built houses of prayer took place, bishops assembled, foreigners came together from abroad, mutual love was exhibited between people and people, the members of Christ's body were united in complete harmony.... And there was one energy of the Divine Spirit pervading all the members, and one soul in all, and the same eagerness of faith, and one hymn from all in praise of the Deity. Yea, and perfect services were conducted by the prelates, the sacred rites being solemnized, and the majestic institutions of the Church observed, here with the performance of divine and mystic services; and the mysterious symbols of the Saviour's passion were dispensed. At the same time people of every age, both male and female, with all the power of the mind gave honour

unto God, the author of their benefits, in prayers and thanksgiving, with a joyful mind and soul. And every one of the bishops present, each to the best of his ability, delivered panegyric oration, adding luster to the assembly”.^{xv}

An example of such panegyric speech, which is actually very inspiring, is also found in chapter 4 of Eusebius work. It is addressed to Bishop Paulinus, the Bishop of Tyre. It says:

Friends and priests of God who are clothed in the sacred gown and adorned with the heavenly crown of glory, the inspired unction and the sacerdotal garment of the Holy Spirit; and thou, oh pride of God’s new holy temple, endowed by him with the wisdom of age, and yet exhibiting costly works and deeds of youthful and flourishing virtue, to whom God himself, who embraces the entire world, has granted the distinguished honour of building and renewing this earthly house to Christ, his only begotten and first-born Word, and to his holy and divine bride; - ... Since we, men, children, and women, small and great, are already in part partakers of these things, let us not cease all together, with one spirit and one soul, to confess and praise the author of such great benefits to us, ‘who forgives all our iniquities, who heals all our diseases, who redeems our life from destruction, who crowns us with mercy and compassion, who satisfies our desires with good things.’ ... Rekindling these thoughts in our memories, both now and during all time to come, and contemplating in our mind night and day, in every hour and with every breath, so to speak, the Author and Ruler of the present festival, and of this bright and most splendid day, let us love and adore him with every power of the soul. And now rising, let us beseech him with loud voice to shelter and preserve us to the end in his fold, granting his unbroken and unshaken peace forever, in Christ Jesus our Saviour; through whom be glory unto him forever and ever. Amen.^{xvi}

Another account is found in the work of Sozomen in Book II chapter 26 titled, “Erection of a Temple by Constantine the Great at Golgotha, in Jerusalem; its Dedication”. He narrates the ceremony accordingly:

The temple, called the ‘Great Martyrium’, which was built in the place of the skull at Jerusalem, was completed about the thirtieth year of the reign of Constantine; and Marianus, an official, who was a short-hand writer of the emperor, came to Tyre and delivered a letter from the emperor to the council, commanding them to repair quickly to Jerusalem, in order to consecrate the temple. Although this had been previously determined upon, yet the emperor deemed it necessary that the disputes which prevailed among the bishops who had been convened at Tyre should be first adjusted, and that they should be purged of all discord and grief before going to the consecration of the temple. For it is fitting to such a festival for the priests to be like-minded. When the bishops arrived at Jerusalem, the temple was therefore consecrated, as likewise numerous ornaments and gifts, which were sent by the emperor and are still preserved in the sacred edifice; their costliness and magnificence is such that they cannot be looked upon without exciting wonder. Since that period the anniversary of the consecration has been celebrated with great pomp by the church of Jerusalem; the festival continues eight days, initiation by baptism is administered, and people from every region under the sun resort to Jerusalem during this festival, and visit the sacred places.^{xvii}

What the above account provides is the early practice of Church dedication as far back as in the year 314 regarding the cathedral of Tyre and the Constantine’s Church in Jerusalem. There is also the argument that the feast of dedication of churches probably stem from the one done by Judas Maccabaeus in 165 BC in the O.T and that Egeria in 400 A.D was the first to mention it as a Christian feast when she described the dedication of churches of the *Myrtyrium* (church of the cross) and

