

## CHAPTER 8

### PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES AND FRUITFUL PASTORAL MINISTRY: MAKING MORE EFFECTIVE PASTORS

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#### **Introduction**

The aim of this essay is to underscore the integral nature of academic/intellectual formation in the Catholic priesthood, with particular reference to the propaedeutic philosophical studies that is prerequisite for theological studies. It is common among seminarians studying philosophy to question the necessity and relevance of going through such rigorous studies in philosophy. The informing idea is that the priest does not need all that knowledge to effectively minister to the people of God, given that the ministry of the word involves competent knowledge of scriptures, church doctrines and teachings. Against this backdrop, this essay seeks to establish the relevance and accentuate the value of philosophical knowledge and skills in the pastoral ministry of the Catholic priest. The objective is to encourage Catholic priests, especially of the presbyterium of Auchi diocese, to deepen their philosophical knowledge and skills as this will contribute immensely to their pastoral and shepherding ministry. To this end, I shall, using the quantitative method of analysis, first discuss the intellectual dimension of seminary formation within the wider context of the four integral dimensions of priestly formation. Secondly, I shall discuss the

pastoral ministry of the priest. Thirdly, I shall analyse the connectedness between intellectual formation and pastoral ministry, underscoring the positivity that the former brings to the latter. I shall conclude the essay by insisting that to be well-grounded in philosophical knowledge and to properly employ the skills of philosophising, positions the Catholic priest towards a more effective pastoral ministry.

### **The Dimensions of Priestly Formation**

Priestly formation, by which I mean the formation or training of candidates for the Catholic priesthood, is a process that essentially takes place in the Seminary, thus, it may be synonymously referred to as seminary formation. It is an intensive process that aims to be holistic, integral and inclusive because it knits the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral development of the candidate for the priesthood. Such an inclusive programme is both demanding on the formators and the formandi. The formators have the responsibility of guiding the formandi (those being formed), according to the mind of the Church, towards the desired goal of priestly formation. The formandi, for their part, need the required docility and openness to the Holy Spirit and formators, allowing themselves to be moulded according to the mind of God as recommended by the Church. Citing the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (RFIS),<sup>1</sup> no. 35, Anselm Jimoh describes priestly formation as “a process that implies the configuration of the seminarian to Christ, who is the head, the shepherd, the servant and the spouse; bringing the seminarian into a mystical identification with the person of Christ as described in the gospels.”<sup>2</sup> The act of configuration here implies that one shapes himself through a process of internalisation, to develop the personality that reflects the values proper to the life and ministry of the priest.<sup>3</sup>

These descriptions of priestly formation are based on the teachings of the Catholic Church by the Second Vatican Council (VC II) as contained in the Decree on the Training of Priests – *Optatam Totius*,<sup>4</sup> and Pope St. John Paul II’s post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the formation of priests, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*.<sup>5</sup> The latter, is like a

compass to navigate the complexities and challenges posed by a fast-paced digital world to the formation of candidates for the priesthood.<sup>6</sup> To enable the formation of balanced people who are strong, free and capable of the enormous responsibility of pastoring the people of God, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* identified the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral dimensions as the integral components of priestly formation.

The four dimensions of priestly formation “interact simultaneously in the [journey] of formation and in the life of ordained ministers.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, they cannot be strictly separated because they are interwoven. For instance, the human formation constitutes the basis of all priestly formation because it is the necessary and dynamic foundation upon which the other dimensions of formation are erected. In the same vein, the spiritual formation provides the framework within which the quality of priestly ministry is shaped. Thus, it is “the centre that holds and provides life to the being of the priest and his function as a priest.”<sup>8</sup> The intellectual formation “provides the rational tools needed in order to understand the values that belong to being a pastor, to make them incarnate in daily life, and to transmit the content of faith appropriately.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, the intellectual formation which is the focus of this essay, transcends acquiring degrees in Philosophy and Theology. It involves an all-round education of the priest to be familiar with discourses in the human sciences, histories and cultures of those to whom he ministers.<sup>10</sup> The pastoral formation is towards actualising a responsible and fruitful service in the Church as authentic shepherds of souls who take after the example of Christ. The overall objective of the human, spiritual and intellectual dimensions of formation is towards making the priest a pastor.<sup>11</sup> As John Paul II affirms, the central idea of the four dimension of priestly formation is to educate priests to be, to love the truth, and to be loyal to God and his Church. Just as they (priests) are to be respectful of every person, show compassion, exude integrity, honesty, and be symbols of justice, as they reflect a balance in judgement and behaviour.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Intellectual Dimension of Seminary Formation**

