I Chose You

The Nigerian Priest in the Third Millennium

(Issued by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria)
You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last (Jn 15:16)
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviations</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prayer for priests</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOREWORD</strong></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer of Consecration at Ordination</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 1. CONTEXT - NIGERIAN CULTURE

- Some Positive Elements of Priesthood in ATR       | 3   |
- Some Negative Aspects of Priesthood in ATR        | 3   |
- Recommendations                                    | 5   |

## 2. CHRISTIAN IDENTITY AND MISSION OF THE PRIEST

- Trinitarian Foundation                            | 8   |
- Share in the Ministry of Jesus Christ - Priest,  | 8   |
  Prophet, King/Servant                             |

## 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF PRIESTS; QUALITIES CALLED FOR

- Personal Witness of Priests                       | 11  |
- Ministerial Qualities for Priestly, Prophetic,    | 13  |
  King/Servant Roles                                 |
- Priestly Ministry                                  | 13  |
- Prophetic Ministry                                 | 15  |
- King/Servant Role                                 | 17  |
- Relationships                                     | 20  |
- Summary                                           | 26  |
**ABBREVIATIONS:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIC</td>
<td>Codex Iuris Canonici, Code of Canon Law, 1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMLP</td>
<td>Congregation for the Clergy, Directory On The Ministry And Life of Priests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EN</td>
<td>Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii nuntiandi, 1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIRM</td>
<td>General Instruction on the Roman Missal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LG</td>
<td>Vatican II, Lumen gentium, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT</td>
<td>Vatican II, Optatam totius, Decree on the Training of Priests, 1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDV</td>
<td>Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, Pastores Dabo Vobis 1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>Vatican II, Presbyterorum ordinis, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 1965</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

Lord Jesus, I pray for the faithful and fervent,
    For the fragile and weak,
    For those working zealously,
    For those in temptation and doubt.
You have chosen those who serve you.
Fill them with the fire of your love,
Through your Spirit, put your words on their lips
    And your love in their hearts.
Let their ministry show
    Your presence in the Church.
Do not allow them to be crushed.
Inspire them through prayer
To live each day the mystery of your dying and rising.
May the gift of Mary your Mother
    To the disciple, whom you loved,
Be your gift to each of them. Amen.
The ministerial priesthood is one of Christ's inestimable gifts to His Church. For each of us with whom Christ has shared this gift, it is an incalculable treasure. It is also a continuing responsibility. The treasure we have received has been placed in 'earthenware jars' (2 Cor 4:7). There is, therefore, an ongoing onus on each of us to grow in reverent appreciation of the gift we have received, the lived expectations inherent in its mystery and the mission that flows from it.

As the Chief Shepherds of the Church in our land, we, the members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), have the continuing responsibility to mirror before ourselves and our brother priests the awesome dignity of the treasure we share. 'I Chose You' is presented in part-fulfillment of that continuing responsibility.

This document is about the ministerial priesthood. It is deeply pastoral in tone. It is primarily addressed to ourselves and to all our brother priests. At the beginning of the third millennium, we desire to support, encourage and challenge one another to a more authentic living of this priceless gift, shared with us by Christ through His Church. We offer this letter on the priesthood as a genuine 'vade mecum', an indispensable pocket companion. The value of the reflections herein will be personally appropriated only by means of sustained meditation in prayer. Likewise, they can be very profitably used as themes for days of recollection and retreats, as well as for ongoing discussion at presbyterium gatherings. In this way, we will fan into a flame the gift of God that we possess, through the laying on of hands (cf. 2 Tim 1:6).
This letter is also addressed to our deacons and seminarians - and those who have been charged with responsibility for their priestly formation. By carefully studying these pages, our future priests will grow in understanding of the sacrament they aspire to receive, its dignity and the lived expectations that flow from it. They will grow in appreciation of sound priestly spirituality and of all that is needed to foster the growth of that spirituality in their lives. It can therefore serve as a yardstick for their journey of formation.

Finally, this letter is addressed to our lay brothers and sisters. As the Church's ordained ministers, we are the servants of all God's people. To live our priesthood in joyful service of the people we minister to, we need their prayers and encouragement. They hold us in high regard and, at the same time, rightly expect much of us. Both the esteem and the expectation need to be grounded in a right understanding of the nature of the priesthood. An attentive study and discussion of this document will assist in meeting this need.

We firmly believe that we have in us 'a spiritual gift which was given when the prophets spoke and the body of elders laid their hands' on us (cf. 1 Tim 4:14). We do not want to neglect that gift. Nor do we want any of our brother priests to neglect it. In presenting 'I Chose You' to the priests, religious and faithful of the Church in our nation, we are praying that this spiritual gift will be more rightly appreciated and understood by all. More importantly, we are praying that we, who have received that gift, may set ourselves ever anew to live it in all its fullness.

The members of the CBCN express their sincere gratitude to the following who assisted in producing various drafts of this document: Msgr. John Aniagwu, Msgr. Jerome Madueke, Fr. Peter Schineller, S.J., Fr. Cletus Gotan, Fr. James Sheerin, S.P.S., Fr. Raphael Osegboun, Fr. Michael Ekpenyong, Sr. Lucy Gidado,
O.L.F. and Sr. Regina Oke, SSMA. May God bless and reward each of them.

+Richard Burke,
Bishop of Warri.
Chairman of the CBCN Dept of Pastoral Agents,
Chairman of the CBCN Committee for Clergy.

Thursday, 23rd September 2004,
Memorial of St. Pio of Pietrelcina, Priest.
PRAYER OF CONSECRATION AT ORDINATION

Almighty Father,
grant to these servants of yours
the dignity of the priesthood.
Renew within them the Spirit of holiness.
As co-workers with the order of bishops
may they be faithful to the ministry
that they receive from you, Lord God,
and be to others a model of right conduct.
May they be faithful in working with the order of bishops,
so that the words of the Gospel may reach the ends of the earth,
and the family of nations,
made one in Christ,
may become God's one, holy people.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen
1. Several major factors set the context for priesthood in Nigeria. We single out two factors especially. The first looks to the traditional, religious cultures of Nigeria and, in particular, to the exercise of priesthood in African Traditional Religions (ATR). A second major factor is the rapid move of Nigeria to modernity, the fact that change seems to be the order of the day. The first factor of ATR will be examined here. The second factor will be briefly explored later in this document, where we will see that ongoing formation, renewal, and updating are indispensable in a rapidly developing society.

2. There is a great awakening in Africa of a profound cultural, social, economic and political consciousness, which the Church does not ignore. This awakening includes a new quest for meaning, a search for fundamental values and a more radical expression of selfhood in one's native language and culture.

3. Nigerian priests now seek their own identity, deriving from their particular socio-cultural, ecclesiastical and pastoral milieu. The gift of faith and vocation always involve some dialectic of participation, freedom and co-responsibility in the recipients. Like all other historical beings, Nigerians respond to the gift of the priesthood against the background of their environment, cultural categories and social conventions. Pope John Paul II already called on Africans thus: "...look inside yourselves. Look to the riches of your own traditions, look to the faith... .Here you will find genuine freedom - here you will find Christ who leads you to the truth."

---

1 John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa (EIA), no. 48.
4. Nigeria is a country blessed with rich, varied cultures and traditions. The various ethnic nationalities exhibit many features, which harmonize with and indeed promote, the proclamation of the Good News. Among such values are: a deep sense of the sacred; a keen interest in spiritual realities; joy of life; openness to mystery; belief in the effectiveness of prayer; sense of community and hospitality; reverence of fatherhood; respect for age and elders; love of tradition and loyalty to kinsfolk.

5. Priests are called from a certain cultural ambience. The values of their social milieu affect and influence their choices and decisions. The *Instrumentum Laboris* of the 1994 Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops observed: "...some of those who become priests or religious in Africa may feel themselves alienated from their own culture... .This state of things can lead to their living in a very insecure state, perpetually wearing a mask".\(^2\)

For the Nigerian priest, the notion of priesthood in African Traditional Religions (ATR) forms part of the cultural horizon for understanding the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. Deviations into syncretism are likely to happen if an integration of African culture into priestly formation and life is lacking. It is not only the case that candidates for the priesthood may indeed be converts themselves or direct offspring of pagan parents, but a good proportion of the lay faithful who seek their assistance may have a mentality and instincts deriving from ATR. It is thus desirable to make some remarks on the understanding of priesthood in ATR and how it may affect the understanding and exercise of Catholic Priesthood.

In what manner does the African cultural heritage influence priestly life and ministry? Are there elements in African Traditional Religion that can promote priestly values, such as

---

\(^2\) *Instrumentum Laboris of the 1994 Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops*, no. 69.
poverty, obedience, chastity, stewardship, community life? What elements may weaken the meaning of priestly consecration?

**Some Positive Elements of Priesthood in ATR**

6. Priesthood in ATR possesses certain elements that may enrich our exercise of Catholic priesthood. Although priests in ATR exerted some influence in the African society, they did not have a particular social status. Their authority was limited to religious matters alone. Customary rulers and chiefs controlled secular affairs, even though they were in regular consultation with the priests. While rulers and chiefs had prestige and were given social recognition, especially during social functions, priests remained at the level of ordinary citizens. They were generally poor. Furthermore, they were distinguished from the rest of the people mostly by their lifestyle and special role in the community. Should this not challenge us Nigerian Catholic priests to shun worldly power and status, and strengthen our commitment to imitate Jesus Christ in his poverty?

