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## WHY A SEMINARY?

In Mark 3:13-15, Jesus selects His twelve apostles, and the Gospel writer narrates the episode in the following words: *“And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons.”* Stressing the need of effectively training priests, the twenty-third session of the Council of Trent (1545 – 1563), decreed the creation of a seminary, a nursery where vocations to the priesthood can be nurtured and guarded (VATICAN II ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Training of Priests *Optatam Totius*, (28 October 1965), n. 4).



But what is a seminary? Coming from the Latin root, *“seminarium”* (seed-plot) and *“semen”* (seed), it is “a place set aside to provide an ideal atmosphere and environment for the germination and the flourishing of vocations to the priesthood” (MISSIONARIES OF ST. PAUL, NIGERIA, *A Handbook on Formation: The Iperu Formation Community*, Ambassador Publications, Ogun State, Nigeria 1992, 3). From here, we gauge that “to live in the seminary, which is a school of the Gospel, means to follow Christ as the Apostles did. You are led by Christ into the service of God the Father and of all people, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus, you become more like Christ the Good Shepherd in order to better serve the Church and the world as a priest. In preparing for the priesthood we learn how to respond from the heart to Christ’s basic question: ‘Do you love me? (Jn 21:15). For the future priest, the answer can only mean total self-giving (JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), n. 42).

In the fifty years of the existence of the St. Thomas Aquinas’ Major Seminary, Bambui, men chosen specially by God, “young men for the ministerial priesthood” (Cf. STAMS Bambui, *Golden Jubilee Prayer*), have been formed into *alteri Christi* (other Christs). As a guide to realize this goal of forming authentic ministers of the Gospel, the late Bernard Fonlon in his *Open Letter to the Bishops of Bamenda and Buea*, stressed the need for integral formation of the whole person,

a breeding of pastors worth the salt, men seasoned with good manners, standing out as saints and scholars before the world. Still, during the inaugural Mass of the 1973/1974 Formation year, Bishop Paul M. Verdzevov stated clearly the purpose of the erection of STAMS Bambui. *“What kind of institution exactly have we come here to inaugurate? It is an institution of the Church which accepts young students who, after their secondary school studies, desire*

*strictly priestly training. The aim of the Major Seminary is the more explicit and fuller development of vocations; and after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, Priest and Pastor, to form and produce true pastors of souls for the ministry of teaching, sanctifying and ruling the people of God”* (BISHOP PAUL VERDZEKOV, *Sermon on the Occasion of the Solemn Opening of the Regional Major Seminary, Bambui, with a Concelebrated Mass at 3p.m. on Monday 3 December 1973*).

Consequently, this December edition of the *Searchlight Magazine* reflects on the theme: ***Priestly Formation Then and Now***. Articles such as *the Historical Origins of Seminaries; The Basis and Purpose of Priestly Formation: Priestly Identity; The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World; The Nature and Mission of the Ministerial Priesthood*, amongst other articles bring out the necessity of forming the future priests of the Church with emphasis on the fundamental role the Seminary plays in the process of formation. Being the Christmas season, our Christmas article, *“The Theological Significance of the ‘O’ Antiphons in the Advent and Christmas Liturgy,”* throws more light on the last seven days leading us to the birth of Jesus.

As we welcome baby Jesus in our hearts soon, receive Christmas greetings from us and a prosperous New Year 2024.

**Eric AFONGANG N.**  
(Editor-in-Chief)



## ANOTHER YEAR OF FORMATION BEGINS

The Formation Year 2023/2024 began on Friday 22 September 2023, with the arrival of the seminarians. Fifty-one seminarians made their way into the class of First Year Theology.

### ANNUAL RETREAT

From Sunday 24 September to Thursday 28 September 2023, the seminarians had the Annual Retreat to begin the 2023/2024 Formation Year. Fr. Divine Banboye of the Order of the Pious Schools of St. Joseph Calasanz led the retreat. Guided by the theme: "Authenticity and Consistency in following Christ," Fr. Banboye exhorted the seminarians to be disciplined men of God, genuine in their lifestyle and consistent in living out the Christian ideals.

### INAUGURAL MASS, OATH OF FIDELITY AND INSTITUTION IN THE MINISTRIES

In the context of the Golden Jubilee Year of STAMS Bambui (3 December 2022 – 1 December 2023), the Inaugural Mass wherein the new Formators take the oath of fidelity and new lectors and acolytes are instituted was scheduled for Wednesday 8 November 2023 at the Our Lady of Grace Shrine, Abangoh, Big Mankon, Bamenda. The occasion was used also as a day of pilgrimage, to thank God for His graces showered on the Seminary for the past fifty years. Mgr. Andrew Nkea, the Archbishop of Bamenda presided at the occasion.

In his homily, Mgr. Nkea told the seminarians that the priestly vocation is a gift of God to the Church and that no one takes this honour upon himself. He asked them to guard against the vice of clericalism and to shun the attitude of spiritual worldliness. He stressed also the fact that the seminarians need to be vigilant in order to overcome spiritual worldliness.

At the end of the Mass, Fr. Gordian Baba, the Vice Rector, thanked Mgr. Nkea for the beautiful homily and promised that the Seminary will put the teaching into practice. Frs Cyprian Diang, Marcel Kpudzeka, Louis Mbuyeh and Paul Remjika solemnly professed the faith and took the oath of fidelity while 48 seminarians received the ministry of Lector and 32 others received the ministry of Acolyte. The day ended with the Rosary prayer, led by the Archbishop.

### STAMS GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS WITH VARIOUS CHURCH GROUPS

The members of the World Apostolate of Fatima (Blue Army of Our Lady), Archdiocese of Bamenda, joined the STAMS family to celebrate her Golden Jubilee on Sunday 8 October 2023. The Holy Mass was presided at by Mgr. Michael Yuh, who exhorted all to do good continuously so that the peace of God can reign in our hearts. The day ended with presentations, cultural displays and refreshment.

The members of the Catholic Men Association (C.M.A.) of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province joined the STAMS family on Saturday 14 October 2023 to celebrate her Golden Jubilee. The Holy Mass had as main celebrant, Mgr. John Ambe, who, during his homily, exhorted all present to emulate the virtues of St Joseph, that is, his humility, obedience to the voice of God, availability, fidelity and willingness to do God's will. There were also presentations from the seminarians and the CMA members. The day ended with refreshment. The Rector expressed gratitude to the CMA members for the turnout.

The members of the Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary

(ASHJIM) of the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province were in the Seminary on Sunday 22 October 2023 to celebrate with the STAMS family, her Golden Jubilee. The main Celebrant of the Holy Mass was Fr Clement Pishangu. He exhorted the Seminarians during his homily to keep the vow of celibate chastity and to cooperate with the formators in the process of discernment of God's will. Holy Mass was followed by a presentation from the Seminarians, a word of exhortation from two members of ASHJIM, and refreshment.

On Sunday 5 November 2023, the Fon of Bambui and the entire Fondom, gathered in the Seminary to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of STAMS Bambui. The Archbishop, Mgr. Andrew Nkea, being the principal Celebrant of the Pontifical High Mass, during his homily, thanked the People of Bambui, through their Fon for their faith, hospitality, peaceful, welcoming and loving attitude during this 50 years that the seminary has been in their land. He implored the blessing of God over them. The Mass was followed by cultural presentations from both the seminarians and the various dance groups of Bambui. Also, the members of the pioneer batch of STAMS Bambui together with Mgr. Nkea were decorated traditionally by the Fon of Bambui. At the end of the day there were refreshments.

### VISITS

On Sunday 29 October 2023, the members of the Queen of Angels Division, of the Catholic Women's Association (C.W.A.), comprising Babanki Tungo, Balikumbat and Bamessing, paid a visit to the Seminary. Fr. Paul Remjika who was the main celebrant at the Mass, exhorted us to live holy lives like the saints. After Mass, snapshots were taken and we went to the seminarians' refectory. There, the President of the CWA delegation introduced her members and offered words of advice to the seminarians. Also, they gave us some foodstuffs to assist in our feeding.

### ENROLLMENT FOR 2023/2024 FORMATION YEAR

<u>Level</u>	<u>Diocesan</u>	<u>Religious</u>	<u>Total</u>
Theology I	51	6	57
Theology II	46	9	55
Theology III	37	4	40
Theology IV	45	10	55
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>208</b>

### MEMBERS OF STAFF

#### Permanent Formation Team

The following priests constitute the members of the Permanent Formation Team for the 2023/2024 Formation Year: Fr Charles Berinyuy (Rector), Fr Gordian Baba (Vice Rector/Head of Department), Fr Edward Lukong (Bursar), Fr Henri Peeters, Fr Anthony Yilaka, Fr Pascal Nsah, Fr Augustine Nkwain, Fr Peter Foleng, Fr Martin Njikang, Fr Evans Shang, Fr Antoninus Tantan, Fr Marcel Kpudzeka, Fr Louis Mbuyeh and Fr Paul Remjika.

#### Visiting Lecturers

The following Priests and Sister serve as visiting lecturers: Fr Derek Che Choh, Fr Joseph Kuate, Fr Peter Takov, Fr Terence Lukong OFM. Cap, Fr Cyprian Diang and Sr Gloria Wirba TSSF.

**NOTICE! NOTICE! NOTICE!**

**Information for the attention of Ex-seminarians and Priests alumni of Saint Thomas Aquinas' Major Seminary (STAMS *Theologicum*), Bambui.**

If you wish to collect documents from the secretariat of the *Theologicum*, kindly make your request via the email address provided below:

**bambuiseminary@yahoo.co.uk**

Indicate clearly what kind of documents you wish to be prepared for your collection and leave a contact phone number by which you can be conveniently reached when the documents are ready for collection. Your appointment to collect documents should be on working days, that is, from Monday to Friday, during working hours, that is, from 9:00AM until Midday. Thank you for your understanding and collaboration.

*Sr Joan Sikem TSSF (Secretary)*

**A PLEA FROM STAMS LIBRARY**

We plead with Priests and Christians to send copies of Sunday Newsletters, Wedding cards, Funeral booklets, Wedding booklets, Invitation cards, Thank You cards, Souvenirs of Religious Professions, Papers, Magazines and any other souvenir cards for preservation in the *archive section* of the Seminary library. We also use this opportunity to acknowledge, with profound gratitude, having received a good number of these items. However, we remain open to receive even more. You could hand any of these to any member of the STAMS family (priest or seminarian) or, if possible, bring them yourself to the Seminary.

Rev. Fr. Evans SHANG  
(Father Librarian)

**A PLEA FOR MASS INTENTIONS**

We use this opportunity to thank you who have been sending Mass Intentions to our Seminary.

We appeal for more intentions. Our Seminary has eleven resident Priests, and ten intentions could be exonerated everyday. Mass Intentions to STAMS could be sent through any Bishop's House or through any member of the STAMS family-Priest or Seminarian. Once the Mass is celebrated, the Mass Offering is used for the upkeep of the Seminary as a whole. Thus, when you send these intentions, besides reaping the assured Spiritual Benefits, you contribute to the upkeep of the Seminary materially. May God continue to bless and reward you for all your kindness towards our House of Formation for future Priests.

Rev. Fr. Charles BERINYUY SENGKA  
(Rector)

**NOTICE! NOTICE!**

Dear Readers, we would like to inform you that **Subscription Forms** for the *Searchlight* Magazine are now available. To get the form, kindly get to any seminarian from STAMS Bambui and Subscribe for a year or more. Thanks.

**STAMS GOLDEN JUBILEE**

St. Thomas Aquinas' Major Seminary (S.T.A.M.S. *Theologicum*) Bambui wishes to heartily thank you all who, in one way or the other, have contributed to the smooth and fruitful celebration of her Golden Jubilee from the day of its launching to the peak celebration itself. May the Almighty God continue to bless and protect you.

**NOTICE! NOTICE!**

Dear brothers and sisters, we would like to remind all those who visit the Seminary, that whenever they come, they should dress decently.



# THE ORIGINS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SEMINARIES

## INTRODUCTION

The term ‘seminary’ is derived from the Latin word *seminarium*, (literally translated as ‘seedbed’ or ‘nursery’). The term was used to describe a place where young seedlings were prepared for eventual transplantation. Thus, a seminary is “a special type of school dedicated to the spiritual, moral, and intellectual formation of the clergy” (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 12, 1893). Its purpose is to cultivate and nurture the vocations to the priesthood. The aim of this article is to trace the history of priestly formation, and the origins and development of Catholic seminaries through the ages.



**VALERY DINNYUY**  
**THEOLOGY IV**



**CARLTON LEBAGA**  
**THEOLOGY I**

## 1. THE PERIOD OF APPRENTICESHIP

Let us begin by tracing the way priests were trained in ancient times.

### 1.1. APPRENTICESHIP IN SCRIPTURE

In the Old Testament, the ministry of the priesthood was assigned to the tribe of the Levites. There was no formal training for those who were to take up the ministry of the priesthood; one inherited it if he was born a male into the tribe. The priests-to-be received instruction and training from their fathers. We find a good example of this in 1 Samuel 22-25, where the Priest Eli labours to train his sons as priests.

In the New Testament, we find that Jesus Christ called and trained his disciples (Matt. 4:18-22, 9:9-13, Lk. 5:1-11). It was after they had been sufficiently trained that he sent them out (Mk. 3:14-15). Jesus’ selection and training set the foundation for the formation of clergy. This practice can be seen as the precursor to the modern-day seminary system.

### 1.2. APPRENTICESHIP IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

After Pentecost, the early Christian Church began to grow. The Apostles had many followers and from among these he had to choose people who would succeed them. At this stage, there was no official institutional structure for the preparation of the clergy. Those who were to receive the laying on of hands were mentored by

the senior and more experienced members of the community. We find that Paul himself was mentored by Barnabas (Acts 13:1ff). Paul in turn mentored men like Silas, Titus, Ephaproditus and Timothy (Acts 16:3).

## 2. THE BEGINNING OF FORMAL LEARNING

### 2.1. EMERGENCE OF CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

As Christianity began to spread across the Roman Empire, Christian communities began to establish schools to educate and train individuals interested in pursuing the priesthood or religious life. These early Christian schools, often referred to as catechetical schools, focused on teaching scripture and theology. Prominent examples include the School of Alexandria and the School of Antioch (Cf. SHAW, RUSSELL B. “The Origins of the Catechetical School,” in *The Catechetical School: Text and Context*, Raymond F. Lo (ed.), Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015, 25-42). These schools started around the third century.

### 2.2. MONASTICISM AND THE BIRTH OF SEMINARIES

Gradually, monastic communities saw the need for a structured and systematic approach to training future priests. Thus, in 386 AD, St. Augustine opened a monastery called the ‘society of brothers’ at Thagaste. There, he gave philosophical and theological training to men who wanted to grow in knowledge and spiritual life. We find St. Augustine for example teaching thus: “It is the duty of the defender of faith, the opponent of error [...] both to teach what is right and to refute

what is wrong” (AUGUSTINE, *De Doctrina Christiana*, IV, 4).

### 2.3. MEDIEVAL SCHOOLS AND SCHOLASTICISM

Gradually, the monasteries became overcrowded and lost their focus on prayer and silence. Bishops took upon themselves the charge to create schools. Since they created these schools around their cathedrals, these schools came to be called Cathedral Schools. The original purpose of Cathedral schools was to train priests. However, they gradually taught students as well – usually boys of noble families. It should be noted that men such as John of Salisbury amongst others in the Cathedral schools set the pace for scholasticism which will reach its prime with Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure.

### 2.4. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MODERN DAY SEMINARY

The shift in objective of Cathedral schools made education expensive. This caused many clergy to lack proper education and training for the ministry. The Council of Trent resolved the problem.

### 2.5. COUNCIL OF TRENT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SEMINARIES

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) recognized the need for better-educated and properly formed clergy to counter the criticisms of the Reformers. In its twenty-third session in 1563, it decreed (in *De Seminariis Erigendis*) and mandated the establishment of seminaries in every Diocese. These institutions were to be centres of study, where candidates for the priesthood received a rigorous education in philosophy and theology, and an integral formation in various pastoral disciplines like spiritual life, pastoral sensitivity and integral humanity. This formalized the modern-day seminary system as we know it today (Cf. J. O'MALLEY, *Trent: What Happened at the Council*, Harvard University Press, 2013, 87).