Although *Pastores Dabo Vobis* provides four dimensions of priestly formation, this essay is particularly concerned with one of these dimensions, namely, the intellectual dimension. This is not to suggest that the other three are less important,<sup>13</sup> rather, it is to clarify the error of judgement that the rigour of intellectual formation, with particular reference to philosophical studies, is not directly relevant for the pastoral ministry of the priest.

The RFIS carefully accentuates the nature and contribution of intellectual formation to the exercise of the pastoral ministry by the priest by stating that “[i]ntellectual formation is a part of the integral formation of the priest. Moreover, it serves his pastoral ministry and has an impact upon his human and spiritual formation, which draw rich nourishment from it.”<sup>14</sup> This is to say that the intellectual aptitude of the priest has implications for his human maturity, integrity and spiritual growth. Although, it is true that one does not need to be intellectually vibrant to be spiritually sound, it is equally true that intellectual vibrancy can, and does positively impact on one’s sense of understanding, maturity, behaviour and spiritual insight. For instance, an individual’s intellectual capability provides the moderating tool to avoid unbridled rationalism on the one hand and fideism on the other hand. In other words, intellectual buoyancy enables the individual understand how faith and reason constitute the “two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”<sup>15</sup> In this way, fundamentalism and spiritual bigotry that provide basis for religious fanaticism and the extreme of intellectual rationalism and scientism would be avoided.

Concerning intellectual formation, VC II states that “[b]efore seminarians commence their specifically ecclesiastical studies, they should already have received that literary and scientific education which is a prerequisite to higher studies in their country.”<sup>16</sup> By this they establish that candidates for the priesthood are expected to undergo higher (degree) studies, following the basic requirements obtainable in their countries. To undertake higher studies (tertiary education) in

Nigerian, one requires the following minimum qualifications: secondary school leaving certificate (SSCE), obtain the required credits from the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) or General Certificate Education (GCE) and would have passed the mandatory Joint Admissions Matriculation Board (JAMB) and Post Universities Tertiary and Matriculation Examinations (Post-UTME). For the Catholic priesthood, candidates are expected to undertake higher studies in philosophy and theology which according to VC II, should be effectively coordinated to supplement one another such that they enable the students development their understanding and perception of the Mystery of Christ.<sup>17</sup>

VC II considers philosophical studies very relevant and necessary in priestly formation. To underscore this fact, the Council cites from the encyclical letters of Pope Pius XII<sup>18</sup> and Pope Paul VI<sup>19</sup> saying:

Philosophical studies should be taught in such a way as to lead the students gradually to a solid and consistent knowledge of man, the world and God. The students should rely on that philosophical patrimony which is forever valid, but should also take account of modern philosophical studies, especially those which have greater influence in their own country, as well as recent progress in the sciences. Thus, by correctly understanding the modern mind, students will be prepared to enter in dialogue with their contemporaries.<sup>20</sup>

Going further, the Council encouraged the teaching of the history of philosophy to enable the students “grasp the fundamental principles of the various systems, retaining those elements which proved to be true, while being able to detect and refute those that are false.”<sup>21</sup> It continues by identifying the idea of philosophical studies for the priesthood as a way of “stimulat[ing] in the students a love of rigorous investigation, observation and demonstration of the truth, as well as an honest

recognition of the limits of human knowledge.”<sup>22</sup> To this end, the studies in philosophy are to be directed towards real and/or actual problems and issues that engage the minds of the students. For instance, how to evaluate different opinions and views which the courses in Logic deal with; how to reach decisions about which is the most appropriate solution among different possible solutions, and how to differ between what is real and apparent, what is mistaken or false and the truth.

