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CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN THE RELATION BETWEEN THE LAY AND THE ORDAINED FAITHFUL: A CASE STUDY OF THE CATECHETICAL MINISTRY IN THE SOUTH EASTERN CHURCH OF NIGERIA

a thesis

by

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Introduction

Religion is an essential aspect of human culture. Human beings are constantly in search of meaning for life and religious worship is one of the ways human beings seek to make meaning out of life. Religion can be understood as a human response to God or to the "Ultimate Reality" who continually invites human beings to friendship.[1]Through their relationship with the divine, human beings believe that their life will be blessed and that society will be ordered to a good end.[2] Thus their relationship with God (which expresses itself in belief, rituals and conduct) helps them to make meaning of their life on earth.

 Religious worship in many parts of the world involves organization of men and women who, through the use of symbols and rituals, worship God. Most, if not all religious groups have responsibilities that they entrust to different persons or group of persons who fulfill those responsibilities on account of the ministerial position or office that they occupy within the community. In the Christian religion, and Catholic tradition in particular, the believers carry out their worship of God through different services or ministries by which they give honor to God, and in turn are sanctified.[3] The performance of such ministries is usually led by the ordained members of the community, or by some other designated lay members called lay ecclesial ministers. Such services, by which the believers are sanctified, include prayers (liturgy and the

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[1] Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* (18 November 1965) no 2, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html.

[2] Enoch Olujide Gbadegesin, "Olodumare: The Hidden but Relevant God in the Yoruba Religious Imagination," in *Religion and Social Construction in Africa*, edited by Elias Kifon Bongmba, (London: Routledge, 2018), 51, doi https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351167406.

[3] Vatican Council II, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (18 November 1965) no 3, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam_actuositatem_en.html.

sacraments), and teaching by which members are brought and socialized into the faith.[4] Service to God, especially in the Catholic tradition is a corporate responsibility even as it also entails a personal responsibility.

In recent times, in the Catholic Church, there has been a growing concern that the lay members of the Church are being denied a fuller participation in the life and ministry of the Church. One may ask why any member of the Church should be denied full participation in the ministry and mission of the Church? Are there theological or pastoral reasons for such denial or restrictions? Did Jesus intend that ministry should be carried out only by some members?

This thesis will address how ministry came to be seen as the preserve of the ordained by looking at relations, down the centuries, between the clergy and the laity. The thesis will argue that ministry, particularly seen from the lens of catechesis, is a corporate responsibility of the lay and the ordained faithful. As such, it is in the spirit of co-responsibility that the witness of the Church as a communion can truly be possible. The thesis will argue that though much has been done to foster co-responsibility in the Church, the Catholic Church in South Eastern Nigeria still needs to do more in regards to cooperation in catechetical ministry, towards a fuller realization of the communion that should characterize the relation of its clergy and the laity. There is a need for "lay ministers" to be trained in theology and in catechesis so that they can be more efficient and effective in discharging their work as catechetical ministers.

Addressing the issue of relations between the laity and the clergy in the South Eastern Church of Nigeria is in line with the ecclesiological conversations of today. Such conversations focus on

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[4] Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964) no 12, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii/documents/vat-ii_const_lumen-gentium_en.html.

the issues of power and lay ministry which are growing issues in our contemporary time. Walter Kasper speaks of the crisis in the Western European Churches—a crisis that is also spreading to other regions of the Northern and Southern hemispheres—partly, as a result of the decline in numbers of those embracing the vocation to the priesthood. The effect of this decline in numbers of those embracing the priesthood is that many parishes are left without priests to celebrate the sacraments. This situation raises the issue of community leadership and the role of lay ecclesial ministers in community leadership.[5]

To speak of lay ministry implies that lay people can get involved in the pastoral ministry of the Church. This raises the question of how extensive that involvement can be. Different reasons contribute to why this question is pertinent in our contemporary time. The reasons include the fact of a more theological understanding of ministry rooted in the New Testament; and a growing desire in many lay people to participate in the ecclesial ministry, often taking up services in the Church that were ordinarily done by the clergy. That there is a rekindled interest in lay involvement in ecclesial ministry is attested to by the vast number of lay men and women studying theology and engaging in pastoral ministry, but whether this desire for more commitment in ministry can be understood as the working of the Spirit and as a call for the recognition of lay leadership in the ecclesial community is an issue of contention among theologians. These debates have sustained the flame of discussion on this ecclesiological issue of ministry in the Church.

This thesis understands the issue of ministry and relations between the laity and the clergy as a theological as well as a pastoral issue that impinges on the Christian concepts of love, equality, justice, communion and co-responsibility. Christians believe in the equality of every human

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[5] Walter Kasper, *Leadership in the Church,* (New York: Herder &Herder, 2003), 45&68.

being based on the doctrine of the *Imago Dei,* a teaching that upholds the belief that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 27).[6] This basic foundation of equality before God as sons and daughters of God is strengthened by the grace of baptism which is the sacrament of Christian initiation that makes all the baptized Christians. Thus, we are firstly Christians and as such equal members of the Church before becoming ordained or consecrated persons.

 To say that the relation between the laity and the clergy in the South Eastern Church of Nigeria should improve is to mean that the Church of South Eastern Nigeria should deepen its life of communion and witnessing by being a Church where everyone has equal rights as a Christian and feels a sense of belonging. This is to say that the faithful should live out their baptismal life, its rights and obligations in a manner that acknowledges and respects the legitimacy and interdependency of the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained. This thesis holds that co-responsibility is the pathway to this common understanding and working together.

The concept of co-responsibility is an important concept that seeks to address the issue of relations in the Church, especially as they pertain to ministry and mission. Co-responsibility is a concept that seeks to proffer a better understanding of the relationship between the agents of evangelization, and the mission of the Church as a corporate responsibility of the people of God. As such, the concept challenges the sharp dichotomy in ministerial jurisdictions between the clergy and the laity without blurring the differences proper to each one's state of life. As the

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[6] John Paul II, Apostolic Letter on the Dignity of the Vocation of Women *Mulieris Dignitatem* (15 August 1988) no 6, at The Holy See,
 https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-_ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html.

document of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: State of the Question* remarks, most of the service undertaken by the lay ecclesial ministers properly belong to the laity while others, for example, baptism and witnessing to marriage, properly belong to the ordained.[7] The later document of the bishops, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, also, takes the same approach of emphasizing the mutual relationship between the ordained ministry and the lay ministry without diminishing the distinctiveness of each.[8] This distinctiveness necessitates the need to differentiate between the ecclesial ministries that are entrusted to the laity as a result of their baptismal call and those that lay ministers are delegated to do on the basis of a need that arose.[9]

My goal in taking up the concept of co-responsibility in the catechetical ministry of the Church of South Eastern Nigeria is to contribute to a better understanding of what it entails to be an inclusive and participatory Church, that is, a synodal Church. Co-responsibility is an indispensable aspect of being a synodal Church because co-responsibility and synodality entail the participation of the faithful, lay and ordained in a manner that goes beyond mere collaboration to inclusive participation.[10] This thesis, therefore, employs the concept of co-responsibility in the relation between the ordained and the laity as a necessary concept for understanding the Church as a *people of God.* The outcome of this study will contribute towards

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[7] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: The State of the Questions,* 3rd ed., (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1999), 19.
[8] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry, (*Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 20-26.
[9] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, 42.
[10] Gilles Routhier, "The renewal of Synodal Life in Local Churches," *For a Missionary Reform of the Church: The Civilta Cattolica Seminar* (2017): 253-254.

the building up of a community of faith that is mature and responsible in carrying out its mission in the South Eastern Church of Nigeria and beyond.

The notion of co-responsibility was implicitly adopted by the Second Vatican Council when it invited the Church to be more participatory and inclusive and to pursue holiness that is common to all the baptized people of God. The words "collegiality" and "communion" are key words towards this common participation and search for holiness. Holiness, for the Council, is found in active participation of all the faithful, each according to their task, in the life and mission of the Church.[11]

A Church that is co-responsible stands to bear fruitful witness to God. This is because it acknowledges the giftedness of its members even in their different ways of being Christians in the world –as priests or as lay people. In acknowledging the importance of the other, this concept of co-responsibility does not diminish their different but important roles. It emphasizes the communality of the mission entrusted to the Church by Christ which does not exclude but unites the whole of the faithful. The unity of the faithful people of God is a sign of their love for one another. It is by this sign of love that they will bear witness as disciples of Christ (cf John 13:35). This unity (in diversity) of the faithful people of God is also the expression of the gospel truth that Christians share in the unity of one baptism and one faith and, have become one body in Christ (cf Ephesians 5: 4-6).

This thesis will be relevant in the contemporary Church of South Eastern Nigeria in its effort to promote a better way of doing evangelization, curbing clericalism and excessive centralization of power in the hands of the clergy. The Church of South Eastern Nigeria, like the churches

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[11] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium,* no 41.

elsewhere is suffering the reality of clericalism which tends to blur the Christian vocation of the lay people by emphasizing on the "priestly" with its attendant sense of entitlement. This attitude does not promote a communal understanding of the Church as a common project or entity. A thesis project on the relation between the ordained and the laity, such as this one seeks to embark on, will provide a better sense of co-responsibility or team work needed in the Church. The necessity of clarity as to what is needed in the contemporary Church cannot be more urgent than now that the Church is facing challenges rising from the ills of individualism, sex abuse scandals, dwindling numbers of clergy and vocation to the priesthood, and the perceived fear of lay take-over of ministry in the Church. This thesis project will provide a better sense of teamwork by showing that mission and ministry are common projects of the Church and not a prerogative of the few.

The motivation for this thesis comes from the Church's effort to return to the path of synodality which is also the path of renewal and of co-responsibility. I shall elaborate on this point later. It is my belief that a synodal Church is a co-responsible Church that involves the diverse gifts (professions and experiences) of its members in discerning its pathway into the future. The ground for this assertion comes from the concept of *sensus fidei/fidelium* which is the Spirit's supernatural gift to all the baptized to perceive or to know the will of God for them in their realities of life.[12] The wide and varied experiences of the faithful go a long way to helping the Church in bearing authentic witness to Christ and in remaining true to its identity as a mystery of the unity of all nations.[13]

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[12] Ibid., no 12.
[13] Ibid., no 1.

The synodal Church envisioned by the *Second Vatican Council* and promoted by Pope Francis is at the root of the theological project which this thesis is embarking on. This point shall also be treated in detail, later. In moving forward with this project, this thesis will highlight what the Church's notion of co-responsibility and ministry is and the criteria for ministry in the Church. It will also deal with the relation between the clergy and the laity in the catechetical ministry, and the ministerial contexts of the Church's life, especially as it concerns the South Eastern Nigerian Church. Based on these I will take a stand on what I think is the way forward for the Church.

The scope of this thesis will be the Catholic Church in the South Eastern Nigeria. But to engage in this topic of discussion references will be made to other relevant local churches or to the Universal Church. The South Eastern states of Nigeria comprise of five states of Enugu, Imo, Abia, Anambra and Ebonyi. Within these five *Igbo* (Ibo) states are the dioceses of Enugu, Aba, Awgu, Abakaliki, Awka, Nnewi, Orlu, Ahiara, Onitsha, Okigwe, Umuahia, Nsukka, and Owerri. This thesis will cover from the period of the early missionary evangelization of Nigeria till date. The thesis will draw also from the traditional religious experience of the *Igbo* people who make up the South Eastern Nigeria.

The methodology of this research work will be theological. It will carry out a literature review of some theological writings and a critical evaluation of ministerial practices both in the Universal Church and in the Local Church of South Eastern Nigeria. My goal is that this methodology will support the argument that co-responsibility is the pathway towards communion in the relations between the clergy and the laity, especially in the catechetical ministry. This research work will make use of primary and secondary texts from Church documents and from selected relevant theologians.

Chapter One

Co-responsibility—What Is It?

In his book, *Co-responsibility in the Church,* Leon-Joseph Cardinal Suenens (1904 – 1996) speaks of the importance of the Second Vatican Council saying that "If we were to be asked what we consider to be that seed of life deriving from the council which is the most fruitful in pastoral consequences, we would answer without any hesitation: it is the rediscovery of the people of God as a whole, as a single reality, and then by way of consequence, the co-responsibility thus implied for every member of the Church."[14] He goes on to say that by co-responsibility is not meant "organized collaboration for mere practical pastoral efficiency, but rather of a cooperation which is the corollary and manifestation of the Church's deepest nature."[15] These statements carry a lot of weight. They indicate that the concept of co-responsibility is integral to the notion of the Church, especially the Church understood as the people of God.

In line with Suenens' observation, this thesis will argue that it is by being a co-responsible Church that the Church in South Eastern Nigeria will be true to its nature as a Church of communion. The catechetical ministry is one of the vital components of the Church's ministry and mission. Hence, any ministerial relation, by way of catechesis, between the clergy and the laity that does not go beyond mere "assistantship" to an inclusive and co-responsible relation falls short in its witness to the Spirit's gift and call to communion and mission. A look at the Second Vatican Council's rediscovery of the Church as the people of God, and consequently on the radical reversals that it made in relations in the Church, will help in this conversation.

1.1. Locating Co-responsibility in the People of God Ecclesiology

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[14] Leon-Joseph Suenens*, Co-responsibility in the Church*, trans. Francis Martin, (NY: Herder and Herder, 1968), 33.
[15] Ibid.

The Church has used various images to define itself. Such images include sheepfold, land to be cultivated, vine, building, family of God, temple of God, the body of Christ etc.[16] According to Kasper, these images are used because the phenomenon of the Church is too big to be captured by only one image.[17] However the image of the Church as the people of God became central in the Second Vatican Council's notion of Church.[18] This emphasis has been called, by some, the conciliar novelty. This is so because it went beyond the socio political understanding of the Church which tends to link the notion of Church to a nationalistic agenda. The notion of the Church as the people of God goes beyond any geographical confinement and includes everyone anywhere who believes in God. The notion of the "people of God" emphasizes the eschatological as well as the historical nature of the Church.[19] This is to say that the term "people of God" emphasizes the nature of the Church as both something existing in history, in human culture and conditions, and as something which has a divine origin, not bound in its historical condition but on its way to its heavenly home.