Anastasis (church of the Resurrection) in her book on her pilgrimage to Jerusalem. It may be the case that what she talks about is the dedication above. From all that have said thus far, there are four points that are worth noting as far as church dedication is concern which are still part of the celebration of church dedication today. These are underlines as follows:

- Ritual used for the ceremony

The ceremonial from early account seems to show that dedication was a simple ceremony, but if placing of relics in the church is included, then this assumes a more profound part of the celebration. One can instantly argue then that from early account, church dedication consists of two forms: one that only consists of the celebration of Mass when the use of relics are not part of the ceremony; the second is the form that involves the use of relics. In this second form, the ceremony of translating and depositing relics under the altar is a notable part of the dedication rite. The present *Ordo* for Church dedication still contains the use of relics in the dedication of churches.^{xviii} The letter of Pope Vigilius to the Bishop of Bracara in the year 538 further confirms this practice when he wrote, “We know that the consecration of any church in which shrines (relics) are not placed consist merely in the celebration of Masses” (*Consecrationem cujuslibet ecclesiae, in qua non ponuntur sanctuaria {reliquiae} celebritatem tantum scimus esse missarum*).^{xix}

Most of what was used in the early era for dedication that was later improved upon includes the Old “Ordines Romani”; “*Ordo* of St. Amand”; “*Ordo* of Verona”. But what was used in the Roman liturgical rite of the seventh century is said to have come from the Gelasian Sacramentary that contains the first complete formulary for liturgical dedication. The form involves prayers, sprinkling of holy water and blessings. This ritual with some reform in the ninth century is still relevant in our present celebration.^{xx} The ceremony of dedication as we have it now is in two forms: the first is wherein a church is simply blessed; the second is where the church is solemnly consecrated. In the former, the ceremony entails prayers, sprinkling of holy water, and

Mass (this can be seen in the Roman Ritual); the later, the consecration ceremonies are very solemn and elaborate, and it entails dedication which is the setting aside for the service and worship of God through prayers, rites and ceremonies.

- Consecration of a Church

The Fathers of the Council of Trent in their 22nd Session decreed that Mass should not be celebrated in any place that is not a consecrated or blessed church. This clearly expresses the intent of the Church Fathers that cathedrals and parish churches must be solemnly consecrated as well as also specifying that other smaller churches connected to cathedral and parish churches be blessed as well. Few years after the above provision, it was further directed that any ‘church and public or semi-public oratory may be consecrated’.^{xxi} What is worth learning from the Church’s teaching on this subject is that both by consecration and by blessing, the church is dedicated and therefore set aside for divine worship for the service of God. Consequently, such a building is considered a sacred place, and its use for profane and other ordinary purposes is forbidden, since such profane usage is inconsistent with the objective as a place of worship, and that by virtue of its consecration it has been raised to a higher order in perpetuity. This also underline the fact that no church is to be built, repair or even be demolish without the express written permission of the diocesan Bishop who also must ensure the church’s liturgical principles, norms, sacred arts and traditions are observed in the edifice. But in giving his consent the Bishop is to hear first from the presbyteral council, pastors of nearby churches and ascertain there is fund to carry out the work and that the new church will serve the good of souls (canons. 1215 and 1216).

In a situation where a church building that is dedicated can no longer be use for worship or is in such a state that it cannot be possibly repaired, the diocesan bishop is the only one who can relegate the building for other uses, but never for sordid use (can. 1222). The present 1983 Code has a section in Book IV, part III, title I that deals with Sacred Places and Times. The section underlines the meaning and

understanding of Sacred Places, Churches, Oratories and Private Chapels, Shrines, Altars, and Cemeteries. The Code describes sacred place as a designated place for worship or for the burial of the faithful by dedication or blessing in accordance with prescription of liturgical books (can 1205). Whenever such a place is desecrated in a gravely injurious way that is contrary to the sanctity of the place, causing scandal to the people of God, worship is not to be done in the place until the damage is repaired through penitential rite according to the church's liturgical norms (can. 1211).