The RFIS reiterates that “intellectual formation is aimed at achieving for seminarians a solid competence in philosophy and theology, along with a more general educational preparation, enough to allow them to proclaim the gospel message to the people of our own day in a way that is credible and can be understood.”<sup>23</sup> Our world is ever changing as new discoveries in the sciences and discourses in the arts and humanities raise new questions and challenges. To remain relevant, pastors of souls must keep pace with changing times as the people of God look up to them for direction so as not to deviate from the path of salvation. In the light of this, the RFIS is apt about the necessity for seminarians to be competent in philosophy and theology. As future pastors of souls, they need to be able to correctly interpret the gospel message in ways and manners that the people of God can relate with regardless of the age and time. In this wise, seminarians need the criticality and analyticity of philosophy, and the systematic approach of theology. As RFIS puts it,

The organic serious study of philosophy and theology is the most suitable means of acquiring that *forma mentis* [form of mind – a way of thinking or mind set] that enables one to address the questions and challenges that are encountered in the exercise of the sacred ministry, and to interpret them in the light of faith.<sup>24</sup>

Given the *forma mentis* that knowledgeability in the philosophical and theological sciences equip candidates for the priesthood with, as pastors of souls in future, they can respond in appropriate ways to “enquiries

from the faithful who seek guidance and counsel to resolve their faith and moral crisis in the face of new scientific and technological discoveries that tend always to remove God from the picture.”<sup>25</sup>

While citing from VC II,<sup>26</sup> the RFIS states that “the knowledge of philosophy and theology helps us ‘to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word, so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage’.”<sup>27</sup> What this means is that the study of philosophy and theology in the Seminary is meant to develop, broaden and shape the mind of the seminarians in view of the praxis of pastoral responsibilities as priests. Therefore, RFIS insists that “[c]andidates for the priesthood must prepare themselves with diligent attention, by deepening their knowledge of the philosophical and theological sciences, with a good introduction to canon law, social sciences, and history.”<sup>28</sup> What is clear from the exposé thus far is that the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council and the Congregation for the Clergy that issued the RFIS are convinced that the study of philosophy and theology are not just relevant, but also necessary for the pastoral ministry of the priest. An understanding of the pastoral ministry of the priest would provide the grounds to further establish this fact.

### **On the Pastoral Ministry of the Priest**

The fundamental aim of priestly formation is “intended to prepare seminarians to be shepherds in the image of Christ.”<sup>29</sup> Priests are expected to be permeated with a pastoral spirit such that like Christ, they demonstrate compassion, generosity, love and zeal for the Kingdom of God. Thus, pastoral ministry requires “listening and careful discernment of situations, as well as cooperating with others and encouraging their ‘ministeriality’.... [Priests are to be] experts in pastoral discernment, ... able to listen deeply to real situations and capable of good judgement in making choices and decisions.”<sup>30</sup> The attributes listed here are discernible in Christ’s own ministry. For instance, he was just a good listener as we see in the conversation

between him and the woman at the well (John 4: 5-26), the encounter with the two men on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-27) and the case of the woman caught in the act of sin (John 8: 1-11). Attentive and careful listening makes good judgement and discernment possible.

The pastoral ministry of a priest is modelled after the public ministry of Christ who is **The Priest**, because every priest act *in persona Christi capitis* (in the person of Christ the head).<sup>31</sup> To explain this, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) states that,

In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present in his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, high priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth. This is what the Church means by saying that the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts *in persona Christi Capitis*.<sup>32</sup>

Like Christ's ministry which is captured in his mission statement: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captive and new sight to the blind; to free the oppressed and announce the Lord's year of mercy" (Luke 4: 18-19), the pastoral ministry of priests is essentially about the care of the people of God. The priest is supposed to undertake this acting as Christ would. Specifically, the pastoral ministry revolves around teaching, preaching, fellowship and service. It requires that the priest represents Christ and the Church as a pastor to the people. With the Bishop, the priest oversees the Church, he proclaims the gospel, administers the sacraments, blesses the people and declares forgiveness through absolving the people of their sins in the name of God.