A priest in ATR was surrounded by numerous ascetic practices and prohibitions, which imposed a rigorous discipline on him. He observed a decorum that singled him out unmistakably as belonging to the sacred. He stood out by his continence, silence and solitude, especially on and around the ritual days. His integrity was unparalleled, as required by his role as an intermediary between man and the gods. Nigerian Catholic priests should excel in the same qualities or else run the risk of betraying this rich spiritual patrimony.

**Some Negative Aspects of Priesthood in ATR**

7. In contrast to the universal and revealed Priesthood of Jesus Christ, priesthood in ATR derives its essence, function and importance from the religious and socio-cultural milieu of a particular society. It has an anthropological origin, based on the very human fear of the unknown and the need to appease some
gods to whom were attributed earthly blessings and calamities.

Priests in ATR were believed to be diviners or fortune-tellers with special skills for consulting the gods. They were believed to know how to avert the anger of the gods by prayer or sacrifice, and how to win back their goodwill.

In some parts of Nigeria, priests in ATR were magicians, healers and rainmakers. They could change misfortunes, such as illness or bad harvests. Might this not explain the current fascination with healing and miraculous powers among some Catholic priests, who feel 'called' to meet every temporal need? There is also the magical notion of prayer which now seems to prevail among some priests as leaders of liturgical worship and teachers of prayer.

In some traditional societies, priests acted as spirit-mediums, through whom 'mysteries' obtained in a 'trance' from the gods were revealed, by means of incantations interpreted by skilled persons. Any wonder that visions, false illuminism and mysticism, and other new-age exaggerations are creeping into the priestly ministry?

8. There are, of course, traditional values that need to be purified with regard to the Catholic priesthood. One example is the extended family system, which, though it may provide a natural support for a priest's affective growth, all too often constitutes a hindrance to the practice of evangelical poverty. There are other traditional features that should be rejected outright because they are contrary to the Gospel. Male chauvinism in the African traditional culture, which reduces women to objects of gratification, instead of equal partners created in the image and likeness of God, should be rejected. It should also be rejected because it presents a problem to the celibate way of loving.

The Fathers of the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops invited African priests to live out their calling "as a
vocation to spiritual paternity.” Reminding African priests of the fact that Africa reveres the father figure, the Synod Fathers urged: "Do not disappoint her. The Church counts on you to exercise faithfully this spiritual fatherhood without sparing yourselves”.

In his 2002 Ad Limina Address to the Nigerian Bishops, Pope John Paul II remarked that some Nigerians might be tempted to see the priesthood as a means for improving their lot in life, or to see it as a means of gaining prestige and power. Hence, there is the need for constant self-examination, vigilance and renewal.

**Recommendations**

9. Having examined the socio-cultural-anthropological dimensions of priestly life and ministry in the Nigerian context, we urge the following:

- There is a great need for inculturation, which, when deeply understood, is another name for conversion. The Nuntius of the 1994 African Synod called on Africans to evangelize "the cultural roots of their persons and of their communities." Inculturation is a total transformation of primordial values which shape the individual's attitudes and judgments, decisions and choices, behaviour and relationships.

- Nigerian priests should examine the values they inherited from their people in the light of the Gospel, and seek authentic and dynamic ways of re-expressing the priestly ideals. In this way, they will be able to influence and transform their people and culture, as well as offer to the universal Church new ways of responding to God's call.

- Each cultural grouping in Nigeria is urged to undertake a periodic self-examination, in order to clarify the identity and mission of its priests. By together acknowledging their strengths

---

3 Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, Nuntius, no. 25.
5 Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops, Nuntius, no. 17
and weaknesses, Church ministers are helped to a life of greater fidelity. Each priest should acquire the habit and skills of clarifying, evaluating, or changing for the better, values that are operative in his life.

- Priestly training should root candidates in their cultural heritage. The split between faith and culture would be reduced if faith could be made to seek understanding and expression more in the philosophy and wisdom of the African people than in Greek and Western categories. Inculturation of the liturgy, pastoral ministry, Church law, and so on will depend largely on this hermeneutic.

- Seminary formation should enable African priests to lead a truly priestly life and at the same time be men of their people. Formation should be taken to the very depths of the hearts and customs of our people to enable an individual priest or seminarian to abandon beliefs and practices that are incompatible with the Gospel.

- Consolidating the positive traditional values in our heritage may be an effective way to address the negative impact of colonialism. The Church in Africa cannot be "the hope of this two-thousand-year-old Church" nor "a leaven of missionary spirit for the older Churches" if her ministers suffer from alienation and cultural confusion.  

10. We conclude this section by re-echoing Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*: “today more than ever there is a need to form future priests in the true cultural values of their country, in a sense of honesty, responsibility and integrity. They shall be formed in such a manner that they will have the qualities of the representatives of Christ, of true servants and animators of the Christian community... solidly spiritual, ready to

---

*EIA, no. 136.*
serve, dedicated to evangelization, capable of administering the goods of the Church efficiently and openly, and of living a simple life as befits their milieu.”

Ibid, no. 95
The priest's identity, like every Christian identity, has its source in the Blessed Trinity. This identity is revealed, and is communicated to people, in Christ. Priestly life and ministry means that in a profound way, the priest relates personally to each Person of the Blessed Trinity.

"The priest, by virtue of the consecration which he receives in the Sacrament of Orders, is sent forth by the Father through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, to whom he is configured in a special way as Head and Shepherd of his people, in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world." 

Every Christian is joined to the Triune God through baptism. That union and configuration is intensified for the priest in and through the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Share in the Ministry of Jesus Christ - Priest, Prophet, King/Servant

While the identity of the priest finds its ultimate origin in God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the priest turns to Jesus Christ, the Son, for the most concrete revelation and manifestation of the meaning of his priesthood. The priest is rightly called an "alter Christus." The priest always finds his identity and meaning in Jesus Christ, the High Priest.

As Jesus Christ called, formed and then sent forth the twelve, so Jesus Christ calls, forms and sends forth the priest today.

---

8 PDV, no. 12.
9 Ibid.
Jesus invited the twelve to carry on his mission at the Last Supper - "Do this in memory of me" - so does He invite the priest today. Through the sacrament of Holy Orders, the priest shares in the priesthood of Jesus Christ in a unique, public way. The profound invitation to the priest, therefore, is that he would re-present Jesus Christ in his personal life and in his public ministry.

This is the joy, the grace and the challenge. What is at stake is not only the salvation of the priest, but the salvation of others. What a privilege, and what a responsibility!

13. What is the shape or style of priestly life? What qualities and virtues are needed in the Nigeria priest? What is his identity or image? What is his mission? What spirituality is needed to carry out this mission? How does the priest continue, deepen and build upon the initial formation he underwent in the seminary? These are not easy questions, nor do they admit of simple answers. Yet, they are questions that surely we must reflect upon, if we are to faithfully and effectively live out our call to serve as priests.

14. Where do we look for guidance and direction on the shape and meaning of our priestly lives? We look to the teaching of the Church. We look especially to Vatican II and subsequent documents. We reflect, for example, on the annual letter of Pope John Paul II to priests. We study the documents from the Synod of the Bishops of Africa and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN), with their emphasis on inculturation, evangelization, justice, and dialogue. Above all, we turn to the Scriptures - especially the New Testament - and to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

15. For the most explicit teaching on priesthood, we turn to the Letter to the Hebrews, where Jesus Christ is the compassionate, humane, high priest who offers sacrifice once for
all. "Every high priest has been taken out of mankind and is appointed to act for men in their relations with God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins; and so he can sympathise with those who are ignorant or uncertain because he too lives in the limitations of weakness" (Heb 5:1-2).

Each of the gospel accounts, in its own way, shows us how Jesus went about doing good, proclaiming the kingdom, healing, teaching, gathering followers, and eventually laying down his life. The stories and parables of Jesus - such as the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Good Shepherd - provide direction for priestly ministry. Above all, in the gospel accounts of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we see the type of life we are called to live, namely, one of total dedication and self-sacrifice, even to death. In the Risen Lord, we see the example of a life where the fruits of redemption are lavishly and joyfully shared with those who seemed to be alone and without hope.

We learn also about priestly life and mission from following the stories of St. Peter and St. Paul. We observe how they were called, responded, struggled, preached, oversaw the establishment of new churches, and went on mission, even to the ends of the earth.
We present here what might be called the qualities or virtues needed in priests in Nigeria at the dawn of this new Millennium. These qualities are gathered under three categories, namely (a) Personal Witness of Priests, (b) Ministerial Qualities, (c) Relationships.

(a) Personal witness of priests

Sense of joy in one's life and ministry. The priest is ever grateful for the gift of priesthood, a gift of the Spirit. He is privileged to share in a special way in the ongoing Paschal Mystery and victory of Jesus Christ, and then share this with others. Through there manifest enjoyment of priestly life and work, priests become "heralds of hope in our perplexed and distressed society of today."¹⁰ Like Jesus on the road to Emmaus, the priest accompanies his people on the recurring journey from death to life, to the third day experiences of the new life of Easter. His priestly life and example become 'gospel', good news for his people. He so lives and ministers as to be a sign of the joy and grace of the priesthood. In this manner, he encourages and promotes vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Through his own life, conduct, and ministry, he mirrors forth and projects a positive image of Jesus Christ, the High Priest.