- Minister of Consecration

St Ignatius of Antioch tells us that the local Church has “the bishop as the representative of Christ, the qualified center and criterion of its communion, competent to teach, to rule, and to sanctify.”^{xxii}

Canon 1206 states: “The dedication of any place belongs to the diocesan bishop and to those equivalent to him by law; they can entrust the function of carrying out a dedication in their territory to any bishop or, in exceptional cases, to a presbyter”. This stipulation is drawn from the practice of the church that has always regarded the diocesan Bishop as the ordinary minister of consecration in his territory. Therefore the permission of the diocesan Bishop is required for another Bishop to licitly consecrate a church in his diocese. What this means is that a Bishop would have to obtain permission to lawfully dedicate a church in another diocese. In fact priests earlier on could not consecrate a church except the priest in a rare occasion obtains delegation in a special manner from the pontiff.^{xxiii} But now with the provision of canon 1206, the diocesan Bishop in exceptional cases can allow a priest carry out church dedication.

Consecration of a church building necessarily includes the consecration of a fixed altar within the church for the process to be licit. The same Bishop must be the one who consecrate the church and the altar. This also entails the anointing of twelve crosses on the inner walls of the church which is the essence of the consecration, with the words: “*sanctificetur et consecratur hoc templum*”. The crosses are to be

attached to the walls inside the church building with a bracket holding candle affixed under each; they are not to be made of wood or fragile material and are not to be removed. It is actually prohibited to remove them after the consecration of the church. These actions are still very much present in church dedication in our time. Should for instance the consecrating Bishop before this part of the ceremony becomes incapacitated and is unable to finish or complete the ceremony, no one can substitute him to finish the function. In fact the whole rite must be repeated from the beginning.^{xxiv} The proviso that the church layout must be free for the Bishop to have access to move round when performing the ceremony of consecration must be noted.

- Any special day for the consecration of a Church?

The historic account from the *Pontificale Romanum* seems to indicate that consecration of a church building can possibly take place in any day of the year, but Sunday or feast day is preferred for the ceremony. Before the ceremony, a day of fasting and abstinence by the consecrator and those requesting for the consecration used to be observed. This will be for example on a Thursday if the day fixed for the consecration is a Saturday, because the evening of Friday preceding the Saturday consecration, the Bishop will place the relics of a martyr in the altar, three grains of incenses and an attestation that is written in parchment. But by February 16, 1906, the Congregation of Sacred Rite instructed that using the relic of one martyr now suffices for valid consecration. The way the dedication was done then is described as follow:

‘The reliquary is then placed in an urn or in the tabernacle of an altar in a nearby church or oratory, or in an adjacent room or the sacristy. At least two candles are kept burning before these relics during the night, and Matins and Lauds de *communi plurimorum martyrum* or of the proper Office of the martyrs whose relics have been placed in the reliquary, are sung or recited. At the beginning of the consecration on the next day the candles under the crosses on the walls are lighted. After the

bishop and the clergy go to the place in which the relics of the martyrs were deposited the evening before, the church meanwhile being left in charge of a deacon. Whilst the bishop is being vested the Seven penitential Psalms are recited, after which all proceed to the main entrance of the church, where, remaining outside of the church, the first time sprinkling the upper part of the walls, the second time the lower part, and the third time on a level with his face. After each circuit the bishop strikes the door with the base of his crosier and says, "Lift up your gates, ye princes, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of Glory shall come in." Three times the deacon within the church asks, "Who is the king of Glory?" Twice the bishop answers, "The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle"; and the third time he says, "The Lord of Armies, He is the King of Glory".^{xxv}

Blessed Yves of Chartres in his sermon on dedication attached significance to this triple sprinkling. According to him they symbolize the triple immersion at holy baptism, the consecration of the soul as the spiritual temple of God, to which the material bears a certain analogy.^{xxvi} Moreover, in this antique ceremony that has persisted over the years and remains with us, the officiating Bishop meticulously observes the rites relating to the blessing of water to be used for the church consecration as prescribed by St. Gregory I. Every action and matter use in the ceremony is rich in symbols and meaning.^{xxvii}