The imagery of the Good Shepherd appositely captures the ministry of Christ. Herein, Christ declares himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep (John 10:11). Christ's exposition on the Good Shepherd which is synonymous with being a good pastor, indicates that a good pastor must enter into an intimate relationship with the sheep to enable him tenderly lead, feed, nurture,

comfort, correct and protect the sheep. Thus, Christ talks about knowing the sheep by name and the sheep recognising his voice and responding by following him when he calls them (John 10:3-4). Even though this is not practicable in our day, given the population and diversity of modern society, it nonetheless, underscores a very salient point. Namely, that a good pastor should be closely united with his followers such that he can feel the pulse of their situation and attend to them as their situation requires, just like the good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37). A good pastor, like the good shepherd, should be completely committed to the sheep, be there and be with them both in good and difficult times. In this regard, Pope Francis calls on priests to be “shepherds living with the smell of the sheep.”<sup>33</sup> He later developed this theme into a book, *With the Smell of the Sheep*,<sup>34</sup> and recently reiterated it in an address to priests of St. Louis of French Boarding School in Rome.<sup>35</sup> The Pope does not literally mean that priests as pastors should smell like sheep, he employs the phrase to emphasise the necessity of intimacy between the pastor and the people under his pastoral care.

We can, at this point plausibly claim that the fruitfulness of the pastoral ministry of a priest is largely dependent on the healthy and robust relationship between him and the people under his pastoral care. Such relationship is only possible in an atmosphere of mutual respect where parishioners are comfortable and at ease to approach the priest to share with him their challenges and difficulties. The factors that create an atmosphere of mutual respect include: (i) The ability of the priest to patiently listen to the parishioners. (ii) The absence of a domineering attitude by the priest. And (iii) The encouragement of participation and the practice of inclusivity in the parish life.

Listening is an evangelical style that is central to effective pastoral discernment. A pastor who listens carefully and attentively avoids the temptation of abstraction, self-promotion, excessive self-assurance, and aloofness. In this way, he avoids being a ‘*spiritual accountant*,’ to be ‘*a good Samaritan*’ instead.<sup>36</sup> Through listening the pastor is able to transcend his preconceived certainties, open up to God and others, learn about the experiences of others and enrich himself to

discern better and address issues appropriately. This is possible because careful listening enables him to gain understanding of the lives of others, and without being superficial or judgemental, he interprets the conditions of people with wisdom. Thus, he is able to offer attainable spiritual and pastoral possibilities that are relevant to the life and socio-cultural context of the people.<sup>37</sup>

A domineering attitude by a pastor, makes him a lord of the people instead of the good shepherd. It prevents a suitable atmosphere for mutual interaction between the priest and parishioners, rather, the priest is wont to talk down on the people, even from the pulpit. This disenfranchises the people and pushes them away from the priest because they would consider him disrespectful and a snob. It is antithetical to the pastoral spirit; it sows apathy among parishioners who wrongly begin to consider the Church as that of the priest. On the contrary, when the priest appreciates and respects his parishioners regardless of their social status, it gives them a sense of belonging and esteem. Instead of being apathetic they are encouraged to contribute to the best of their abilities to the life of the parish.

The ongoing Synod on synodality underscores the importance of participation and inclusivity in the pastoral affairs of the parish. Instead of being a divisive factor that segregate parishioners, a priest should be a cohesive force and a point of confluence. He should reach out to all and sundry irrespective of their tribal/ethnic, financial/economic, political and social differences in the parish. He should bring parishioners; the young and the old, the sick and the healthy, the educated and the illiterate, the poor and the wealthy, natives and non-natives, together as one big family of God's people. He should always be cognisant of the fact that among the people of God there is no Jew or Gentile, and God's salvation is for all.