The Church which is the people of God is called forth by the word of God, formed and nourished by the sacraments (Mt 28: 19-20).[20] The document on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (1965) speaks in this regard saying that "through the apostolic proclamation of the Gospel, the People of God are called together and assembled."[21] This Church, called together and assembled, is one where everyone is an equal member, each fulfilling their duties according to the gifts given by the Spirit. This is to say that the Spirit gives

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[16] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, nos 5-7.

[17] Walter Kasper, *The Catholic Church: Nature, Reality and Mission*, trans. T. Hoebel (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 119.

[18] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium,* no 9.

[19] Kasper, *The Catholic Church*, 119.

[20] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium,* nos 5 &7.

[21] Vatican Council II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, (7 December 1965) no 2, at The Holy See. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_presbyterorum-ordinis_en.html.

to every member of the Church gifts of grace or charisms for the building up of the Church (1Cor 12).[22] None of these gifts is inferior to the other but all are necessary and to be put into common use for the good of the Church.

The Church that is the people of God is one where every member is a participant and journeying together along the way to our eternal home. This Church can be called a synodal Church. Synodality is the nature of the Church because "synodality refers to the involvement and participation of the whole people of God in the life and mission of the Church."[23] In this regard, co-responsibility is situated in the context of a synodal Church where every member feels welcomed and has a sense of belonging and of working together.

Co-responsibility is not a mere collaboration of the laity and the clergy in the mission of the Church but is a concept that connotes the inner nature of the Church as communion. Communion implies believers' sharing and participating in the life of God which in turn grounds their own participation and sharing in the life of each other.[24] As the document of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (*2005*) puts it, "the reality of the Church is the communion of each Christian with the Triune God and, by means of it, the communion of all Christians with one another in Christ."[25] Communion speaks to the

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[22] Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no 3.
[23] International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, (2 March 2018) no 7, at The Holy See,
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html.
[24] Michael A. Fahey, "The Church as Communion," in *The Church as Communion* ed. James H. Provost, (Washington, DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1984), 4.
[25] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry, (*Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 19.

interconnectedness, fellowship, love, and participation of all the faithful that should be fostered in a spirit of co-responsibility.[26]

The baptismal foundation of communion and co-responsibility of the people of God situates the Church at the center of a relational Trinitarian theology. Hermann Pottmeyer identifies the ground for the Church's unity in diversity as the Trinity itself. For Pottmeyer, it is the Trinitarian mystery of the Church described in the first chapter of *Lumen Gentium* that sets the ground for the theology of the people of God. This expression of the Trinity as unity in diversity of persons sharing in communion and reciprocity is the model for the Church's communion as unity in diversity of peoples and charisms. Thus, communion is the essential configuration of the people of God; communion is what defines the people of God.[27]

1.2. Background of the Concept of Co-responsibility

While the word co-responsibility may be a relatively new concept in the Catholic Church, its connotation has always been an integral part of what is understood as Church.[28] The Second Vatican Council speaks of *synods, concilium/conciliary, and collegiality* as terms connoting the gathering of the whole Church (synods), or the bishops in council with the pope as the head of

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[26] Michael A. Fahey, "The Church as Communion," in *The Church as Communion,* 11.

[27] Hermann J. Pottmeyer, "The Church on its Pilgrim Way to arise as the People of God," *For a Missionary reform of the Church*, 67-68.

[28] Helen Buss Mitchell, "A Laywoman Looks at Coresponsibility" in *Understanding Coresponsibility: A Collection of Essays*, eds. Helen B. Brewer and Thomas J. Tewey,(Washington, DC: National Council of Catholic Laity, 1974), *44-45.*

the Church (concilium and collegiality), to govern and to teach.[29] Synodality and collegiality can be expressed at a national or local level as in national or diocesan synods.[30]

In recent years, Pope Francis uses the word synod/synodality as a catch word for the Second Vatican Council's understanding of the Church. For him, the word synodality is not restricted only to the assembly of bishops but is open to all the members of the Church. It expresses the co-responsibility of all the faithful- including the lay and the ordained in the life and mission of the Church. For Francis, "A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening is more than simply hearing. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of truth', in order to know what [the Spirit] 'says to the Churches."[31] Thus *collegiality, synodality and concilium* all have something in common, namely co-responsibility in the government, the teaching and mission of the Church. It is a way of being Church in a manner that is inclusive.[32]

Synodality and co-responsibility highlight our understanding of participation and governance in the Church. As such, one comes to understand that although governance of the Church may rest with the ordained by the virtue of their ordination as representatives of the Church, the laity also participate in that governance by the virtue of their common priesthood and baptismal co-responsibility. Both kinds of priesthood can co-exist because they emanate from the one

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[29] Ormond Rush, "Inverting the Pyramid: The Sensus Fidelium in a Synodal Church*," Theological Studies, 2017, vol. 78(2),* 303.
[30] Francis, Address on the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops (17 October 2015) at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches /2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Rush, Inverting the Pyramid," 303.

priesthood of Christ.[33] Both are also geared towards the fulfillment of the mission of the Church

which is the evangelization of all peoples. [34] The term co-responsibility has, in recent decades,

been popularized by popes Benedict XVI and Francis. In his address to the clergy and the laity of

the diocese of Rome at the opening of the pastoral convention of the diocese (2009), Pope

Benedict spoke of the mission of the Church as the co-responsibility of the laity and the clergy.

For him, the "lay people must no longer be viewed as "collaborators" of the clergy but truly

recognized as "co-responsible" for the Church's being and action…" He goes on to say that it is

by seeing the Church's mission as the o-responsibility of the laity and the clergy that we will be

fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity.[35] In this regard, co-responsibility

stands for the participation of the baptized in the life of the Church, not as subsidiary members

but as subjects with roles and responsibilities on account of their being baptized members of the

Church. In line with Benedict, Pope Francis calls the Church to be a co-responsible Church, to

embrace the way of synodality which guarantees the communal and participative nature of the

Church in fidelity to tradition.[36]

For Francis, synodality is something richer and more encompassing than episcopal collegiality.

Synodality means "not some of the bishops sometimes but all of the Church all of the time."[37]

Francis' emphasis on the participative nature of the Church that involves all of the faithful is

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[33] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium,* no 10.

[34] Francis, The Apostolic Exhortation to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013) no 20, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

[35] Benedict XVI, Address on the Opening of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome *Church Membership and Pastoral Co-responsibility,* (26 May 2009) at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090526_convengo-diocesi-rm.html.

[36] International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*, no 9.

[37] Rush, "Inverting the Pyramid," 304.

rooted on his understanding of the Church as a people of God that are imbued with the Spirit's gift of *sensus fidei*.[38]

In this vein, he writes in his encyclical letter *Evangelii Gaudium*, that "as part of his mysterious love for humanity, God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an instinct of faith-*sensus fidei*-which helps them to discern what is truly of God. The presence of the Spirit gives Christians a certain connaturality with divine realities, and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively; even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression."[39] Possessing the sense of faith means that the Spirit is at work and inspiring the faithful to good actions.

The sense of faith of the people of God is an expression of the Spirit's presence and action in the life of every Christian. At baptism, the Holy Spirit anoints the faithful and fills them with the graces they need for their Christian calling. As a result of the Spirit's anointing, the faithful are able to discern and recognize what is the word of God. As such, they have the capacity to know what is good and are able to reject what is contrary to the faith they profess. Therefore, this supernatural instinct enables the faithful to be able to live out their priestly, kingly and prophetic ministry in the world and in the Church which is a communion of people.[40] Thus the re-awakening, in contemporary times, of the co-responsibility of every member of the Church, in the mission of the Church, can be seen as the inner reality of the Church asserting itself and not

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[38] Francis, Address Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops.
[39] Dario Vitali, "The circularity between *sensus fidei* and magisterium as a criterion for the exercise of synodality in the Church," *For a Missionary reform of the Church*, 199.
[40] International Theological Commission, *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church* (2014) nos 1-2, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html.

as some arbitrary regulation added on to the Church.[41] In order words, co-responsibility is the nature of the Church which is the people of God.

1.3.0. Foundations of Co-responsibility

1.3.1. Theological

The theological foundation of co-responsibility is the sacrament of baptism and the *sensus fidei/fidelium* of the faithful. One of the great achievements of the Second Vatican Council is the recovery of the baptismal importance of the people of God in the life and mission of the Church. Baptism is the sacrament of initiation that makes every baptized person a Christian. It confers the new life of the trinity, and membership of the Church, the body of Christ, on the recipient. It is this primordial sacrament that is the foundation of every other sacrament. Baptism configures the believer to Christ such that the recipient puts on Christ as a new creature that he/she is. In this regard, one has a share in the priestly, kingly and prophetic ministry of Christ. Both the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood of the faithful are made possible through baptism. Both kinds of priesthood, though differing essentially and in degree, are geared towards the sanctification of the people.[42]

The Second Vatican Council's document, *Lumen Gentium* no 12 speaks of the people of God as the entire body of the faithful comprising of the bishops down to the last of the lay faithful.[43] In this regard, the community of believers, united through baptism to become the one body of Christ, is entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out God's mission. Since they are brothers and sisters in the Lord, the faithful are to see themselves as co-workers who carry out their

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[41] Timothy E. O'Connell, "Decision, Decision-Making" in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey, (Collegeville, Minnesota, 1993), 256.
[42] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium,* no 10.
[43] Ibid., no 12.

respective duties in a co-responsible way that entails genuine cooperation of each and

everyone.[44] The concept of "co-workers" reminds one of Paul's usage of the word to describe his

colleagues in the ministry, Prisca and Aquila. Paul called them "my co-workers in Christ Jesus"

(Rom 16:3). Using that phrase, according to Richard McCord, "not only connects the

contemporary phenomenon of lay ecclesial ministry to an experience in the early Church, but

discloses that the theological framework for understanding this reality will be a relational

theology of ministry that is grounded in an ecclesiology of communion."[45] Thus, communion is

what the believers are born into in their new life with Christ, at baptism. It is also a task that they

are called to achieve.

At baptism, the believers are made to share in the life of communion that exists in the Trinity and

among the community of believers. The believers are, also, called to maintain that life of

communion among themselves and with God by prioritizing what makes for the building up of

the Church over what divides it.

Baptism confers equality on the people of God.[46] This equality of all the baptized does not

obliterate the different charisms conferred by the spirit on the individuals. The believers'

baptismal equality rather helps all the faithful to work in the common project of the Church as

co-workers with one mind and one heart. According to *Lumen Gentium* the pastors know that

Christ has not ordained them to take upon themselves alone the entire salvific mission of the

Church. As such in their task of shepherding the people of God, they must recognize the

ministries and charisms of the faithful "so that all according to their proper roles may cooperate

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[44] Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no 6.
[45] H. Richard McCord, "Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Pastoral Perspective on Its Reception," in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathway Towards the Future,* ed. Zeni Fox, (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 3.
[46] *CCC,* 1267-1271.

in this common undertaking with one mind."[47] In order words, the role of the ordained as shepherds of the people of God is not obliterated by the fact of working as co-workers with the laity. But the clergy must also know that God has not left the lay faithful without charisms and responsibilities.

The dignity of baptism entails that everyone is a subject in the Church cooperating in its mission. Each one is called to the same holiness of life according to the role occupied by one as a lay or as an ordained person. Baptismal co-responsibility entails that "the faithful are …companions on the journey. They are called to play an active role inasmuch as they share in the one priesthood of Christ, and are meant to receive the various charisms given by the Holy Spirit in view of the common good."[48] In this regard of equality and necessity of everyone, Pope Francis remarks in his weekly catechesis (June 26, 2013) in Rome, that the Church is the "Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Temple in which God works, the Temple in which, with the gift of Baptism, each one of us is a living stone. This tells us that no one in the Church is useless ... we are all necessary for building this Temple! No one is secondary. No one is the most important person in the Church, we are all equal in God's eyes. Some of you might say 'Listen, Mr Pope, you are not our equal'. Yes, I am like each one of you, we are all equal, we are brothers and sisters!"[49]

The choice of baptism as the basis of equality of all Christians is, according to Rush, a recognition of the fact that the greatness, the dignity and the newness brought by Christ properly dwell in baptism. Without the foundation of baptism there can be no Christian, no priest, bishop

[47] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* , 30; also cf. Alphonse Borras, "Ecclesial Synodality, participatory processes, and Decision-making procedures: A Canonist's Point of View," *For a Missionary Reform of the Church*, 221.
[48] International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the Life of the Church,* 55.
[49] Rush, "Inverting the Pyramid," 300.
[49] Ibid., 308.

or pope.[50] One can then say that it is in the context of the baptismal co-responsibility, which involves the Church hierarchy listening to the laity, and vice versa in an honest and open spirit of dialogue and working together that the Church as communion can truly be seen. On the other hand, a Church which does not acknowledge the equality conferred on its members through baptism, and the co-responsibility therein, will tend to be clerical and will neglect the rights of its lay members to be active participants in its mission and ministry. The result in this situation will be a formation of immature adult Christians who do not exercise initiatives or take responsibilities in the Church.

1.3.2. Sensus Fidei

The Church that is the people of God sharing in the baptismal dignity is also a Church that is imbued with the supernatural sense of faith. The recovery of the *sensus fidei* of the people of God helped in situating co-responsibility at the heart of being Church. *Lumen Gentium* speaks of the sense of faith of the people of God as the work of God. It says, as mentioned before that, "the entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole people's supernatural discernment in matters of faith when from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals."[51] Thus, the gift of *sensus fidei* is the work of God because it is a supernatural gift that is connected to faith.[52] Faith is a supernatural gift of God which no one can acquire on his/her own. As such, *sensus fidei* expresses itself in the life of faith and differs from a mere opinion which often is an expression, transient, and relates to the mood

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium,* no 12.