Pope Pius IV erected a seminary for the Diocese of Rome in 1565 in response to the decree, as well as St. Charles Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan who opened a major seminary and preparatory seminaries for aspirants of different age groups.

### 2.6. PROBLEM WITH THE SEMINARIES OF TRENT

As many seminaries were erected, there rose another problem. There was no Church legislation governing the length or content of seminary formation. This was largely determined by various episcopal conferences and religious houses with no general guide.

## 3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN SEMINARIES

### 3.1. THE STANDARDIZATION OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) brought significant changes to the formation. It emphasized the need for pastoral formation based on a deeper understanding of Scripture, theology, and the human sciences. These reforms were done mainly in two documents: *Presbyterorum Ordinis* and *Optatam Totius*.

*Optatam Totius*, for example, explains that “the whole training of the students should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd.” (VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*, (28 October 1965), n. 4). On its part, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* explains that bishops should be careful to ensure that there will never be any lack of suitable teachers for the education of clerics (Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priest *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, (7 December 1965), n. 19).

### 3.2. ADAPTATIONS AND UPDATES

In the aftermath of Vatican II, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education released in 1970 the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* which put into practice the teaching of *Optatam Totius* (n.1) on the creation of a universal and uniform program for priestly formation. Revised on 19 March 1985 to meet up with the changes in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, the new *Ratio* gave new impetus to formation. In the monumental Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, the term “pillars of formation,” was introduced and on-going formation for priests linked to initial formation in the seminary. The formation process has also become more culturally diverse, reflecting the global nature of the Catholic Church. In 2016, the Congregation for the Clergy published *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* outlining these recent needs.

## CONCLUSION

The successive historical developments have shaped the current structure and function of seminaries. With each passing era, seminaries have adapted and responded to the demands of their time, incorporating new approaches to theological education, pastoral training, and the formation of future priests. Today, Catholic seminaries continue to adapt and respond to the challenges and opportunities of the modern world and serve as essential institutions in the life of the Catholic Church, preparing men for the sacred vocation of priesthood.



## LE CONCILE DE TRENTE : UN RENOUVEAU DANS LA FORMATION DES FUTURS PRÊTRES



**REV. FELIX ADE**  
**THEOLOGY IV**



**KEN-EMMANUEL BAWALA**  
**THEOLOGY III**

### INTRODUCTION

Le Concile de Trente, l'un des conciles les plus importants de l'histoire du catholicisme, est le dix-neuvième concile œcuménique reconnu par l'Église catholique. Convoqué par le pape Paul III le 22 Mai 1542 en réponse aux demandes formulées par Martin Luther et Jean Calvin dans le cadre de la Réforme protestante, il débute le 13 décembre 1545 et se termine le 4 décembre 1563. Étalées sur dix-huit ans, ses vingt-cinq sessions couvrent cinq pontificats (Paul III, Jules III, Marcel II, Paul IV et Pie IV). Ce concile, qui institue les séminaires (lieux de formation des candidats en vue du sacerdoce), a eu un impact remarquable dans la formation sacerdotale.

### 1. CREATION DES SEMINAIRES : LE DECRET DU 15 JUILLET 1563

L'un des objectifs majeurs du concile de Trente a été de permettre la réforme du clergé qui n'a jamais été absent des préoccupations de l'Eglise. Les regroupements de clercs autour des évêques pour leur formation avaient donné de bons résultats dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen-Âge, mais à l'aube de la Renaissance, la décadence du clergé était telle que plusieurs évêques et prêtres souhaitaient une prise en charge plus institutionnalisée de la formation des futurs ministres. Le Concile de Trente a élargi ses

tentatives en étendant son œuvre à la formation des candidats. C'est un '*seminarium*' qu'il fallait créer dans chaque diocèse. Ce mot latin couramment utilisé désigne un endroit où de jeunes pousses sont préparées pour ensuite être transplantées ailleurs.

C'est donc à une des dernières sessions du Concile de Trente, la 23<sup>ème</sup>, le 15 juillet 1563, que les séminaires sont créés dans le décret de la réforme du clergé. Le Concile décrète que les diocèses devraient,

selon leurs moyens s'atteler à la formation de jeunes garçons en vue de l'exercice des ministères dans l'Eglise dans des établissements ecclésiastiques aménagés spécialement pour cela. Ces établissements sont les séminaires, où des étudiants vivraient en communauté sous le contrôle direct d'éducateurs prêtres. (H. SCHROEDER, *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, TAN Books Charlotte, North Carolina 1978, 177-181.). « Même si le Concile n'avait rien fait d'autre que d'instituer les séminaire, écrit Mgr Cristiani, il aurait accompli dans l'Eglise l'œuvre la plus nécessaire et la plus bienfaisante » ( L.CRISTIANI, *L'église à l'époque du Concile de Trente, t. XVII et de l'Histoire de l'église depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours, sous la direction de Fiche et Martin*, Bloud & Guay, Paris 1948, 141 ). En effet, jusqu'à la décision du Concile de Trente, la formation des prêtres diocésains n'avait presque aucune organisation structurale. Il n'y avait ni normes ni cadres appropriés pour la formation et l'éducation des futurs prêtres. Nombreux étaient ceux qui s'accrochaient aux prêtres de leur paroisse pour lesquels ils étaient soit « enfants de chœur », « catéchistes », « cuisiniers » ou « coursiers. »

C'est face à cette situation que, par le décret du 15 Juillet 1563, le Concile a rendu obligatoire la création de séminaires

diocésains pour la formation du clergé local. L'opportunité était aussi donnée par le Concile pour la création de séminaires interdiocésains ou régionaux sous la responsabilité des évêques impliqués. Les suite de ce décret ne tardait pas à se faire sentir. Pie IV, en avril 1564, décrète la création du Séminaire romain qui ouvre ses portes en février 1565 et qui existe de nos jours. Le Cardinal Charles Borromée, à Milan, charge son vicaire général, dès novembre 1564, d'ouvrir un séminaire diocésain d'abord confié aux Jésuites puis, suite à des plaintes du clergé local, remis aux Oblates de saint Ambroise en 1578. ( *MOLS. Roger, «Saint Charles Borromée, pionnier de la pastorale moderne», dans Nouvelle Revue Théologique, 791(1957), 600-622 et 715-747.* )

## 2. DU CONCILE DE TRENTE AU VATICAN II

Le prêtre est toujours l'homme d'une époque. L'exercice de son ministère est marqué par les modes de pensée et de vie de la société dans laquelle il vit. Mais la définition de son identité et de sa mission s'enracine dans les Écritures et la Tradition de l'Église dont les Conciles sont l'expression privilégiée. Au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, le Concile de Trente, dans un contexte de défense par rapport à la Réforme protestante, a fixé les traits d'un modèle de prêtre qui a marqué la vie de l'Église jusqu'à l'époque moderne. Quatre siècles plus tard, le concile Vatican II, dans un tout autre climat et dans une perspective pastorale et missionnaire, a apporté de nouveaux accents qui modifient notablement le modèle précédent.

Pour le Concile Trente, le prêtre est l'homme de l'Eucharistie. Il est ordonné au premier chef pour l'offrande du sacrifice eucharistique et pour la célébration du culte de l'Église. Le rôle du prêtre n'est pas présenté en référence à la communauté. La charge pastorale est minimisée. On ne parle pas pour le prêtre de ministère mais de sacerdoce. Par contre l'une des données les plus importantes de Vatican II est la remise en valeur de l'Église, 'peuple de Dieu et de la commune appartenance de tous les baptisés'. Vatican II parle à propos du prêtre de

« ministère » plutôt que de « sacerdoce ». À ce titre, les prêtres ont pour première fonction d'annoncer l'évangile à toutes les nations. Le ministère de la Parole est remis en valeur, et son articulation avec le ministère des sacrements et du culte est mieux soulignée.

## 3. L'EVOLUTION DES SEMINAIRES APRES VATICAN II

Pour refléter une image du prêtre issue de la vision du Concile, Le décret *Optatam Totius*, promulgué le 28 octobre 1965, prend le relais de celui du 15 juillet 1563. Il sera suivi d'un travail de redéfinition de la formation des futurs prêtres qui va mettre l'accent sur le programme de formation. Rome publie le 6 janvier 1970 des normes fondamentales en vue de la formation des futurs prêtres sous le titre '*Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis*'. Cette *Ratio* a connu des amendements en 1983 et en 2016. Elle sera suivie des normes adaptées présentées par chaque Conférence épiscopale.

## CONCLUSION

Le séminaire tridentin a évolué en restant fixé sur son but à savoir former des pasteurs compétents, dévoués et adaptés aux besoins de leur temps. L'histoire des séminaires part d'un modèle ajusté à une certaine conception de l'Église. Le pasteur est préparé à son rôle en milieu fermé. Transplanté dans le monde, le nouvel ordonné devra toujours se rappeler qu'il est le porte-étendard d'un groupe auquel il a été incorporé, le clergé. Ce modèle subira des adaptations nombreuses à diverses époques et dans diverses contrées. On assiste à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle à une diversification qui ne remet pas en cause le modèle. La lente réconciliation avec le monde couronnée à Vatican II aboutit en fin de compte, à privilégier pour la formation des futurs prêtres un programme de formation (*Ratio*) qui devient le cœur de l'institution héritée du Concile de Trente. Le séminaire s'ouvre sur le monde et sur les communautés chrétiennes. Plus qu'une institution, il est un temps de formation et sa nécessité en est d'autant plus évidente.



# THE NATURE AND MISSION OF THE MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD

## INTRODUCTION

The ministerial priesthood, as a participation in the Church and in the very priesthood of Christ, has been underlined by Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, as the goal of formation (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, (25 March 1992), n. 11). As such, the knowledge of the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood is very necessary, and at the same time the surest guide and motivation towards fostering and discerning vocation to the priesthood and training those called to the ordained ministry (Cf. *Ibid.*) In other words, it is of paramount importance, in the process of formation, to have an appropriate understanding of the true nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood. This article therefore focuses on treating the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood.

## 1. THE NATURE AND MEANING OF THE PRIESTHOOD

It is within the Church's mystery that the specific nature of the priesthood is revealed. The nature of the ministerial priesthood is not revealed in isolation but in communion. It is through the priesthood which has as its starting point the love of the Father, the grace of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's gifts of unity that the priest sacramentally enters into communion with the Bishop and with other priests (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 12)

The nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood can only be defined through the numerous and rich interconnection of relationships which arise from the Blessed Trinity and are sustained in the communion of the Church, as a sign and instrument of Christ, of communion with God and of the unity of all humanity. In this context therefore, the Church's theology of communion becomes a tool for understanding the identity of the priest, his essential dignity, and his vocation and mission among the people of God and in the world (Cf. *Ibid.*). In this way the priest



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becomes the transparent image of Christ the priest.

## 2. THE FUNDAMENTAL RELATIONSHIP OF A PRIEST WITH CHRIST

The priest's fundamental relationship is to Jesus Christ the head and shepherd. Jesus Christ the promised Good Shepherd (Cf. Ezekiel 34) has established a close relationship between the ministry entrusted to the Apostles and his own mission: "He who receives you receives me and he who receives me receives him who sent me" (Mt. 10:40). As such, the Apostles have a mission which comes to them from Jesus. Their mission is not theirs but is the same mission of Jesus. This is the gift of Christ and His Spirit and not the making of human abilities.

The Apostles, in various but complementary ways, have progressively carried out their mission by calling other men as bishops, as priests and as deacons, in order to fulfil the command of the Risen Lord who sent them out to all people of every nation. Priests are therefore called to prolong and to perpetuate the presence of Christ, the one High Priest, exemplifying his way of life and making him visible in the midst of the flock entrusted to their care. They are thus a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ in the Church and on behalf of the Church (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 15).

*The spiritual gift which priests have received in Ordination does not prepare them only for a limited and demarcated mission, but for the universal mission of salvation to the ends of the earth.*

### 3. THE MISSION OF THE MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD: SERVING THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

Closely connected to the relationship between Jesus and the priest, is the priest's relationship with the Church. The priest's relation to the Church is inscribed in the very relation which he has with Christ. Inasmuch as the priest represents Christ, he is placed not only in the Church but also in the forefront of the Church. The priest is therefore a servant to the Church because he serves the community as herald and witness to the Gospel.

According to the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, the spiritual gift which priests have received in ordination does not prepare them only for a limited and demarcated mission, but for the universal mission of salvation to the ends of the earth. This is because every priestly ministry shares in the fullness of the mission assigned by Christ to the Apostles (Cf. VATICAN II ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, (7 December 1965), n. 10). Priests should therefore be animated by a profound missionary spirit and a "truly Catholic spirit which habitually looks beyond the boundaries of diocese, country or rite, to meet the needs of the whole church, being prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere" (VATICAN II ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius* (28 October 1965), n. 20).

The ministry of priests is therefore considered in terms of functions such as ministers of God's word, ministers of the Sacraments and the Eucharist and as rulers of God's people. It is also considered in terms of relation with others: relation between bishops and the priestly body, brotherly bond and cooperation among priests and relations of priests with the lay people (Cf. VATICAN II ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, nn. 4-9).

Because the human race today is joining more and more into civic, economic and social

unity, it is that much the more necessary that priests, by combined efforts and aid, under the leadership of the bishops and the Supreme Pontiff, wipe out every kind of separateness, so that the whole human race may be brought into the unity of the family of God (VATICAN II ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, (29 November 1964), n. 28).

From these statements, the Council draws the necessary conclusions for the relation of the bishops to their priests, of priests to their bishops, and of priests among each other, as well as for the activity and the life of priests in this world for the kingdom of God. These conclusions are contained above all, in the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests. "All priests share with the bishops the one identical priesthood and ministry of Christ. Consequently the very unity of their consecration and mission requires their hierarchical union with the order of bishops" (VATICAN II ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 7). In the pastoral spirit of the whole council, the subsequent sections of the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (nn. 8-9) unfold the relation between bishop and priests as a relation of trust and love, of care and obedience. They also portray the inner cohesion of the whole presbyterate as a witness for the world and for building of the kingdom of God in the Church of Christ.

### CONCLUSION

This article, so far, has highlighted, though in summary form, what the nature and ministry of the ministerial priesthood is. This has been done by first of all casting a look at the nature and meaning of the priesthood and then highlighting the fundamental relationship of a priest with Christ and lastly the mission of the ministerial priesthood: serving the Church and the world. In pastoral charity, he gives himself as a total gift to Christ and to the Church most especially the people he serves (Cf. B. COLE, *The Hidden Enemies of the Priesthood: The Contributions of St. Thomas Aquinas*, St. Pauls, New York 2007, 10).

### **stop and think**

*Having a heart at peace and inner harmony is possible, but not outside God. Happiness exists because God exists. To be happy and to exclude God from one's life is contradictory.*



## SEMINARY FORMATION AS CONFIGURATION TO CHRIST



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### INTRODUCTION

To be configured to Christ is to live a life shaped by remaining in his presence. By way of the seminary's fidelity to the processes of integration, a man becomes capacitated for ecclesial service. In its essence, the seminary is a set of relationships mediating the Truth and Love who is Christ the priest. This mediation is ordered by way of discreet areas of formation identified as human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. Within these areas of formation, the seminarian is invited to be vulnerable before the love of Christ, a love that carries him to the truth about doctrine, service, academics, and his own self. The seminarian welcomes this love-bearing-truth into his mind and heart. In effect and in time, becomes configured to Christ. A seminarian becoming configured to Christ the Priest is the hope of the seminary staff (J. KEATING, *Seminaries, Integral Formation, and the Role of Academics*, 2017, 37).