In the post Trent church consecration is described thus:

The bishop, clergy and laity then go to the place in which the relics are reposed and in solemn procession carry them to the church. Before entering, the relics are borne round the outside of the church, whilst the clergy and the people repeat "Lord, have mercy on us". Having returned to the church door, the bishop gives a suitable exhortation to the people and addresses the founder of the church. Then one of the clergy reads the two decrees of the Council of Trent from the Pontifical. The bishop

next anoints with holy chrism, three times, the pillar on each side of the door, after which the clergy and the laity enter the church, and the consecration of the altar takes place. Finally, the twelve crosses on the interior walls are anointed with holy chrism and incensed by the bishop; the altar-cloths, vases and ornaments of the church and altar are blessed and a solemn or low Mass is celebrated by the bishop. If he be too fatigued, he may appoint a priest to celebrate a high Mass in his stead. If more than one altar has been consecrated, it will suffice to celebrate on the principal one (Cong. Sac. Rit., 22 February 1888).^{xxviii}

But more importantly the present Code of Canon Law dealing on Sacred Places attests to the continued existence of this custom. It holds that when a church is dedicated or blessed or a cemetery, a document must be drawn up in duplicate to be preserved in the diocesan curia and the archive of the dedicated church (can. 1208). The anniversary of the consecration is to be observed as a solemn yearly first class celebration till such a time when the church building is completely destroyed, ruined or profaned. There are three ways the loss of this consecration can occur, namely: a) a situation where the walls are totally or a greater part of it is simultaneously demolished; b) a situation where fire simultaneously destroys the inner walls of the church totally or a greater part of it; c) in a situation where addition is made to the church that is greater both in length, breadth or height to the original walls of the church.^{xxix} If the church is rebuilt or repaired due to any of the above situation, the Church after completion of work must be consecrated for worship again since it lost its initial consecration on account of any one of the situations we mentioned earlier.

In picking dates for church consecration, which must be stated in the act of consecration, it is advisable that the Bishop, do not take a date that clashes with another feast day of great importance in the universal church. He is also to be cognizant of this fact should he decides on a day different from the actual day of consecration for the celebration of the anniversary of the church.^{xxx} It is very significant to note that once

cathedrals and parish churches are dedicated, they are each dedicated with a title, which the law provides cannot be changed after the church has been dedicated (can. 1218). This is what becomes the birthday of the church (*dies natalis*) that is now celebrated just as we have November 9 for St. John Lateran that was built by Constantine in 324 A.D; June 29 for Saint Peter and Saint Paul Basilicas also built by Constantine; and August 5 for Saint Mary Major built in the 4th century. It is indeed the Post Second Vatican Council teaching that cathedral and parish churches celebrate their day of dedication as solemnity.

Ordo Dedicationis ecclesiae et alteris

This 1977 regulations and guide for dedicating churches and altars offer us profound theological, doctrinal, spiritual and symbolic rich meaning of church and the dedication of churches. In the *preanotanda*, we are told that a church building in as much as it is a visible edifice, is a sign of the pilgrim church on earth and the image of the church already blessed in heaven.^{xxxix} Therefore, the dedication of a church is not a social or a merely functional thing as some would argue; in fact, it has a sacramental characteristic as far the earthly and heavenly church is understood. Hence, the liturgical ceremony is placed within the context of our salvation: Christ the true temple → *ecclesia* temple of God → church-*domus* → dedication of the church.^{xxxix}

The structural layout in the *Ordo* of dedication is in four parts: a) the introductory rites [nn. 28 – 52]; b) the liturgy of the word [nn. 53 – 56]; c) dedication and consecration [nn. 57 – 71]; and d) liturgy of the Eucharist [nn. 72 – 85]. Just as we saw in the ancient practice, the use of procession to the church of dedication, the sprinkling of holy water and the incensing of the people as the living temple still subsist in church dedication today.^{xxxix}

Dedication of Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Auch and Future Direction for the Diocese