A holy Priest. He is seen and perceived to be a person in touch with God. Thus, he is able and willing to speak of God, and of his experience of God, with the people he serves. He is a person

¹⁰ Bishop Anthony Gbuji, Relator at National Pastoral Congress, No. 21; See also DMLP 37
of prayer and a leader of prayer, including Scriptural prayer, with and for his parishioners and parish societies.

His personal devotion to the Blessed Sacrament is apparent to the parishioners. In this way, he encourages the Eucharist to be the center of the parish assembly. "The parish priest is to take care that the Blessed Eucharist is the center of the parish assembly of the faithful. He is to strive to ensure that the faithful are nourished by the devout celebration of the sacraments, and in particular that they frequently approach the sacraments of the Blessed Eucharist and penance." He also labors to enable his parishioners receive Communion through regularization of marriages, and regular scheduled times for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

He is content with a simple lifestyle, free from ostentation and vanity. His attitude is more one of caring and sharing, rather than an acquisitive, consumerist, or materialistic outlook. He is a careful steward over the goods and properties of the Church entrusted to him. He clearly and conscientiously observes the distinction between the goods and moneys of the Church and his own personal property. He uses Church goods with a sense of responsibility, moderation and detachment, using them only for the building up of the Kingdom.

The priest is, and is seen by his people as, one eager to learn, grow in faith and knowledge. Private studies and study programmes are always and only undertaken in service to, and to build up, his priestly ministry. Their goal is not so much certificates or degrees but improved service to the people of God. Seeing the need for ongoing renewal, he is eager to update himself. He learns and improves on pastoral skills, counseling and preaching skills through reading, workshops and sabbaticals. He strives to grow in knowledge and love of the Scriptures. This carries over to his leadership and support of catechetical and adult education programmes in the parish.

11 Canon 528, # 2
12 DMLP, no. 67
Witness of life is one key way in which priests exercise their prophetic ministry. It is what Evangelii Nuntiandi calls “... the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbour with limitless zeal.” Such witness is particularly called for today since, as Pope Paul VI said, "modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he listens to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

(b) Ministerial Qualities For Priestly, Prophetic, King/Servant Roles

18. All Christians by their baptism share in the priestly, prophetic and king/servant role of Jesus Christ. Ordained priests share more deeply in a public, official manner in the triple role of Jesus Christ. We will examine the ministerial qualities or characteristics of the Nigerian priest under the threefold categories of priestly, prophetic, and king/servant roles.

Priestly Ministry

The priestly ministry of the priest is none other than the ministry or office of sanctification. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that bishops and priests sanctify the Church by their prayer and work, by their ministry of the word and of the sacraments. They sanctify by their example, "not as domineering over those in [their] charge but being examples to the flock" (I Peter 5:3) Thus, "together with the flock entrusted to them, they may attain eternal life.”

The pre-eminent exercise of the office of sanctification by priests is at the Eucharistic celebration. Here, they re-enact the once-for-all perfect sacrifice of Christ for the salvation of the world. Priests should make it a point of duty to celebrate the Eucharist daily, unless they are impeded by a justifiable cause.

---

\(^{13}\) EN, no. 42  
\(^{14}\) EN, no. 43  
\(^{15}\) LG 26, #3 CCC 893.
They should always be mindful that, by so doing, they are sanctifying the Church and themselves as well.

Priests should celebrate the other sacraments as demanded by the needs of the faithful entrusted to their care. In particular, they should make the sacrament of reconciliation available to the faithful on a regular basis. Priests should also attend to the sick members of the community by promptly offering them the sacrament of the anointing of the sick and the viaticum whenever the need should arise.

While exercising their priestly ministry, priests should always be conscious that their manner of celebrating contributes in no small measure to the efficacy of the sacred event that they are celebrating. It is thus not just a matter of the sacraments being efficacious 'ex opere operato'; that is, regardless of the disposition of the celebrant. Yes, the sacraments are indeed efficacious 'ex opere operato', since Christ is the minister in each of them, but their value and worth for the faithful, who participate in them can be enhanced or diminished 'ex opere operantis', that is, by the manner and disposition of the celebrant.

In his ministry, the priest practices and manifests clearly that the sacraments are free, and that any funds related to sacraments are donations, free-will offerings and never forced or obligatory.

In regard to the celebration of Mass, the priest knows and follows the guidelines and directions in the General Instruction on the Roman Missal. He carefully prepares the Sunday liturgy, planning, gathering together and working with the various ministers including the choir, the servers, lay readers, ushers, and ministers of Communion. In his own role as the presider, the priest strives "to serve God and the people with dignity and humility; by his bearing and by the way he recites the words of the liturgy he should communicate to the faithful a sense of the living presence of Christ" 16

16 _GIRM_, no. 93
The priest knows that one of his major challenges, as an ordained ministerial priest, is the responsibility of stirring up, encouraging, and empowering the priestly nature and gifts given to all of God's people in Baptism. He constantly reminds the faithful of their priestly dignity: "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9).

**Prophetic Ministry**

19. The Congregation for the Clergy describes priests as “Ministers of the Word 'Nomine Christi et Nomine Ecclesiae'.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that "Bishops, with priests as co-workers, have as their first task to preach the Gospel of God to all men." From these statements, it follows that priests should apply themselves assiduously to the ministry of the Word.

The homily is the pre-eminent proclamation of the word of God by priests. It should be taken very seriously. Priests should see to it that their homilies are adequate in content and delivery, so that the People of God who participate at liturgical celebrations are well nourished with the word of God. They need to keep constantly in mind the words of Pope St. Gregory the Great, when he said: 'For it is a fact that anyone entering the priesthood accepts the office of herald and must prepare the way for the terrible judgment of the one who follows. If then, the priest neglects his preaching, what sort of warning cry can he, a dumb herald, give? That is why the Holy Spirit settled on the first religious leaders in the form of tongues: because those whom he fills he fills with his eloquence.'

Priests should see the opportunity to preach at weekly and especially Sunday Masses as a graced opportunity to share the gospel with large numbers of Christ's faithful, as one of the

17 Congregation for the Clergy, DMLP
18 CCC, no. 888, PO, no. 4, cf. Mk 16:15
19 St. Gregory the Great, Regula Pastoralis
glories of priestly life. They should respond with well-prepared homilies, that relate the Scripture readings to the life and circumstances of the people. Not infrequently, these homilies should issue challenging and prophetic words to the people. Priests should preach with compassion and gentleness, yet not lessening the power and challenge of the Gospel.

Priests should exercise the ministry of proclamation also by catechetical instruction. They are the premier catechists in their parishes or other areas of apostolate. Even if other persons, notably catechists, assist them in providing catechetical instruction, priests should themselves regularly engage in the training of those others as well as in direct instruction of catechumens. Ongoing catechesis by the priest is a pre-requisite for deepening the faith of believers within the ecclesial community.

Spiritual direction is another avenue for the proclamation of the word. Priests should make themselves available to give spiritual direction to members of the faithful whenever they require it. Proclamation of the word can also be done by formation of the laity. Priests should endeavour to provide such formation by means of programmes of bible study, doctrinal instructions, seminars, workshops and regular retreats for the faithful who are entrusted to their care.

Beyond verbal proclamation, due attention should be given to proclamation by means of the written word. This can be done through the medium of newspapers, magazines, journals, tracts and even the weekly parish bulletin. Priests should avail themselves of these media too in proclaiming the Word of God.

Nowadays, everyone appreciates the power and the reach of the electronic media of radio, television and the computer in the dissemination of information. Priests should equip themselves to use those media for the dissemination of the Good News, whenever opportunities present themselves to do so.
Much of the time and energy of the priest is caught up in fundraising and in various building projects. It is important that amid all these activities, the priest puts the priority where it belongs, on people, recalling that the people are the Church. He also recalls that his first and major responsibility is to preach the Word. "It is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishops to preach the Gospel of God to all."\(^{20}\) Priests should strive earnestly to always match their words with their actions. Their lives should be gospels that people can read. An individual priest's life may well turn out to be the first gospel that some people will read or maybe even the only gospel that they will ever read. That is why it is essential that each priest makes of his life a veritable gospel that people read and be edified by.

**King/Servant Role**

20. The king/servant ministry of the priest is the ministry of shepherd, the ministry of leadership of the People of God. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a "sacred power" which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all."\(^{21}\)

Priests need to constantly remind themselves of the Christian understanding of leadership as service. Therefore, the headship, leadership, authority of priests must be one of service, not one of domination or monopoly. That is what Jesus said in Mark 10:41-45, Matthew 20:24-27 and Luke 22:24-27. That is what he showed when he washed the feet of his disciples, and said, "I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you." (John 13:15)

The priest has a real sense of zeal and service. He is eager, ready, and willing to respond to the legitimate needs of his

\(^{20}\) PO, no. 4  
\(^{21}\) CCC, no. 1551.
people, for example, in visiting the sick in homes and hospitals. He is available at the rectory to meet, greet, assist parishioners and strangers. He is available for confessions, in addition to regularly scheduled confessions. He is approachable, hospitable, and welcoming - at the same time maintaining legitimate privacy and time for himself. He ministers with an attitude of reverent, respectful listening to the voices and struggles of his people.