### 1. THE CONFIGURATION STAGE IN SEMINARY FORMATION

According to the *Ratio Fundamentalis* (2016), initial formation is divided into various stages: The Propaedeutic stage, the study of Philosophy or discipleship stage; the study of theology or the configurative stage, and the pastoral stage or that of vocational synthesis (CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, (8 December 2016, n. 3). The configuration stage is so central in the life of the one responding to

the call of Christ. This is because the one in formation learns from the master himself what his mission is before he embarks on carrying out the mission of Christ. This configuration demands that the seminarian enters profoundly into the contemplation of the person of Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of the Father, sent as Shepherd of the People of God (*Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, n. 68). The seminarian's relationship with Christ at this stage should be more intimate and personal. This stage allows the gradual grounding of the seminarian in the likeness of the

Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep and gives his life for them (*Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, n. 69). Having looked at the configuration stage in seminary formation, we shall examine the model of configuration.

### 2. CHRIST THE HIGH PRIEST: THE MODEL OF CONFIGURATION

For Pope Benedict XVI, the *Letter to the Hebrews* presents Christ's Priesthood as an expression of his mission to all people. (Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Meeting with Parish Priests of the Diocese of Rome* (18 February 2010): *Insegnamenti* VI/1 (2010), 243). The first quality that characterizes Christ as true High Priest is his singular closeness both to God and humanity (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 13: *AAS* 84 (1992), 677-678). The *seminarian* must therefore fix his gaze on Jesus who is the perfect role model of every priest. He must be ready for a total self-sacrifice, like Christ the Good Shepherd, who knows each one of his sheep, who offers his life for them and who wishes to gather them together as one flock with one shepherd (Cf. Jn. 10:11-16). What is the implication of having Christ as the model of configuration in Seminary formation?

### 3. "FOLLOW ME": THE READINESS FOR CONFIGURATION

Where does mission originate? The answer is simple: it originates from a call, the Lord's call, and when he calls people, he does

so with a view to sending them out. How is the one sent out meant to live? The seminarian, is called to be a bearer of this message of hope that gives serenity and joy: God's consolation, his tenderness towards all (POPE FRANCIS, *Conference with Seminarians and Novices*, July 7, 2013). The Lord said to Levi (Matthew) "follow me" and he immediately left his office and followed Jesus (Lk. 5:27-28). Following Jesus means to spend time with him and learn from him so as to be configured. Saint Mark tells us that Jesus summoned his disciples and picked out twelve of them, whom he called 'apostles.' These he called to be with him (Mk 3:14). The period of seminary formation is also a time of being with Jesus preceded by the response to the call 'follow me.' Giving his total 'Yes' and learning from Jesus Christ, the seminarian is shaped by Christ according to His mind and for the purpose of mission in His Church. But the fundamental question could be: How necessary is this configuration in Seminary Formation?

#### 4. THE NECESSITY OF CONFIGURATION IN SEMINARY FORMATION

It will be good we underline reasons why a seminarian must allow himself to be configured to Jesus Christ who called him. As a future priest, he should be configured to Christ because he is to be a translation of Christ among men. He is to be a visible sign of the merciful love of the Father in the Church and in the world (*Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, n. 35). Through the life of the seminarian, men and women should be able to see Christ. He should be an example for others to imitate. For Paul, after his conversion was a "translation" of Christ that people could see and identify with. Furthermore, the seminarian is going out to preach Christ and not himself. For Christ said "My teaching is not from myself." He is not going out to win people for himself. St. John Mary Vianney was able to touch people's hearts by his preaching because his own heart had been touched. The seminarian must let his heart be touched by Jesus Christ. To the Apostles, Christ said: "Cut off from me you can do nothing" (Jn. 15:5). Two things, above all, are asked of the seminarian: there is a need for an interior bond, a configuration to Christ, and at the same time there has to be a transcending of himself, and a renunciation of what is simply his own. He should be asking not what I stand to gain, but what I can give for Christ and so for others

(BENEDICT XVI, *Homily at Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday*, Vatican Basilica, April 5, 2012).

#### 5. THE LIFE OF THE SEMINARIAN IN THE CONFIGURATION PROCESS

In the course of formation, the seminarian is being directed and taught various ways in the practice of virtues. Configuration to Christ requires a great deal of commitment. It demands a constant responsibility in living the cardinal and theological virtues and the evangelical counsels of: poverty, chastity and obedience (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 27: *AAS* 84 (1992)), 710). Configuration to Christ requires an authentic and consistent lifestyle from the seminarian in the light of the Gospel. He should preach the Gospel by his example and then with words. People should be able to read the gospel in his life first, then in words. Again, an intimate relationship with Christ through an intensive and constant prayer configures the seminarian to Christ. Through prayer, he becomes totally transformed and connected to God. Since a life without prayer is a life not connected to God. St. Augustine tells us: "For men are separated from God only by sin" (AUGUSTINE, *On Prayer*; T. HAND (tr.), Gill and Son Ltd, Dublin 1963, 8). In one of his conferences, Pope Francis says that: "to bear fruit, priests must pray and be with God, lest the vocation and mission become a job" (POPE FRANCIS, *Conference with Seminarians and Novices*, July 7, 2013). Our mission ceases to bear fruits, indeed, it is extinguished the moment the link with its source, with the Lord, is interrupted. If we look towards Jesus, we see that prior to any important decision or event he recollected himself in intense and prolonged prayer. Before appointing the twelve apostles, he spent the whole night in prayer (Cf. Lk. 6:12). It is precisely this "life in Christ," being faithful to Jesus that ensures an effective apostolate, that his service is fruitful, for Jesus said: "My Father goes on working and so do I" (Jn. 5:17).

#### CONCLUSION

In all, the Seminarian under formation is therefore called to form himself so that his heart and his life are conformed to the Lord Jesus, in this way becoming a sign of the love God has for each person (Cf. *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, n. 40). By intimately being united to Christ, he will be able: to preach the Gospel and become an instrument of the mercy of God.



## PRIESTLY VOCATION IN THE CHURCH'S PASTORAL WORK

### INTRODUCTION

God in His infinite goodness and boundless love, continues to call young men to serve in His Church. Following our Lord's command in Matthew 28:19-20, the Church of God will always be in need of ministers to continue fulfilling this command of Christ to evangelize. Consequently, evangelization is fundamental to the Church's existence. Priestly formation following the words of Pope Francis in his address to the Plenary of the Congregation for the Clergy (03/10/2014), "is all about guarding and fostering candidates that they may bear mature fruits." Hence priestly formation is all about helping the candidate to configure himself to Christ, head, servant, and shepherd of the Church (VATICAN II ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Life and Ministry of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (7 December 1965) n. 2). Priestly Vocation requires from the candidate in formation and the Priest in the pastoral ministry a total giving of self for the service of the people of God. Given that grace builds on nature, the candidate in formation needs to present the right nature by dedicating himself wholeheartedly in the service of the Church; for we may have vocations to the priesthood yet the Church's pastoral work remains undone because the ministers are not disposed to do the work. The Church is truly present and at work in the vocation of every priest. This can be seen in the following:

### 1. FAITH AND ZEAL IN THE FORMATION OF PRIESTS

By the law of celibacy, the priest not only does not lose the office of fatherhood, but rather increases it immensely, since he begets children not for his earthly and transitory life, but for the heavenly and unending life (Cf. D. UNGER, *The Mystery of Love for the Single*, TAN Books Publishers, Inc, Rockford 1958, 69). This animates the life of the priest by his faith and zeal. It is the ardent goal of the Church to implant and nurture this faith.

If faith and zeal should animate the life of the priest, he will find in them new occasions to show that he belongs entirely to Christ and His mystical Body, for his own sanctification and the sanctification of others. The charity of Christ



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which urges him on (Cf. 2 Cor 5:14), will help him not to renounce his higher feelings but to elevate and deepen them in a Spirit of consecration in imitation of Christ the High Priest, who shared intimately in the life of men and women, loved and suffered for them (Cf. Heb. 4:15), and of Paul the apostle who shared in the cares of all in order to bring the light and power of the Gospel of God's grace to shine in the world (Cf. PAUL VI, On the Celibacy of the Priest *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, Black Belt Konzult Ltd, Nigeria 2010, 48).

It is from Christ that the Priest draws strength. This helps him to manage the challenges he faces in the ministry properly that he may obtain the fruits of the Holy Spirit which are: joy, patience, goodness, faith, modesty, charity and self-control, just to highlight a few (Cf. *Ibid.* 49). This leads to unity among priests and the community. The unity of spirit among priests should be active in their prayers, friendship and help of all kinds for one another. In this same vein, candidates in formation to the ministerial priesthood should be formed in the way that they learn to live in intimate and unceasing union with God the Father through His Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit (VATICAN II ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Training of Priests *Optatam Totius* (28 October 1965), n. 8).

### 2. PRIESTLY VIRTUE

By virtue of their consecration, Priests are configured to Jesus the Good Shepherd and called to imitate and live out His pastoral charity (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Paulines Publications, Nairobi 1992, n. 22). Priestly virtue is a treasure that belongs to



the whole Church. It is enrichment and splendour above the ordinary, which resounds to the building up and the profit of the entire people of God. Hence, Christians should pray and work for priestly vocations; they should help Priests wholeheartedly, with filial love and ready collaboration; they should encourage these their fathers in Christ to overcome the difficulties of every sort which they encounter as they fulfil their duties, with entire faithfulness, to the edification of all (Cf. PAUL VI, *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, n. 57). In order to edify all, the one called to the priesthood has to renounce worldly desires and be attached to Christ and His Church.

### 3. THE OUTER RENUNCIATION

For the man who plans to walk in the footsteps of Christ, there have to be certain separations which the world would judge to be unnecessary. In a great number of cases, the call to sanctity demands the change from one state of life to another. In a sense of light, a man should not leave himself a peep-hole through which to look back. Even if there is no intention of going back, the mere fact of looking back is a thoroughly wrong thing, for it stores up images which the memory will feed upon later on (Cf. D. ZELLER, *The Choice of God*, Burn and Oates, London 1956, 14-15). To allow the mind to dwell upon material which is outside the scope of the call from God is to go far towards providing excuses for ultimately reclaiming what has been renounced.

Once the singleness of the original purpose is lost, the soul will find itself turning round. It loses its direction. In this case, the hand on the plough (Cf. Lk. 9:62) becomes uncertain; the furrow begins to waver away from the straight (Cf. D. HURBERT, *The Choice of God*, 15). There is therefore a serious need for a deliberate response to God's call. This has to do with the demand to mortify the natural man. The Priest has to clear from the margins of life those creatures or pleasures or desires which have no bearing upon the service of God. He should distinguish between those satisfactions which are of the essence of his vocation and those which are not (Cf. *Ibid*, 17-18). In other words, the recreation of the Priest should not be found in worldliness. Hence the Priest in his pastoral ministry needs to be simple, yet firm in his witnessing. The Church in carrying out her prophetic role of witnessing, she feels herself irrevocably committed to the task of proclaiming and witnessing to the Christian meaning of vocation (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 39).

### 4. SIMPLICITY OF LIFE

To be pledged to the service of God and His Church is to be pledged to simplicity of life. If the man of the world and the man of God share the same amusements, follow the same interests, have the same standards of living, what is the difference between them? If mortification means anything at all it must mean the denial of the non-essential (Cf. D. HURBERT, *The Choice of God*, 20). Certain appetites must be starved so that certain appetites may be nourished. Like Christ Himself, the ministry of the priest is wholly and solely intent on things of God and the Church. The priest's consecration to Christ frees him to devote wholly to the service of others in simplicity. With this, he becomes happy and peaceful.

### 5. PEACE AND HAPPINESS OF THE PRIEST IN THE CHURCH'S PASTORAL WORK

Peace based on surrendering to our passions is what the world gives, but the peace Jesus gives is found in victory over our passions. The peace offered by the world is a source of unhappiness; the peace Jesus offers is a source of joy. The master said; "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it (Cf. Mtt 10:39). If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Cf. Mtt 16:24, Mk 8:34 and Lk 9:23). By this, it means that one who seeks oneself instead of God finds unhappiness and death. Happiness must go along with self-denial (Cf. L. LOVASIK, *The Hidden Power of Kindness*, Sophia Institute Press, Manchester, New Hampshire 1961, 29). This leads the priest to union with Christ, which is basically the task of the Church, to lead souls to Christ. This is exemplified in the structuring of the Church's Liturgy which plays an indispensable role in the pastoral work of promoting vocations (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation; Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 38).

### CONCLUSION

The Church, in her dignity and responsibility as a priestly, kingly and prophetic people, possesses in prayer, in the celebration of the Liturgy and governance, the essential and primary stages of her pastoral work for vocations. Therefore, the Priest groomed in the Church and who truly cares, who loves God, the Eucharist, and his people; who prays unceasingly, will touch hearts and move people (Cf. J. CHAMPLIN, *The Priest and God's People at Prayer*, Lowe and Brydone Ltd, London 1972, 27).

## THE SETTING OF PRIESTLY FORMATION



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### INTRODUCTION

In its session of July 15<sup>th</sup> 1563, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) decreed the creation of seminaries. That obliged Bishops to found in their respective Dioceses Seminaries to ensure the formation of new type of Priests: theologically cultivated, zealous, morally decent and conscious of their duties. The Seminary is seen as a period in life and also an educational community in progress. It is a community established by the Bishops to offer to those called by the Lord to serve as Apostles the possibility of re-living the experience of formation which our Lord provided for the twelve [...] in fact, the Gospels present a prolonged and intimate sharing of life with Jesus as a necessary premise for the apostolic ministry. This experience demands of the twelve the practice of detachment in a particularly clear and specific fashion, [...] a detachment from their roots, from their usual work, from their nearest and dearest (Cf. Mk 1:16-20; 10:28 and Lk 9:23). In this article, we shall be looking at the place of the minor and major seminaries in the formation of young men for the ministerial priesthood which constitute the paramount setting of Priestly formation (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation; Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Paulines Publications, Nairobi 1992. n. 60).

### 1. MINOR SEMINARIES

Minor Seminaries and other similar institutions are to be open and preserved, where they exist, for the sake of nurturing vocations, these institutions provide special religious formation together with instruction in humanities and the sciences. Where the Diocesan Bishop judges it expedient, he is to erect a minor seminary or similar institution (Cf. THE CODE OF CANON LAW, New Revised English Translation, can. 234). The purpose of the Minor Seminary is to assist the human and Christian growth of the adolescents, who manifest the seeds of a vocation to the ministerial priesthood. The Church looks after these seeds of vocations sown in the hearts of young men, by means of providing a careful though preliminary

discernment and accompaniment. In some parts of the world, these Seminaries continue to carry out a valuable educational work, the aim of which is to protect and develop the seeds of a priestly vocation, so that the students may more easily recognize it and are in a better disposed to respond to it. (Cf. THE CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, Vatican Press, Vatican City, 2016, n. 18).

The educational objective of Minor Seminaries tends to favour in a timely and gradual way the human, cultural and spiritual formation which will lead the candidate to embark on the path to the Major Seminary with an adequate and solid foundation to follow Christ with a generous soul and a pure heart. Considering the indispensable role of Minor Seminaries in priestly formation, the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, advocates that the qualities of the young men should be taken into consideration, along with the specific signs of a vocation. It is therefore the task of Formators and those directly involved to verify the overall suitability of those who might become candidates for the Priesthood (Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 19),

The goal of Minor Seminaries as highlighted in the Decree on Priestly formation, *Optatam Totius*, which Pope St. John Paul II made reference to is that the students in Minor Seminaries should feel the fatherly follow up of their teachers, the guidance of their parents to enable them lead lives suited to their age, mentality and development. Their way of life should be fully in keeping with the standards of sound psychology and should include suitable experience of the ordinary affairs of daily life and contact with their own families.” (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Apostolic Exhortation; Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV), n. 63).

In situations wherein it is not possible to run Minor Seminaries, other “institutions” should be looked into such as *youth vocation’s groups, communities for vocational discernment, Catholic colleges* and other youth organizations. In the mind of the Church, the above organs which lack the quality of permanence can offer a systematic guide, in a community context, with which to check the existence and development of vocations. While such persons spend their entire time at home, while taking part in the activities of the community, they should not be abandoned all by themselves. They need a particular group or community to refer to, and where they can find support to follow through the specific vocational journey which the gift of the Holy Spirit has initiated in them (PDV n. 64). The Minor Seminary therefore offers the candidates preparing to embrace the priesthood of Christ a solid and firm foundation for the Major Seminary.