The dedication of a church is not a mere social event as we have indicated earlier. Therefore, with this dedication of the Immaculate

Conception Cathedral, Auchi, one cannot but reflect on imparts the ceremony should have on all of us as well as the future direction of the diocese. In his book, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Cardinal Ratzinger describes the theology of the liturgy as “symbolic theology” in a special way, that is as a theology of symbols that connects us to what is present but hidden. It is in the light of this that he addressed the question of the relevance of a place for worship. He stressed the fact that we must understand that we still need to set aside a place and time to worship today when he writes:

Yes, we do need them, precisely so that, through the ‘image’, through the sign, we learn to see the openness of heaven. We need them to give us the capacity to know the mystery of God in the pierced heart of the crucified. Christian liturgy is no longer replacement worship but the coming of the representative Redeemer to us, an entry into his representation that is an entry into reality itself. We do indeed participate in the heavenly liturgy, but this participation is mediated to us through earthly signs, which the Redeemer has shown to us as a place where his reality is to be found. (...) The Liturgy is the means by which earthly time is inserted into the time of Jesus Christ and into its present. It is the turning point in the process of redemption.^{xxxiv}

The cathedral church dedication today offers us this meeting point so aptly articulated by Cardinal Ratzinger above. The building and dedication of any church building reiterate its unique function that it is meant to play, which is to make it possible for people to get together for the liturgy. This coming together is a call to worship together. The cathedral is the mother church of the diocese, where the seat of the Bishop from where he teaches his flocks is institute and where he leads and presides over our worship of God. “It is a worship that unites the people called together and gives their being together its meaning and worth: they are united in that ‘peace’ which the world cannot give. This also becomes clear in relation to that great Old and New Testament

archetype of the *ekklesia*, the community on Sinai. They come together to hear God's Word and to seal everything with sacrifice. That is how a 'covenant is established between God and man.'^{xxxv}

The diocesan Bishop is the one to whom the care of the portion of the people of God is entrusted as their immediate pastor exercising the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing (CD 11).^{xxxvi} Among the principal duties of Bishops is preaching the Gospel. The Bishop being chief preacher of faith in the diocese leads new disciples to Christ. The Bishop in his diocese is the authentic teacher endowed with authority of Christ, preaching to people the faith they must believe, put to into practice, and illustrating to them by the light of the Holy Spirit that faith.^{xxxvii} Another primary duty of the Bishop is his office of teaching by which he announces the Gospel of Christ and calling people to faith in the power of the Spirit or by confirming them in the living faith (CD 12). The words of the Fathers of Vatican II says: "In exercising their office of father and pastor, bishops should stand in the midst of their people as those who serve. Let them be good shepherds who know their sheep and whose sheep know them. Let them be true fathers who excel in the spirit of love and solicitude for all and to whose divinely conferred authority all gratefully submit themselves. Let them so gather and mold the whole family of their flock that everyone, conscious of his own duties, may live and work in communion of love".^{xxxviii} The Bishop as chief shepherd of the diocese is obliged to earnestly urged the faithful to assume their duties of carrying on diocesan apostolate according their state in life and ability, admonished them to actively participate in and give aid to the various works of apostolate of the laity, promoting and supporting associations with the objectives: that is, either the attaining of a more perfect life, the spreading of the Gospel of Christ to all men, and the promoting of Christian doctrine or the increase of public worship, or the pursuing of social aims or the performing of works of piety and charity".^{xxxix}

The Bishop is the high priest of the diocesan flock, from whom the life in Christ of his faithful is in some way derived and dependent, we are all thus to hold in great esteem the liturgical life of the of the diocese centered around the Bishop especially in his cathedral church. We must

be convinced and understand that the pre-eminent manifestation of the Church in our diocese now, consists in our full active participation as God's holy people in liturgical celebrations especially in the Holy Eucharist, in a single prayer, at one altar, presided over by the Bishop surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers.^{xl} It is our duty to gathered round the Bishop as our head and under his leadership to direct the diocese in the understanding of the liturgy, the summit toward which the activities of the Church is directed, the font from which all power flows, and in the appreciation that all of us now made sons and daughters of God by faith and baptism must come together to praise God in His Church, to take part in the Eucharistic sacrifice and partake of the Lord's supper (SC 10). Therefore efforts are to be made to promote Liturgical Life in the Diocese and Parishes and ensuring that no form of abuses are allowed. In this end, the Bishop is to foster theoretical and practical relationship with his clergy and the faithful (SC 42).