The spiritual and liturgical life of the parish are integral aspects of the pastoral ministry. As part of his responsibilities, the priest administers the sacraments, nourishes the life and faith of the people through the Word of God, as well as provides them with spiritual guidance. To accomplish these, the priest must be available and stable in his parish; an absentee priest, globe-trotting would be

counterproductive since he would not be there to carry out these functions. To adequately and properly nourish the spiritual and moral life and faith of the people, the priest needs an in-depth understanding of scripture, doctrines and teachings of the Church. He must take time to prepare his homilies and be personally involved in the catechesis programme of the parish. He should not leave catechism and marriage classes entirely to those who have not had the privilege of the intellectual formation the Seminary provides. He should ensure regular spiritual renewal programmes like, retreats and seminars. The absence of these would hinder the pastoral vivacity of the priest and the parish.

Administration of the parish is also part of the pastoral ministry of the priest. This requires that he oversees Parish Pastoral Council meetings, as well as, other administrative organs of the parish. At such meetings he should avoid the 'I know it all attitude.' Even when he brings his expertise to bear on discussions, he should allow contributions, suggestions and proposals from members without making them feel they know nothing. Members should be free and at ease to express their views; disagree with proposals they think are not realistic or practicable, suggest alternative proposals they consider better than whatever proposals already made, and point out what they consider wrong in the life of the parish, even when they directly have to do with the priest. Objectivity, accountability, openness, affirmation, fairness and truth should characterise parish administration.

The foregoing analysis of pastoral ministry does not seem to suggest that it requires the kind of academic and intellectual rigour that comes with philosophy and theology. This seeming lack of connectedness provides the basis for questioning the necessity and relevance of philosophy especially, in the pastoral ministry of priests. The latter is, itself, connected to the abstract nature of philosophy against the practicality of pastoral ministry. More so, in our age where technological and scientific developments daily impact on the lives of people, the question of the relevance of philosophy that is almost entirely abstract, seems to be cogent. To adequately link philosophy to fruitful pastoral ministry, we may need a basic understanding of what

philosophy entails. Hence, the necessity to, even if briefly, expound the nature of philosophy.

### **Philosophy and the Pastoral Ministry of Priests**

Philosophy, in its simplest conception, the critical inquiry that privileges the use of human reason in the attempt to resolve existential issues. According to its Greek etymology, it derives from the Greek words: *Philo* (Love) and *Sophia* (Wisdom), thus, it is considered as the love of wisdom. Wisdom refers to an individual's reasonability and ability to exercise moderation. It is a combination of intelligence, smartness and clear judgement; an insight of profound understanding that enables sound judgement about what is right and appropriate.

Aristotle conceives wisdom as an intellectual virtue, that is, a habit of the soul that express the truth. A habit for him is a disposition that we acquire to perform certain types of action. Aristotle describes wisdom as the greatest intellectual virtue because while wisdom does not need to be moderated, it is needed to moderate how we exercise other virtues like, patience, courage, temperance, liberality, generosity, modesty and friendliness. We can exercise any of these in its excess and it becomes dangerous. For example, restrained courage at the war front can lead a soldier to his death. Just as unrestrained patience and tolerance can allow disorder and recklessness from those that need to be checked and corrected. This is why Aristotle proposes moderation in our exercise of the virtues, granting exception to wisdom because wisdom can never be exercised in excess.<sup>38</sup>

Philosophy as love of wisdom or philosophical wisdom, is a combination of scientific knowledge and intuitive reason about phenomena in their abstract form.<sup>39</sup> In other words, it deals with inquiry into the fundamental truths of reality as far as it is possible, regardless of how difficult it is. That is, gaining understanding of phenomena even if they are removed from sensory perception.<sup>40</sup> It is a discipline for persons who seek the highest degree of universal knowledge. By its nature, it seeks to develop human rationality to achieve the required understanding to resolve puzzles about the nature of reality. Hence, it is "the study of the fundamental problems connected with reality,

existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind and language.”<sup>41</sup> That is, seeking the fundamental truths about the human person and the world.