### 2. MAJOR SEMINARIES

The need for the Major Seminary and by analogy for the Religious House – for the formation of candidates

for the priesthood, was affirmed with authority by the Second Vatican Council (Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on the Ministry and life of Priest *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, (7 December 1965), n. 9). The purpose of the Major Seminary is to build a community like that of the Apostolic Age whereby the Apostles were always around the feet of Jesus Christ the Master, listening to his word, proceeding towards the Easter experience, awaiting the gift of the Spirit for the mission (Cf. PDV, n.60). The Holy Father, John Paul II spells out clearly in PDV n. 60 that the seminary is a human community with its own diversities which has to find a concrete realization, faithful to the gospel values from which it takes its inspiration and able to respond to the situations and needs of the times.

Furthermore, the Major Seminary is, in itself, an original experience of the Church's life. The Major Seminary is in the hands of the Rector and other members of the formation staff who are there to guide the seminarians to conform to Jesus Christ. They cooperate as a body in order to foster in the seminarians the faith and charity which they need to prolong in the Church the saving presence of Christ, the Good Shepherd. The Bishop is present through the ministry of the Rector and the service of co-responsibility and communion fostered by him with the other teachers, for the sake of the pastoral and apostolic growth of the students (Cf. PDV n. 60).

The Second Vatican Council saw the need for candidates to the Priesthood to be fully discerned and selected by those in charge of their formation with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Council highlights that each

candidate should be subjected to vigilant and careful enquiry, keeping in mind his age and development, concerning his right intention and freedom of choice, his spiritual, moral and intellectual fitness, adequate physical and mental health, and possible hereditary traits. Account should also be taken of the candidate's capacity for undertaking obligations of the Priesthood and carrying out his pastoral duties (Cf. *Optatam Totius* n. 6).

Pope John Paul II together with the synod Fathers insist that before a candidate is admitted into the Major Seminary, there should be a sufficient period of preparation based on the period of human, Christian intellectual and spiritual preparation for the candidates to the Major Seminary. They should have qualities like: a right intention, a sufficient degree of human maturity, a sufficiently broad knowledge of the doctrine of the faith, some introduction into the methods of prayer, and behaviour in conformity with Christian tradition (Cf. PDV n. 62).

## CONCLUSION

It is worth applauding the remarkable contributions offered by the Minor and Major Seminaries in the process of forming candidates who manifests the desire of embracing the Priesthood of Christ in the Roman Catholic Church. But the place of the family cannot be totally neglected in this process, for the family is looked upon as the Domestic Church wherein the gift of vocation is planted, developed and preserved. The setting of the Parish community too is of utmost importance in nurturing the gift of the vocation.

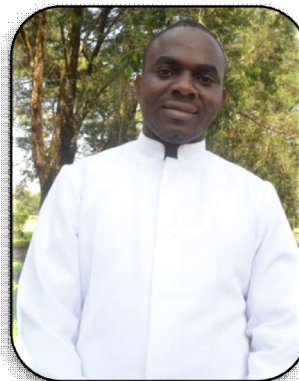
## THE AGENTS OF PRIESTLY FORMATION

### INTRODUCTION

"The gift of the priestly vocation, placed by God in the hearts of some men, obliges the Church to propose to them a serious journey of formation" (CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, (8 December 2016), Introduction). This formation journey requires a series of Agents who have vital roles to play in the formation process. In this article, we shall examine the various Agents of priestly formation.

#### 1. THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the Principal Agent of priestly formation. He shapes every seminarian according to the plan of the Father; both through the presence of Christ and His Word, in the sacraments, and in the brothers and sisters of the community, and through His many actions (Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, nn.125, 105). The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in the priestly formation in the sense that He calls for a reciprocal listening and collaborative spirit between the members of the ecclesial community, priests, deacons, consecrated persons and laity.



**PHILLIPE ALAIN TONGALE**  
**THEOLOGY III**



**JAMES MICHAEL OKEKE**  
**THEOLOGY I**

#### 2. THE DIOCESAN BISHOP

The Diocesan Bishop admits a candidate into the seminary after investigations concerning the conduct of the candidate. The presence of the Bishop is very important, not only because it helps the seminary community to live its insertion into a particular Church and its communion with the pastor who guides it, but also



because it verifies and encourages vocation to the priesthood. In particular, with his presence and by his sharing with candidates for the priesthood all that has to do with the pastoral progress of the particular Church, the Bishop offers a fundamental contribution to formation in the “*sensus Ecclesiae*”, as a central spiritual and pastoral value in the exercise of the priestly ministry (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, (25 March 1992), nn. 65, 100).

### 3. THE PRESBYTERIUM

Another agent of the priestly formation is the *Presbyterium*. The entire clergy has to be in communion and in full harmony with their Diocesan Bishop: by sharing his concern for the formation of candidates through prayer, sincere affection, and support. (Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, nn.129, 107). Every priest who receives a seminarian for a pastoral placement is expected to work generously with the community of Seminary Formators through open and concrete dialogue with respect to the conduct of the seminarian. The concrete forms of cooperation between priests and the Seminary can vary, according to the various stages of the process of priestly formation (Cf. *Ibid.*, nn.129, 107-108).

### 4. THE SEMINARIAN HIMSELF

We must not forget that the candidate himself is a necessary and irreplaceable agent in his own formation: all formation, priestly formation included, is ultimately a self-formation process (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 69). Seminarians are therefore bound, both individually and as a group, to demonstrate, not only in their external behaviour, but also that they have internalised an authentic priestly character, in humility and service of their brothers. This shows a sign of a maturity in following Christ (Cf. BENEDICT XVI, Homily for the Ordination to the Priesthood of 15 Deacons of the Diocese of Rome: Insegnamenti II, 550-555).

### 5. THE COMMUNITY OF FORMATORS.

The community of formators is made up of priests who are chosen, prepared, commissioned to carry out the task of forming candidates for the priesthood (Cf. *Directives on the Preparation of Seminary Formators, n. 1: Enchiridion Vaticanum* 13 (1996), 3151-3152). It is necessary that there are formators assigned exclusively to this task, so that they can dedicate themselves completely to it. Thus, they should live in the seminary. The community of formators ought to meet regularly with the Rector to pray, to plan the life of the seminary and to assess periodically the growth of the seminarians. So to say, the group of formators is not merely an institutional necessity but, above all, it is a genuine educating community that offers a coherent and eloquent witness to the values that belong to priestly ministry. Edified and encouraged by such an example, the seminarians will welcome, with docility and conviction, the proposals made to them for their formation (Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, n. 109).

### 6. THE PROFESSORS

Professors are so indispensable in the formation of priests, as they intellectually guarantee their cognition.

It is to this that they are appointed by the Bishop or in the case of inter-diocesan Seminaries, by the Bishops concerned, having consulted the Rector and the professors, if deemed appropriate. Due to the formative responsibility that it brings with it, this task requires a specific mandate (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 67). Professors and Seminarians are called to adhere with complete fidelity to the Word of God, committed to writing in the Scriptures, handed on in Tradition, and authentically interpreted by the Magisterium. They acquire a living sense of the Tradition from the works of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, whom the Church holds in high esteem.

### 7. THE FAMILY, THE PARISH AND OTHER ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES

The vocation to the priesthood usually grows within the context of a Community, in which the Seminarian must have picked up a significant experience and rudiments of the Faith. For this reason, initial priestly formation must keep this influence in mind. Both the family and the parish of origin, or parish to which he belongs, as well as other ecclesial communities, contribute significantly to sustaining and nourishing the vocation of those called to the priesthood. However, this is as true during the period of formation as it is during the life of the priest (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 68).

### 8. CONSECRATED PERSONS AND LAITY IN FORMATION

The presence of the laity and of consecrated persons in the Seminary is an important point of reference in the formative journey of the candidates. Seminarians should be formed in a proper appreciation of the various charisms to be found in the diocesan community. The priest, in fact, is called to foster a diversity of charisms within the Church. Consecrated life is an attractive and eloquent sign of the radical nature of the Gospel and of availability for service. For their part, the lay faithful cooperate in the evangelizing mission of Christ, and offer an edifying witness to consistency and to life choices according to the Gospel (Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Amoris Laetitia*, n.162). It is worth mentioning that the presence of women in the seminary journey of formation has its own formative significance. The role they play helps to instil recognition of how men and women complement one another. They offer an edifying example of humility, generosity and selfless service (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 66). However, they must not be in the seminary to offer this.

### CONCLUSION

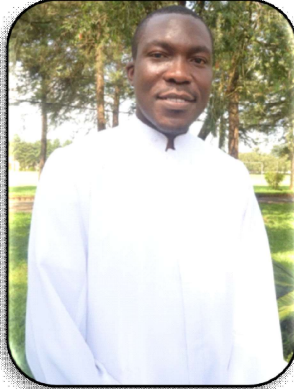
From the above, we have come to realise that becoming a priest requires many factors both spiritual and human, the seminarian being the main protagonist of his own vocation which he can either cherish or be careless about it. To an extent, priestly formation does not just end with the years spent in the seminary, but the priest is called to form himself even after the ordination has taken place (on-going formation). In other words, formation never ends.



## A THEOLOGICAL READING OF MK 3:13-15 AS THE PARADIGM FOR PRIESTLY FORMATION



**BR. THADDEUS ESOPÉ**  
**THEOLOGY IV**



**SAMUEL ALIYY**  
**THEOLOGY II**

### INTRODUCTION

“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve, designating them apostles that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mk 3:13-15).

In the above gospel passage, Jesus has come to a crucial moment in his ministry, and he acts with solemn deliberateness, he doesn't want to carry on his mission on his own, but to form a chosen company to collaborate with him and to continue his work (Cf. M. HEALY, *Mark*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids – Michigan, 74). Mark 3:13 says he went up the mountain, and the mountain as we know biblically is where revelations are made and received. The verb used here to “call” means to summon people to listen to what is about to be said or to have someone do something.

Here Jesus calls them to come to him; which emphasizes the fact that the decision in all this lay with Jesus' own choice, and what Mark in this passage is passing across is to make us see Jesus' action as being similar to God's sovereign calling in the old-testament (Ex 3:4, 1 Sam 3:4, Jer. 1:5). The first reason for calling them was that they might be with him, it is not just a desire by Jesus for companionship or because “no man is an Island”, but rather they are to accompany Jesus during his ministry, and in so doing they will learn from him, witness his action, and learn his teachings. As

a result. They will serve as his apostles and witnesses. The second reason why Jesus appoint the twelve is “in order that he might send them out”, with two purposes; “to preach”, which is likened to the preaching of John the Baptist, and secondly to have “authority to cast out demons” which is not a legal right, but a divine power which will demonstrate the greatness of Jesus of Nazareth who possesses such authority and is able to give it to his representatives (Cf. R. STEIN, *Mark*, Baker Academic, 2008, 169). The number twelve is also very significant in that there were twelve tribes of the nation of Israel, in Genesis, God started with the twelve sons of Jacob, and in Exodus he built them into a mighty nation, and Israel was chosen to bring the Messiah into the world, so that through him all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12:1-3).

### 1. CHRIST'S CALL AS A GIFT

Every Christian vocation finds its foundation in the gratuitous prevenient choice made by the Father “who blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the Heavenly places” *Eph 1:3* (JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, (25 March 1992), n.35). The vocation to the priesthood is a gift and not a merit. It is an inexpressible dialogue between the love of God who calls and the freedom of the individual who responds lovingly to Him. God Himself takes the Divine initiative and the human person responds. The twelve Apostles did not ask to be called. They only played their role in the vocational dialogue by accepting freely to follow Jesus. If the priestly vocation bears unequivocal witness to the primacy of grace, God's free and sovereign decision to call man calls for total respect. It cannot be forced in the slightest way by any human ambition and it cannot be replaced by any human decision. The vocation to the priesthood is a gift of God's grace and not a human right, such that “no one can consider priestly life as a simple human affair, nor the mission of the minister as a simple personal project”. It is important to note here that since

**CONTINUES ON PAGE 23**

## SAINT OF THE ISSUE

## **GOODWILL MESSAGES**

## **GOODWILL MESSAGES**



# ADVERTS

the vocation to the priesthood is always accompanied, the one who is called and answers out of love will be endowed with qualities such as: love for the Eucharist, a strong prayer life, knowledge of scripture, generosity and kindness, good listening, sound doctrine, genuine piety, good moral behaviour and fitness for the exercise of the ministry (Cf. Canon 1051, 1). But all these do not just come by chance but through the acceptance and cooperation with the Holy Spirit in the call one has received.

## 2. CHOSEN FROM AMONG MEN

Every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God" (Heb. 5:1). All those under priestly formation are our sons and brothers and this brings the human character of God's ministers; and their environment and context inevitably influence them (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* n.5). And after due formation, they are sent to people, to work with them and to offer sacrifices to God for their sins and the sins of the people. "He sent them out to preach and to drive out demons" Jesus gives the apostles authority to drive out demons indicates that an exorcist succeeds not by special techniques or talents, but only by the authority delegated from the One who has already conquered the demons. (Cf. Mary HEALY, *Mark: Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture*, 75).

## 3. CALLED FOR MISSION: THE AUTHORITY OF A PRIEST

Christ called the Twelve because he wanted them to continue his threefold ministry as prophet, priest and king to the entire human race. In the Gospel of John 15:16, Christ says: "you did not choose me, it was I who chose you and sent you to go and bear fruit, fruits that will last." By the verse: "He wanted to send them out" (Mk 3:14), it signifies that the priest participates in a specific way in the consecration, anointing and the mission of

Christ" (JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n.16). The priest is the teacher of the word, minister of the sacrament and leader of the Christian community entrusted to him. The Church continues to place the highest value on the work of priestly formation because it is linked to the very mission of the Church especially the evangelization of humanity.

## 4. DISPOSITION OF THE CANDIDATE IN FORMATION

Without a proper willingness and openness of the one called, there can be no effective formation. The disposition of the candidate in formation to the priesthood will determine the level to which he will be formed. An unreserved openness will permit the Holy Spirit to blow in the candidate and bring the required transformation in the candidate for mission. The Lord says "whom shall I send?" (Is 6:8). Every seminarian in formation should have a ready response "send me Lord" (Is 6:8). This availability and readiness are the first tools in carrying out what the Lord wants of us, "to preach and drive out demons" (Mk 3:15). In being ready to be sent, the seminary assists the candidate to grow in docility and in understanding the dimensions of his personality and this readiness "to go" is what the *Ratio Fundamentalis* describes as the internalization and authentication of the priestly way of life, in humility and the service of their brothers (*Ratio Fundamentalis*, n.131). This is a sign of mature choice because Christ himself said "I did not come to be served but to serve and to give my life as a ransom" (Mt 20:28). Those called to be priests are therefore to avail themselves to be authentic ministers of the Church and teachers of the faith.

## CONCLUSION

Priestly training, especially in view of the circumstances of modern society, should be continued and perfected after the seminary course, all those already ministering ought to involve themselves actively in all the on-going formation programmes necessary, in order to continue to enrich and fortify themselves for the mission (Cf. *Optatam Totius*, n.22). When the candidate in formation responds freely and willingly to the love of God's call, then the building ground of Christ's mission to bring the Gospel to the ends of the earth is guaranteed. We rely on the help of God (2 Cor. 12: 9).