[52] International theological commission, *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church,* nos 117-119.

of a particular person or group.[53] On the contrary, faith is not transient but lasts. Faith is the echo

of the Good News of Christ in the realities of the life of the community of faith. Faith is an

expression of the enduring word of God.[54]

The notion of *sensus fidei* touches on two important realities of the people of God. As the

document of the International Theological Commission *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church*

(2014) says *sensus fidei,* on the one hand, refers to the capacity of the individual person to be

able to grasp the reality of faith within the communion of the Church. On the other hand*, sensus*

fidei refers to the instinct of faith of the Church, the ecclesial reality itself, whereby the Church is

able to recognize Christ her master and to proclaim him as Lord.[55] As such, *sensus fidei*

presupposes a life of faith and communion with the ecclesial community. In both personal and

communal contexts of *sensus fidei/fidelium,* there is an ecclesial context. The ecclesial context

refers to the fact that the context of God's revelation of God-self is the Church. God reveals God-

self or the truth about the Church to the community who perceive God's self revelation as

members of the Church sharing in the community's faith, hopes and mission.

Such universal agreement in faith and morals, which the sense of faith of the people of God can

bring about, is exemplified in the dogmatic definitions of Mary's Immaculate Conception (1854)

and her Assumption into heaven (1950). These definitions came about as a result of the

unanimous belief of the people of God and their pastors that Mary was conceived without

original sin, and that she was assumed body and soul into heaven, respectively.[56] Thus the gift of

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[53] Ibid., no 118.
[54] Ibid., no 3.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Prosper Mushy*, Sensus Fidelium as a Locus for Theology: Some Perspectives on the Use of the Concept in Ecumenical Dialogue*, (Saarbrucken, Germany: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG, 2010), 27-28.

sensus fidei is a means through which the Spirit acts, inviting the Church to consensus and to a co-responsible life and mission.

Being the Spirit's gift to grasp the realities of faith, *sensus fidei* gives perception of faith as it is lived in the here and now. God is dynamic and continues to reveal God-self to humanity in the here and now of their lives. To that effect, *sensus fidei* gives relevance to the witness of the lay faithful and makes that witness in the world possible because it is that capacity by which the people of God are able to grasp, live and proclaim the truth of faith.[57] The implication of the Spirit's action in the here and now of people's life is that people's socio-cultural life, and indeed the whole of the human person and world become the domain of the Spirit's action. Hence, the lay people can be agents of God's mission. Their diverse experiences become a source of enrichment for the Church.

In this regard, there is always need for dialogue in the Church for the community to be able to interpret and understand what the Spirit is saying to the Church. In this context of dialogue and discernment the Church is able to reach a consensus, and the pastor's pronouncements become the pronouncements of the whole people of God through whose discernment the pastor speaks. This is so because what the pastor is saying would be what he has already heard from the communal discernment of the whole people of God. Dialogue done in a co-responsible way of trust and listening will play a positive role in building a healthy relation between the clergy and the laity, and in fostering a positive reception of what the Church is teaching.[58]

The gift of *sensus fidei* is a guarantee of the infallibility of the whole people of God in matters of faith. When the community of believers has a sense of faith of what the Spirit is conveying to the

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[57] International Theological Commission, *Sensus Fidei in the life of the Church*, 45.
[58] Mushy, *Sensus Fidelium as a Locus for Theology,* 123.

Church, then they cannot be in error. Infallibility in this regard becomes the property of the whole people of God. Hence, those popular pieties that emanate from the laity should be harnessed and appreciated as the gift of the Spirit to the Church. They can be a means of catechesis to the people of God. Many lay movements, such as the Legion of Mary (1921) founded in Ireland by a layman, Frank Duff, grew to become strong means of catechizing the people of God, and of providing them with spiritual nourishments in the faith. These lay movements and confraternities usually have the aim of cultivating among their members a life of piety, with attention to spiritual and corporal works of mercy.[59] These lay movements also tend to adapt to the context of the times by focusing their mission on the present need of the generation while remaining faithful to their founding charism.

To see the duty of the lay people as simply being docile to the command of their pastors is, therefore, to overlook the spirit's work in the community of faith. Through the inspiration of the Spirit, the Church continues to find ways of addressing the challenges of its changing contexts of doing mission and ministry.

1.4.1. Sociological Grounds for Co-responsibility

The theological foundation of co-responsibility is closely tied to its sociological reality. The notion of the Church as the people of God connotes a people journeying together. It calls to mind the biblical people of Israel as they journeyed through the desert to the Promised Land (Exodus 16ff). Through the Spirit's gift of freedom the people cooperate with God in building a future for themselves. In other words, the people of God are agents in their own history. They form an organic whole through the co-responsibility of each one of them. They have their

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[59] Maureen Dolan, *Partnership in Lay Spirituality: Religious and Laity Find New Ways*, (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: the Columba Press, 2007), 62.

contributions to make to their own destiny through the choices they make as agents or subjects in their destiny. But as Pope Francis said, the people of God are found in the diverse peoples of the world. As such diversity is the face of God's people.[60] The diverse face of the Church can truly be seen in the cooperation and co-responsibility of the diverse people of God who possess the diverse gifts of the Spirit. Through their cooperation the people of God bring the richness of their talents, charisms and cultures to unity in the Church.

The socio-cultural contexts of the people of God differ and shape the face of the Church. As such, while the Church seeks unity it should not seek uniformity. The people of God are a community of diverse individuals and groups who are in communion with each other without losing the specific gifts that characterize them. For Francis, the diverse faces of the peoples of the world foster an intercultural richness in the Church. "In the diversity of peoples who experience the gift of God, each in accordance with its own culture, the Church expresses her genuine catholicity and shows forth the beauty of her varied face."[61] Again, the pope re-iterates this saying that, "the People of God is incarnate in the peoples of the earth, each of which has its own culture."[62] The Pope uses the image of the polyhedron which has varied but important parts to describe the diversity of cultures that make up the unity of the people of God.[63] Cultural diversity, when well managed, is not a challenge but a source of richness for the Church.

The Church as the people of God points to the fact that the Church exists in history, and is thus affected and shaped by the social and cultural conditions in which it carries out its mission.[64]

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[60] Carlos M. Galli, "The Missionary Reform of the Church According to Francis : The Ecclesiology of the Evangelizing People of God," in *For A Missionary Reform of the Church*, 36.
[61] *Evangelii Gaudium*, no 116.
[62] Ibid., no115.
[63] Ibid., 236.
[64] Rafael Luciani, "The Centrality of the People in Pope Francis' Socio-Cultural Theology," *Concilium* 3, eds. Carlos Mendoza-Alvarez and Po-Ho Huang (2018), 54-55.

This is to say that the Church does not exist independently of the people/culture in which the gospel message takes root. Each culture, also, has its positive and negative aspects which the gospel message appropriates or challenges, as the case may be. As such, the Church cannot say that the problem of the world does not affect or concern it. The problem of the world is the problem of the Church because the Church lives and acts in the world. The children of the Church are shaped by the various cultures of the world, and they conduct their affairs in the world.[65] Jesus' command to his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28: 19-20) equally implies that the Church's mission is in the context of the world. Thus, all these call for co-responsibility within the Church and between the Church and the nations among which the Church journeys.

Part of being a people journeying together is the Church's ability to critique itself and the world around her. The Church understands its nature to be wider than the expression which it often takes in history. This understanding, as Karl Rahner (1904-1984) observes, enables the Church to be able to engage in the critique of itself in its practice of ministry and mission. This critique, Rahner writes, is "based on the intrinsic tension with her between that which she herself seeks to be and that which she de facto is."[66] The Church's critique of its practice of mission and ministry helps it to grow and to be a more effective sign of God's mercy and love in the world. In critiquing itself, the Church is able, also, to critique the world by offering the world dimensions of hope and right relations springing from the gospel message. The inadequacies of the Church imply that the Church is not an absolute or perfect society on earth, and should not constitute any absolute political judgments. The Church should be ever open to the newness of the Spirit's

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[65] Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, (7 December 1965) no 1, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

[66] Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations-12,* trans. D. Bourke (NY: Seabury, 1974), 232.

intervention in its life. Such intervention comes both from divine inspiration and from the lessons it learns from the world around her.

1.5. The *Igbo* View of Co-responsibility

Co-responsibility has correlates in the *Igbo* vision of life. The *Igbo* people of Eastern Nigeria believe in a co-responsible way of living. The *Igbo* family system manifests this way of living. In the *Igbo* culture, a family does not comprise only of a father, a mother and their children. A family includes the extended family members, *Umunna,* up to the fourth generation.[67] In other words, there may be up to four or five nuclear families in an extended family. The members of this nuclear family usually come together for celebrations of important events in the life of the family. They understand themselves as one family, and as Nkem Hyginus Chigere (2001) rightly points out, "solidarity urges the members of the extended family to seek physical and social, as well as the moral and general well-being of all her members."[68] The well-being of the family/community is the paramount concern of the *Igbo* person. This is so because the *Igbo* people believe that when the group is flourishing the individuals are also flourishing. The family/community will take care of the individual just as the individual should take care of the welfare of the family.

This way of living in a co-responsible manner does not diminish the value and importance of the members of the family. For the *Igbo* people, everyone is important and has something to contribute to the welfare of the community. The necessity, value and relatedness of every member of the family or community is expressed in such sayings as, *Anya bewe imi ebewe*

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[67] Nkem Hyginus M. V. Chigere, *Foreign Missionary Background and Indigenous Evangelization in Igboland,* (Munster: Lit., 2001), 41.
[68] Ibid.

meaning that 'when the eye cries, the nose also cries'*; obele Azu kpata obele nku, nnukwu Azu kpata nnukwu nku* meaning, 'let everyone contribute according to their capacity/capability'. These sayings uphold an inclusive vision of life whereby the solidarity of the community members goes to sustain the flourishing or the survival of the community. Communality, thus, is a characteristic feature of the *Igbo* people.[69]

Igbo pithy sayings, proverbs and idiomatic expressions reflect a co-responsible attitude to life. The saying that *Ndi Igbo n'asu n'olu n'olu mana ha kwa ukwara oburu ofu* reflects the *Igbo* people's belief in unity in diversity. The saying can be translated as that 'though there may be dialectic/language differences among the *Igbo* people, yet there is an enduring identity that makes them recognizable as *Igbo* people'. Beyond these differences in dialects or ways of doing things, there is the *Igbo* culture that is a recognizable identity in each person or group of *Igbo* people. This culture or identity is recognizable in the midst of diversities of people's lives because it is fostered in a co-responsible way.

The *Igbo* people's vision of a co-responsible communal life is equally captured in the saying, *onye aghana nwanne ya.* This saying encourages everyone to be their brother's and sister's keepers; to walk or to journey together without neglecting the other. The *Igbo* people, like many other African societies believe that one who despises his fellow human beings and who leads life without consideration for interpersonal relationships is cutting him/herself off from the

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[69] Ambrose Chineme Agu, *The Eucharist and Igbo Communal Spirit: Towards a Solid Inculturation of the Christian Faith in Igboland*, (Wurzburg: Echter, 2004), 58.

community. Such a one is stripping oneself of their humanity because it is the community that

gives relevance to the individual.[70]

The basis for a co-responsible way of life, as we have seen, is the unitary view of life in the *Igbo*

cosmology. The *Igbo* people believe in the interconnectedness of everything. For them, nothing

stands in isolation. A thing stands not alone but together with others in harmony. Thus we have

man and woman, up and down, black and white etc.[71]

In this vein, the world does not comprise of dualism between the secular and the profane; all

things are created by *Chukwu* (the great God) and thus are interrelated. For the *Igbo* people, the

world is an integral and a religious place. This is because everything proceeds from one source

which is God, *Chukwu*. This integral connection of beings with each other is the basis for the

communal spirit in the *Igbo* worldview.[72] It is to give a fuller expression to this communal spirit

that the Church of South Eastern Nigeria is being called to foster, more deeply, co-responsible

relations between the clergy and the laity.

1.6. Implications of Co-responsibility

1.6.1.   Evangelization is for Everyone

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of God's people have become missionary disciples

(cf Mt 28: 19). Pope Francis writes that "All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church

or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient

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[70] Benezet Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethics: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*, trans. Brian McNeil (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), 87.
[71] Elochukwu E. Uzukwu*, Worship as Body Language, Introduction to Christian Worship: An African Orientation*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 13.
[72] Agu, *The Eucharist and Igbo Communal Spirit, 58.*

to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized."[73] This statement points to the fact that both the lay and the clergy are agents of evangelization. Evangelization as an act of witnessing to the gospel message can be carried out in a 'formal' way by preaching and dialoguing with people or in an 'informal' way of living a life leavened by the gospel values of love and compassion. As such evangelization does not necessarily need to be carried out only in formal settings of the Church but it can be engaged in by the way one leads one's life.

In regard to this, *Lumen Gentium* teaches that the call to Christian witnessing is for everyone and means "that all Christians in whatever state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity, and this holiness is conducive to a more human way of living even in society here on earth."[74] This statement suggests that the daily work of the faithful in the world, permeated by the gospel values, is a way of witnessing and as such of sanctification of the faithful. By this is meant that while every Christian may not need a specialized training in theological studies to be able to evangelize, it is necessary that one knows and performs well one's duties of life as a means of witnessing to the Gospel. Hence, both the professional preaching of the pastor and the daily labor of the layperson are contexts of evangelization. And when done in a spirit of co-responsibility will result in an effective witnessing to Christ.

1.6.2. Community Discernment

Co-responsibility calls for a listening Church. The laity must listen to the clergy because by their ordination they have the charism of teaching and of directing the people of God. The charism of

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[73] *Evangelii Gaudium*, no 120.
[74] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 40.

teaching and directing the people of God properly belongs to the bishops because they represent the apostles and have the fullness of the priesthood.[75] The priests, however, share in this ministry of teaching and shepherding the people of God as sharers in the same ministerial priesthood of Christ, which the bishops have received in a full measure. The priests, as helpers of the bishops assist in leading and nourishing the people of God. As *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (1965) says, "the office of priests, since it is connected with the episcopal order, also, in its own degree, shares the authority by which Christ builds up, sanctifies and rules his Body."[76] It is, therefore, necessary for the lay faithful to listen to their pastors as representatives of Christ to the community. Such listening and discernment should be done in a spirit of dialogue and co-responsibility.