The priest desires to be among his people, accompanying them on their journey. He enjoys being with them. He is not separate or standing above them, or looking down upon them in an arrogant or high-handed manner. In solidarity with his people in their living conditions, he sees the Church as a community of disciples, learning together, growing in faith, hope, and love. "They should try to get to know them in the situations of their daily life, as a shepherd knows his own flock."  

Canon 529, #1, presents a powerful description of the activities of a parish priest: 'So that he may fulfill his office of pastor diligently, the parish priest is to strive to know the faithful entrusted to him. He is therefore to visit their families, sharing in their cares and anxieties and, in a special way, their sorrows, comforting them in the Lord. If in certain matters, they are found wanting, he is prudently to correct them. He is to help the sick and especially the dying in great charity, solicitously restoring them with the sacraments and commending their souls to God. He is to be especially diligent in seeking out the poor, the suffering, the lonely, those who are exiled from their homeland, and those burdened with special difficulties'.  

The priest strives to put into practice the Church's preferential option or love for the poor, so that the poor are seen as being at the center of the Church and the pastoral activity of the Church. He should "know the essential elements for a theology of liberation in  

---

22 Vat. II, PO, no. 3  
23 PGDP, no. 5  
24 CIC, C. 529, #1
conformity with the magisterium of the Church.”

He leads and guides the local Church in concern for justice and in the works of charity. This option for the poor manifests itself in a special way in concern for the handicapped and the unemployed, for migrants and especially for those afflicted with HIV/AIDS and families affected by AIDS. He upholds and stands with and for the Church's attitude of respect for life at all stages.

The priest tries to reach out and prayerfully extend the healing power of Jesus Christ to the sick and the troubled. Celebrations of Holy Mass, and the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick demonstrate Jesus Christ's concern for the sick and troubled. He, or specially appointed Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, regularly bring the Eucharist to the sick in homes and in hospitals.

The priest is a friend and guide of the young. He holds a special concern for the youth who are so often overlooked, unemployed, not married, and discouraged in Nigeria. As we see in EIA no. 115, youth "embark on adult life with very little enthusiasm for a present riddled with frustrations and they look with still less hope to a future which to them seems sad and somber." The priest challenges the youth to participate in and lead programs in catechesis, evangelization, justice and peace. If there are educational institutions in his parish - governmental, private or Catholic - he takes the opportunity to visit them and make the Church present through his own visitations or through working with Catholic teachers in those institutions. He supports youth organizations such as the Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON), National Federation of Catholic Students (NFCS), and Young Catholic Students (YCS).

As a man of peace, a peace maker and reconciler, the priest is able to move among and serve a variety of peoples, and lead others

---

25 PGDP, no. 9
26 Cf. EIA, no. 116
27 PGDP, no. 16
28 PGDP, no. 12
to peaceful, non-violent solutions to family and neighborhood problems.

With the African Church so beautifully described as 'the family of God on mission', he tries to foster the positive qualities of Christian family life both in the parish house and in the parish community. He fosters Christian marriage among his people, and makes a special effort to regularize the marriages of those in traditional unions.

In a nation seeking to solidify a democratic culture, the priest reflects and encourages democratic principles in his parish or apostolate. He promotes active participation, sharing of views and serious collaborative efforts, while always keeping in mind that the Church is a communion and not in itself a democracy. His leadership exemplifies service and responsiveness to the needs and aspirations of his people, rather than any authoritarian or self-serving attitude.

He encourages, supports and helps train and empower the laity in their specific role and mission in the world of politics, culture, economy, etc. With the Catechism of the Catholic Church, he sees that "the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood." He encourages the presence and leadership of women in the life of the Church in virtue of the values and gifts proper to womanhood.

21. **(C) Relationships**

*Sense of the presbyterium.* The priest maintains and fosters a spirit of fraternity, solidarity, friendship, and special hospitality to his brother priests who are often alone, tired and exhausted. He spends time and recreation with his fellow priests. If possible, there is a guest room in the priest’s house, ready to warmly receive visiting priests. If he is aware of a priest in

---

29 *Cf EIA, no. 90*
30 *CCC, no. 1547*
31 *PGDP, no. 14*
difficulty or temptation, a priest that is too much and too often on his own, he reaches out to support, assist and possibly challenge that priest. If need be, he elicits the support and help of the Bishop in assisting that priest.

In personal relationships and in ministry, the priest exhibits openness, honesty and transparency. What Pope John Paul II said to the bishops during their Ad Limina visit (April, 2002) applies equally to each and every priest: "Dear Brothers, Shepherds of God's Holy People, it is of utmost importance that openness, honesty, and transparency should always be the hallmark of everything that the Church does, in all her spiritual, educational and social undertakings, as well as in every aspect of her administration."

A spirit of collaboration is manifest in his relationships with the bishop, other priests, religious, laity, with men and women, and with seminarians.

A support and help to his Bishop or ordinary. In the first place, the priest should be able to collaborate with his Bishop in a spirit of loyal and sincere communion. Through his fidelity to the gospel and Church teaching, his dedication to the pastoral ministry, and in a cooperative spirit, he makes the Bishop's ministry all the more easy. He is ready and willing to accept transfers, always ready to do the will of the one who sends him.

He should be open to collaboration with other members of the local presbyterium, and indeed all priests in fraternal solidarity. When two or more priests are employed in the same parish, "it is advisable that they live in the same house and form a single community."32 As this document explains, "community life means not merely living physically together, but sharing on the spiritual, pastoral, and human levels. Thus, priests who form a community should pray together..."33 Priests in the same parish house should examine ways in which they can recreate and dine together. Such

32 PGDP, no. 26, See also EIA, no. 97
33 Ibid
common life extends also to planning and evaluating apostolic activities, administration of the parish, including financial administration.

It is particularly incumbent on the priest that he collaborates with members of religious institutes in a spirit of fraternal charity and genuine respect. He esteems the place, role and contribution of those in Consecrated Life to the growth and mission of the universal Church and the local diocese and church.

Priests should always be ready to engage in collaborative ministry with the lay faithful. They should cultivate the attributes that make for good human relations, such as: respect for others (including one's subordinates and employees); concern for their welfare; generosity; openness; truthfulness; ability to listen; ability to engage in dialogue; ability to take advice and correction; able to delegate functions and responsibilities; basic trust; humility and, above all, charity towards everyone. On the negative side, priests should strive not to be arrogant, rude, selfish, opinionated, ill-mannered, ill-tempered, abusive, lazy, disrespectful, or partial in their judgments and decisions. The positive attributes match Paul's description of love in 1 Cor.13:4-7 and his admonition in Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brothers, let your minds be filled with everything that is true, everything that is honourable, everything that is upright and pure, and everything that we love and admire with whatever is good and praiseworthy”. Priests ought to be able to see themselves as the "brothers" whom Paul is addressing in this admonition, and be guided by it in their exercise of the ministry of leadership in the Church

The priest should be careful not to lord it over anyone, or usurp roles that belong properly to persons outside Holy Orders. He should rather safeguard and promote their exercise of those roles within the norms set forth by the ecclesiastical authority. He promotes collaboration, and thus enjoys working with the parish
pastoral council and parish financial committee.\textsuperscript{34} He is appreciative of their contribution and assistance to the life and mission of the parish.

He strives to oversee and delegate work and authority to the assistant priest or priests, to the religious and laity, to leaders of parish societies. He thus empowers them in their particular contributions to the building up of the local Church.

Promoter of vocations.\textsuperscript{35} The priest has an indispensable role here. He will accompany, guide, challenge, and direct youth, who exhibit signs of a possible vocation to the priesthood and religious life. He welcomes seminarians during holidays and assists and encourages them in their times of pastoral experience. He supports and gladly works with seminarians, vocation directors and seminary officials in writing reports. In all of this, through example and action, he nurtures vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

The pastoral life of priests can be helped in no small measure by a system of apprenticeship, whereby newly-ordained priests are attached to more experienced priests for a period of time, before being assigned to take care of parishes or other areas of apostolate on their own. It is a well-known fact that seminary formation alone does not fully equip priests for their future life and ministry. For one thing, life in the seminary is not exactly like living and working in the world outside the seminary walls. The demands and challenges are not the same. For these reasons, it is necessary to fill out the seminary formation with formation on the job, when newly ordained priests will learn from those who have spent an appreciable number of years in the field before them.

In accord with his pastoral work and personal interest, the priest is encouraged to actively participate in associations such as the Catholic Theological Association of Nigeria (CATHAN), the Canon Law Society of Nigeria, and biblical associations. He also

\textsuperscript{34} PGDP, no. 10
\textsuperscript{35} PGDP, no. 13
takes part in other associations of priests, following the guidelines of the Local Ordinary.

The priest plays a crucial role in the missionary activity and responsibility of the Church, by continually reaching out in mission to the lapsed, the unchurched and to new fields. Priests should be frontier apostles, insofar as the "evangelization of non-Christians who are present in the territory of a diocese or parish is entrusted, as a primary responsibility, to the respective pastor with his community." While being totally committed to the ministry of the local Church, he remains aware of the universal Church and its mission, and fosters this awareness in the local community.