### **stop and think**

***Happiness is not to do what one loves, but to love what one does.***

## THE SEARCHLIGHT MAGAZINE INTERVIEWS FR LOUIS MBUYEH

***S.L:*** *Greetings, Dear Father. It is with joy that the editorial board of the Searchlight Magazine grants you this interview. Could you please, make yourself known to our readers?*

***Fr Mbuyeh:*** I am Fr Louis Mbuyeh, priest of the Diocese of Kumbo. I was born and bred in Vekovi – Nso on the 1st of December 1978 to the matrimonial union of Jerome Ngeh and Roseline Kume (RIP), firstborn of five children (three boys and two girls). I received baptism from the hands of Fr Michael de Rooy, MHM on the 18th of January 1982, First Holy Communion on the 15th of August 1988 from the hands of Fr Charles Acha and Confirmation in 1990 from Bishop Cornelius F. Esua all in St Theresia's church, Vekovi. My entire primary education took place in Catholic School Vekovi between September 1984 and June 1992. Towards the end of my primary education I felt called to the ministerial priesthood. After my First School Leaving Certificate in June 1992, I stayed at home for one year so as to wait for the beginning of St Aloysius' Minor Seminary, Kitiwum (SAMS). For some reason, my plans to attend a minor seminary failed, but the desire to become a priest remained. My parents then (at the recommendation of the newly appointed Rector of SAMS) chose St Sylvester's College Sop as an alternative to the minor seminary. There I did the entire secondary school between November 1993 and June 2000 and obtained both Ordinary and Advance Levels General Certificates of Education (GCE). At the end of my high school and with the help of the Vocations Director (Fr Anthony Yilaka), I applied to undertake seminary training for the Diocese of Kumbo. The necessary requirements having been met by August of 2002, Bishop Cornelius F. Esua (now Emeritus Archbishop of Bamenda) admitted me and sent me to begin with a year of Prospective Candidacy in Bishop Rogan College, Small Soppo – Buea (September 2000 to May 2001). I was further admitted to St John Mary Vianney Spiritual Centre, Bafut for a year of propaedeutic formation which lasted between October 2001 and June 2002. I proceeded to St Thomas Aquinas' Major Seminary (STAMS), Bambui where I did the Philosophy Stage between September 2002 and June 2005 earning a bachelor's degree in philosophy. The next stage was the Pastoral Year Experience which took place the following year in St Joseph's Quasi, Ndzervu. At the end of this year, I returned to STAMS to embark



on the Theology Stage, precisely, between September 2006 and June 2010 obtaining another bachelor's degree in theology. Diaconate ordination took place on the 29th of June 2009 in St Joseph's Metropolitan Cathedral, Mankon and priestly ordination in the premises of STAMS on the 9th of April 2010.

After seminary formation and priestly ordination, I have served in the following places and capacities: curate and manager of schools in St John the Baptist Parish, Elak-Oku (2010-2012); psycho-spiritual formation at L'Institut de Formation Humaine Intégrale de Montréal (L'IFHIM), Canada (September 2012 to June 2014); formator at Vianney Centre, Bafut (August 2014 to June 2016); Chancellor for the Diocese of Kumbo (June 2016 to August 2018); studies at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's University (UKSW) in Warsaw-Poland (October 2018 to February 2023) which earn me a doctorate in moral theology; formator in STAMS Bambui (August 2023-).

***S.L:*** *After your departure from the Vianney Centre, did it ever cross your mind that you will return to be a Formator in the Major Seminary?*

***Fr Mbuyeh:*** I had barely settled in Bafut and was just getting to master what to do with and for the candidates sent for propaedeutic formation when my bishop called me home to Kumbo to consider another assignment. It was, perhaps, the greatest surprise I ever had concerning priestly transfers with regard to the time to move and the function to assume. I really enjoyed the time I spent in Bafut and the growth process I was able to facilitate in future priests. As I moved out of the place in June 2016, I thought it was all gone. It did not cross my mind that I would later return to the task of priestly formation, talk less of the Major Seminary. While in Kumbo, working in the Bishop's House, a similar scenario took place. I had scarcely settled and was mastering what my job consisted in, when the bishop disclosed the study plans he had for me. Step by step, I began to see the prospects for a return to the Seminary as formator. These prospects were, however, marked by one challenge or obstacle after another, from within and from without. Nevertheless, it appears God had planned it so and so it became. Incidentally, the present Fourth Year Theology students (most of them deacons) are one class of my former students at Vianney Centre Bafut. In a sense, I am back to what I started in 2014 which I thought had

passed and gone, this time around with a larger community in a bigger environment.

***S.L.: Which course do you teach and what is its place in the life of the Church and the seminarians?***

***Fr Mbuyeh:*** For this academic year, I teach Sacramental Theology and Bioethics. The Sacraments as ‘efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church’ (CCC n. 1131) are the privileged moments of encounter between God and His people. As future ministers of the Word and Sacraments, familiarity with the theology that underlie these special signs is indispensable. Thus, this course aims at helping the seminarians to better appreciate the reception of sacraments as Christians in general, but especially, as future ministers and official witnesses of their celebration. Furthermore, Moral Theology occupies a central place in the life of the Church. Bioethics/Biomedical Ethics targets the respect for the sacredness and inviolable character of human life. The contemporary threats to the right to life from conception to its natural end (especially those backed by growth in biotechnology) makes the course even more relevant. It is the task of the Church to equip her pastors and future pastors with the necessary tools to meet up with the challenges that characterise today’s world, precisely, by promoting the culture of life against the spread of the culture of death which sometimes happens in very subtle, but damaging ways. Besides teaching, I am also a Formation Advisor to 25 seminarians of Theology I. This forum is so important in Seminary formation, since the task of formation is not only teaching, but a journey. Since this journey is personal, meetings with a mentor are nearly indispensable to help the candidate properly discern and cooperate with the Holy Spirit in his faith journey during the period of seminary formation.

***S.L.: Having returned to STAMS after thirteen years, do you find the place different and what aspect of its new look catches your attention?***

***Fr Mbuyeh:*** Actually, it is over 13 years since I left STAMS in June 2010. The most conspicuous are Cardinal Tumi’s Dormitory (the lone storey building apart from the Rector’s complex), the ultra-modern lecture halls and renovation works in the students’ kitchen and refectory. Although the chapel was renovated before I left the seminary, further renovation works are hard to escape one’s view. It is, indeed, a conducive place for personal prayer and communal worship. Moreover, the presence and use of other musical instruments: electric guitars and a plethora of new songs and melodies are quite impressive. At the same time, one hopes that the traditional instruments (xylophones in particular) would retain their place in liturgical music, not only in the Seminary, but in our churches as well.

***S.L.: As a Moral Theologian, what moral options, if any, are there for the formation of the Catholic Priest in contemporary society?***

***Fr Mbuyeh:*** As regards priestly formation, there should actually be no options. Every aspect of morality has its place in the life and ministry of priests. Nevertheless, the challenges of the post-modern age strongly suggest the need for bioethics, marriage and the family, human sexuality and the use of the digital means of communication and technology. This should be based on the various sources of theology: Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium. An additional consideration would be recourse to the African cultures and customs whose moral values are compatible with the Christian message.

***S.L.: Robert Cardinal Sarah lamented that modern man and society has lost the sense of the seriousness of sin. What remedies are there to save humanity from this mess?***

***Fr Mbuyeh:*** Cardinal Robert Sarah, the pride of Africa at the Vatican by lamenting that modern man has lost the sense of sin is reiterating the cry of Pope Pius XII in 1946 and especially Pope John Paul II in 1984. According to John Paul II, atheism and secularism are the root causes of this crisis. Other reasons include a gradual shift from the personal character to the social dimension of sin, systems of ethics that deny the existence of intrinsically evil acts as well as deficiencies in the practice of sacramental penance (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n. 18). A reversal or correction of the present day tendencies would, thus, constitute a remedy to the spiritual mess. Concretely speaking, conscience formation or a clear reminder immutable and timeless moral principles of reason and faith as in sound catechetics, biblical theology of the covenant, docility to the Magisterium and an ever careful practice of sacramental confession (Cf. *Ibid.*).

***S.L.: Any final words?***

***Fr Mbuyeh:*** I am grateful to God for calling me, in spite of my shortcomings, to be His priest and for the graces He lavishes me with daily to persevere in this calling. I am indebted to the Bishops of BAPEC for confidence bestowed on me, which besides contributing to the formation of future priests also benefits my integral growth. Special thanks to the editorial board of *Searchlight Magazine* for honouring me with this interview and the entire Seminary community for the wonderful family spirit and an enabling environment. I commend the seminarians for their talents, intellectual work, a spirit of prayer and service and exhort them to be singleminded.



## THE SEARCHLIGHT MAGAZINE INTERVIEWS FR PAUL REMJIKA

**SL:** *The editors of the Searchlight Magazine are happy to have you on this platform. Can our readers get to know you?*

**Fr Remjika:** I am Fr Paul Remjika Nyuykighan, Priest of the Archdiocese of Bamenda. I was born on June 26, 1983, in Bamenda, to Mr Remjika Christopher Mbuy and Mrs Remjika Theresia Bongfen. I am the last of five children, and the only male, meaning I have four older sisters.

I started primary education at Catholic School, Fuli – Kom (1988-1992) and continued at Catholic School, Azire – Small Mankon (1992-1994). I pursued secondary education at Government Bilingual High School (GBHS) Bamenda from 1994-2001, obtaining the General Certificate of Education (GCE) at the Ordinary and Advanced Levels. Upon obtaining the GCE A/L certificate, I proceeded to Bishop Rogan College (Minor Seminary), Soppo-Buea, where I spent the 2001/2002 Academic Year as a Prospective Seminarian. The following Academic Year (2002/2003), I moved to the St John Mary Vianney Spiritual Formation Centre, Bafut. From there, I was admitted to St Thomas Aquinas' Major Seminary, Bambui where I did studies in Philosophy (2003-2006) and Theology (2007-2011), obtaining a bachelor's degree in both disciplines. The 2006/2007 Academic Year was spent in St. Francis Xavier's Parish, Bali Nyonga as a year for pastoral experience.

On June 29, 2010, I was ordained Deacon at the St. Joseph's Metropolitan Cathedral, Mankon, Bamenda, by Archbishop Cornelius Fontem Esua, Archbishop Emeritus of Bamenda. On April 27, 2011, I was ordained a priest by the same Archbishop at the same Cathedral and appointed as Parochial Vicar and Manager of Schools at St Paul's Parish, Benakuma, where I worked from August 2011 to June 2012. From July 2012 to June 2014, I was Principal of St. Bede's College, Ashing – Kom. From there, I was appointed as Parish Priest of St. Joseph's Parish, Teze (July 2014-August 2015), then as Archbishop's Private Secretary (August 2015-July 2017).

In July 2017, I left for Rome to embark on studies in Canon Law at the Pontifical Gregorian

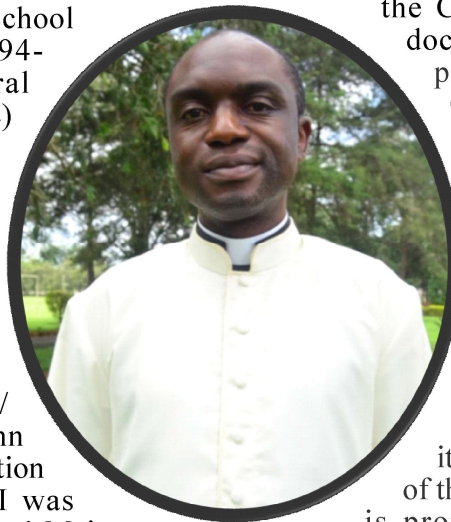
University, where I obtained a Licentiate in Canon Law in 2020, and took a one-year diploma course in matrimonial jurisprudence, as part of the doctoral programme which I am currently undertaking. In the meantime, I was appointed to STAMS as formator, a function I took up in September 2023.

**SL:** *Which courses do you teach and what is its place in the life of the Church and the seminarians?*

**Fr Remjika:** I teach Church Law, principally contained in the Code of Canon Law, which is the Church's fundamental legislative document. Pope John Paul II, while promulgating the current Code of Canon Law in 1983 through the Apostolic constitution *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges* highlighted the necessity of the Code of Canon Law for the Church, thus: "since the Church is established in the form of a social and visible unit, it needs rules, so that its hierarchical and organic structure may be visible; that its exercise of the functions divinely entrusted to it, particularly of sacred power and of the administration of the sacraments, is properly ordered; that the mutual relationships of Christ's faithful are reconciled in justice based on charity, with the rights of each person safeguarded and defined, and lastly, that the common initiatives which are undertaken so that Christian life may be ever more perfectly carried out, are supported strengthened and promoted by canonical laws".

It is important for seminarians preparing themselves for sacred ministry in the Church, to have some reasonable knowledge of the Church's laws by which they are guided as members of Christ's faithful, as seminarians, and eventually as sacred ministers, in view of the preservation and achievement of order in the Church and the facilitation of an orderly development in the life of the individual persons – among whom, seminarians and sacred ministers – who belong to it.

**SL:** *A heated debate now in the Church is the question of divorced and remarried people receiving "Holy Communion." What canonical arguments are there to guide the handling of such cases involving our Christians?*



**Fr Remjika:** To better appreciate the condition of divorced and remarried persons, it is important to understand the teaching of the Church on the indissolubility of marriage. Indissolubility is an essential property of marriage (cf. can. 1056), which means that marriage is a perpetual partnership which not only *should not* be terminated but *cannot* be terminated, even if the couple's existential relationship is irretrievably broken (Cf. JOHN P. BEAL, *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*). Current Church law considers only sacramental marriages that have been consummated to be extrinsically indissoluble by any cause except death (cf. can. 1141). The Church, however, claims the authority, under certain conditions, to dissolve non-sacramental marriages involving at least one unbaptized person and sacramental marriages that have not been consummated (cf. can. 1142).

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned authority of the Church, those who are married have the obligation and the right to maintain their common conjugal life, unless a lawful reason excuses them (can. 1151). In such cases, there can be a separation of the spouses while the bond remains (cf. cann. 1151-1155). This is not the dissolution of the marriage, and it is not divorce. Divorce obtains in the civil sphere. The Church does not recognize the power of civil authority to dissolve canonical marriages. Divorce, in other words, has only civil and not canonical effects. Divorced persons, therefore, are still bound by their sacramental marriage bonds. They cannot enter a new union with a Catholic religious ceremony. They can be said to be in an "irregular" matrimonial situation as far as their new union is concerned.

The situation of married and divorced Catholics who have entered new unions, indeed, constitutes a real and growing pastoral challenge for the Church which calls for adequate pastoral attention. As far as divorced and remarried persons are concerned, it is to be recalled that they are members of Christ's faithful. As such, they are to be helped by pastors and the whole community of the faithful, with solicitous care, not to "consider themselves as separated from the Church, for as baptized persons they can, and indeed must, share in her life" (John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 84). They need to be more fully integrated into Christian communities in the variety of ways possible, while avoiding any occasion of scandal (Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, 299). In this regard, they are to be encouraged "to listen to the word of God, to attend the Sacrifice of the Mass, to persevere in prayer, to contribute to works of charity and to community efforts in favor of justice, to bring up their children in the Christian faith, to cultivate the spirit and practice of penance

and thus implore, day by day, God's grace" (JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 84).

Even as they are integrated into the Christian communities into a variety of ways, John Paul II reaffirmed the practice of the Church, based on Sacred Scripture, of not admitting divorced persons who have remarried to Eucharistic Communion: "they are unable to be admitted thereto from the fact that their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist. Besides this, there is another special pastoral reason: if these people were admitted to the Eucharist, the faithful would be led into error and confusion regarding the Church's teaching about the indissolubility of marriage" (JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 84).

Those who find themselves in difficult or "failed" marriages and even those who are divorced and remarried, can still approach an ecclesiastical tribunal. As John Paul II indicates, "there are those who have entered into a second union for the sake of the children's upbringing, and who are sometimes subjectively certain in conscience that their previous and irreparably destroyed marriage had never been valid" (JOHN PAUL II, *Familiaris Consortio*, 84). If such a case is presented to the ecclesiastical tribunal and the investigations lead to the conclusion that the marriage was never valid in the first place, its invalidity would be declared by the tribunal and the persons concerned would be free to enter a new sacramental union.

Pope Francis highlights the fact that "today, more important than the pastoral care of "failures" is the pastoral effort to strengthen marriages and thus to prevent their breakdown" (FRANCIS, *Amoris Laetitia*, 307). A lot could be done in the prevention of the breakdown of marriages if the preparation for marriage is seriously and properly done, and provision made for the assistance by which the marriage state is preserved in its Christian character and developed in perfection (cf. cann. 1063-1072).