Pope Benedict XVI also emphasized the role of the priests in nurturing the life of faith of the people of God. In his address to the parish priests of the diocese of Rome (2009), he reminds them that it is precisely the task of the priests, "to nurture the spiritual and apostolic growth of those who are already committed to working hard in the parishes."[77] Through the sacraments and the word of God that all the faithful partake in, the lives of all are nourished as all discern together the will of God for the community.

 On the other hand, the clergy must listen to the lay people of God because they also possess the capacity to know what the will of God is for the Church. Co-responsibility calls for a mutual relationship of listening, a carrying shoulder to shoulder the mission of the Church by the clergy and the laity. As such, "the bishop has a responsibility to listen carefully to his presbyters and all the faithful so that he can be more effective in promoting their welfare, encouraging their

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[75] Second Vatican Council, Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus* (28 October 1965*)* no 3, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/i_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_christus-dominus_en.html. Also cf Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, no 21.

[76] Vatican Council II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no 2.

[77] Benedict XVI*, Address on the Opening of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome.*

collaboration, building up the Church, and so giving glory to the Father."[78] This type of community discernment can be carried out in the context of diocesan synods. The example of Pope Francis in calling the particular Churches to respond to the questionnaire concerning issues affecting family life is also an example of a community discerning in a co-responsible way. In that situation, the Church discerns together as a community and acts together out of what has been discerned.[79]

In a co-responsible Church, listening and discerning together happen when the community listens to the voice of God in scriptures and in the daily experiences of the people. This can be done in the context of faith sharing groups, parish seminar meetings or in the meeting of the parish pastoral teams. Thus the people's daily experience becomes a locus of doing theology and a place of encounter with God.[80] Listening helps one to understand people's historical contexts. It is often from these contexts that people speak and act. It is also to these contexts of poverty, of marginalization, of different world views that theology and ministry should be directed. Jon Sobrino (1938--) notes that Jesus' ministry overflowed with compassion for the poor and the needy. Jesus ministered to people from the context of their needs because he was able to listen and to understand them. Thus, compassion is one of the hallmarks of Jesus' ministry.[81]

 Listening is important because every member of the Church is a subject of the mission of the Church and has important contributions to make to the welfare of the community. Listening to one another and discerning together enriches the Church. But, as Gilles Routhier says, "If we do

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[78] Eugene Duffy, "Processes for communal discernment: Diocesan Synods and assemblies," *Jurist* 71 (2011), 79.
[79] Vitali, "The circularity between *sensus fidei* and magisterium as a criterion for the exercise of synodality in the Church," 212.
[80] Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of An Accountable Church*, (New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002), 31.
[81] Jon Sobrino, "The Foundation of All Ministry: Service to the Poor and Victims in a North-South World," in *Ministries in the Church*, eds.Susan Ross, Diego Irarrazabal, and Paul Murray, (London:SCM, 2010), 15-16.

not have the deep conviction that the people of God are the subject of the Church's missionary activity and that evangelization is based on all the baptized who are responsible and protagonists of it, then synodal life does not manifest itself."[82] Listening together presupposes the autonomy of the other as a subject and full member of the community.

1.6.3. Co-responsibility is not About Power Struggle

The term co-responsibility comes to many with a feeling of fear and hope. On the one hand, it comes with the hope of a better co-operation between the clergy and the laity, hence an effective and richer witnessing to the gospel. On the other hand, the term evokes a feeling of fear of losing power to the lay people. Quite often the clergy think that by the practice of co-responsibility the lay people are trying to take away their power. The same also goes with some lay people who, now, tend to understand co-responsibility as laicization of the Church.[83] However, co-responsibility is not necessarily about power and authority but about repositioning the Church such that its nature as a communion shines out.

Repositioning the Church gives a new interpretation to power structure in the Church such that ministry and mission do not seem to belong only to the ordained but to all the baptized people of God. Co-responsibility "…offers us the most appropriate interpretive framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself."[84] Ministry through the lens of the people of God ecclesiology is service for the people of God. Thus, hierarchical ministry is not and should not be used to dominate but to serve the people of God. As Suenens puts it, when papal primacy is

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[82] Routhier, "The renewal of Synodal Life in Local Churches," 253.
[83] Anthony Barratt, "What is Ordination? A Roman Catholic Perspective," *Ecclesiology* 3.1 (2006), 76. DOI: 10.1177/1744136606067682.
[84] Galli,"The Missionary Reform of the Church According to Francis," 48.

understood and situated in the context of collegiality it bears fruits in mutual understanding, love

and service.[85]

1.7.Conclusion

The richness of the ecclesiology of the people of God rooted in the mystery of the Trinity is that

it gives room for ministry to flourish in a co-responsibility way. It also gives room for diversity,

for juxtapositions and for holding in creative tension seeming opposites. This ecclesiology offers

a critique of a view of the Church that does not appreciate the beauty of diversity and of

consensus. Consensus comes through listening to one another which, sometimes, involves

conflict of opinions. As such patience is a necessary element of a co-responsible Church. The

concept and practice of co-responsibility offers a critique of the superiority tendency whereby an

individual or a sectional opinion is imposed on others without due consideration for the others'

take on the issue. Co-responsibility, therefore, calls for a pastoral attitude of respect for cultures,

and mutual involvement in ministry whereby everyone feels involved and respected.

As a critique and a way forward, co-responsibility is a constructive alternative to the practice of

the Church where mission and ministry are taken as prerogatives of a few, namely the clergy. It

also kicks against the practice of the Church whose "actual concrete activity… in its relation to

the world outside of Europe was in fact...the activity of an export firm which exported a

European religion as a commodity it did not really want to change but sent throughout the world

together with the rest of the culture and civilization it considered superior."[86] In this vein, the

concept and practice of co-responsibility invites to a life of communion which is the nature of the

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[85] Suenens, *Coresponsibility in the Church*, 39.
[86] Karl Rahner, "Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II", in *Theological Studies;*
Woodstock, Md., etc Vol. 40, Iss. 4, (1979)**,** 717.

Church. The communion of the Church is seen in its unity in diversity of cultures and charisms. And this unity is built, in a co-responsible way, upon the recognition and involvement of the gifts of each and every member of the Church.

Chapter Two

Relationship Between the Laity and the Clergy in the Church

The focus of this chapter will be the relationship between the laity and the clergy. The issue of

relations between the laity and the clergy has been one of the on-going conversations among

theologians, and non-theologians alike, in the contemporary times. This conversation on relations

in the Church is highlighted by the situation of the decline in the number of the clergy, especially

in Europe and North America, engaged in the pastoral ministry, and by an increased awareness,

and demand by the laity for their role in the Church.[87] To deal with this topic, this chapter shall

try to answer the following questions: (i) What is the role of the laity in the Church? (ii) Has

there been a co-responsible relationship between the laity and the clergy? (iii) How does the

presence or absence of good relations between the laity and the clergy affect the Church's

mission and ministry? This chapter shall focus on the different epochs in the life of the Church,

from antiquity to the present. I shall not try to cover every detail of the centuries but I shall draw

relevant points from some periods of the Church's life to buttress my arguments.

2.0. Overview of the Church

The Church comprises men and women "chosen and set apart" in Christ (cf 1Pt 2:9). This

Christological notion of the Church as a people chosen by God through Christ, and rooted in

Christ, is the basis for calling all the faithful brothers and sisters.[88] The Second Vatican Council

speaks of the people of God as the entire body of the faithful comprising of the bishop down to

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[87] Walter Kasper, *Leadership in the Church,* (New York: Herder &Herder, 2003), 45.
[88] Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964) no 13, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii/documents/vat-ii_const_lumen-gentium_en.html.

the last of the lay faithful.[89] As such, the Church is a community of faith (men and women), existing in history although emanating from God and called to the service of God's kingdom.[90] This community lives in the world, even if she is not of the world (cf. Jn 17:16). The Church "is sent to continue the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, which by its very nature concerns the salvation of humanity, and also involves the renewal of the whole temporal order."[91]

2.1. The Church is Rooted in Relationships

As a people, the Church is rooted in relationships among its members, with the world in which it lives, and with the Trinity in whose relationship it shares. Relationship defines the nature of the Church because it is from the Trinitarian relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that the Church derives its existence and mission.[92] Imbued with diverse charisms, the Church is called to a mutual relationship among its members for the building up of the body of Christ. Relations in the Church, especially between the clergy and the laity, have been a point of contention, and also a place where there is a huge potential for growth and the actualization of what the Church truly is, a communion of people. Kasper writes in this regard that, "the contemporary crisis must not be seen only in the light of its negative aspects: we could also consider it a kairos for developing,

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[89] Ibid., no 12.

[90] Ibid., no 13.

[91] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World, *ChristiFideles Laici* (30 December 1988) no 15, at The Holy See. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christififeles-laici.html.

[92] Vatican Council II, Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes* (7 December 1965) no 2, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council /documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html.

if not a new Church, then at any rate a new epochal form of our Church as it enters the third millennium of its history."[93]

The contemporary crisis that Kasper is talking about is the crisis in the priesthood.[94] The period after the Second Vatican Council saw a huge drop in the priests serving in parishes as many of the priests left their ministry. The number of those entering the seminary for the priesthood also declined.[95] Many priests left the ministry for a number of reasons. Some of those reasons include a feeling of exhaustion and frustration with the ministry because the job was too burdensome with little or no felt positive results to it; the general attitude of the society which has become, so to say, hostile to religion because they no longer see religion as relevant to the societal life; a one- sided understanding of the Second Vatican Council's notion of the Church as the "people of God," and the "baptismal priesthood" of all the faithful. The notion of the Church as the "people of God", and the Council's teaching that every Christian shares, by baptism, in the priesthood of Christ, brought about confusion to many priests concerning the identity of the priest.[96] If baptism makes one to participate in the priesthood of Christ, then what is the identity of the ordained person in ministry?

 Added to the list are complaints and protests against the episcopal and papal authority which did not pay adequate attention to the complaints and feelings of the priests; and protests against a form of life and vocation which is considered outmoded and difficult to live.[97] The image of the priest has also blurred because the liturgical sphere, which used to be the sphere of the priest, no

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[93] Kasper, *Leadership in the Church*, 48.
[94] Ibid., 45.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., 46.
[97] Synod of Bishops, "The Ministerial Priesthood *Ultimis Temporibus*," nos 4-6, in *Vatican Council II. Volume 2: More Conciliar Documents*, edited by Austin Flannery (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1982), 673-676.

longer held, for the lay people, the aura of appeal which it had before as a special reserve of the priests. The new pastoral roles which lay people now undertake include many duties that priests used to perform. Thus, the sacred function and celibate life of the priest seemed to have little or no value again.[98] The sociological theory of equality of all people, which was making waves in the society, also, tended to stand in contrast to the idea of hierarchy of office and authority. As such, many priests, now, ask what their specific role in the Church is.[99] All these continue to affect relations between the clergy and the laity in the Church. While many priests see lay involvement in ministry as an encroachment into the priestly jurisdiction and, therefore, view lay ministry with suspicion, many lay people also see the clergy as forming an obstacle against their rightful participation in ministry. The result is often lack of cooperation between the two as the clergy try to hold on to their power as the ones in-charge of the parishes. Thus, lay people are still largely looked upon as mere supporters in the priestly ministry.

2.2. Co-responsibility as the Way the Church Approaches Mission and Ministry

2.2.1.   The Early Church--First Century to the Third Century

The history of the Church has been a history of a community of believers co-sharing in mission and ministry. That history has not always been without some misunderstanding, as it has quite often been marked by high and low points in the interaction between those seen as the leaders and the people they led, or between the lay and the ordained people. Those misunderstandings have had serious impacts in the positioning of the laity and the clergy in the Church. Aware of the possibility of unhealthy relations in the ecclesial community, Peter warns the presbyters not

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[98] Ibid.
[99] Gisbert Greshake, *The Meaning of Christian Priesthood*, (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1982), 16.

to lord it over those they lead but to be examples of good Christian leaders to them (1 Pt 5:1-4).

Peter was, thus, advocating for a harmonious relation in the community of the believers.

Relations among the early Christians seemed, in general, to be cordial. In the early Christian community, there was an understanding of ministry and mission as the co-responsibility of all believers. All worshipped with one mind and one heart (Acts 4:32). In the Synagogues, instruction which is a form of leadership went hand in hand with worship. And, it was not always that it is the teacher or the prophet that led the worship. According to Leon Morris, "there was no indication in the New Testament that anything resembling the Jewish priesthood developed; worship in the Church was the concern of all the people of God and any of them might be expected to take a significant part in its leadership."[100] As such, through their experience of God, in Christ, and their membership of the community of believers, the early believers were enthusiastic and eager to share their faith with others.[101]

In the household churches of the first century, one of the hallmarks of the churches' mission was hospitality and compassion (1Cor 16: 1-3; Acts 4: 32-37).[102] Men and women who became Christians found in the churches a new family. The churches were homes of hospitality and compassion to those in need. Men and women cooperated in the mission and ministry of alleviating the sufferings and needs of members. Prophetic ministry which played a leadership role as well as a pastoral role in the life of the communities was not the prerogative of men (Acts

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[100] Leon Morris, "The Saints and the Synagogue," *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin,* eds. Michael J. Wilkins and Terence Paige (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 51.
[101] Daniel J. Harrington, *The Church According to the New Testament: What the Wisdom and Witness of Early Christianity Teach Us Today*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2001), 54.
[102] Ibid., 138.

21: 8-9). Men and women were prophets, and by this ministry helped to guide the community and to bring them consolation in times of difficulty.[103]

Being a Church in a co-responsible manner, as we have seen, bears fruit in fellowship and in the flourishing of the Church's mission. The Apostles as leaders of the Church were able to concentrate on the teaching and proclamation of the word, and advance Jesus' agenda to evangelize all nations, because the other members of the Church participated co-responsibly in the life and mission of the Church. In Acts of the Apostles (chapter 6), a disruptive situation was settled amicably because of the cooperation of the whole Church in selecting the deacons who attended to the material needs of the community (Acts.6:1-7), Without a harmonious relation among the various ministries in the apostolic time, it would have been difficult for the Church to advance its mission of proclaiming the word, tending to the sick and needy, showing hospitality and seeing that the welfare of its diverse members was equitably ensured.