In regard to adherents of African traditional religions, he respects the traditions, the cultural heritage and values of the people and encourages the critical discernment, evaluation and utilization of those traditions in the life of the parish. This may well involve study and direct interaction with adherents of those traditions.

Touched by the scandal of disunity, and upholding and standing for the truth and strength of the Catholic tradition, he is ready and willing to reach out and enter into dialogue with separated Christian brothers and sisters. The priest is therefore, ecumenically-minded. This of course presumes that he has an up-to-date grasp and understanding of the faith and tradition of the Catholic Church.

Especially now in Nigeria, "commitment to dialogue must also embrace all Muslims of good will." Such dialogue will avoid the one extreme of denying the significant differences between the theology of Catholicism and Islam, and the other extreme of believing that there is no truth or grace found in the

36 PGDP, no. 4
37 PGDP, no. 4
38 Cf. EIA, no. 67
39 Cf. EIA, no. 65
40 Cf. EIA, no. 66
Islamic tradition. He searches for ways to collaborate with those of other traditions in the great causes of humanity, such as peace, justice, development and human rights. As was recently stated in Rome at a meeting of leaders of different religious traditions, "to be religious today is to be inter-religious".

The priest cultivates warm, healthy friendships and good adult relationships with priests and laymen and women. These relationships do not become exclusive or secretive. He respects boundaries in these personal and/or professional relationships. He is at home, at peace, comfortable with his celibacy, even as he experiences the sacrifice and the difficulties it entails. He meets and ministers in an appropriate place or setting, and at appropriate times. While the human experience of intimacy is important, and can serve as a pathway to God, this does not involve touching or gestures that properly belong to courtship, engagement, and marriage. He is not overly inquisitive in counseling, or overly revealing of his own feelings and emotions. He does not cross the emotional, physical, spiritual or sexual limits of someone to whom he ministers. He never initiates behaviour that is sexually stimulating and refuses it, if another initiates it. Only in the appropriate context does he share deep personal feelings. Affection in ministry is never expressed in an unethical or unprofessional way, for example, a tactile way. He is prudent in showing expressions of regard and in giving and receiving gifts.

The priest is a person of integrity. His conduct is open and honest, respectful of others and free from any form of deception or manipulation. This involves avoiding all discrimination and harassment, whether physical or verbal. His love for his people is universal and admits of no favoritism or preference based upon sex, economic status, state of origin or tribal/ethnic identity. "There does not exist among you Jew or Greek, slave or freeman, male or female. All are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Unity through Baptism is deeper and more significant than ethnic or cultural differences.

41 PGDP, no. 18
22. SUMMARY: Reflection on and examination of the identity and mission of the priest in Nigeria, and the qualities needed in those priests, reveals the many difficult challenges facing each and every priest. To successfully meet these challenges, there is constantly demanded of the priest an ordered spiritual life, a deep spirituality. It also calls for solid and ongoing formation. To these topics we now turn.
SPIRITUAL LIFE OF PRIESTS:
LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

23. “By sacramental consecration, the priest is configured to Jesus Christ as head and shepherd of the Church and he is endowed with a 'spiritual power' which is a share in the authority with which Jesus guides the Church through his Spirit”42 This text reminds us that every priest is a priest of the universal Church, and as such, there are universal or common elements in the spirituality of each and every diocesan priest. At the same time, we joyfully acknowledge the witness of the particular charisms and rich traditions of spirituality that are found in the many religious congregations in Nigeria.

24. Because of his special ministry and the context of his life, the diocesan priest has a distinct spirituality, an apostolic spirituality, to support and carry out his mission. He needs this spirituality. Without such a spirituality, continually forming and informing his life, he becomes a mere functionary, rather than one called by God to serve in the Lord's vineyard. If this occurs, the people are then spiritually starved and disappointed in their pastor. Their faith and level of spirituality will find it hard to rise above that of the priest. The priest himself is the one primarily responsible for his own life in the Spirit: “...the care for the spiritual life of the priest should be felt as a joyful duty on the part of the priest himself, and also as a right of the faithful, who seek in him, consciously or not, the man of God, the counselor, the mediator of peace, the faithful and prudent friend, the sure guide

42 PDV, no. 21
to confide in during the more difficult moments in life to find encouragement and security.”43

25. All over the world and from time immemorial, priests have been looked upon as holy people or simply as "Men of God." That is, they are seen and perceived as persons in touch with God. They are thus able and willing to speak of God and of their experience of God with the people they serve. Priests have also been justifiably seen as men of prayer. What that means in concrete terms is that they should be striving to "live in familiar and constant companionship with the Father, through Christ his Son, in the Holy Spirit." They should be looking for Christ in many places: “...in faithful meditation on God's word, in active communion with the most holy mysteries of the Church, especially in the Eucharist and the Divine Office, in the bishop who sends them and in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor, the young, the sick, the sinful and the unbelieving.44

This vision and ideal of Catholic priesthood can only be realised by priests who actively, consciously and deliberately cultivate a deep liturgical and personal prayer life.

The Context of Priestly Spirituality in Nigeria

26. Pope John Paul II, in his address to the Nigerian bishops during their Ad Limina visit in April 2002, encouraged the bishops succinctly: "...ensure an ever more complete and permanent formation for your priests." In strong language, he emphasized that “the priesthood must never be seen as a means for improving one's lot in life or in terms of gaining prestige. Your lives and those of your priests should reflect an authentic evangelical poverty and detachment from the things and attitudes of the world, and the value of celibacy as a complete gift of self to

43 DMLP, no. 39
44 See Vat. II, PO, no. 5 for details, cf.DMLP, nos. 39-40
the Lord and his Church must be carefully safeguarded. Behaviour which might give scandal must be carefully avoided, and you yourselves must diligently investigate accusations of any such behaviour, taking firm steps to correct it where it is found to exist”.

While the period of priestly formation, in accord with Vatican Documents, is long, some priests leave the seminary without any real interiorization of the formation given them. In the disorder of parish life, their spiritual life then disintegrates. They do not keep a regular confessor or soul friend, and as a result lose focus in the priesthood. Consequently, many regrettable digressions enter their lives, both material and sensual. These concern and shock the laity, and, in some cases, the priest behaves as if these digressions are normal in priestly life. Spiritual numbness takes over. It becomes extremely difficult for the priest to recover any of the ideals of his first fervour. Indeed he might easily treat these ideals with scorn and see them as naive.

Older priests often seem unwilling or unable to journey with younger priests. Oftentimes a lack of community and shared ministry, or a lack of dialogue concerning the apostolate, frustrates the young priest and even makes him cynical about the pastoral training given to him.

In the past, the problem for the Catholic Church in Nigeria was to attract, form, and ordain sufficient diocesan priests. Today the problem is the quality of the diocesan priesthood as it is lived. Each diocese has its own spirit or atmosphere. There is a growing danger of clerical arrogance, of materialism in an impoverished society, and of brazen disregard for the strategy that sustains a celibate life. Consequently, members of the laity are more and more disedified by some Church leaders. When the laity are aware of the questionable conduct of a priest, that priest in turn is beholden to the laity, and loses his freedom, because of fear of revelation of his misdeeds. Media and video houses are beginning to search and reveal some of the greatest lapses in priestly life and ministry.
In regard to the exercise of authority, a priest's leadership, whether an authoritarian or servant model, is easily read by watching his celebration of the liturgy, his preaching, and his manner of dealing with those who approach him for pastoral reasons.

Most dioceses have financial regulations and guidelines about parish finances and the priest's own remuneration. The priest who knowingly and openly flouts these is exposing himself as a crude and worldly person.

Ministry cannot be exercised without empathy and a certain degree of intimacy. Celibate intimacy must observe definite boundaries and exercise professional skills, both personal and interpersonal. A celibate needs to monitor continually the drive of his emotions and fantasies. Intimacy in pastoral ministry always excludes touch or expressions of affection that are only appropriate in courtship or marriage. A priest must recognize himself as a vulnerable human being. "In the eyes of people and whether we like it or not, celibacy is the test of integrity for the Catholic priesthood". Celibacy demands that the priest integrate his sexuality into his spirituality, in the never-ending offering of his person to the Lord.

**Essential Elements of Priestly Spirituality**

27. While the elements listed below are not exhaustive, and while no one priest may fully have all of these elements, it remains true that for priesthood to be effective and satisfying, most of these elements must be found and practiced in the life of the priest.

They should cherish the Holy Eucharist and celebrate it often, even daily, since it is the very source and summit of the whole Christian life. But priests should be careful to always celebrate the Eucharist with exemplary devotion and decorum, mindful of St. Paul's severe admonition: “Whoever... eats the bread or drinks

---

45 *The Igbo Catholic Priest, no. 36*
46 *Vatican II, OT, no. 8*
the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord." (I Cor. 11:27).

The Divine Office, the Liturgy of the Hours or the Prayer of the Church has been the constant companion of priests in the Tradition of the Catholic Church. It should always remain so. Every priest should therefore be faithful to praying the Office daily and, as far as possible, with due regard to the hour in which each prayer is to be said. This is another means by which priests sanctify the Church.