Given that wisdom is the ability to apply knowledge in a profound way, and that someone lacking knowledge cannot be said to be wise, we may broaden the etymological definition of philosophy to the “love of knowledge and wisdom.”<sup>42</sup> Knowledge is an integral and holistic grasp of reality that arises from the “intercourse between the cognitive agent and the object of cognition [as a result of] the agent’s interaction with others, the community, and the environment.”<sup>43</sup> Although, to be wise implies that one is knowledgeable, it is not necessarily the case that an individual who is knowledgeable is wise. To know is to have a mental or theoretical understanding of what is the case, wisdom is the practical application of one’s understanding to issues and situations. Thus, wisdom is practical knowledge, the ability of an agent to assimilate and apply what s/he knows to make the right and appropriate decision when required. Philosophical knowledgeability is therefore, a pathway to wisdom because it enwisdomises the knower on the application of theoretical principles to practical life situations.<sup>44</sup>

Philosophy helps us to correct distortions in human thought process, and engage in the unbiased examination of our worldviews and conceptual frameworks. Its primary objective is to “dispel ignorance, enrich understanding, broaden experience, expand horizons, develop imagination, control emotions, explore values, fix beliefs by rational enquiry, establish habits of acting, widen considerations, synthesise knowledge [in the] quest for wisdom.”<sup>45</sup> The study of philosophy equips us to respond to existential situations in the appropriate manner by providing us with the tools of analysis, criticality and constructiveness to circumnavigate intricate issues and situations. By prioritising the logical criteria of consistency and coherence, philosophy helps us to avoid contradictions in our thinking and ambiguity in our expressions. By insistence on the criteria of adequacy and applicability philosophy helps us to ensure that our theoretical analyses are compatible with what is given in our experiences.

The overall implication of studying philosophy is that it enables us to cultivate a broad and open-minded attitude to life. In this way, we have no inhibitions to question and investigate phenomena; we are open to truth irrespective of its source; we are objective in the assessment of different perspectives on any given issue; we take the risk to question unexplained assumptions; and we are humble because we recognise and accept the limitations of human knowledge.<sup>46</sup> Given that philosophy broadens our mind and horizon of perception, it us helps to eliminate our fears, misconceptions and prejudices.

How does any of these contribute to fruitful pastoral ministry? As *Optatam Totius* n. 4 states, the objective of formation is to make the priest a pastor. RFIS n. 117 affirms this by asserting that the human and spiritual formations draw rich nourishment from the intellectual formation. This is so because philosophy especially, helps the formandi acquire the *forma mentis* required for the pastoral ministry. As John Paul II asserted above, priestly formation is aimed at educating the priest to: (i) love the truth, (ii) respect people, (iii) exude integrity, and (iv) reflect balance of judgement and behaviour. The primary aim of philosophy is to understand the truths of reality through a critical and rational investigation of phenomena. To this end, it trains the mind to be open to all perspectives and objectively assess propositions to avoid contradictions and ambiguity. This way, it helps the pastor to avoid falsehood, errors, and poor judgement. Adequate knowledge, openness, objectivity and careful listening enable proper discernment and good judgement. This is very fundamental to the pastoral ministry. In this regard, philosophy is the apposite discipline that equips the priest for the responsibility of pastoral ministry

In his responsibility of teaching about the mysteries of God's Kingdom through his homilies and catechesis, the pastor would not to deal with explaining Christian doctrines that raise difficult philosophical questions.<sup>47</sup> For instance, questions about the Trinity – how there can be three persons in one God? The same applies to questions the Hypostatic Union – how there can be a unity of two natures in one person without one of the natures sublimating the other? Likewise, is the teaching on transubstantiation – how the Blessed

Sacrament is the Body and Blood of Christ, yet it continues to look like and taste like bread and wine? These doctrines require some philosophical analysis and expertise to elucidate. A good foundation in philosophy is a huge advantage in execute this pastoral responsibility.