Co-responsibility leads, then, to shared or mutual ministry. This was prevalent in the Pauline Churches. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 Paul addresses the whole Church asking them to exhort one another and to build one another up. This, according to C. K Barrett, is an example of "mutual ministry which was the foundation of common Christian life."[104]

The early community of believers may not have been a perfect community. Some elements of misunderstanding existed in the community. This misunderstanding can be seen in the Church in Corinth where it seemed that the believers held in higher esteem those who possessed the gifts of

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[103] Carolyn Osiek, "Who Did What in the Church in the New Testament?," *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry Through the Wisdom of The Past*, ed. Richard W. Miller II, (Liguori, Missouri: Catholic Community Foundation of Kansas City, 2005), 4.
[104] C.K Barrett, *Church, Ministry, and Sacraments in the New Testament,* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Company, 1985), 37.

speaking in tongues, prophecy, words of knowledge, and so on, than they did those who did not possess the gifts (1 Cor. 12). Such attitude creates a sense of superiority/inferiority between those who have the gifts in question and those who do not have them. This issue can be deduced from Paul's letter to the community admonishing them that the possession of spiritual gifts without love adds no benefit to the community or to the individual. For Paul, love is the greatest of all the gifts because, among other things, love is not conceited (a feeling of superiority) but is kind, and is the basis for the significance of any spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 13).[105]

That spiritual gifts confer some level of significance in the Christian communities is attested to by, Dale B. Martin (1991) who remarks that "comparative analysis shows that in most cases speaking in tongues is taken within the practicing Christian groups as a high status indicator linked unproblematically with leadership roles."[106] Some other tendencies of unhealthy relations among the early believers may have also existed. Some of them can be deduced from Matthew's gospel account where he warns concerning those who put on long and conspicuous religious clothing and paraphernalia. He calls them hypocrites. Matthew also warns of the desire for first seats at the religious meetings, and the desire to be addressed by special titles (Mt 23:5-10).[107]

These tendencies indicate elements of "superiority" in the community of believers usually associated with people in positions of authority or of high social class. They are indicators of unhealthy relations in the early communities of believers between the leaders, (those who possessed certain spiritual gifts of leadership) and those that can be termed the "commoners".

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[105] Raymond F. Collins, *Sacra Pagina: First Corinthians* ed. Daniel J. Harrington, (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 471.

[106] Dale B. Martin, "Tongues of Angels and Other Status Indicators," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* vol. 59, No. 3 (Autumn, 1991): 552, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1465031.

[107] Thomas Rausch, "Ministry and Ministries," in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood* edited by Susan K. Wood, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), 55.

In Paul's treatment of (the body) hierarchy in I Cor. 12, Paul says that the parts of the body which are considered, weak or shameful are those that are treated with utmost care and dignity (vs 23-25). In taking care of the ignoble parts, one dignifies them, and their dignity enhances the overall dignity of the body. Thus, Paul seems to be advocating for the necessity of mutual cooperation among the believers. For him, every member and charism with which God has endowed the community is important and should be used for the good of the community.[108]

A common motif that existed in the Church of the apostolic time is Paul's *one body* motif. Paul's *one body* motif advocates for a harmonious relation in the body of Christ that is made up of different spiritual gifts and ministries (cf Rom 12:5; 1Cor. 12; 13). For Paul, the diversity of members and charisms which made up the Church was integral to and constitutive of the oneness of the body.[109] As such, that diversity must be ensured through the co-responsibility of every member. James D. G. Dunn notes that the *oneness* motif in Paul's writings on "one body" equally served a purpose of allowing for both variation and development in the Church.[110] This is to say that for Paul, there is a diversity of people—Jews and Gentiles— making up the Church, each having their particularities, but there is also a common understanding that both the Jewish and Gentile believers are members of the Church, the one body of Christ, and are called to work for the harmonious growth of the body through which, both are called to share in the blessings promised to Israel.[111]

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[108] Ibid., 567-568.
[109] James D. G. Dunn, "The Body of Christ' in Paul*," in *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin*, eds. Michael J. Williams and Terence Paige (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic 149.
[110] Ibid., 153.
[111] Ibid., 157.

In the centuries following that of the household churches, a gradual differentiation begins to emerge between the clergy and the laity. However, we continue to see active involvement of all the members of the Church. St. Cyprian's letters, as the bishop of Carthage (248-258 C.E), to the churches of his diocese, show the participative role of the laity in the election and appointment of the clergy. The laity had an active role in conciliar decision makings in the diocese, and in the reconciliation of the lapsed Christians.[112] In these letters, Cyprian was addressing the Christian community and reminding them of the validity of, and need for, decisions reached in a general manner that involved the participation of the whole Church. One of the letters which was written in defense of the legitimacy of the election of a Spanish bishop reads in part, "moreover we can see that divine authority is also the source of the practice whereby bishops are chosen in the presence of the laity and before the eyes of all, and they are judged as being suitable and worthy after public scrutiny and testimony…."[113]

The significance of these letters goes beyond the Church of Carthage. Carthage was regarded as second in command to the Church of Rome, in the whole Church of the Christian West. This means that what Cyprian wrote must have had a wider relevance for the Church of the Latin West than just for Carthage alone. The culture of lay participation in the choosing of their bishops and in conciliar decision makings must have been a general Church practice in the West and not just a practice of a particular local Church. The fact of lay people being involved in the election of the bishops is also supported by the writing of Hippolytus of Rome (200 C.E). In his *Apostolic Tradition*, Hippolytus writes that a bishop is chosen by the participation of the whole

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[112] Francis A. Sullivan, "St. Cyprian on the Role of the Laity in Decision Making in the Early Church," in *Common Calling: The Laity and Governance of the Catholic Church*, ed. Stephen Pope (Washington D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 39.
[113] Ibid., 40.

Church.[114] The process of choosing a bishop is, therefore, not reserved to the clerics but involves the lay people, as well.

Notable in this period also is the central role that bishops begin to assume in their dioceses, especially in ministerial functions. The bishop, at this time, is seen as the visible sign of unity of the local Church. Ministerial functions and service to the poor begin to be centralized on him and his clergy. As such, the role of lay people, including women deaconesses, as ministerial leaders, also begins to gradually diminish.[115] In this regard, Ignatius of Antioch (30-107 CE), in his collected letters to the Churches at Asia (Ephesus, Magnesia, Smyrna, Philadelphia, and Tralles), and to the Church at Rome wrote telling them that whatever is done in the Church should be done with the approval of the bishop. To the Christians of Magnesia he writes, "let there be nothing in you that can divide you, but be united with the bishop and with those who preside, for an example and lesson of imperishability."[116] Ignatius was concerned with the unity of the Church; the harmonious working of its different charisms and the avoidance of the danger of heresy that was prevalent at the time.[117]

   2.2.2.   The Medieval Period---300 CE to 1500 CE

   a)   Early Medieval Period—400 CE to 800 CE

The fourth to eighth centuries of the Church were a favorable period for the spread of Christianity. The favorable laws of the Christian emperors of the fourth (and fifth) centuries, such as Licinius (263-325 CE), and Constantine (272- 337 CE) were of great help for the Church

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[114] Hippolytus of Rome, "Apostolic Tradition 200 AD," in *Ministry*, ed, Joseph Lienhard (Wilmington DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), no 2.

[115] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian History: An Introduction,* (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2013), 14.

[116] Ignatius of Antioch, "Letter to the Magnesians, 2-7; 13," in *Ministry*, ed. Joseph Lienhard (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), no 6.

[117] Harrington, *The Church According to the New Testament*, 162-163.

in the spread of Christianity.[118] Emperors Constantine and Licinius proclaimed the edicts of

Milan which guaranteed freedom of worship to Christians and to all other religious worshippers

in their kingdom.[119] Thus, there was a favorable environment for Christianity to thrive.

But the gradual centralization of power around the clergy, which we saw leaders like Ignatius of

Antioch champion in the early centuries of the Church, took a more definite shape during this

medieval period. The period of 324 CE-731 CE, according to Osborne, was important in

understanding the position of the lay person in the western Church. This is because lay people

became more and more restricted in Church relations.[120] During this period of Constantine

(272CE-337CE), and Theodosius (347 CE-395CE), the Christian Church became more

thoroughly an imperial Church due to the close relationship that existed between the Church and

the State. It was in this period, also, that the Church moved towards a *one empire-one Church*

notion of religion. This move gave the church-clerics more socio-political powers, such that they

began to have extensive influence in the Church over the laity, and in the secular government.[121]

Francine Cardman (2005) notes that the terms "laity" and "clergy" began to be used in the third

century as ministerial offices began to be sharply defined and formally restricted to men.[122]

 The result of the influence of the clergy in the secular society, especially during the Frankish

period (481CE-843CE), was that lay people (in the west) were not considered important in the

relations between the empire *regnum* and the Church *sacerdotium.* Lay people were relegated to

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[118] Colman J. Barry ed. *Readings in Church History: From Pentecost to the Protestant Revolution,* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1960), 141.
[119] Ibid., 76-77.
[120] Kenan B. Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church Its History and Theology*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 170.
[121] Ibid., 173.
[122] Francine Cardman, "Who Did What in the Church in the First Millennium," in *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church: Visioning Church Ministry Through the Wisdom of the Past* ed. Richard W. Miller II, (Liguori, Missouri: Ligouri press, 2005), 17.

the background such that in Church relations with the government the clergy received greater prestige while the laity lost their prestige.[123] Consequent upon this, co-responsibility, that had been evident in the early period of the Church, continued to diminish.

But this period of the Church's history also witnessed some lay leadership that had positive impact on the Church's pastoral ministry and administration. Two instances, at this period, that show the relevance of lay involvement in leadership in the Church are the rise of monasticism in the east and west, and the expansion of missionary work to the pagan Frankish lands, through the instrumentality of lay people. I shall now elaborate on these examples.

The fourth and fifth centuries saw the emergence and spread of monasticism in the east and in the west. St. Anthony of Egypt (292-348 CE), and St. Benedict of Nursia (480 CE through whom monasticism spread in the west) stood out at this period.[124] The spiritual thirst for God, which the religious status quo of the time could not satisfy, led people to search for God in the monastic life. Monasticism was a new kind of martyrdom that is not by blood but by a manner of life that separated one from the world, and fostered spiritual life with Christ.[125] The monastic movement in the east and west largely originated from the lay people and came about because people were dissatisfied with the Church which had become so attached to the state (world) that it was no longer offering them the spiritual satisfaction they needed.[126] These lay individuals took to the deserts or to other remote parts of the communities and became hermits, living alone or in communities with others. They provided spiritual guidance to many Christians who sought them in those remote areas. Thus we see lay people demonstrating spiritual leadership in the Church at

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[123] Ibid., 171.

[124] Henry Cowan, *Landmarks of Church History to the Reformation,* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Co, 1973), 56.

[125] Ibid., 153.

[126] Joseph H. Lynch and Philip C. Adamo, *The Medieval Church: A Brief History*, second edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014) 29-30.

a time that the services provided by the clergy could not satisfy their spiritual thirst.[127] The

monks' life of total dedication to God challenged the status quo in the Church which had become

so immersed in the society, thereby, becoming spiritually lax.[128]

As revival in spiritual life was promoted through the monastic tradition, new pathways of

mission were also opening up that involved the evangelization of the pagan nations. In the sixth

century, the Frankish King Clovis (died in 511 CE), and his wife Clothilde, were instrumental in

the evangelization of these pagan Frankish nations.[129] The fifth to eighth centuries were a time

of mission and evangelization in the Church. The authority of the Roman empire had failed in

the west and new opportunities for mission had opened up with the ethnic groups of the British

Isles. As such, the success of this mission was largely dependent on the leadership of the king,

Clovis, who came into power around 382. Through the instrumentality of his wife, Clothilde, and

the persuasion of the bishops of the region, Clovis converted to Catholicism and was baptized

along with three thousand of his soldiers.[130] It was through Clovis (and his wife), and a century

later, king Ethelbert of Kent, who allowed the catholic bishops in the nearby territories to send

missionaries to the people of the British Isles, that Christianity was able to spread to those

places.[131] Thus, the history of the Church at this time, shows how the mission of the Church

depended on the good will/co-operation of lay people, Clovis and his wife, for its advancement.

b) The Later Medieval Period—900 CE to 1500 CE

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[127] Lynch, *The Church's Story: A History of Pastoral Care and Vision,* (Boston, MA: Pauline Books, 2005), 86-87.
[128] Lynch and Adamo, *The Medieval Church*, 29.
[129] Howard Clark Kee, Emily Albu, Carter Lindberg, J. William Frost and Dana L. Robert, *Christianity: A Social and Cultural History,* second edition, ed. Charlyce Jones Owen (New Jersey: Pre ntice-Hall, Inc., 1998), 164.
[130] Cardman, "Who Did What in the Church in the First Millennium," in *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church*, 25-26.
[131] Ibid., 26.

In the later centuries of the medieval Church, we begin to see a resurgence of lay involvement in Church mission.[132] This resurgence can be seen in different areas of the Church and societal life. At this period, for example, lay people began to organize themselves as members of prayer groups, and to form apostolic institutes that preached and carried out different works of charity.[133] The missionary/pastoral zeal of these lay organizations, and the impact they made in the spiritual, and social life of people help to define this era as an era of lay resurgence in the Church.