As far as looking toward the future direction of the diocese is concern, this can only be attained in our walking together which is the very nature of the church. Pope Francis fittingly explain it thus: "To walk together is the constitutive way of the Church; the figure that enables us to interpret reality with the eyes and heart of God; the condition for following the Lord Jesus and being servants of life in this wounded time."^{xli} With the call by the Holy Father Pope Francis on a synod on synodality, may I suggest that for us to really look and project into the future, the diocese should begin to consider the possibility of having a diocesan synod in accordance with canonical provisions to assist the Bishop in planning the next Twenty years of the Catholic Diocese of Auchi especially in the area of Catechesis, Liturgy and Liturgical adaptations, Vocation to Priestly and Religious life, Formation of the laity, Youths ministry, pastoral care for family, Marriage, Dialogue, communication, Conflict resolution, evangelization, development of the diocese, investments, good governance and collaborative ministry/ co-responsibility of the whole people of God in the diocese. This is the case because synodality which is depicted as "the 'way', 'path' 'breath, 'condition', 'key' for life in

faith – is the *modus vivendi et operandi* with which the Church prepares all its members to share responsibility, develops their charisms and ministries, intensifies their bonds of fraternal love.”^{xlii} Embracing the spirit of prayerful discernment, consultation, listening to one another and working together will pave the way for the growth of the diocese. In this regard, overcoming all obstacles of proper formation and harmful effects of clerical mentality that relegate the lay faithful to subordinate role should be avoided so as to allow openings for laity, that represent the majority of the People of God to express themselves and share the wealth of their experience as disciples of Christ for the good and growth of the Catholic diocese of Auchi.^{xliii}

Conclusion Remarks

It is clear from our analysis, the church from the beginning celebrated the consecration of churches. For every church that is dedicated, all Christ faithful are to take responsibility to maintain its cleanliness, preserve its beauty to make it befit a house of God (c. 1220). Also all Christ faithful are to take to heart that only those things which serve the exercise or promotion of worship, piety, or religion are allowed in the church being a sacred place by virtue of its consecration (c. 1210). It is pertinent we emphasize that the place of the people in a dedicated church is that they constitute a community born from God’s convocation with Christ as the corner stone. Clearly then, a church is the house of God in which the Christian community gathers for the celebration of divine mysteries and for prayers, however, for it to obtain juridical personality, it must be canonically erected.^{xliv} When a church is erected and dedicated, it’s juridical and liturgical status must be determined (whether it is cathedral, parish, prelate, capitular, rector, convent, sanctuary, basilica) for such rests the rights and duties as can be seen in canons 503; 510; 556; 858 & 934. The importance of the church and its pastor is central in the liturgical life of the community hence none should be created without the other. This is so with the Holy See and in the creation of new parishes in the diocesan level.