At the heart of priestly apostolic spirituality lies a commitment to an ordered life of contemplative or meditative prayer. This prayer pattern enables the priest to be a person of prayer and a leader of prayer. It bonds him to the Eucharist and the sacramental ministry. This daily prayer and consequent sense of union with God is the source of his zeal and enthusiasm, and of his personal moral refinement. It supports that sense of vocation to commit oneself generously to the people and to imitate in his lifestyle the solemn liturgy he celebrates. Finally, it is the mainstay of his celibacy for the Kingdom and enables that "total gift of themselves in their mission and in full communion with their Bishop." This life of prayer cannot be haphazard or just a matter of goodwill. A strategy is needed which creates time and space for prayer (for example, a minimum of thirty minutes every day) within a busy, and often chaotic parish life and ministry.

It is only by fidelity to this kind of prayer that the priest cultivates a deep, personal devotion, love, friendship and relationship with Jesus Christ, the High Priest, the Good Shepherd. Jesus is found in the people he serves, found in the Scriptures, and in a most special way, found in the Blessed Sacrament. The priest's personal relationship to Jesus is manifest not only through the celebration of the Eucharist, but also in devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. In this devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, the priest becomes a model for the faithful. 

48 - 49 EIA, no. 97
50 DMLP, no. 50
This daily prayer must be supported and renewed by the annual retreat, by faithful attendance at the monthly days of recollection and by spiritual reading.

A regular, positive relationship with a spiritual director/confessor/soul friend must be in place. If the priest himself practices spiritual direction and regular confession, he will be all the more effective in directing others, and in celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation. "Spiritual direction contributes in no small way to the ongoing formation of priests. It is a well-tried means and has lost none of its value. It fosters and maintains faithfulness and generosity in the carrying out of the priestly ministry." Priests should have frequent and timely recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Thus, they are not only to be faithful ministers of the sacrament, but its beneficiaries as well, since, as the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us, priests too are subject to weakness, and must offer sacrifice for their own sins as well as for those of the people. (Heb. 5:3) There is also the testimony of John to the effect that "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [But] If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John I :8-9). So too, "if a priest were no longer to go to confession or properly confess his sins, his priestly being and his priestly action would feel its effects very soon, and this would also be noticed by the community of which he was the pastor."

The nightly examination of consciousness (which may take the form of journaling) becomes an integral part of the life of the priest. In this prayerful review of the day, the priest, in addition to the review of actions and activities, reviews how God has personally touched his life, or how and where God has been absent. One can, for example, review the dominant feeling or

---

51 PDV, no. 81
52 See also, DMLP, 53-54, and Canon Law 664, on frequent confession, meaning normally once a month
53 PDV, no. 26
emotion of the day as one retires, and through that reflection sense the presence or absence of God's guiding Spirit.

The priest who is a member of a religious order/congregation takes the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience at his profession. The diocesan priest commits himself to celibacy and obedience at his diaconate ordination. The binding force of these evangelical counsels on both categories of priests is the same. The diocesan priest is no less bound to celibate chastity and obedience than his religious counterpart. While the diocesan priest does not expressly vow or promise poverty, he is, nonetheless, expected to embrace its spirit, in imitation of the One he serves, who had nowhere to lay his head (Matt. 8:20). Consequently, neither he nor his religious counterpart should pursue crass materialism or indulge any acquisitive tendencies he may have. His life style should reflect the way of Jesus, a way of service and availability. “A priest could hardly be a true servant and minister of his brothers if he were excessively worried with his comfort and well-being”\(^{54}\)

Jesus became obedient unto death (Phil. 2:8). In imitation of Jesus, the priest remains open, available, and responsive to the will of God as manifest through his legitimate superiors. He thus remains in all ways and at all times in the service of Christ and the Church.

The spiritual life of priests is rounded out and completed by a sincere and filial devotion to the person of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is Mother both of the Church and of individual Christians. Her Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, made her so when he entrusted her to the care of the disciple whom he loved. At the same time, He entrusted the disciple to her care while hanging on the cross of our salvation: "Woman, here is your son. Here is your Mother." (John 19:26 & 27) But priests, who are held to be 'alii Christi,' can justifiably claim Mary to be their Mother in an altogether special way. They should see in her a dependable

\(^{54}\) DMLP, no. 67
support and mainstay of their vocation, and have frequent recourse to her in prayer. In this regard, the rosary, in particular, should be part of the daily spiritual exercises of every priest.

Priests should see in the clerical garb an aspect of their spirituality. While it may be true that "the hood does not make the monk", it is equally true that the monk should not dispense with the hood altogether. Each time priests wear their clerical garb, they themselves are reminded of the sacredness of their person and their calling. At the same time, all those who see them - even non-Christians - are led to a recognition of the same. Clerical garb should be seen as an outward sign of the sacred status of the person and vocation of the Catholic priest. It is also a sign that the priest is at home with his priesthood. He is positive about it. By happily and publicly wearing clerical garb, priests are witnessing to the person of Christ the High Priest, and at the same time, by that very fact, proclaiming His Good News. They should wear the clerical garb also whenever they are engaged in any distinctly pastoral activity, such as visiting the sick, counseling, spiritual direction, teaching catechism, and the like. Even when they are engaged in activities that are social in character, such as visiting their parishioners, attending wedding receptions, naming ceremonies, priests should take pride and feel at home in wearing the clerical garb. Priests should, however, refrain from taking any undue advantage of the clerical garb. They should not use it to gain favours that they are not entitled to, like receiving preferential treatment when they go to transact business with other people.

The life of priests is such that they often have to be alone, on their own, away from all other human beings, including their fellow priests. Such is the experience of every priest at the close of the day, when he retires to his room for the night. It is also the experience of many priests who are assigned to remote parishes all by themselves. Such situations can pose a serious challenge to priests unless they have learnt to cultivate a spirit of solitude, of aloneness, that is not aloofness.
Priests, therefore, should learn to cherish silence, recollection, and not always go in search of company to fill their periods of solitude. They should, in addition, cultivate healthy pastimes that they can engage in on their own, such as reading, writing, music, art, even gardening and farming. They should refrain from filling their days with watching movies, many of which are often of dubious value.

SUMMARY
28. The spiritual life of priests requires that they embrace the Church with filial love. They should be so committed to the Church that they, as it were, carry her with them wherever they go. Every priest should be able to make his own the words of the character Anouilh in T .S. Elliot's Beckett, "I have rolled up my sleeves and taken the Church upon my back - I shall never put her down."

A document from the Congregation for the Clergy\textsuperscript{55} makes crystal clear how indispensable a deep spirituality is for the priest to minister effectively today: “Pastoral ministry is a fascinating undertaking, yet arduous, open to misunderstanding and marginalisation, and especially today, to fatigue, challenge, isolation, and at times, solitude. To rise to the challenge continuously presented him by the secularist mentality, the priest must make every effort to protect the absolute primacy of his spiritual life, his continuous presence with Christ and his generous pastoral charity, intensifying his communion with all men and women, and above all, with other priests.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{55} DMLP, no. 37
Two points underpin all that we say about ongoing formation. First, the priestly vocation and priestly ministry are grounded in grace. Secondly, priestly ministry is a form of service in the Church, service made possible by that same grace of God. Unless these two points are kept in mind, the priest will lose his identity and fail in his priestly mission. Even as the foundations of priestly life and mission lie in the freely given grace of God, we know that grace calls forth a free human response on the part of the priest. For this reason, the priest has to undergo years of formation before being ordained. For the same reason, ongoing formation remains essential if the priest is to achieve his mission and find personal satisfaction and peace in his priestly ministry. The priest, after the completion of his seminary training and after ordination, must assume the primary responsibility for his own continued formation and growth, relying always upon the grace of God.

Context - The Modern World of Change

Based upon its experience over the centuries and especially today, the Church calls for such ongoing formation. Reflection on our own experience of change in the Church and in the larger society will also convince us of the need for ongoing formation. No executive or leader today can simply rely on the tools and training of the previous generation.

Rapid and widespread transformations and a secularized social fabric typical of the contemporary world, are what make

Cf. PDV, no. 79
unavoidable, the priest's duty of being adequately prepared. His own priestly identity and his commitment to an effective proclamation of the Gospel demands it. To this grave duty corresponds the specific right of the faithful, who feel the effects of priests' solid formation and sanctity in a definite way.  

31. In the life of the priest, there must be developed the habits of constant study, reading, prayerful discussion and time given to personal development and growth. Unless he is convinced of this need for ongoing formation, it is fruitless and self-defeating to believe that his priesthood will be solid, and that the grace of God alone will suffice to carry him forward as an effective minister of the Gospel.

Priests of today increasingly exercise their ministry among people who are more adult, more educated, more critical and better informed than many people among whom they exercised their ministry in the past. Members of worshipping congregations are people immersed in a world of ideological pluralism, where Christianity is exposed to many interpretations and suspicions common to a culture becoming ever more alien to the faith. It will be impossible for priests to serve the faith and the ecclesial community effectively without sound theological foundation begun in the seminary and carried on beyond.

Of course, not only the personal growth and satisfaction of the priest is at stake, but equally or more importantly, the right of the baptized faithful to have priests who are effective ministers of the Gospel.