**SL: Is there any other thing you want to tell our readers?**

**Fr Remjika:** I would like to thank the *Searchlight* team for the work they are doing and the readers for supporting the Seminary (STAMS) by buying and reading the *Searchlight Magazine*, a wonderful gift from the Seminary to its readers. It contains a lot of rich material for our edification and encouragement as we journey through life, and it is my wish and prayer that more and more people may come to know and enjoy this treasure, the *Searchlight Magazine*.



## THE SEARCHLIGHT MAGAZINE INTERVIEWS FR MARCEL KPUDZEKA

***S.L:*** *The editors of the Searchlight Magazine are happy to have you on this platform. Can our readers get to know you?*

***Fr Kpudzeka:*** It's an honour to be with you and your team, Mr Editor-in-Chief. Thank you for having me. My name is Kpudzeka Marcel Msekenyuyfo'on. I am a priest of the diocese of Kumbo ordained on 24 April 2014. After ordination I served as Parochial Vicar in Assumption Parish Mbiame and St Joseph Parish Djottin for two years each, then in 2018 my Bishop, Mgr George Nkuo, sent me to Poland to further my studies. In 2020, I obtained a Licentiate degree in Sacred Theology from Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. I continued studies in that same university specialising in Spiritual Theology and obtained a doctorate in 2023. Upon completion of my studies I returned home in March 2023. In June 2023, I was assigned as formator to St Thomas Aquinas Major Seminary, Bambui. And here we are.

***S.L:*** *In 2013, as a Third Year Theology seminarian, you were part of those who celebrated the ruby jubilee of STAMS. Ten years after, now as a Formator, you are going to be part of those who will celebrate the Golden Jubilee of STAMS. Do you see this as coincidence or divine providence?*

***Fr Kpudzeka:*** There is a way that all things fit into the overall scheme of divine providence. For this reason, I do not regard the fact that I took part in the ruby jubilee celebration of Mother STAMS and I am now taking part in the Golden Jubilee as a matter of mere coincidence. I can't say for sure why God has given me such a privilege, but I am certain that it's for a purpose. As you have rightly said, I was a seminarian doing the third year of my theological studies when this seminary celebrated her ruby jubilee. A jubilee, for us believers, is usually a time to look back with gratitude to God for the blessings received; and to ask for the grace to move ahead with hope and courage. I remember that I belonged to a committee charged with the task of going through the minutes of the past seminary councils from inception till then to track down the progress of the seminary from that forum. It was a time-consuming but exciting exercise.



***S.L:*** *Which course do you teach and what is its place in the life of the Church and the seminarian?*

***Fr Kpudzeka:*** I teach Spiritual Theology whose subject matter is Christian perfection. The place of this discipline in the life of a seminarian in particular and of any Christian in general or of the Church can be seen from the vantage point of its goal which is ultimately the glory of God and proximately the sanctification and salvation of man. Hence, it is hoped that a course on Spiritual Theology will help the seminarian to engage decisively in his own journey towards becoming a better Christian, and to enable him to guide others as they too strive to be perfect.

***S.L:*** *In a time like ours when the priesthood is attacked from all sides, what spiritual guides can you give seminarians to be equipped for times such as this?*

***Fr Kpudzeka:*** The priesthood today is indeed facing lots of challenges both from within and from outside the Church, but you know what? Challenges are nothing unusual in the priesthood. They may change form, but they have always been there even right from the time of Christ.

Seminary formation takes that into consideration and puts in place what it takes to weather any storm. So, I can only encourage the future priest to apply himself sincerely and assiduously to his formation. He should, above all, develop a deep and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Storms of personal weakness, negative criticisms, persecutions or even physical violence may shake but they cannot destroy a life or ministry that has Christ for its foundation.

***S.L:*** *Is there any other thing you want to tell our readers?*

***Fr Kpudzeka:*** Yes. I have a word to say especially to our people of the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon who have suffered and continue to suffer the scourges of the socio-political crisis that has ravaged our land since 2016. We may lose our homes, our businesses, our loved ones, but let us never lose hope. As long as there is life, it is said, there is hope. One day God will bring us out of this mess and wipe tears away from our eyes. Let us continue to trust and hope in him even as we fight for the reign of truth, justice, and peace in this land of ours.

## THE SEARCHLIGHT MAGAZINE INTERVIEWS FR CYPRIAN DIANG

***S.L:*** *The editors of the Searchlight Magazine are happy to have you on this platform. Can our readers get to know you?*

***Fr Diang:*** Thanks very much dear editors for this opportunity. I am Fr. Cyprian Diang TOH, a Priest of the Archdiocese of Bamenda, formed in Mother STAMS and ordained on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2006.

Pastoral necessities since my ordination brought me to Esu as curate and later manager of schools, Benakuma as curate and manager of schools and finally as Parish Priest. From Benakuma I moved to Wum where I served as Principal of JOPACC for three years. It was in 2014 that I moved to Florence-Italy for studies in Biblical Theology in the FACULTY OF THEOLOGY OF CENTRAL ITALY and collaboration in the Parish named BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF DIVINE GRACES. Upon return from Florence, I was appointed the Parish Priest of Saint John the Baptist's Parish Ntaghem, Nkwen and given as well the privilege to share what I learned with my junior brothers of my alma mater on the way to the priesthood.

***S.L:*** *The news of one's appointment as a seminary Formator seems to provoke mixed feelings for the one appointed. How did you receive the news of your appointment as a Formator in STAMS Bambui?*

***Fr Diang:*** Indeed, I consider such an appointment as a privilege and a challenge as well. As you rightly mentioned, such an appointment provokes mixed feelings first because the perfect formator is Jesus. I found myself very unworthy of such a task. On the other hand, I understand that it is Jesus

Himself who does it all. Equally, I am convinced that full collaboration with His Grace which is ever sufficient for His children will lead to break throughs and an accomplishment of the task. Thus, in everything we give thanks to God leads us to heights that we might not expect but in His faithfulness goes on to grant the necessary graces that we need.

***S.L:*** *Which course do you teach and what is its place in the life of the Church and the seminarians?*

***Fr Diang:*** I teach Sacred Scriptures and at moment following our Seminary programme the **Letters of Saint Paul and Hebrews**. The Word of God is an indispensable tool in the work of evangelization and serve like yeast for growth in Faith. As such, Saint Jerome puts it very clearly: "Ignorance of the Scriptures is Ignorance of Christ". It is for this reason that **THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL'S** teaching on Scripture in general and on the place of Scripture in the life of Church in specific ranks among its most far-reaching accomplishments. **Dei Verbum (DV)**, the Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, addresses the Church's understanding of how the life of faith is to be shaped by God's revelation in Scripture. The document places Scripture within the context of divine revelation as a whole. Revelation is the way in which "God wished to manifest and communicate both himself and the eternal decrees of his will concerning the salvation of mankind" (DV 6). The Catechism insists that "access to Sacred Scripture ought to be open wide to the Christian faithful" (CCC 131). This not only includes the use of Sacred Scripture in "pastoral preaching, catechetics and all forms of Christian instruction" (CCC 132) but all the Christian faithful are urged "to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus





Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures” (CCC 133).

***S.L.: Mindful of Vatican II’s stress on the centrality of Sacred Scriptures in theological formation, how does the study of “Bible,” prepare the seminarian for a fruitful theological formation and priestly ministry?***

***Fr Diang:*** If we go by the fact that Theology is the human effort to understand the God of scriptures, then the importance of studying and mastering the Word of God above all by Seminarians could never be overemphasized. It is evident in Dei Verbum that the ministries of the Church are to be renewed by an expanded understanding of the Scriptures. This understanding becomes more important for those preparing to embrace the ministry. It further urges continued biblical studies so that “those who are ministers of the divine Word may be able to distribute fruitfully the nourishment of the Scriptures” (23). Moreso, all aspects of the ministry of the Word, including preaching and catechetics, are formed by and derive their strength from the Scripture; and therefore, those involved in such ministries must be especially devoted to its study (24-25). All the above points to the fact that the seminarian must be well grounded in Sacred Scriptures in the course of his formation so as to understand God and to prepare adequately to embrace fully the ministry and be able to lead the people of God.

***S.L.: A cry amongst many Christians is the need of priests who are grounded in Scriptures and who in turn can lead them to such maturity in the Word of God. What can be put in place to ensure that the Christian people get what they deserve?***

***Fr Diang:*** We have already established very vividly the fact that a sound knowledge of the Scriptures is an indispensable tool for evangelization. More than ever before, above all in this digital age, the Christians are more exposed to the Word of God. In the Catholic Church, there is explosive yearning for a deeper understanding and interpretation of the Word of God more visible in Gospel sharing groups, the Charismatic Renewal etc. All these

groups and those yearning to understand the Scriptures need informed guidance. Unfortunately, the Bible may come closer to our Christians with a distorted interpretation from some zealous and unprepared “men of God”, “Prophets”, “Apostles”, “Evangelists”, “Preachers” etc. No wonder then that in Dei Verbum no. 9 we read: The Word of God is like a hymn with many voices, proclaimed by God in a variety of ways and forms (cf. *Heb* 1:1). The history of Revelation is long and has many heralds, yet it is always characterized by a hierarchy in meaning and function. Future Pastors of souls need prepare themselves adequately to be able to unveil this treasure to the hungry souls yearning for nourishment. Moreso, in Dei Verbum no. 10 we read: The Pastors have the responsibility to help the faithful in acquiring a true, complete and proper understanding of the harmonious workings of the ministry of the Word, enabling them to become attentive hearers of the Word wherever it is proclaimed and to appreciate even the simplest expressions in the Bible. Therefore, the expectations are very high as we can testify. What can be done then, is that the Seminarians need to be helped to understand the importance of the Study of the Word of God not purely for academic reasons. Once they fall in love with it, they will understand more, dedicate more time for its study in preparation for the ministry.

***S.L.: Is there any other thing you want to tell our readers?***

***Fr Diang:*** Once more, thanks for this opportunity given to me to share in this prestigious and time-honoured magazine. For the seminarians I say courage in their formation. I heartily urge each and every one of them to apply themselves fully to formation for the world is becoming more complex than ever before. As for the readers I appreciate their fidelity in supporting the Seminary in various ways. In conclusion I call on all to develop love for the Word of God for knowing the Bible gives us a better understanding of God’s love for us and His ultimate plan for our lives. In the same way, the Word of God encourages us to walk in obedience and holiness without which no one will see God (*Heb* 12:14).

## THE TRANSITION FROM “PILLARS OF FORMATION” TO “DIMENSIONS OF FORMATION”

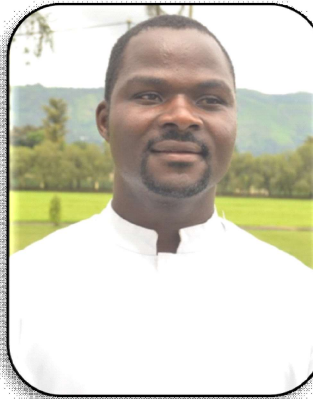
### INTRODUCTION

The Church, in her 2,000-year existence, has acquired a copious amount of wisdom. Part of that wisdom is found in the approach to seminary formation. In the document *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, (PDV) an Apostolic Exhortation published in 1992, Pope John Paul II outlined four aspects, or pillars of priestly formation, which are the foundation for the formation that seminarians receive. The *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (RFIS 2016) is a document that provides guidelines for the formation of priests in the Catholic Church. The RFIS emphasizes the importance of an **integral formation** that encompasses every aspect of the person, including the human dimensions of affectivity, sexuality, and desire. In this article, we shall focus on understanding the various facets of formation brought out by the above mentioned documents.

### 1. THE TENETS OF PRIESTLY FORMATION

The most notable component of seminary formation in the PDV is the articulation of what is known as the “four pillars” of priestly formation. These pillars are: **human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral**. The **human pillar** represents the necessary and dynamic foundation of all priestly life and focuses on the personal growth of the seminarian; the **spiritual pillar** helps to shape the quality of the priestly ministry and emphasizes on the seminarian’s relationship with God; the **intellectual pillar** provides the rational tools needed in order to understand the values that belong to being a pastor, and focuses on academics for the transmission of faith content appropriately; and the **pastoral pillar** which makes possible a responsible and fruitful ecclesial service.

The *Ratio* outlines **four dimensions of formation** in mutual tandem with PDV. However there consist within the *Ratio* some significant changes from “Pillars” of formation as seen in PDV to “Dimensions” of formation, which



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include: **Human, Intellectual, Spiritual, and Pastoral**.

The *Ratio* also outlines **four stages of priestly formation** that are designed to ensure an integral formative process: **Propaedeutic Stage, Discipleship Stage, Configuration Stage, and Continuing Formation**. The Propaedeutic Stage is a period of preparation before entering the seminary. The stage of Discipleship is a time for seminarians to deepen their relationship with God and discern their vocation. The Configuration Stage is when seminarians receive the sacrament of Holy Orders and are ordained as deacons and then priests. Finally, Continuing Formation is an ongoing process of growth and development that takes place throughout the life of a priest (Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, 2016, n. 69).

The theological significance of the RFIS lies in its ability to provide a structured approach to priestly formation that ensures that seminarians and priests receive a well-rounded education that prepares them for their roles as spiritual leaders in their communities. By emphasizing the importance of an integral formation that encompasses every aspect of the person, including the human dimensions of affectivity, sexuality, and desire, the RFIS seeks to ensure that priests are well-equipped to serve their communities effectively. The significance of this change is that it provides a more comprehensive approach to

priestly formation that takes into account not only academic and theological knowledge but also practical aspects of ministry and personal growth. It recognizes that priests need to be formed not only intellectually but also spiritually, pastorally and personally. The four stages as presented by the RFIS, shall be considered below.

## 2. STAGES OF PRIESTLY FORMATION

### 2.1. PROPAEDEUTIC STAGE

This is the preparatory stage which is indispensable for the candidate to embrace fully seminary formation. As objective, this phase is meant to provide a solid basis for the spiritual life and to nurture a greater self-awareness for personal growth (Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, n. 94). During this period, the seminarian is equally grounded on the Church's doctrine. This stage should not last for more than two years.

### 2.2. DISCIPLESHIP STAGE

During this stage, seminarians are given the opportunity to deepen their relationship with God and discern their vocation. (Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, 59.) The RFIS emphasizes that this stage is a time for seminarians to grow in their spiritual life and develop a deeper understanding of the teachings of the Church. The significance of this Stage lies in its ability to provide seminarians with a solid foundation for their future ministry as priests. By focusing on spiritual growth and discernment, seminarians are better equipped to serve their communities effectively and lead others to Christ. By emphasizing the importance of spiritual growth during this stage, the RFIS seeks to ensure that future priests are well-equipped to serve as spiritual leaders in their communities.

*The significance of the Configuration Stage lies in its ability to provide seminarians with a deep understanding of their role as spiritual leaders in their communities.*

### 2.3. CONFIGURATION STAGE

During this stage, seminarians receive the sacrament of Holy Orders and are ordained as deacons and then priests. The RFIS emphasizes that this stage is a time for seminarians to be configured to Christ, the High Priest, through the

laying on of hands by the bishop. (Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, 62.) The significance of the Configuration Stage lies in its ability to provide seminarians with a deep understanding of their role as spiritual leaders in their communities. By receiving Holy Orders, seminarians are given the authority to act *in persona Christi*. This means that they are called to imitate Christ in their lives and ministry, and to be visible signs of his presence in the world.

## 3. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DOCUMENTS

The RFIS and the PDV are two documents that provide guidelines for the formation of priests in the Catholic Church. The RFIS was published in 2016, while PDV was published in 1992. Both documents emphasize the importance of an integral formation that encompasses every aspect of the person, including the human dimensions of affectivity, sexuality, and desire. They also outline four characteristic elements of formation that are essential for the training of seminarians and priests: Human Formation, Intellectual Formation, Spiritual Formation, and Pastoral Formation.

However, there are some differences between the two documents. PDV emphasizes the importance of a **community-based approach** to priestly formation, while the RFIS emphasizes a **more individualized approach** that takes into account the unique needs and strengths of each seminarian. Also, PDV places a greater emphasis on the importance of **ongoing formation** throughout a priest's life, while the RFIS focuses more on initial formation. Despite these differences, both documents share a common goal: to provide a structured approach to priestly formation that ensures that seminarians and priests receive a well-rounded education that prepares them for their roles as spiritual leaders in their communities.