Endnotes

- ⁱ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964, n. 6
- ⁱⁱ See Fabio Trudu, *Immagini Simboliche dell' Ecclesia nel rito di Dedicazione della Chiesa*, (Rome, 2001), 35.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no 6
- ^{iv} *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 583 & 584
- ^v Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, (San Francisco, USA: Ignatius Press, 2018), 77.
- ^{vi} For detail exposition see J. J. O'rourke, "Church in the Bible", *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), 678 – 683.
- ^{vii} F. X. Lawlor, "Theology of the Church II," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), 686-7.
- ^{viii} St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Smyrn*, Introduction, in K. Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers, I. I Clement; II Clement; Ignatius; Polycarp; Didache; Barnabas*, (London, 1965).
- ^{ix} St. Augustine, In *Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos tractatus X*, n. 3, in J. P Migne, *Patrologiae Latina, Cursus Completus*, 1887, (PL 35), 2055 – 56.
- ^x St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 3a 65.3 ad 1; 3a 73.1 ad3; 3a, 83.4
- ^{xi} F. X. Lawlor, "Theology of the Church II," 691.
- ^{xii} Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 76
- ^{xiii} Cf. *Praenotanda, Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et alteris*
- ^{xiv} *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org, (accessed 13/10/2022)
- ^{xv} Eusebius, cited in *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org, (accessed 13/10/2022)
- ^{xvi} Eusebius, cited in *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org, (accessed 13/10/2022)
- ^{xvii} Sozomen, cited in *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org, (accessed 19/10/2022)
- ^{xviii} *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et alteris*, n. 61
- ^{xix} *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org, "Consecration of a Church", (accessed 04/11/2022).
- ^{xx} For more elaboration on this theme see *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org, "Consecration of a Church".

^{xxi} *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org, “Consecration of a Church” It cited as source of these teaching the Cong. Sac. Rit., 7 Aug., 1875 and 5 June, 1899. (accessed 04/11/2022)

^{xxii} St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Smyrn*, 8; *Ad Eph.* 4

^{xxiii} Cf. Benedict XIV, Const. “Ex tuis precibus”, 16 November 1748, §2

^{xxiv} See Cong. Sac. Rit., 19 September 1665; Cong. Sac. Rit., 3 March 1866; Cong. Sac. Rit., 12 April 1614; Cong. Sac. Rit., 19 September 1665; Cong. Sac. Rit., 22 February 1888; Cong. Sac. Rit., 18 February 1696 (cited in *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org)

^{xxv} *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org, (accessed 09/11/2022)

^{xxvi} Blessed Yves of Chartres, *Sermo de Sacramentis Dedicacionis*, cited in *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org, (accessed 19/10/2022)

^{xxvii} Cf. *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org, (accessed 12/11/2022)

^{xxviii} *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org, “Consecration of church”, (accessed 12/11/2022)

^{xxix} Cf. *Catholic Encyclopedia*: www.newadvent.org, “Loss of consecration”, (accessed 14/11/2022)

^{xxx} Cong. Sac. Rit., February 4, 1896; Cong. Sac. Rit., June 12, 1660;

^{xxxi} *Praenotanda, Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et alteris*, n. 2

^{xxxii} Fabio Trudu, *Immagini Simboliche dell’ Ecclesia nel rito di Dedicazione della Chiesa*, 64. However, he stresses the fact that the lay faithful’s practical understanding of the celebration would be the reversed order: dedication of the church → church-domus → ecclesia-mystery → mystery of Christ.

^{xxxiii} *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et alteris*, n. 11; 16

^{xxxiv} Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 74 - 75.

^{xxxv} Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 77.

^{xxxvi} Second Vatican Council, Decree on The Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, October 28, 1965, n. 11.

^{xxxvii} Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution of the Church *Lumen Gentium*, n. 25.

^{xxxviii} Second Vatican Council, Decree on The Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, n. 16.

^{xxxix} Second Vatican Council, Decree on The Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, n. 17

^{xl} Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, December 4, 1963, n. 41

^{xli} Pope Francis, *Address to the Italian Episcopal Conference*, on the Opening of the 70th General Assembly of the Italian Episcopal Conference, Synodal Hall (22 May 2017), in *Bulletin of the Holy See Press Office*, 22 May 2018

^{xlii} Cardinal Michael Czerny, “The Church becoming synodal, part 1: *Lumen gentium* and the inverted pyramid” in thinkingfaith.org, (accessed 06/01/2023)

^{xliii} See Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World *Evangelii gaudium*, (Rome: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 24 November 2013), § 102

^{xliv} Juan Ignacio Arrejeta, (ed.), *Code of Canon Law Annotated*, (Canada, Wilson & Lafleur, 2022), 935.