Ongoing formation is therefore a right/duty of the priest and imparting it is a right/duty of the Church. The priest has received, as a demand of the gift connected with ordination, the right to have the necessary help from the Church in order to carry out his

58 DMLP, no. 69
service effectively and in a holy way.\textsuperscript{60}

Ongoing formation, like the initial formation offered in seminaries, must be integral formation, and thus must touch the four levels of priestly formation, namely, the human, the spiritual, the intellectual and the pastoral.

**Human Aspect Of Ongoing Formation**

32. To carry out his priestly mission, the priest must present himself with an abundance of human virtues. He must, for example, practice goodness of heart, patience, kindness, courtesy, love for justice, even-mindedness and truthfulness to his word. These virtues must be reflected in his social conduct and in human relationships.\textsuperscript{61}

The priest, sharing in the King/Servant role of Jesus Christ, must manifest the qualities of a leader. He leads not by dominating or controlling, but by service. This attitude does not come at once or automatically. We need to pray, reflect and examine how our priestly ministry echoes the servant model of Jesus Christ.

Some priests live in a parish by themselves, while others live with another priest or priests, or deacon. Whatever the case, the priest is never totally alone. He is a member of the presbyterium. He looks for opportunities to share experiences, to grow together, through interaction with peers, and with younger and older priests.

33. There is always room for growth in interpersonal skills, in leadership and listening skills, in management skills, in one's ability to work with groups, large and small. The priest should avail himself of workshops in these areas, as well as private reading. Growth in the above areas at the personal and social level will come about from the grace of God, but also through the efforts and initiative of the individual priest.

\textsuperscript{60} DMLP, no. 72
\textsuperscript{61} See Vat. II, PO, number 3
Spiritual Aspect of Ongoing Formation

34. Conversion to Jesus Christ is never fixed and final. It is an on-going process of transformation. The priest must continually review the concrete strategy and plan of his life in the Spirit, especially at the time of the annual retreat. Through conversations with his spiritual director, he will evaluate his growth as to how much he is putting on the mind and heart of Jesus Christ.

He might well, at the time of the annual retreat or on a day of recollection, read and review how Canon Law describes the priesthood. For example Book II, Ch. III, THE OBLIGATIONS AND RIGHTS OF CLERICS (Can 273-89), and Book II, Ch. VI on PARISHES, PARISH PRIESTS AND ASSISTANT PRIESTS, (Can. 515-552, especially Can 528-29).

The priest can profit much by reading annually the recently updated General Instruction of the Roman Missal. In this way, he can be more sure that his presiding and guiding the Eucharistic celebrations conform to the guidelines of the Church. This will help assure that he faithfully and prayerfully gathers God's people and celebrates the Sacred Liturgy with the holiness, dignity and reverence befitting that celebration. So too, by reading annually the introduction to the Breviary and the Lectionary, he will be reminded of other priestly responsibilities and opportunities.

Intellectual Aspect Of Ongoing Formation

35. Reading and study does not end with the conferral of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Effective ministry today must go together with the habit of reading and with the intelligent use of the media.

The priest should be able to converse, teach and preach on the many new issues facing the Church and the Catholic laity. These include bioethics, cloning, artificial intelligence, the new expanding universe, ecological concerns, urbanization, the impact of modernity and the meaning of globalization, the impact

62 PDV, no. 81
and attraction of new sects and new religious movements, the values of Islam, the international emphasis upon human rights and democracy, the use of the new media of communications. All these should be in addition to keeping up with developments in Scripture, Liturgy, Canon Law, Ecumenism and the Social Teaching of the Church. As Canon Law indicates, the priest must be familiar with humanistic and philosophical themes "linked to the sacred sciences, particularly insofar as they benefit the exercise of the pastoral ministry" (Canon 279 # 3).

"The very situation of the Church today demands increasingly that teachers be truly able to face the complexity of the times and that they be in a position to face competently, with clarity and deep reasoning, the questions about meaning which are put by the people of today, questions which can only receive a full and definitive reply in the Gospel of Jesus Christ."  

36. The Second Vatican Council had the following to say on the subject of intellectual formation of priests: “Since in our times human culture and the sacred sciences are making new advances, priests are urged to develop their knowledge of divine and human affairs aptly and uninterruptedly. In this way they will prepare themselves to undertake discussions with their contemporaries”.

37. The age we are living in is witnessing a literal explosion of knowledge. Here in Nigeria, priests have to deal with a growing number of highly educated and well-informed people within their congregations and the wider society. An ever-increasing number of the Laity are becoming highly knowledgeable, even in Sacred Scripture and other theological and ecclesiastical disciplines. These things pose a serious challenge for today’s priests. They need to constantly develop themselves intellectually to cope with that challenge. The Laity in particular still look up to their priests

\[63\] PDV, no. 58
\[64\] PO, no. 19
to provide leadership and guidance at least on theological and ecclesiastical matters, and with very good reason. They expect, and rightly so, that whenever they come to their priests for explanations of difficult theological issues and guidance on complex moral issues, they will go away satisfied. Priests can meet those expectations only if they "develop their knowledge of divine and human affairs aptly and uninterruptedly."

**Pastoral Aspect Of Ongoing Formation**

38. Apart from the annual retreat, there should be seminars, workshops, conferences in dioceses or ecclesiastical provinces for the benefit and enrichment of the priests. These might focus on pastoral issues such as abortion, euthanasia, Christian marriage, women studies, pastoral care to those with HIV/AIDS, the social teaching of the Church, ministry to youth and liturgical practice. Complex issues of justice, of the outreach of the Church to the poor, and the civic responsibilities of Catholics also call for serious study and reflection. In all of these, the priest is rightly expected to be competent and knowledgeable.

39. Finally, as we mentioned under the Human Aspect of Formation, there is always room for improvement in our counseling skills, our preaching ability, and our interpersonal and social skills.

**Well- Planned Sabbaticals**

40. In the course of their pastoral ministrations, priests are often victims of overwork and physical exhaustion, of psychological fatigue and discouragement. There may well arise in them a loss of focus as to who they are and what they are about. Some priests do not readily admit that they may suffer from some of these ailments. Others admit the problem and need help, but do not receive that help. Sabbatical periods, times for renewal, refreshment and updating, should be mandatory. While many
varied activities may be part of these sabbaticals, in their essence they are periods to have more time with the Lord Jesus Christ, freed from heavy pastoral responsibilities. One highly challenging and enriching program is that of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).

Monasteries, religious communities, retreat centers and study centers are possible venues for sabbaticals. For some it could be a period to update oneself in theology or another subject. It must be made abundantly clear that the sabbatical period is not simply vacation time, nor is it a strict right. It is the responsibility of the bishop with his consultors to arrange sabbaticals for his priests. Generally, the number of years that qualify a priest for a sabbatical should be part of a diocesan policy. Specific cases of urgent need should be discussed with the bishop.

Of course, there must be the right motivation for sabbaticals and special studies. The priest must be personally committed to, and convinced of, the need and advantage of a sabbatical programme. He must not view it as something imposed upon him. Priests can never forget that their sabbaticals, or special studies in the sacred or secular sciences, are always for the service of the people of God within the Church. What is important is not the certificate or degree, but the improved pastoral service rendered to God's people.

**Special Studies**

41. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council prescribed thus: “... After gaining some pastoral experience, suitable priests should be chosen to pursue higher studies in universities, even abroad and especially in Rome. In this way, the young Churches will have at hand men from among the local clergy equipped with the learning and skill needed for discharging more difficult ecclesiastical duties." 65

---

65 *Vat. II, PO*
In keeping with the above conciliar teaching, the local Churches in Nigeria will continue to send some of their priests for further studies in universities and other institutions of higher learning, both at home and abroad, based on the following principles:

i  Formal Further studies are not a right for all priests.

ii  Diocesan needs will determine the kinds of further studies that priests engage in.

iii  Only priests with the requisite intellectual and personal aptitude will be sent for the kinds of studies that they are qualified and suitable to undertake.

iv  In selecting institutions where priests will study, priority will be given to institutions within Nigeria, provided that the disciplines in question are available here. In this regard, pride of place will go to the Catholic Institute of West Africa and the Catholic University of Nigeria.

v  Bishops sending priests abroad for further studies will provide adequate funding for those priests to pursue their studies with minimal difficulty and distraction.

vi  Priests who are sent abroad for further studies must ensure that they return to their home dioceses promptly on completion of their studies. In that way, the local Church will be able to benefit from the knowledge and skills they have acquired.

Summary:

42. A summary and review of the meaning and importance of ongoing formation is found in the Directory for the Life and Ministry of Priests, No. 74: “[This ongoing formation] must tend to help each priest to achieve the development of a full human personality, mature in the spirit of service to others, in whatever task he may receive; it will permit him to be intellectually prepared in the theological sciences as well as in the human sciences, insofar as they are linked with his ministry, in order to
pursue his function as witness to the faith with a greater effectiveness; that he have a deep spiritual life, nourished by intimacy with Jesus Christ and by love for the Church: and so that he may pursue his pastoral ministry with zeal and dedication.  

43. Every priest is daily challenged to find meaning and fulfillment in his ministry of service to the Church and society. In this service, he will attain the full stature of his priesthood by putting on the mind of Christ in doing the will of God. Ongoing formation, faithfully applied as described above, will contribute to the well-being of the priest and the building up of the Kingdom of God.