## CONCLUSION

Looking at *Pastores Dabo Vobis* of Pope John Paul II and the 2016 *Ratio Fundamentalis* done by the Congregation for the Clergy, we see a shift in the focus in priestly formation. And we showed it clearly in our article.



## THE BASIS AND PURPOSE OF FORMATION: PRIESTLY IDENTITY



**JUDE KUUM**  
**THEOLOGY II**



**NOEL NDZELE**  
**THEOLOGY II**

### INTRODUCTION

The Ministerial Priesthood is a gift from God to man. Anyone who receives this gift has to undergo a moment of formation so as to listen carefully to the voice of the one who is calling and to conform his will to the will of the one who calls. During this discernment period, the individual is directed on what to do. What actually is the basis and purpose of this formation? Basis can be defined as the reason why people take a particular action (*Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, 112). Purpose on the other hand is the intention, aim, or function of something (*Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1249). The identity of a thing is the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish a particular thing from another (Cf. *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, 779). What then does formation give to a Priest that distinguishes him from other people or gives him an identity?

### 1. BASIS OF PRIESTLY FORMATION

For an integrated formation of candidates for the Ministerial Priesthood, it is necessary to reflect on the identity of the Priest. The formation of Priests is basically salvific in character and theological in nature. By being salvific in character, Priestly formation helps the candidates to orientate the hearts and minds of men back to God. Jesus had a salvific mission and so Priests formed to configure themselves after the heart of Christ should have the same orientation. The

Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in relation to this said; "The nature and mission of Priests must be understood within the Church, the people of God, the Body of Christ, The Temple of the Holy Spirit" (SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, (21 November 1964), n. 9). The entire people of God by virtue of their Baptism, constitutes a Sacrament for the Salvation of the World, thus participates in the saving work of Christ (*Ibid.*, n. 10). As a Priestly people by virtue of their Baptism, the People of God offer themselves as a "living sacrifice acceptable to God" (cf. Rom 12:1). Baptism becomes the foundation or basis on which priestly formation builds. This is so because the one who aspires to serve God in the Ministerial priesthood must be first of all baptized.

It is therefore imperative for a Priest to be entirely, wholly and perfectly rooted in Christ, the source and summit of his being. From Christ, he can then draw the strength to nourish the people he is shepherding. A Priest is called to cultivate his missionary zeal, exercising his pastoral responsibilities with humility as an authoritative leader, teacher of the word and minister of the sacraments (Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *The Priest and the third Millennium. Teacher of the Word, Minister of the sacraments and Leader of the Community* (19 March 1999), Enchiridion Vaticanum 18 (2002), 289-376). Priestly formation should then have as basis, the enabling of the priest to practice his spiritual fatherhood fruitfully. Having looked into the Basis of Priestly formation, we shall go on to examine the purpose of priestly formation.

### 2. PURPOSE OF PRIESTLY FORMATION

The formation of men for the Sacred Priesthood of Christ is one of the Church's sacred duties. The ministerial Priesthood is understood both in its biblical and theological foundations, as a service to the glory of God and to the brothers and sisters in their baptismal priesthood (SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, n. 10). This does not cancel the fact that every believer is anointed by the Holy Spirit, and actively participates in the mission of the Church according to his own proper



charisms (*Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, n. 32). Priestly Formation is grounded in community and is missionary in spirit (Cf. *Ibid.* n.3). The goal of Priestly formation is participation in the one mission which Christ entrusted to the apostles, that is, evangelization (Cf. Mtt 28:19, Lk 22:14).

Before sending the seventy-two and the twelve out for mission, Christ called them to be with Him, learn from Him and encounter Him profoundly. Thus Priestly formation aims at helping those called to be with Christ. As such it is to be understood as being with Christ. Also, Priestly Formation is intrinsically related to Pastoral ministry. As such, the purpose of Priestly Formation is to bear fruits that will last (Cf. Jn 15:16).

### 3. PRIESTLY IDENTITY

Before considering the identity of a priest, it is necessary to first look at the meaning of the word 'Priest.' The word 'Priest' has varied meanings depending on the context in which it is used. The Priest is one who offers sacrifices to God on behalf of others and himself (Heb 5:1-2). The Priest is an ordained minister authorized to administer the Sacraments in particular the Eucharist; the sacrifice of the Mass (*The Cambridge Encyclopedia* 975). The Church teaches that by the virtue of one's Baptism, one becomes a Priest. This is the common Priesthood of all the faithful in which all participate "each in his own way in the Priesthood of Christ" (Cf. CCC 1547). This is different from the ministerial or hierarchical Priesthood of the Bishop and Presbyters gained by Ordination. Though they differ essentially, both share in the Priesthood of Christ but each in its own proper way (SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, n. 10). Our focus here is on the identity of ministerial Priest.

#### 3.1. THE PRIEST AS A SERVANT AND SHEPHERD

The Bishop who has received the fulness of Priesthood with his collaborators are sent by Christ through the Apostles to preach to the whole world and baptized them (Cf. Mt 28:19-20). This particular office in its strict sense refers to service (Cf. CCC 1551). Anyone called to this office is required to relate with Christ and men, for the good of men and for the communion of the Church. This is clearly verbalized when Scripture says "every High Priest is chosen among Human beings ..." (Cf. Heb 5:1-2). The Priests

should be educated so that they do not become preys to clericalism, or become modelled by the world, seeking fame, wealth and thereby feeding on the sheep they are called to feed. The Priest as a good shepherd must make his whole life a continual manifestation of his pastoral charity which is shown in the total gift of self to the Church, a personal relationship with the Presbyterate, his Bishop and above all his love for Christ (Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, (25 March 1992), n. 22). It is only in loving and serving Christ the Head and Spouse that his love and service to the Church, the Body and Spouse of Christ will be visible. This can also be seen in his ability to go out in search of the straying and scattered sheep.

#### 3.2. THE PRIEST AS ANOTHER CHRIST

The formation of a Priest enables him to provide a suitable ground for the action of the Holy Spirit so that during his Ordination, an indelible character is formed in him. By the special power he has, he forms and rules the Priestly people; in the person of Christ, he effects the Eucharistic sacrifice which is the supreme nourishment of the Pastoral Charity that is rooted in the sacrament of Holy Orders. This sacrifice is offered to God in the name of all the people and it is the source and summit of the Priestly life (cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 23). The Priest at this moment is also a sacrifice thus he becomes a Priest and victim as the Lord on Calvary when he celebrates the Eucharist which is a re-enactment of the bloody Calvary sacrifice in a bloodless manner.

### CONCLUSION

The basis and purpose of Priestly formation is to establish an identity in the candidate for the Ministerial Priesthood. He is called to serve the Church and to lay down his life as another Christ. As a servant leader, the priest is not to lord it over those entrusted to his charge but to be a true servant after the example of his Master, Jesus Christ (Cf. Mtt 20:28).

*Being a "creature" of Adam and Eve, the priest has his own weaknesses to struggle against and crosses to bear even though he is joined to Christ in a special way.*

Basil cole

# THE PRIEST AND PASTORAL MINISTRY IN A DIGITAL WORLD

## INTRODUCTION

Modern man lives in a technologically saturated world. He finds himself entangled in an imposing techno-centric system without much discretion and prudence in their usage. Such is the age in which the priest, a dispenser of God's love and mercy and above all, a minister of the sacrament and teacher of the Word is bound to live and exercise his pastoral ministry. Pope Paul VI posits; "In our age which is characterized by the Mass Media we must not fail, as we have already pointed out, to avail of the media for the first proclamation of the message, for catechetical instruction and for a deeper study of the faith" (PAUL VI, *Evangelization in the Modern World*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, (8 December 1975), n. 45). To this effect, the Priest is called to employ the media with prudence in carrying out his pastoral ministry. The media can disseminate the word of God and his pastoral activities over a vast area and carry the message of salvation to millions of people. However, with the loopholes that characterizes the media world and its usage today, we may dare to ask: Is the media still useful in the priestly ministry? To give a firm foundation to the topic under consideration, it will be necessary for us to clarify and define some key concepts.

### 1. WHO IS A PRIEST

This word "priest" etymologically means "Elder," from the Greek *Presbyteros*. Generally, the Priest is the minister of Divine worship and especially of the highest act of worship, the Holy Sacrifice. Specifically, a Roman Catholic Priest is a baptized man called by God to serve Christ and the Church through the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The Priest therefore serves the faithful by building up the Church *in Persona Christi*, who is the head of the body, the Church (CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (CCC), n. 1547). As the *Letter to the Hebrews* puts it, *Every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God (Heb. 5: 1)*. According to Pope St. John Paul II, "God always calls his Priests from specific human and ecclesial contexts, which inevitably influence them; and to these same contexts the Priest is sent for the service of Christ's Gospel" (JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, Paulines Publications, Nairobi 1992, n. 5). Therefore, the ministerial priesthood is given to serve the common priesthood; all the people of God are called to participate in the common priesthood (CCC nn. 1546-1547). A Priest is a means through which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads His Church; therefore it is the mission of the Catholic Priest "to feed the Church by the word and grace of God" (VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen*



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*Gentium*, (21 November 1964), n. 11). As such, a priest is a mediator or 'bridge-builder' between God and humanity.

### 2. THE PASTORAL MINISTRY OF A PRIEST

The pastoral duties of a Priest involve looking after the people he has been given responsibility over. It includes preaching, teaching, counseling, and leading of worship. The Priest ministers to the pastoral and spiritual needs of the faithful and nourishes their soul through preaching and teaching of all that is found in the Word of God. The Priest is called to be an example to God's flock and to shepherd them through his spiritual journey.

### 3. THE DIGITAL WORLD

The digital world is basically the world of modern technology, the availability and usage of digital tools to communicate on the Internet, digital devices, smart phones and other technologies. Digital technology is primarily used with new physical communications media, such as *satellite* and optic fiber transmission. The swift advances of the means of social communication tear down barriers that time and space have erected between men. In the light of these advances, the communications media can be seen as powerful instruments for spiritual and moral progress.

### 4. THE PRIESTLY PASTORAL MINISTRY IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

All priests have as their primary duty, the proclamation of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, and the communication of his saving grace in the sacraments. By virtue of his call to the ministerial priesthood, the Priest is a minister of the sacraments and teacher of the Word. As a fundamental concern on the media and Priests, the Holy Father, Benedict XVI posits that the main task of the Priest is to preach the word of God made flesh, a man, in history, thus becoming a sign of the communion that God establishes

with man. While reflecting on the theme, the Holy Father calls on Priests to seize the opportunities the digital world provides for carrying out their ministry to and for the Word of God (Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Message For the 44<sup>th</sup> World Communications Day*, 16 May 2010). The Pope reminded all Priests that they have a particular responsibility to respond to today's "cultural shifts" and employ the new communications technologies, invoking the pastoral zeal of St. Paul who said, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). Therefore, Priests are encouraged to imitate the Teacher of the Nations by similarly experiencing heartache unless they take advantage of these opportunities to proclaim the Word. While they are called to create websites for their Parishes and apostolates, Priests are to establish a unique personal presence in the new digital world so that they may use these means to carry out their pastoral mission to the sizable portion of the flock of Christ that spends increasing portions of their day online.

On a flip side, the media especially social media platforms have been used to destroy priests, religious and the Church as a whole. The imprudent use of the media has led priests into untold harm not forgetting the constant dangers imprudent curiosity poses to the priest. In the *Guide to the Training of Future Priests concerning the Instruments of Social Communications* published in 1986, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications advocated that the Seminary enforce discipline in the use of the media which later on, the priest will practice in his personal life. This echoes the advice in the Vatican II document *Inter Mirifica* nn.9 and 16 calling for the discreet use of the media (Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INSTRUMENTS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION, Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication *Communio et Progressio* (29 January 1971), nn. 9, 16. Also, SACRED CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Ratio Fundamental Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (1970/1985), nn. 68-69, 89). The need for selectivity in the contents of the media consumed is pivotal. (Cf. PUIS XII, Encyclical Letter *Sacra Virginitas*, (25 March 1954), AAS 46 (1954), 161).

## 5. PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE THE PRIEST IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

The Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, during the 44<sup>th</sup> World Communications Day 2010 gives two main principles to guide the Priests of the world so as to properly and adequately fulfill their responsibilities as they initiate, continue or expand their presence in the digital age.

i) The Priest must become "more focused, efficient and compelling" in the use of the internet to advance the Gospel. It is not enough, the Pope says, "simply to be present on the Web or to see it only as a space to be filled." Just as with giving a homily, where Priests are called not merely to say something but to have something to say, so in cyber-space, Priests are summoned to be "focused, efficient and compelling" in their message.

Cyber-space has become another pulpit, from which the Priest proclaims the Gospel to a much broader parish. The Priest should bear in mind that the same principles and message that would make him a good communicator at the ambo applies at the cyberspace.

ii) In the cyber-space, Priests should be more than just preachers but faithful witnesses in their lives. The modern world, Pope Paul VI used to say, is convinced more by those who evangelize with their lives rather than merely by their words. Therefore, Priests should be present above all as "faithful witnesses to the Gospel, exercising their proper role as leaders of communities that increasingly express themselves with different 'voices' provided by the digital marketplace." It is a forum in which he is challenged to give personal testimony to his faith in Christ and how he has tried to incarnate the Gospel in his discipleship and apostolate. In an age of celebrity, a Priest, to be effective, must be humble enough to tell his own story, which is the chronicle of how much the Lord in his goodness has done for him.

Apart of the two points seen above, there is the need for balance and discipline on the part of the priest who makes use of digital communication (SACRED CONGREGATION FOR SEMINARIES, *Norms for the Rectors of the Seminaries of Italy*, 10 June 1964, nn. 2-4; JOHN PAUL I, *Discourse to the Roman Clergy after his election* (7 September 1978), Osservatore Romano, 1 October 1978, n. 4). Canon 666 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law calls for the prudent use of media so as not to harm one's vocation. To this end, "... a priest cannot see everything, listen to everything, say everything ... The seminary ought to have made him capable, in interior freedom, to make sacrifices and to observe an intelligent and loyal personal discipline." (SACRED CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, Letter to Local Ordinaries *On Spiritual Training in the Seminaries*, (6 January 1980: Enchiridion Vaticanum, VII 1982, p.68), in Part II: Orientations, n.3: The Word of the Cross – The "Spiritual Sacrifices").

## CONCLUSION

While acknowledging the opportunities that come along with the digital world, Priests are called upon to be prudent in the usage of these means of social communication and not to become webmasters, graphic designers, or gadget geniuses but to become "competent" enough to do what it takes to establish a presence, whereby their priestly heart can establish heart-to-heart contact with those who are searching and show that Christ is near. "*Great good and great evil come from the use people make of the media of social communication ... The media do nothing by themselves; they are instruments, tools, used as people choose to use them ... But despite their immense power, the means of social communication are, and will remain, only media – that is to say: instruments, tools, available for both good and evil uses. The choice is ours!*" (PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS, *Ethics in Communications*, 4 June 2000, nn.1, 4, 28).

## SOME PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS AND REMINDERS ON LITURGICAL MUSIC IN THE BAMENDA CHURCH PROVINCE

### INTRODUCTION

Liturgical music is that which is created for the celebration of divine worship and is endowed with a certain holy sincerity of form. (SACRED CONGREGATION OF RITES, Instruction on Music in the Liturgy *Musicae Sacram* (5 March 1967), n. 4). We will look into certain areas of the Liturgy wherein more attention has to be paid when it comes to singing.



#### 1. FIDELITY IN THE RENDITION OF SONGS

In his Chirograph for the centenary of the *Motu Proprio* "Tra le Sollecitudini," Pope John Paul II emphasized that, music destined for sacred rites must have holiness as its reference point. Some choirs find nothing wrong forcing traditional drum beats into songs which were composed to be rendered without traditional drums. They do this knowingly with the intention of wanting to "spice up" their singing or "to inculturate." This is totally unacceptable within the liturgy because it destroys the spirit of prayer and destroys the purpose for which such songs were composed. We encourage all choirs to do their best to be as faithful and natural as possible in the rendition of musical pieces within the liturgy.