Notable in this era (1000 CE-1100 CE) is the action of some lay men and women who, thirsting for a deeper spiritual life began to organize themselves to read, share and pray with some scriptural passages. To be able to read and reflect on a particular passage of the scripture, these men and women had to make do with some hand copied passages of the bible. There was no printing press at the time. The clerical leadership at the time did not provide them with the spiritual nourishment that they sought. With time, these groups flourished and spread in other regions of the Western Church providing spiritual nourishment to many people.[134]

The reform that the lay apostolic institutes introduced in the manner of doing ministry in the Church is equally worthy of note. The mendicant orders of the 12th and 13th centuries which were founded by lay people also followed in the example of providing spiritual guide and nourishment to people. They did this, not by staying in enclosures or by waiting for people to come to them, but by going out to encounter people on the streets and in the market places. This differed from the traditional way of monastic and parish-church based model of waiting for people to approach the clerics.

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[132] Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church,* 116-117.
[133] Lynch, *The Church's Story,* 132
[134] Osborne, "Who Did What in the Church in the Second Millennium?," in *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church,* 34-35.

Francis of Assisi (1181-1226 CE), a pioneer of this group of Mendicants and, belonging to the merchant class, embraced the life of poverty and together with the members that he had attracted to himself lived by begging for alms.[135] Through this way, Francis and his group (later known as Franciscans) responded to the pastoral needs of the time which was necessitated by the social changes happening at the time. In Assisi, the population of people migrating to the cities due to the new possibilities that the cities offered had a huge impact on the Church. Churches could no longer support the pastoral ministry of helping the poor due to large numbers of people in need of help. The monastic system of the time could, also, not support the new pastoral need of the time as monks lived in enclosures, many of which were remote.[136]

Francis and his companions responded to the pastoral need of their time by embracing the life of poverty, itinerancy and begging so as to sustain themselves and help the poor and the sick. They found their place not in the quiet solitude of the monastery but in the busy streets of the cities, and in later years, in the newly formed universities of Paris, Oxford, and in mission work abroad to North Africa and Middle East.[137] The Church was, however, wary of these lay groups, and some of the male groups were later subsumed into vowed clerical associations.[138] Thus, by the eleventh century (1000 C.E), much of the male monasteries had become clerical.[139]

The crusades of the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries also gave visibility to lay involvement in the Church. It helped to register the later medieval period as an era of greater co-responsibility in the Church. This was a period the Christian world of the west engaged in embittered battles with

[135] Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* Revised Edition vol 1, (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), 358-359.
[136] Ibid., 257.
[137] Tim Dowley ed. *Introduction to the History of Christianity*, third edition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018) 221.
[138] Thomas F. O'Meara, "Being a Ministering Church: Insights from History," in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry: Pathway Towards the Future*, ed. Zeni Fox (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield publishers, 2010), 56.
[139] Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 276.

Muslims to reclaim the holy city of Jerusalem from the Muslims.[140] The people (knights) who fought the wars understood themselves to be doing a religious duty. They travelled and fought with the assurance that the warfare they were engaging in was not sinful but was for the remission of sins and for their salvation.[141] The basis for this belief was because the crusades were supported/fostered by the Church, and the knights received the blessings of the Church for the holy war they were embarking on.[142] Thus the knights were seen as the new martyrs who, like the disciples of Jesus, were fearless in their service to God.[143]

The resurgence of lay people in ministry at this medieval period can also be attributed to the rise of university schools in Europe. Many lay men and women took advantage of the university opportunity of the twelfth to sixteenth centuries to obtain academic qualifications in the humanities of the time. This educational opportunity for the lay people also helped them to secure civil as well as ecclesiastical jobs, which before then, they could not have engaged in.[144] To say that the later medieval period was a time of lay resurgence does not mean that everything was a bed of roses for the lay person. There were still situations that hindered lay people from full participation in ministry.

In the eleventh to the fifteenth century, there was a strong focus on formalizing the sacraments. The scholastic theology of this period helped to formalize the sacraments into seven, and to clericalize them.[145] The result of this clericalization of the sacraments was that it removed the laity further away from ministerial functions of celebrating these sacraments.[146] The laity became

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[140] Lynch, *The Church's Story*, 136.
[141] Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church,* 363.
[142] Ibid.*,* 362-363.
[143] Ibid., 364.
[144] Kee, Albu, Lindberg, Frost and Robert, *Christianity,* 234.
[145] Dowley, *Introduction to the History of Christianity*, 221.
[146] Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church,* 279.

more of passive receivers of the sacraments from the clergy. The Church of this period also had a strong sense of the sacred such that persons, buildings, etc were made holy and, therefore, were set apart for the worship of God.[147] In this regard, the clergy as people set apart, began to be seen in a greater degree as the people who can celebrate the sacraments.

2.2.3. The Early Modern Age—1600 CE to 1800 CE

The modern age was an age of greater lay impact in the society and in the Church. Through an organized mechanism of revolutions, lay people demanded their rights, and changed the course of history. Two major revolutions stood out in this era: the French and the American Revolutions.

The French revolution (1785-1799) brought about the separation of Church and State and is often taken to mark the beginning of modernity.[148] In France the Church was associated with the aristocrats who oppressed the masses. Church leaders acquired a lot of wealth such that much of the nation's wealth was under the control of the bishops who were, also, predominantly from the noble families.[149] This situation cast the Church in a negative light before the masses who, along with the revolution, were now turning their backs at some of the Church's teaching while embracing the new found freedom that modernity and democracy offered them.

 The new orientation of the society to democracy, modernism, freedom and equality of every individual put the Church in a hostile position where it had to struggle to accommodate itself with the reality of modernity that was unfolding before it.[150] For the masses, the idea of *Fraternite, Egalite, and Liberte* and *"all men (and women) were created equal"* was the truth to

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[147] Ibid.
[148] Lynch, *The Church's Story*, 201.
[149] Ibid., 202.
[150] Ibid., 201.

be pursued.[151] Through the revolution, the masses rejected the idea of divine right to leadership and chose the democratic way of governance.[152]

In the United States, the American war of independence (1776), like the French Revolution, brought to focus the question of the role of the individual in the society, and of his/her inalienable rights. Both the French and the American revolutions, representing the spirit of the age, found their greatest expression in the declaration of the human rights. This declaration reshaped relations in society and in Church where everybody is now equal before the law and has inalienable rights and obligations that must be respected. This claim of equality, and of rights and obligations of all people did not go well with the Church leaders who have modeled the Church on the model of the aristocratic leadership where their subjects are regarded as servants.[153] The position of the Church hierarchy was defensive and suspicious of any lay initiatives, many of which the Church saw as anti-clerical.

2.2.4. The Late Modern and Early Contemporary Age—1850 CE to 2000 CE

The period of the twentieth century was a period of search for identity in the Church. The position of the Church against modernism, which was highlighted, in the previous century's *Syllabus of Errors* of pope Pius IX (1864), and the decree on papal infallibility of the First Vatican Council (1868-1870), put the Church in a bad light and set off anti-clerical sentiments in many nations.[154] People understood papal infallibility as a quest for absolute supremacy by the pope, and so they opposed it.

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[151] Osborne, "Who Did What in the Church in the Second Millennium?," *Lay Ministry in the Catholic Church*, 44-45.
[152] Dowley, *Introduction to the History of Christianity*, 459.
[153] Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 464-466.
[154] John W. O'Malley, *A History of the Popes: From Peter to the Present,* (Lanham, Maryland, Sheed and Ward; 2010), 249.

Many nations did not also appreciate the encyclical because these nations were already beginning to build their society on the ideas of freedom, equality of all people, etc which the encyclical was condemning. The Church saw in these modern trends of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, the separation of Church and State, what it terms "evils" of modernity and held that modern ideas entrenched atheism and destroy the order that God has instilled in society. But in doing so the Church isolated itself from the world.[155]

Along with the *Syllabus of Errors* and *papal infallibility,* the twentieth century was also a period of the great wars in the world. The first and second world wars, the national/regional wars going on in Africa and Asia (Vietnamese, Korean, Biafran wars etc) all helped to characterize this century and to raise questions on the role and place of the Church in society. Many of these nations that were at war were Christian nations where it was supposed that Christianity would help to cultivate peace and fraternal life.

The rise of communism in Eastern Europe with its anti-religious views; and increase in scientific and technological advancements of the twentieth century, all added to the questioning of the identity of the Church in the world.[156] Thus the aura of sacred that religion used to hold began to give way to modern logical and empirical way of thinking which questioned everything that the Church held as tradition.[157]

The contemporary Church, since the Second Vatican Council, has tried to recover the role of the lay person in the Church. The Church sees the place of lay people from the context of their role in the world. The document *Christifideles Laici*, as mentioned earlier, holds that the Church "has

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[155] Ibid., 227-229.

[156] Osborne, *Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, 520.

[157] Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), 3.

an authentic secular dimension, inherent to her inner nature and mission…"[158] This secular

character, the document says, "is properly and particularly that of the lay faithful."[159] This means

that in carrying out their duties imbued with the gospel values as men and women in society, lay

people are engaging in the mission of the Church which aims at bringing the gospel of Jesus into

the fabrics of the societal life.

Lay people also engage in the service of the Church within the Church in what is known as lay

ecclesial ministry. Although the Second Vatican Council did not say much on lay ministry, it

often used the term "apostolate" to express the work that lay people do.[160] In many parts of

Europe and North America, many lay persons are now engaging in the Church's ministry. Lay

persons now serve as extra ordinary ministers of the Eucharist, readers, catechists, directors of

religious education, hospital chaplains, pastoral associates etc.[161]

All these lay services notwithstanding, many clergy still look at lay initiatives in the Church as

encroachment into the clergy area of work. Thus, clericalism is a factor that still hinders a fuller

collaboration between the clergy and the laity in the contemporary Church ministry.

2.4.3. Conclusion

From the foregoing one can say that relations in the Church have been fluctuating between a

surge and a decline. The early centuries of the Church saw a co-responsible participation of the

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[158] *ChristiFideles Laici,* no 15.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Edward Paul Hahnenberg, "The Emergence and Sources of Lay Ecclesial Ministry" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, Indiana, 2002), 13. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
[161] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry,*(Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 9.

believers in the ministry of the Church, as Cyprian's letters mentioned above attest to.[162] But the subsequent centuries leading up to the Second Vatican Council saw the lay persons as secondary members of the Church. Their work was seen as a participation in the work of the clergy.[163] But the times of lay involvements helped to revitalize the Church. However, most of these times came about not because there was a recognition of the role of the laity in the Church, but as a result of lay initiatives and reactions against the status quo of laxity and neglect of the laity by the hierarchy. Looking at the contemporary times, one can say that improvements have been made in the relations between the clergy and the laity, especially, as it pertains to lay ecclesial ministry, and the general participation of the laity in the Church. However, more efforts are needed to foster understanding and acceptance, and to allow the budding cooperation in ministry between the laity and the clergy to grow.

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[162] Sullivans, "St. Cyprian on the Role of the Laity in Decision Making in the Early Church," in *Common Calling,* 39.

[163] Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church*, (New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2002), 27.

Chapter Three

Catechetical Ministry in the Church of South Eastern Nigeria

Catechesis has been an essential aspect of the Church's ministry in the transmission of faith. It has its root in Jesus' command to his disciples to go and teach and baptize, and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:29). In the Church of South Eastern Nigeria, children and adult catechesis happen constantly in churches, in schools, in basic Christian communities etc. But the question is, how does the Church of South Eastern Nigeria understand relations between the clergy and the laity in its catechetical ministry? And, how does the Church's (South Eastern Nigeria) understanding of relations in catechetical ministry affect the faith formation of the people?

To focus with this chapter, I shall explain the term catechesis and how it is done in the Church of South Eastern Nigeria. I will, also, answer the questions of how the Church of Eastern Nigeria understands relation between the clergy and the laity in its catechetical ministry, and the effects this understanding has on faith formation. To answer these questions, I shall look at some relevant theological works and Nigerian Church document(s). I will look at the catechetical models of the early missionaries to Eastern Nigeria and the contemporary catechetical models of the Church in the South Eastern Nigeria. The factors that disposed the indigenous people to the reception of the gospel message, or that hinder a deep and committed faith in the Church will also be discussed. From these expositions, I will offer an alternative way of doing ministry that will be more inclusive and participatory.

3.1. What is Catechesis?

The General Directory for Catechesis says that catechesis is one of the moments in the evangelization process.[164] The catechetical moment is that "moment which corresponds to the period in which conversion to Jesus Christ is formalized and provides a basis for first adhering to him."[165] This is to say that catechetical moment begins from the time of one's conversion to the faith—(conversion) which is often brought about through the proclamation of the word of God. As such catechesis is a process of formation (apprenticeship) or educating in faith that begins from the moment of conversion and lasts for a lifelong period. Catechesis helps in the formation of a mature Christian faith, and aims at encouraging a fruitful living and expression of faith, which is a lifelong endeavor.[166] This is to say that proper catechesis is important in faith formation because Catechesis is the transmission of the faith of the Church to her members, and when this transmission is not done well, there is lack of depth in Christian witnessing, especially in the face of challenges that might test the faith.[167]

In the evangelization process, the moment of initial catechesis is important. This is so because initial catechesis lays the foundation on which further formation in faith is done, and is closely tied to the sacraments of Christian initiation. Thus, it is necessary for adequate care to be given to initial catechesis for a proper understanding of the faith from the beginning. The connection between catechesis and the sacraments flows from Jesus' command to his disciples to go and preach and to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them (Mt 28:19-20). Thus, instruction and the sacrament(s) go hand in hand.

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[164] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *General Directory for Catechesis,* 7rd ed., (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004), no 63.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid., no 67.
[167] Ibid., no 79.

In this regard, Pope John Paul II emphasizes the formation of the agents of evangelization. In his words, "the whole community needs to be trained, motivated and empowered for evangelization, each according to his/her specific role in the Church."[168] This is important because "the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church…Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize."[169] If catechesis is the Church's transmission of its faith to its members, how is that faith being transmitted to the people of eastern Nigeria?