For effective and fruitful pastoral ministry, the priest must have the ability to listen carefully, avoid being domineering, and exhibit the capacity to encourage inclusivity. Although it is debateable, it is nonetheless, plausible to claim that these character traits are not intrinsic to human nature, they are traits that we acquire in our development as human persons. Philosophy provides the avenue to acquire and develop these traits. According to RFIS n. 89, intellectual formation of which philosophy is an integral part, provides: (i) the rational tools to understand the values required to pastor, (ii) incarnate the values referred to in (i) in daily life, and (iii) appropriately transmit the content of faith. Listening, openness, humility and integrity are some of the essential values required for fruitful pastoring the people of God.

Since philosophy provides us with analytic skills, given that it makes us critical thinkers, it enables us to have a clearer perception of phenomena and therefore, more creative with problem solving. In seeking to understand the truths of reality, philosophy prioritizes objectivity, avoids partial inquiry, and explores all the possibilities in search of the right answers and solution. It therefore, assists the pastor to realise that there are other views beyond his own and that openness to these other views, even if they are opposed to his position, provides a more comprehensive, holistic and integral understanding. In this way, he does not have to impose his views and positions on the people. Where he thinks he is correct, he should provide superior argument to convince the people to accept his view. Philosophy would not permit him to result to imposition of his view by virtue of his authority, that will be tantamount to *ad baculum* – appealing to the force of authority.

Humility is very essential to the fruitful pastoral ministry of the priest. Apart from guiding the priest from being domineering and disrespectful to the people, it attracts people to him and therefore, facilitates his responsibility as a point of confluence. Philosophy helps

us to realise the limitedness of human knowledge and so facilitates our openness to the views of others. It enables collaboration with others in the search for what is right and appropriate. Humility provides the right disposition for the effective function of a pastor, it does not allow the pastor to be carried away with the paraphernalia of his position, rather, it positions him as a servant leader ‘with the smell of the sheep.’

## Conclusion

This essay set out to establish the connectedness between philosophical studies in seminary formation and the pastoral ministry of the priest. Its aim was to discountenance the contestation that philosophy is relevant and necessary for effective pastoral ministry and by so doing encourage priest of Auchi diocese to deepen their philosophical knowledge and skills towards enhancing their <sup>48</sup>pastoral ministry of teaching, administration and spiritual renewal of the people of God. In pursuance of this aim and objective, this essay analysed priestly formation, pastoral ministry and the nature of philosophy, deducing from these the connection between pastoral ministry and intellectual formation, especially in philosophy. In the light of the expositions of this essay, I submit that being well-grounded in philosophical knowledge and employing the skills of philosophising, the priest better position to engage in a fruitful and more effective pastoral ministry.

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Congregation for Clergy, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation: Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (Vaticana: Libreria Editrice, 2016). Henceforth referred to as RFIS or *Ratio Fundamentalis*.

<sup>2</sup> Anselm K. Jimoh, “The Dialectics of ‘Auto-Guided. Formation: The Seminarian as an Agent of Formation,” in *Formation of the Human Person in the 21st Century*, eds., Gregory Ogbenika and Francis Ikhianosime, pp. 183-193 (Benin City: Floreat Systems Publications, 2021), p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> See Jorge C. P. Wong, “Foundations of Priestly Formation,” <http://www.clerus.va>Dox>, PDF, p. 1. (Accessed 3/11/22).

<sup>4</sup> Vatican II, *Optatam Totius*, Degree on the Training of Priests, (28 October, 1965).