#### 2. THE DURATION OF HYMNS

Liturgical Music is meant to accompany the sacred liturgical actions and not the other way round. Choirs should be keen enough to notice when to stop singing at various points in the celebration of the Liturgy. The entrance hymn for instance, is meant to accompany the procession to the sanctuary and once the ministers take their rightful places, the singing is expected to stop. Also, at the Gospel acclamation, the singing is expected to stop when the minister is already settled at the Lectern. We should all note that in as much as singing is very vital in the Liturgy, the importance of silence too cannot be over emphasized. The Communion hymn is also meant to accompany the reception of Holy Communion. So, once the minister is done sharing and the whole congregation is settled, the Choir could leave some time for the community to be in silence before the Priest takes the *Prayer after Communion*. It is not the time for the Choir to begin a whole new song, what some would refer to as their "special number."

#### 3. ATMOSPHERE OF PRAYER

The liturgy is not a concert. The songs chosen should at all times evoke a spirit of prayer and not of excitement and entertainment. In some Churches during Mass, the entire singing from the entrance to the exit is loud, noisy and suggestive of a concert or a music jamboree. Some Choirs use popular worldly musical



interludes which are foreign to religious sentiments. Pope Paul VI, commenting on a Decree of the Council of Trent, explained that, "if music - instrumental and vocal - does not possess at the same time the sense of prayer, dignity and beauty, it precludes the entry into the sphere of the sacred and the religious" (Address to the Participants in the General Assembly of the Italian Association Santa Cecilia, *Insegnamenti VI*, 18 September 1968, 479). We go to Church to encounter God and not to be entertained.

#### 4. THE PENITENTIAL ACT

The *Kyrie* (the "Lord, Have Mercy") of a given Mass composition could either have verses or not. Some examples of masses where the *Kyrie* has no verse(s) include: *Missa Solemnis*, Mass of St. George, *Missa de Angelis*, etc. (found in the third edition of the *Aquinas' Hymnal*). When the Priest has already invited the faithful to make the penitential act and led them in the recitation of the *Confiteor* (the "I Confess"), it is needless to intone a *Kyrie* where the verses will have to be sung because the *Confiteor* has the same penitential character as a validly composed *Kyrie* with verses. If the Choir has prepared to sing a Mass with a *Kyrie* which has verses, then they are expected to come in after the brief silence which would normally precede the *Confiteor*. It would require that the priest to lead the celebration goes through the Mass Programme before the celebration.

#### 5. OFFERTORY PROCESSION(S)

When the offertory procession is almost done or at the presentation of the gifts at the altar for consecration, the choir is expected to switch over to a soft and gentle piece in order to prepare the hearts, minds and spirits for Consecration. In the case of our Local Church, choirs are advised to choose hymns from the Cameroon Hymnal at least at the beginning and at the end of each offertory procession since such hymns have the character already described above.

### CONCLUSION

Liturgical music must meet the specific prerequisites of the Liturgy: full adherence to the text it presents, synchronization with the time and moment in the Liturgy for which it is intended, appropriately reflecting the gestures proposed by the rite. It is our wish that we all consider the points we have indicated in this article to serve as an aid to our spiritual growth.

SINGING DEPARTMENT



## CHALLENGES OF PRIESTLY FORMATION



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### INTRODUCTION

The Council of Trent decreed the creation of seminaries and made them the proper place for priestly formation while noting the importance of other avenues of formation. Following up from the Council of Trent, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* relates that, “*The formation of future priests, both diocesan and religious, and lifelong assiduous care for their personal sanctification in the ministry and for the constant updating of their pastoral commitment is considered by the Church as one of the most demanding and important tasks for the future of the evangelization of humanity*” (JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV), (25 March 1992), n. 3).

The call to the priesthood is demanding and involves the grace of God to lead one through the formation process. The essence of this article is to outline some of those challenges in priestly formation, and to suggest ways of overcoming them.

### 1. CONFIGURATION TO CHRIST IN A CHANGING WORLD

The goal of priestly formation is making the seminarian to be an *alter Christi*. The difficulty is that, “God always calls his priests from specific human and ecclesial contexts, which inevitably influence them; and to these same contexts the priest is sent for the service of Christ’s Gospel” (PDV, n.5). Each candidate has his proper background before entering the Seminary, and the time of formation should take into consideration all the candidates because at the end of the day, the priest must resemble Christ, and serve the community.

### 2. ADAPTATION TO PRESENT DAY CIRCUMSTANCES

One of the major challenges of priestly formation is the capacity to adapt the formation to present day circumstances. “A priest like Jesus is to be totally dedicated to the work for which he has been chosen. He

is to live in this world among men; however, he is forbidden to be conformed to this world” (S. KIZHAKKEYIL, *The Priest. Theological Reflections on Priesthood and Priestly Spirituality in the Light of Church Teachings*, 500.). Therefore, the opening to the world has to take into consideration the tendencies of the contemporary society, and dispose the candidates to the adequate pastoral methods to adopt with respect and the consideration of human dignity because “the thirst for God and for an active meaningful relationship with him is so strong today that, where there is a lack of a genuine and full proclamation of the Gospel of Christ, there is a rising spread of forms of religiosity without God and the proliferation of many sects” (PDV, n. 6).

### 3. CELIBATE CHASTITY : A MYTH OR REALITY LIVED?

Rationalism and materialism are some of the problematic elements in priestly formation: “it is in this situation that the priests of today have to find their identity keeping their total devotion to the Divine Master and to the Church” (S. Kizhakkeyil, *The Priest. Theological Reflections on Priesthood and Priestly Spirituality in the Light of Church Teachings*, 499). Because of rationalism, some of the fundamental values of the priesthood have been argued, such as celibate chastity, obedience and poverty. For example, it is only when the priest identifies himself with the poor that he can easily live poverty and abandon himself to God. As stipulated by the *Congregation for Catholic Education*, the love of Christ is the condition which can help the candidate to embrace willingly celibate chastity (CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION, *Guidelines for the use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood*, Rome, 29 June 2008, Part I). And this exercise should begin during the formation time. However, materialism and rationalism make reason “insensitive to an encounter with revelation and with divine transcendence” (PDV, n. 7).

### 4. NEED FOR GOOD RELATIONSHIPS

Among many reasons justifying the present identity of priests presented by Dr. Joseph Cheriampanatt, we have the “Absence of good friends.” In fact, given that the priests whether diocesan or religious share altogether in the same priesthood of Christ, there is a great need for them to build up healthy relationships among them so that they “may find mutual assistance in the development of their spiritual and intellectual lives, that they may be able to co-operate more effectively in their ministry and be saved from loneliness” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 8). Moreover, it is also very important for a priest not only to choose his friends among his brother priests, but associate with other men and women as well. In this regard, those who relate only to men or women are seen as emotionally undeveloped and crippled in ministry.

Analysing this fact, Pope John Paul II spoke to the priests saying; “Every priest thus has the great responsibility of developing an authentic way of relating to women as a brother, a way of relating which does not admit of ambiguity” (JOHN PAUL II, “Holy Thursday Letter “Women in the Life of the Priest,” *Origins* 24, (20 April 1995), 753).

## 5. DEFECTIVE FORMATION IN THE SEMINARY

Another reason is termed as “Defective formation in the seminary.” This is due to the fact that “the artificial environment in the seminaries and formation houses, sheltered as they are from the main stream of life and its challenges, prevents the growth of candidates into mature and responsible priest” (J. CHERIAMPANATT, *Challenges to Catholic Priesthood*, 497). With this defective mind, a priest is faced with the conflict between the ideal self and the real self, given that he concentrated the most important part of his time to intellectual formation highlighted by the seminary, though sometimes “only a limited attempt is made in our seminaries to assist future priests to understand the influence of sexuality, emotion, and frustration in their personality” (*Ibid.*, 505).

## 6. CHANGES IN THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE LAITY

In the same vein, changes in the expectations of the laity constitute another challenge faced by the ordained ministers in their daily life. Priesthood has long been qualified and approached with assertions and traditions

which have set the priest apart and made him in effect an extraordinary personage in the eyes of the people. In this line, the priest should have special qualities. Nobody thinks of the fact that he is also a human being, and if he is to invite others to holiness, he has to be holy himself, in one word, he is often seen as a non-human, and that is why if there is anyone who is not permitted to live his own life like any other human being, that person is the priest. Again, “if there is anyone who is denied the right to have personal problems and difficulties, that person is a priest” (G. MANALET, *Priest as a Man: Counselling for the Clergy*, Kochi: Karunikan Books, 2006, 9). More than that challenge, we cannot but highlight *the lack of commitment or risk taking*. If the past generations could accept the teachings of priests without paying particular attention to their personal life, the present generation rather prefers priests who give all they have for the sake of preaching of the Gospel both by words and deeds, for “the world is tired of words and statements; rather it needs deeds and witness of life” (S. KIZHAKKEYIL, *The Priest. Theological Reflections on Priesthood and Priestly Spirituality in the Light of Church Teachings*, 507). In addition, we have as a challenge to priestly formation *the inter-relatedness of prayer and life*. It is noticed that priests sometimes find it hard to pray, either for lack of time or because they contrast it with work.

## CONCLUSION

Despite all the hurdles before the one aspiring for the priesthood, God’s grace is sufficient (Phil. 4:13). God who initiates the call in us, is also capable to equip us with the needed graces to live our vocation to the full.

# THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE “O ANTIPHONS” IN THE ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS LITURGY

## INTRODUCTION

From the 17<sup>th</sup> of December to the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December, the antiphons for Evening Prayer (Vespers) begin with “O.” The aim of this article is see what these “O” Antiphons are, distinguish them from the ordinary antiphons, and show their theological significance.

## 1. GENERAL MEANING OF AN ANTIPHON

### 1.1. DEFINITION OF AN ANTIPHON

An antiphon is a short text, usually from Scripture, sung or recited as a refrain before and after a Psalm, or canticle. Antiphons transform a Psalm into personal prayer by highlighting a sentence that might otherwise not attract the attention it deserves. (Cf. J. LANG, *Dictionary of the Liturgy*, Catholic Book Publishing, New York 1986, 36-37.)

### 1.2. THE “O ANTIPHONS”

The “O Antiphons” in particular are seven antiphons each starting with the interjection “O,” which are consecutively used to introduce the *Magnificat* during



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Evening Prayers for the seven days before Christmas. They are also used as the verses that make up the *Gospel acclamation* during Holy Mass. They are as follows:

1. Dec. 17: “O Wisdom (*O’ Sapientia*), O holy Word of God, you govern all creation with your strong yet tender care. Come and show your people the way to salvation.” (Cf. Isaiah 11:2-3)



2. Dec. 18: "O sacred Lord (*O' Adonai*) of ancient Israel, who showed yourself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Sinai Mountain: come, stretch out your mighty hand to set us free." (Cf. Isaiah 11:4-5. 33:22)

3. Dec. 19: "O Flower of Jesse's stem (*O' Radix*), you have been raised up as a sign for all peoples; kings stand silent in your presence; the nations bow down in worship before you. Come, let nothing keep you from coming to our aid." (Cf. Isaiah 11:1.)

4. Dec. 20: "O Key of David (*O' Clavis*), O royal Power of Israel controlling at your will the gate of heaven: come, break down the prison walls of death for those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death; and lead your captive people into freedom." (Cf. Isaiah 22:22.)

5. Dec. 21: "O Radiant Dawn (*O' Oriens*), splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death." Cf. Isaiah 9:1.

6. Dec. 22: "O King of all the nations (*O' Rex Gentium*), the only joy of every human heart; O Keystone of the mighty arch of man, come, and save the creature you fashioned from the dust." (Cfr Isaiah 2:4.)

7. Dec. 23: "O *Emmanuel*, king and lawgiver, desire of the nations, Saviour of all people, come and set us free, Lord our God." (Cf. Isaiah 7:14.)

### 1.3. THE STRUCTURE OF THE "O" ANTIPHONS

As can be seen, each antiphon has four parts. The first is a Messianic title preceded by "O". Example: "O Wisdom". The second part elaborates on the title, for example "mightily and sweetly ordering all things." The third part is the verb "come." The fourth part elaborates the request that depends on the title. For example "and teach us the way of prudence."

## 2. THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF EACH

### 2.1. O SAPIENTIAE

The title addresses Jesus as the wisdom of God who sits with Him at the beginning of creation (Prov. 8:22-31, Sir. 24:1-22). It is the wisdom soaring from every part of the earth, gently and firmly setting all things into place; guiding creation with power and love. Christ is the wisdom by whom and with whom God created the world. (Cf. Jn. 1:1.) Through Jesus Christ, then, we have access to the hidden mysteries of God revealed in his creation (Cf. Rom 1:19-20). The petition here invites Christ to "come and teach us the path to knowledge." This knowledge is about man, the world, and above all, knowledge of God who is fully made manifest in Jesus Christ. The essence of this knowledge is to delight our hearts with the joy.

### 2.2. O ADONAI

This title evokes the revelation of God to Moses as YHWH, the 'I AM' who saves, the God of our Salvation, through his appearance in the uncreated fire which burns but does not destroy (Cfr Ex. 3:13-14). As such Jesus Christ is He who comes as Lord of lords to save mankind from the powers of darkness and not to consume or destroy it.

The request to the second title invites Christ to come as the ruler and Saviour who possesses all power

to free us from the grip of sin and Satan. We recognize such a person only in Jesus Christ our God.

### 2.3. O RADIX JESSE

The prophecies of Old had foretold that the Messiah was to be born of the stock of Jesse, a sign of God's love for all his people. This is exactly what the genealogical account of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew does. (Cf. Mt. 1:16) By showing Jesus to be a son of Joseph who is a son of David, Jesus is shown as a legitimate heir to the Davidic throne. The petition to this title invokes Jesus to "hasten his steps" to save us as we continuously get lost into the darkness of this world: "come to save us without delay."

### 2.4. O CLAVIS DAVID

This title is an image of one who has authority over the house of David. As the alpha and the omega, Jesus Christ is both the gate and the key of heaven. Jesus uses this same imagery when he confers to Peter the authority of the Keys (Cf. Mt. 16:19. 18:18.) In this title, Jesus is seen as the one who holds the keys of life and death. The request here beckons Jesus to free us from darkness into (Cf. Eph. 1:7; Jn. 8:12).

### 2.5. O ORIENS

In light of the prophecy in Zech. 3:8, Jesus is understood as the Rising Sun from the East and the Morning Star that brings hope of salvation and life to all peoples. It equally points to the glory of God which the Psalmist prays for to shine over all the earth (Cf. Ps. 57). In this way, the light of God's justice will penetrate all the confines of the earth so as to bring peace to the world. The petition here invites Jesus to shine on those in the shadow of death, for, he is the light of revelation for the gentiles (Cf. Lk. 2:32.)

### 2.6. O REX GENTIUM

This title explains that Christ is not only the Messiah of Israel, but of all nations of the world. Jesus unites the whole of humanity into one people. There is no longer race or colour, class or status, but we are all one human race created by God in his image and likeness (Cf. Gn. 1:26-27). The request here acknowledges Jesus Christ as the only one who can redeem his own creation and none other. He is our Salvation (Cf. Rom. 10:9-10.)

### 2.7. O EMMANUEL

The last title, Emmanuel, summarizes all other titles. In Isaiah 7:14-17, we read of the prophecy to King Ahaz in which a virgin will conceive and bear a son named Emmanuel, "God is with us," a sign of Yahweh's presence among his people. This prophecy clearly finds fulfilment in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ which took place in the womb of the Virgin Mary (Cf. Lk. 1:26-38.) This last petition therefore reiterates Christ as our Saviour. Save us Lord.

## CONCLUSION

From what we have seen, it can be stated that the "O Antiphons" are a summary of the mysteries of salvation. Through them, the Church prepares each and every Christian not only to celebrate the coming of Christ at Christmas, but to appreciate all the mysteries that will occur throughout the liturgical year.