3.2.1. Missionary Work in South Eastern Nigeria: 1485-1655

The Portuguese missionaries first made contact with Nigeria for the purpose of evangelization in the fifteenth century (1485). Part of their success was the baptism of the king of Benin six years later. Later in 1591, the Jesuits made contact with Nigeria, followed later on in 1655 by the Spanish Capuchin Friars.[170] The Jesuits as well as the Capuchins succeeded in baptizing the kings of Benin. Their missionary endeavors, like those of the Portuguese, did not last long, because of the challenges of the tropical climate, language barrier, and the Portuguese war with Spain at the time. All these factors contributed to the discontinuation of their missionary endeavor in Nigeria.[171]

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[168] John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa *Ecclesia in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000*, (Washington, D.C: United States Catholic Conference, 1995), no 53.
[169] Ibid., no 55.
[170] Nkem Hyginus M. V. Chigere, *Foreign Missionary Background and Indigenous Evangelization in Igboland,* (Munster: Lit., 2001), 108.
[171] Gabriel T. Wankar, *The Dual Reality of Salvation and the Church in Nigeria,* (New York, N.Y: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2017), 27.

3. 2.2. The Holy Ghost Fathers and Their Catechetical Work of 1885—1960s

However, the nineteenth century saw a renewed missionary activity in Nigeria championed by the Society of African Missions (SMA) and, later, in the eastern part of Nigeria by the CMS Mission (Anglican), and the Holy Ghost Fathers. The French and the Irish Holy Ghost missionaries were, mostly, the evangelizers of the eastern Nigeria.[172] The Holy Ghost Fathers became more popular in South Eastern Nigeria because, unlike the CMS, the Holy Ghost Fathers combined the preaching of the word of God with charity work, agriculture and education.[173] These aspects of their mission touched the needs of the indigenous people and helped to win their hearts.

Fr Joseph Lutz (1853-1895) and his Holy Ghost missionary companions landed at Onitsha for mission in 1885. Shortly after, in 1900 and 1902, two other known figures in the evangelization of the Igbo people, Fr. Leon Lejeune (1860-1905), and Fr. Joseph Shanahan (1871-1943) joined the mission. Shanahan later became the first bishop of the mission area.[174] These missionaries recorded "success" in their missionary endeavor, within a short period of time, because of the natural disposition of the indigenous *Igbo* people to religion, and because of the models of evangelization which they employed. They employed a model of evangelization that could be said to be participatory, and respectful of the local ways of life. Shanahan, for example, was said to be persuasive in his approach of appealing to the locals to a better way (Christian) of worshipping the great God whom they already know and worship in their traditional ways.[175] This participatory and respectful model of evangelizing could be seen in the running of the

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[172] John Baur, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History, second revised edition* (Nairobi, Kenya: Pauline Publications, 1998), 147-149.
[173] Chigere, *Foreign Missionary Background and Indigenous Evangelization in Igboland* , 172-184.
[174] Baur, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa,* 149-151.
[175] Ibid., 151.

Christian villages which the missionaries instituted, and in their use of the indigenous people as catechists and agents of evangelization. We shall discuss these points further.

3.2.3. The *Igbo* People and their Disposition to Life

For the *Igbo* people as I explained in chapter one, family is very important. Family forms the basis of every community.[176] There are two major phases in family, the nuclear family and the extended family. The extended family comprises of the sons of a father together with their wives and children. An extended family, known as *umunna*, usually comprises of people who trace a common paternal ancestry up to the fourth or fifth generation. The *Igbo* life in this basic form of community, just as it is in the nuclear family of a man and his wife and children, is fraternal because everyone sees the other as a brother or a sister.[177] Without belonging to a community (ostracization, etc) one is considered as good as nothing. It is the community, in *Igbo* society, that gives one meaning.

The *Igbo* people have a unitary view of life. Reality, for them is a web of interconnectedness because everything is related to the other. Every life comes from *Chukwu*, the great God who has placed human beings at the center of his creation. The duty of human beings includes channeling the reality around them to their own benefit.[178] And, as Orobator would affirm, "religious practice is essentially oriented towards enhancing and strengthening life broadly conceived. Whether in ritual, worship, or divination, the primary benefit of religious allegiance is derived

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[176] Peter Osuchukwu, *The Spirit of Umunna and the Development of Small Christian Communities in Igboland*, (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 1995), 29.
[177] Ibid., 36.
[178] Ambrose Chineme Agu, *The Eucharist and Igbo Communal Spirit: Towards a Solid Inculturation of Christian Faith in Igboland,* (Wurzburg: Echter, 2004), 58.

from the belief that such practice enhances life-force of devotees individually and collectively."[179]

Reality is thus viewed through the lens of religion and unity of all things. In this sense, there is no dualism between the profane and the sacred. Everything has a sacredness to it.[180] In this regard also, Pope John Paul II, writes in his post synodal exhortation on the Synod of Africa that "Africans have a profound religious sense, a sense of the sacred, of the existence of God the Creator and of a spiritual world. The reality of sin in its individual and social forms is very much present in the consciousness of these peoples, as is also the need for rites of purification and expiation."[181] All these communal structures, and the natural dispositions of the *Igbo* people to religion were essential in the reception of the gospel message from the missionaries. We shall see this reception play out in the Christian villages formed by the missionaries and in the wider *Igbo* Church which the missionaries established to be an inclusive and participatory Church.

3.2.4. The Christian villages

In the beginning of the missionary work of the Holy Ghost Fathers, those who made up the Christian community were largely comprised of the outcasts of the society, such as those who were ostracized from the community due to one abomination or the other, and slaves bought and freed by the missionaries. Trade in slavery was still in vogue at the time. The missionaries established Christian villages where these local indigenes and other converts in good standing with the local community lived and were formed in the Christian faith. The Christian villages were modeled in a manner that separated the Christian converts from other members of the local

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[179] Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *Religion and Faith in Africa: Confessions of an Animist*, (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2018), 95.
[180] Ibid., 58.
[181] *Ecclesia in Africa*, no 42.

community. These Christian converts practiced a communal life of prayer, catechesis, manual

labor, etc.[182] Life in the Christian village can be said to be a semi- monastic one as members had

set times for their community programs. The community formed a choir and rehearsed songs

which they rendered with great admiration from the whole Church. Major feasts such as

Christmas and Easter were celebrated with great festivity and with a well prepared liturgy that

merited the commendation of the missionary clergy themselves. Catechesis was not only for new

members but all participated in the Sunday afternoon catechesis besides the catechetical

instructions given during mass. A conference was also usually given after the evening

benediction on Sundays. Other days of pious devotion to the Sacred Heart and to other sodalities

were also opportunities for instruction in the faith.[183]

This manner of evangelizing both those seen as in good standing with the wider Igbo community

(the free citizens) and those regarded as outcasts and renegades (slaves bought back and freed by

the missionaries, and other dissidents of the community who took refuge in the Christian

communities) in the same community had its merits and demerits.[184] One of the merits of this

style of catechizing is that it is a concrete example of the Pauline doctrine that in Christ there is

no longer distinction between free people and slaves, male and female, but that all are one in

Christ Jesus (Gal. 3: 28). As such it is a form of catechizing that expresses in a concrete way the

power and newness of the gospel message that pulls down walls of hostility/difference among

people, and that creates new life and community in Christ. This community witnesses to a

mutual ministry whereby each, with their talents, contribute to the good of the community.

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[182] Donatus Emeka Onyemaobi Ogudo, *The Catholic Missionaries and the Liturgical Movement in Nigeria An Historical Overview, vol.1:The Holy Ghost Fathers and Catholic Worship Among the Igbo People of Eastern Nigeria*, (Druckerei Paderborn: Verlag Bonifatius 1988), 47-48.
[183] Ibid., 47, 50-51.
[184] Osuchukwu, *The Spirit of Umunna and the Development of Small Christian Communities in Igboland*, 151.

But while the aim of instituting the Christian villages may have been to give the new converts a space where they could thrive without fear of adulteration in the new life they were being introduced into, this move had the disadvantage of cutting the people away from their fellow members of the community thereby creating a dichotomy that was not there before. This assertion is supported by the fact that the Christian village comprised of school, dispensary, orphanage and Church which made it a "self-sufficient" establishment.[185] The effects of this dichotomy of people in the *Igbo* community will be discussed further.

3.2.5. The Teacher-Catechists

One of the ways the missionaries tried to approach the evangelization of the Eastern Nigeria was to involve the indigenous people whom they trained as teacher-catechists. Early in their mission work, the Holy Ghost Fathers identified education as a means of evangelizing the *Igbo* people. The Christian villages which began under Fr. Lutz were too expensive to maintain, and had the negative effect, as mentioned above, of separating its members from the wider Igbo community that they belonged to. This had a huge implication, as I have already said, for the people as *Igbo* people's life are built around the *umunna* (community) kinship system. The other negative implication of the Christian village system was that most of the teachers and catechists were former slaves. But in *Igbo* culture, slaves held little or no position among the people. As such, the evangelization of the people was negatively impacted as people did not accept the message of the slaves.[186]

All the negative effects of the Christian village system mentioned above, and the better prospects that modern education would bring to the evangelization of the people, led to the establishment

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[185] Ogudo, *The Catholic Missionaries and the Liturgical Movement in Nigeria An Historical Overview, vol.1*, 48.
[186] Baur, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa,* 149.

of schools by the missionaries. However, the missionaries built schools only after having

established friendly rapports with the local leaders, the civil leaders and the indigenous people.[187]

This initiative to create a favorable atmosphere between themselves and the indigenous/civil

leaders was to enable them to win the heart of the *Igbo* people which was necessary for the

success of their missionary endeavor. Shanahan defended his decision for focusing on schools by

holding that through the schools the whole country would be won for Christ. He believed that the

school children would open every home to the missionary, and through them, as tiny apostles,

their parents would gradually be converted to Christ.[188]

Members of the Christian community who showed good intellectual aptitude were trained as

teachers and, also, acted as catechists. The catechists received training in sacred chants and

ceremonies of the Church. Their job was to go to teach the Christian faith in the villages,

especially in those areas where the missionaries were not frequent in visiting.[189] The catechists

also baptized persons in danger of death after which they reported the cases to the priests.[190]

Bernard J. Kelly, writing on the pioneer work of Bishop Joseph Shanahan, comments that

"without the help of the teachers very little could have been achieved. To their help we must add

that of the people themselves."[191] He writes of the impression the catechists and the people made

on Shanahan thus: "Fr. Shanahan saw goodness in the people. He described them as 'wonderful'

people. The chiefs, for example, were wonderful old fellows full of natural dignity."[192] The local

community leaders, on their part, appreciated Shanahan's attitude and showed themselves

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[187] Blaise Okachibe Okpanachi, *Nigerian-Vatican Diplomatic Relations: Evangelisation and Catholic Missionary Enterprise 1884-1950*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 2013), 99-100.
[188] Baur, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa,* 150.
[189] Okpanachi, *Nigerian-Vatican Diplomatic Relations,* 87-88.
[190] Ibid., 129.
[191] Bernard J. Kelly, *Bishop Shannahan, Pioneer Irish Missionary in Africa and Founder of The Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary, Killeshandra*, (Dublin, Ireland: Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, 1961), 12.
[192] Ibid.

worthy leaders of their people such that "in innumerable cases the faith entered new areas through the goodwill of the chiefs."[193] Thus we see the cooperation of the missionaries and the indigenous *Igbo* people in the expansion of the mission work of the Spiritans.

This way of shared responsibility with the catechists, in the catechetical/pastoral ministry by the early Holy Ghost missionaries, was in tandem with the vision of the inclusive ministry of their co-founder Francis Mary Paul Libermann (1804-1852). Libermann believed in respect for local cultures and wanted that Africans should be included as agents in their own Christian formation. He had the foresight that adaptation is necessary for the survival of the local Church. Hence Libermann advised his missionaries to "make yourselves black with the blacks and you will judge them the way they ought to be judged. Make yourselves blacks with the blacks in order to train them the way they ought to be taught, imposing nothing from your own view point, but conceding them that which is proper to them."[194]

Shanahan made good use of this advice of their co-founder, Libermann, especially when he spoke to the people concerning the Eucharist. For example, discovering that the *Igbo* people have deep sentiments for cults relating to sacrifices, Shanahan speaks to them of the Eucharist as a sacrifice for the expiation of sins.[195] In so doing, he creates a connection between the traditional *Igbo* notion of sacrifice and the Eucharist. This helped to give fecundity to faith in the Eucharist in *Igboland*. This art of using people's experience of life, proverbs, people's material culture etc, became for Shanahan a means of explicating the gospel message.[196]

3.2.6. The Missionary Catechetical Work of the 1930s-1960s

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[193] Ibid.
[194] Ibid., 99.
[195] Ogudo, *The Catholic Missionaries and the Liturgical Movement in Nigeria An Historical Overview, vol.1*, p 94.
[196] Joseph Healy & Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology,* (Nairobi, Kenya, Paulines Publications, 1996), 51.

The overall aim of catechesis, for the missionaries, was to give the indigenous people a solid

Christian foundation. Schools continued to be an essential means of catechizing the people. The

missionaries used the schools for the teaching of hymns that were disseminated to the parishes.

Religious education and other forms of catechetical instructions were among the core of the

school curriculum.[197] The fruits of the liturgical apostolate of this time are seen in the positive

responses given by the people to such liturgical activities as retreats, congresses, Eucharistic and

prayer vigils, and other forms of devotional activities which the people participated in with

devotion and eagerness.[198]

Gains made by the missionaries in their catechetical endeavor can also be seen in a greater

collaboration of the indigenous people (catechists, religious and clergy) in catechetical ministry

and in the evangelization of the people. This collaboration went along with the strengthening of

the catechetical schools, and parishes as structures of sound formation in faith, and the formation

of human resources/personnel, (catechists, clergy and religious) as indispensable collaborators of

the missionaries. The factors that show an attitude of co-responsible relation between the

missionaries and the laity at this time abound. Below is a brief look at these factors.