- <sup>5</sup> John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (Vaticana: Libreria Editrice, 1992).
- <sup>6</sup> See John K. Aniagwu, *Faith and Social Action: Perspectives on the Church and Society* (Iperu Remo: Ambassador Publications, 2011), p. 214.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis*, n. 89.
- <sup>8</sup> Jimoh, “The Dialectics of ‘Auto-Guided’ Formation,” p. 185.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis*, n. 89.
- <sup>10</sup> See Anselm Jimoh, “Priestly Formation in the Face of Contemporary Challenges in Nigeria: Lessons for Consideration in Auchi Diocese,” in *Diocese of Auchi at 10: History, Growth and Perspectives*, eds., J. A. Onimhawo and F. E. Ikhianosime, pp. 31-53 (Ibadan: Safmos Publishers, 2013), p. 44.
- <sup>11</sup> *Optatam Totius*, n. 4
- <sup>12</sup> John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 43-45.
- <sup>13</sup> See *Ratio Fundamentalis*, n.118.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis*, n. 117.
- <sup>15</sup> John Paul II, *Faith and Reason* (Lagos: Paulines Publication Africa, 1998), p. 5.
- <sup>16</sup> *Optatam Totius*, n. 13.
- <sup>17</sup> *Optatam Totius*, n. 14.
- <sup>18</sup> Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Humani Generis* (12 August, 1950).
- <sup>19</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical Letter, *Ecclesiam Suam* (6 August, 1964).
- <sup>20</sup> *Optatam Totius*, n. 15. (The emphasis indicated by italics is mine).
- <sup>21</sup> *Optatam Totius*, n. 15.
- <sup>22</sup> *Optatam Totius*, n. 15.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis*, n. 116.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis*, n. 118.
- <sup>25</sup> Jimoh, “The Dialectics of ‘Auto-Guided’ Formation,” pp. 185-186. Also see Jimoh, “Priestly Formation,” pp. 44-45.
- <sup>26</sup> Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (7 December, 1965), n. 44.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis*, n. 116.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis*, n. 116.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis*, n. 119.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis*, nn. 119 & 120.
- <sup>31</sup> Vatican II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (7 December, 1965), n. 2.
- <sup>32</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Ibadan: St Pauls, 1994), n. 1548.
- <sup>33</sup> Pope Francis, “Priests should be ‘Shepherds Living with the Smell of the Sheep,’” *The Catholic Telegraph*, March 28, 2013. <https://www.thecatholictelegraph.com>. (Accessed 3/10/22).
- <sup>34</sup> Pope Francis, *With the Smell of the Sheep* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017).
- <sup>35</sup> “Pope’s Advice includes Smelling of Sheep,” <https://www.exaudi.org>. (Accessed 3/10/22).

<sup>36</sup>*Ratio Fundamentalis*, n. 120. Here references are made to Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November, 2013), n. 33 & the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia* (19 March, 2016), n. 200.

<sup>37</sup>*Ratio Fundamentalis*, n. 120.

<sup>38</sup> See Tim, "What is Wisdom? Philosophical Definition, May 26, 2012" in *Philosophy & Philosophers*, <https://www.the-philosophy.com/wisdom-philosophical-definition>. (Accessed 6/9/22).

<sup>39</sup> Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), VI, 1141b.

<sup>40</sup> See, Stephen Skousgaard, "Wisdom and Being in Aristotle's First Philosophy," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 40, 3 (July 1976) pp. 444-474. Doi:10.1353/tho.1976.0013.

<sup>41</sup> Anselm K. Jimoh, *Philosophy: A guide for beginners*, Revd ed. (Ibadan: Ebony Books and Creations, 2021), 21.

<sup>42</sup> Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 286.

<sup>43</sup> Anselm Jimoh, Moses Akpoughal Abunya and Peace Jemibor, "The Epistemology of African Sociological Knowledge Practices," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sociology of Africa*, eds. R. Sooryamoorthy and Nene Khalema pp. C2.S1-C2.S6. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022). <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197608494.001.0001>.

<sup>44</sup> Anselm Jimoh, "Philosophy and Christian Pastoral Ministry in the Contemporary World," *EPHA: Ekpoma Journal of Religious Studies* 1 & 2 (June 2016), 48. 47-58

<sup>45</sup> Jimoh, *Philosophy*, 22.

<sup>46</sup> Jimoh, *Philosophy*, 36-37.

<sup>47</sup> William Wood, "Philosophy and Christian Theology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/christiantheology-philosophy>. (accessed 7/10/22).