66 DMLP, no. 74
6

WELFARE OF PRIESTS

44. The priests of the New Testament are to be configured to Christ, the Son of Man, who had nowhere to lay his head (Matthew 8:20). Like the Twelve, they are sent out with no gold or silver or copper in their belts, no bag for the journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff (Matthew 10:9-10). Thus, whether they take an explicit vow of poverty - as do members of institutes of consecrated life - or not, they are expected to reflect in their persons and in their lifestyle the poverty of the One who called and chose them. But, as "the labourer deserves his keep" (Matthew 10: 10b), it is appropriate that adequate provision be made for the welfare and upkeep of priests in the Nigerian Church.

45. In the first place, the Code of Canon Law prescribes that clerics "deserve the remuneration that befits their condition, taking into account both the nature of their office and the conditions of time and place." The Code further stipulates, “In every diocese there is to be a special fund which collects offerings and temporal goods for the purpose of providing, in accordance with Can. 281, for the support of the clergy who serve the diocese, unless they are otherwise catered for”. In view of the above provisions of Church Law, it is desirable that all priests serving the Church in Nigeria be placed on stipends, monthly or otherwise, that enable them to take care of their personal needs, as well as meet the legitimate needs of

67 CIC, 281 #1.
68 CIC, 1274.
family members, especially their parents. As the priest reaches out in compassion and charity to those in need, especially family members, he keeps in mind that he is not owned by his family. Rather, as God's servant, he strives to fulfil the gospel imperative to leave all and follow Jesus.

Besides the stipend, it is also to be expected that adequate provisions be made for the feeding and housing of priests, as well as for transportation such as may be needed for the apostolate.

The welfare of the priest demands that he takes time off-duty for relaxation and rest. He keeps his mind and spirit alive and interesting through balanced recreation and cultivation of hobbies. One day off a week, and one month's vacation in the year are considered sacred and essential for the health and spirit of the priest. "They may take a rightful and sufficient holiday every year, for the length of time determined by general or by particular law" (Canon 283 #2)

The priest should be careful, considerate and conscientious in the maintenance and use of cars, in traveling and in being driven. Excessive speed is a danger to oneself and others. Far too many Nigerian priests have been injured or killed in motor accidents. He should take care of his personal health, through proper diet, appropriate exercise, and regular medical check-ups. Through proper precautions, some of the premature deaths of Nigerian priests might have been avoided.

46. Being human, priests are liable to fall sick or be incapacitated in one way or another. It is important that adequate provisions be made for such eventualities. Clear diocesan policies should be formulated regarding the care of priests in the event of illness, hospitalization, and/or incapacitation. It should never be the case that priests become the responsibility of their biological families when they find themselves in such conditions. That would be a scandal that calls into question our commitment to basic fraternal charity.
47. Similarly, clear diocesan policies should be formulated, and adequate provisions made, for the decent retirement of priests who can no longer engage in active apostolate by reason of either old age or incapacitation. This is in keeping with the canonical prescription that "suitable provision is to be made for such social welfare as [priests] may need in infirmity, sickness or old age." Among other things, dioceses should consider the option of erecting retirement homes that meet the peculiar needs of priest retirees, while not being segregated from the still active clergy and lay faithful of the local Church. Care should be taken that such retirement facilities are homes, rather than institutions that can become all too impersonal in character.

48. When priests die, it is the responsibility of the Church to accord them a befitting burial. Each local Church should discharge this act of piety with due care and fidelity. The final resting place of priests should be characterised by utmost decorum. To this end, it is desirable that dioceses create cemeteries or sections of cemeteries for the interment of their deceased clergy and religious.

---

69 EIA, no. 67.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

49. The quality and vitality of the Church depends to a large extent upon the quality and vitality of its priests. This has been demonstrated throughout the history of the Church. All the Councils and various movements for reform in the Church's history have all included a call for reform in priestly life and ministry. In addition, as Pope John Paul II reminds us, "New evangelization needs new evangelizers and these are the priests who are serious about living their priesthood as a specific path towards holiness." To accomplish this, it is fundamentally important that every priest rediscover the absolute need for personal sanctity.

What a glorious gift, a glorious vocation is entrusted to each and every priest! Caught up in the details, the busy coming and going of our everyday lives, we sometimes fail to see the good and positive effects of our witness and our ministry. At times too, our congregations take our ministry for granted. The Lord knows and sees how many lives we are privileged to touch, how many seeds of the Gospel we have planted in the hearts of our people. And the Lord will be generous in sharing with us the hundredfold.

The Road to Emmaus

50. We have said much about the life and ministry of priests in Nigeria. We conclude with one further image of Jesus Christ, the priest, prophet and king/servant. It is found in the gospel according to Luke. It is a story especially close to the heart of Catholic priestly life, the story of Jesus and the two disciples on

50 PDV, no. 82
the road to Emmaus. It is our story as Catholic priests in Nigeria. A brief meditative reading of that beautiful story (Luke 24:13-35) surely illuminates what it means to be a priest in Nigeria today, carrying forward the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. We note the qualities of Jesus' ministry, qualities which should be ours too.

Jesus goes out in search, among his people. He is sent by the Father, and does not simply wait for the people to come to him.

Jesus walks with, accompanies his people. He spends time with them and his time is not his own.

Jesus listens to the story of his people. He learns before he responds.

In mutual ministry, he converses with them, and gets to know their situation and their problem.

In addition, Jesus is at home and knows the treasure of the Scriptures. He then breaks open, shares that treasure, especially the Paschal Mystery. He presents it in a persuasive way.

Jesus sits at table and gathers the disciples. He first breaks open the Word, and then the Bread of Life and shares these with the disciples.

Jesus thus calls forth faith, hope, and love in those who are traveling, lost, or troubled, and leads them to new faith and conversion.

Jesus freely invites them to faith. He does not force them but invites a free response. Enthused as they are, the two disciples invite Jesus to stay with them.

Jesus empowers them. He does not cling to them, but frees them, and sends them forth on mission to share the good news of the Paschal Mystery.

51. In summary, the priest, like Jesus on the road to Emmaus, accompanies the people on their journey. He listens to the story of their hopes and fears. He then turns, not to his own word but, to the power of God's Word to illuminate their lives. This breaking
open of the Word of Scripture may also lead, as it did with the two disciples, to the breaking of bread at the table of the Lord. This happens daily at Liturgy, and in every celebration of the sacraments.

The priest is called, privileged, graced and empowered to link his people with the Paschal Mystery of Jesus. He enables them to see and celebrate that paschal mystery in the sacraments, especially in Holy Mass, and to see that same mystery operative in their own lives, and in their world.

52. What is most needed on the part of the priest is the never-ending commitment to ongoing, deep, personal growth and renewal. Likewise, what is most needed is his ever-faithful commitment in service of God's people. He follows the example of Jesus Christ the servant, who accompanies the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Like those two disciples, we should rise up, renewed in our faith, enthused, and eager to share with others our faith and insight into the Paschal Mystery. We are the privileged stewards and heralds of that mystery. We go into the future, the new Millennium, the new era of evangelization, knowing that the same Jesus who accompanied the two disciples on the road to Emmaus accompanies, guides and strengthens us on our priestly journey.
THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER
J.B. Henri Lacordaire, OP

To live in the midst of the world with no desire for its pleasure...
To be a member of every family yet belonging to none...

To share all sufferings; to penetrate all secrets; to heal all wounds...
To daily go from men to God to offer Him their petitions...

To return from God to men to offer them His hope...
To have a heart of fire for charity and a heart of bronze for chastity...

To bless and be blest forever.
O God, what a life, and it is yours,
O Priest of Jesus Christ!
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
WITH NOTES

Vatican II, DECREE ON THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF PRIESTS,
Presbyterorum ordinis, 1965

Vatican II, DECREE ON THE TRAINING OF PRIESTS,
Optatam totius, 1965

Vatican II, DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH,
Lumen gentium, 1964

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH,
English translation for Africa, Ibadan, Paulines/Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994,

Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, Evangelii Nuntiandi, 1975

Part VI of this document is most helpful in the area of Ongoing Formation.


Congregation for the Clergy. Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests (DLMP) 1994. Part II of this document is especially
helpful for input on the spirituality of the priest.


Krenik, Thomas. *Formation for Priestly Celibacy: A Resource*

Obuna, Emmanuel. *African Priests and Celibacy; In a Culture Where a Man without Children is a waste.* Rome, Liberit Press, 1986


Prayer of Cardinal Newman

Dear Jesus, help me to spread
Your fragrance everywhere I go.
Flood my soul with Your Spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly
that all my life may only be a radiance of You.
Shine through me and be so in me
so that every soul I come in contact with may feel
Your presence in my soul.
Let them look up and see no longer me
but only Jesus.

Stay with me,
and then I shall begin to shine as You shine;
so to shine as to be a light to others.
The light, O Jesus, will be all from You;
none of it will be mine.
It will be You shining on others, through me.
Let me preach You without preaching,
not by words but by my example,
by the catching force
of the sympathetic influence of what I do,
the evident fullness of the
love my heart bears to You.
Amen.