The missionaries produced catechetical books in the *Igbo* vernacular for the education of the

people. The catechists were among the major contributors in the translation, illustration and

compilation of these catechetical/liturgical books.[199] These catechetical materials were simple,

and contain the basics of the Christian teachings including hymns and prayers.[200] At Ihiala and

Uli, the missionaries opened catechetical centers for the formation of the catechists. The

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[197] Ogudo, *The Catholic Missionaries and the Liturgical Movement in Nigeria An Historical Overview, vol.1* 111-112.
[198] Ibid., 159.
[199] Ibid., 120-126.
[200] Ibid., 64-65.

formation period was between three to four years. The catechists also had monthly get-togethers and refreshers course programs.[201] These efforts by the missionaries and cooperation by the catechists who, sometimes had to leave their families behind so as to focus on their work, bore fruits in greater participation of the laity in liturgy.

The period of 1930s-1960s was also a period of the establishment of seminaries for the formation of priests. After undergoing changes and relocations, the junior and senior seminary that started at Igbariam, Enugu, in July 1924, later stabilized, in 1950, as the Bigard Memorial Seminary.[202] The pioneer indigenous students were William Obeleagu, Michael Tansi, and Joseph Nwanegbo. John Anyiogu, who had studied in England and taught for some years after his studies, was ordained a priest in 1930. Obeleagu, Tansi and Nwanegbo were ordained in 1937 as the second batch of indigenous priests. There were subsequent priestly ordinations, so that by 1960 there were as many as 30 indigenous priests serving in various places in Nigeria.[203]

It was not only vocation to the priesthood that flourished at this time. Notable at this time also was the beginning of vocation to the religious life. Thus, we witness the inception of such indigenous religious congregations as the Sisters of the Handmaid of Jesus (1931). Though this congregation was established in Calabar, *Ibibioland*, it had many *Igbo* members. This period also saw the beginning of the sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (1937) by bishop Heerey at Ihiala, and the Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy (1961), alongside Daughters of Divine Love Sisters founded in 1969.[204] Other congregations continue to emerge after this period. All these show that the concern of the missionaries at this time was to make the *Igbo* Community a part of the missionary evangelization/catechesis of their own *Igbo* people and beyond.

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[201] Ibid., 86-89.
[202] Chigere, *Foreign Missionary Background and Indigenous Evangelization in Igboland,* 289-291.
[203] Ibid., 291.
[204] Ibid., 292-293.

3.3. Modern/Contemporary Catechetical Ministry in the Church in Eastern Nigeria: 1970—Date

The period from the 1970 to date is a period of concentration of catechetical work in the hands of the indigenous *Igbo* people. By this time of the post Nigerian—Biafran civil war (1967-1970), which saw to the expulsion of many missionaries from *Igboland* by the Nigerian government, much of the eastern society had been evangelized and parishes/mission centers established in many places.[205] One of the features of the Church that emerged in the *Igboland,* just as in many other African nations from the time of the missionaries, writes Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator is that "Christianity in modern Africa did not take root and spread from the center of political power, as the early missionaries had planned and hoped for. Rather it evolved in the craters of Christian villages, mission outposts, and mission houses, the vast majority of which were refuges and safe havens for social rejects or, in the apt depiction of the eminent historian of Christianity in Africa, Adrian Hastings, the dregs of African society."[206] This is part of the resilience of Christianity in *Igboland* despite the political and economic challenges that face the society.

Catechetical ministry continued in the line of mutual ministry fashioned by the nineteenth century missionaries whereby the faithful engaged actively in catechizing/evangelizing their members. Chigere records that shortly before the visit of Pope John Paul II to Nigeria in 1982, the Catholic diocese of Orlu had only 24 parishes. The diocese began in 1981. But in 1999 shortly after the second visit of the pope, the diocese already had about 90 parishes.[207] The reason for this huge expansion is attributed to the understanding and co-responsibility that existed in the mission churches of *Igboland*. The strategy of creating parishes and mission posts along the line of community kinship ties helped to promote the evangelization of the people.

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[205] Ibid., 312.
[206] Orobator, *Religion and Faith in Africa*, 42.
[207] Chigere, *Foreign Missionary Background and Indiginous Evangelization in Igboland*, 469.

As mentioned before, the *Igbo* people have a great sense of kinship ties and healthy competitive spirit. The setting up of Christian communities along this line of community ties meant that people accepted themselves as fellow members of the community. Reporting on the benefit of this strategy to pastoral ministry, and also the benefit of the healthy competitive spirit of the *Igbo* people, Chigere writes that they "fulfill making evangelization real life-events as well as the need to be apostles and workers to themselves, thereby making converts among themselves and by themselves as well as forming themselves into a community by themselves and this aims at self elevation."[208] Thus we see in the community, a sense of cooperation among the Christians and with their leaders which leads to the promotion of harmonious relations, and to grass root conversion. The Church in South Eastern Nigeria now can boast of many men and women clergy and religious that it has produced and who serve the local churches in Nigeria and beyond. But the concentration of administration of the *Igbo* Catholic Church in the hands of the indigenous clergy has its challenges vis-à-vis relations with the laity. We shall discuss these challenges in the light of the Second Vatican Council.

The Second Vatican Council has encouraged full participation of the faithful in the celebration of the liturgies.[209] Efforts have been made since then by the local Church of the South Eastern Nigeria to implement this recommendation by the Council. In Africa, and in the Church of South Eastern Nigeria in particular, such reform efforts to make the Church more inclusive and participatory include, "the use of vernacular language; the adoption of local liturgical hymnody accompanied by drums, gongs and other native instruments, hand clapping, rhythmical swaying,

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[208] Ibid.
[209] Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* (4 Dec. 1963) no 14, at The Holy See. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html,

and dancing; and the increasing visibility of local liturgical art and architecture."[210] These, as we have seen, earlier on, were already being practiced by the missionaries.

Many pious organizations which serve the spiritual needs of the faithful are now, like before, also being promoted. Among them include the league of St. Anthony, the Sacred Heart league, the Legion of Mary, Blue Army, the Charismatic group etc. These associations are attracting many members, and reflect the positive contribution of the lay people who, in the most part, are the organizers and recruiters of new members. Other associations such as the Catholic Men Organization, the Catholic Women organization, Young Christian Girls and Young Christian Boys, the Pastoral Council Committee, the laity Council etc also have emerged. All these elements have begun to make the South Eastern Church more inclusive and participatory. They do this, for example, in such things as the labor force the youths provide for the Church; in the advice the pastoral council committee and the other organizations often offer to the parish priest towards a more effective pastoral plan for the parish; and in the contribution of the women in ensuring that the material welfare of the priests and the seminarians are taken care of.

3.4. Challenges to Catechesis and their Effects in the Church of Eastern Nigeria

One of the challenges of the Church in South Eastern Nigeria is that many of the indigenous Church leaders, unlike the example of the missionaries, operate in a feudalistic manner that is very much concerned with power.[211] This is an obstacle towards a more dynamic and participatory Church. The feudalistic manner of administration of the Church derives from two

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[210] Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language, Introduction to Christian Worship: An African Orientation*, (Collegeville, Minnesota, 1997), 271.
[211] Elochukwu Uzukwu, "The Birth and Development of a Local Church: Difficulties and Signs of Hope," in *Concilium, no1: Towards the African Synod*, eds. Giuseppe Alberigo and Alphonse Ngindu Mushete, (London: SCM Press 1992), 17.

major understandings: first is the Western pyramidal notion of Church administration, and second is the *Igbo* traditional understanding of the priesthood.

The pyramidal understanding of the Church sees the bishop as the extension of the pope, the priests as the extension of the bishop, and the laity as in the service of the clergy. This does not allow for a co-responsible ministry between the clergy and the laity but subordinates the ministry of the laity to that of the clergy. This can be seen as a pattern in the contemporary Church of South Eastern Nigeria in which, according to Wankar, "the average Nigerian faithful is typically deferential, perhaps even dependent, on the priests and bishops, especially when compared to most American faithful."[212] This attitude can be traced from the type of formation given to the priests in the seminary, and to the type of catechetical formation given to the laity. Stan Chu Ilo identifies the banking system of catechizing/educating in faith as a source of such dependent attitude. In his assessment, the catechetical instructions in Africa are still based on the idea of memorizing and repeating without questioning.[213] This banking system of education fosters the dependency attitude that is seen in the Church's practice of ministry and witnessing to faith.

Looking at the seminary formation of the priests in Nigeria, one sees that the present formation system fosters a sense of clericalism and entitlement. The formation system, as Wankar pointed out, is such that it emphasizes the cognitive more than the affective and intuitive dimensions of the human person.[214] Thus, seminarians put all their efforts towards passing their exams more than in developing good relational skills that will help them in ministry. Quoting George Ehusani, Wankar writes that "training in love, mercy and compassion, which are a function of

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[212] Wankar, *The Dual Reality of Salvation and the Church in Nigeria,* 34.
[213] Stan Chu Ilo, "The Church of Francis: An Ecclesiology of Accountability, Accompaniment, and Action," in *The Church We Want: African Catholics Look to Vatican III* ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2016), p. 14.
[214] Wankar, *The Dual Reality of Salvation and the Church in Nigeria,* 35.

the affective faculty of the human personality, have often been neglected in favor of an all too intellectual approach to catechesis and theology. The result is that we often have more professionals, scholars, and scrupulous functionaries among the clergy and religious than transformed men and women whose hearts have been won over by the love of God in Christ."[215]

The emphasis on the cognitive dimension of seminary formation, which creates professionals, and scrupulous functionaries, breeds clericalism that sees the laity as inferiors or servants to the clergy. As such, the sharp distinction between the "priestly job" of teaching, administering the sacraments, and running of the Church, and the work of the laity to listen and do as the clergy tells them to, contributes to the fact that adequate encouragement of the laity to train or to engage in catechetical ministry, and to take initiatives of their own is still lacking.[216] This assertion does not deny the effort of the Church of the South Eastern Nigeria to train committed lay people as catechists and evangelists, especially through the catechetical schools and centers.

This effort could be seen in the *Evangelization 2000* movement of the Nigerian Catholic Church, in the 1990s, which eventually concretized into a *School of Evangelization 2000.* The aim of this school was the training of lay persons for evangelization work in Nigeria. This was a major way through which lay people participated in the catechetical ministry of the clergy.[217] Since the *School of evangelization 2000* was established, there has been other catechetical and theological schools for the training of lay people and clerics in the country. But these have not solved the problem of relations between the clergy and the laity.

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[215] Ibid.

[216] Mary J. Obiorah, "The Challenges of Full Participation of Laity in the Mission of the Church," HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies 76, no 4, a6000, (2020). https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v7514.6000.

[217] Chigere, *Foreign Missionary Background and Indigenous Evangelization in Igboland*, 547-548.

Although having schools of evangelization in the Nigerian Church is a huge achievement, there is still need to make these schools affordable, to encourage the lay faithful who feel called to ministry to enroll in them, and to build a relationship of equality as co-workers between these "lay ministers" and the clergy. Building a relationship of equality between the clergy and the "lay ministers" does not mean that there is no role differentiation between the clergy and the laity, but that each one's work should be acknowledged as an essential ministry for the growth of the Church. Some dispositions of the hierarchy may give an impression that the work of the "lay ministers" is inferior to that of the clergy. An example could be seen in some of the writings of the Nigerian bishops.

In the 2004 document of the Nigerian Bishops on the Nigerian Priest *I Chose You*, the bishops wrote that: *"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."*[218] This passage could be understood as a call for a fervent animation of the ecclesial community through the leadership of the priest, or as a reminder that the priest is the sole responsible person for the administration of the Church despite the help he might receive from his lay co-workers.

When understood in the latter sense of absolute power to the priest, the danger is that such understanding creates a sense of superiority/clericalism as is often seen in the Church. As such,

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[218] Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, *I Chose You: The Nigerian Priest in the Third Millennium*, (Abuja, Nigeria: Catholic Secretariat, 2004), 16.

the duty of the lectors or the catechism teachers, for example, is not seen as a "genuine" lay ministry that enhances the ministry of the priest. The lectors or catechism teachers can be discharged of their duty by the parish priest at will. This attitude neglects the fact that lay ministry is an ancient ministry in the Church and that catechists have been instrumental in the effectiveness of the Church's mission.[219] One would think that there should be a standard procedure for relieving an "ecclesial minister" of his/her duty, if need be. But such procedure, in the Church of South Eastern Nigeria, is either not established or followed. The priest's words or decisions are final in matters pertaining to the Church. Adolphus Ekedimma Amaefule's reflection on the theme of inculturation in the Nigerian Church in Chimamanda Adichie's book, *Purple Hibiscus* concentrates on this power dynamic and lack of adequate cooperation between the clergy and the lay faithful.[220]

Some of the factors that foster lack of cooperation in the South Eastern Nigerian Church can be traced back to the time of the early missionaries. Agu remarks that at the basis of all this superiority complex in the clergy, "is an inveterate clericalism which gives the false impression that the Church is owned by the clergy."[221] Agu also reminds that in the early days of Catholicism in *Igboland*, the priest's house was far removed from the inhabited areas of the village. As such, a sense of separateness and superiority was created in the mind of the clergy and the community alike. This sense of superiority was being supported by the fact that the priest's house was the "administrative seat" of the priest, who was virtually everything to the people: a medical doctor, a teacher, an employer, and, above all, a Churchman…. He adjudicated

[219] Francis, Apostolic Letter Issued "Motus Proprio" Instituting the Ministry of Catechist, *Antiquum Ministerium* (10 May 2021) nos 1&3, at The Holy See.
https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20210510_antiquum-ministerium.html.
[220] . Adolphus Ekedimma Amaefule, "The Roman Catholic Church in Nigeria and Liturgical Inculturation in Chimamanda Adichie's Purple Hibiscus", *Ecclesiology* 17 (2021), 79. DOI: 10.1163/17455316-BJA10002.
[221] Agu, *The Eucharist and Igbo Communal Spirit,* 228.

all Church-matters; he determined the running of the Church. His person was momentous; his dealings with the people, officious, his demands were imperative, and his life-style, exquisite."[222] This image of the priest has not changed much today.

Connecting the *Igbo* Catholic Church experience to the wider Nigerian Catholic Church experience, John Ekeocha writes that this regrettable absence of laity participation in the *Igbo* Church is equally true of the Nigerian Church in general. In this connection, Ekeocha quotes the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria saying that, "the lay population is yet to be fully integrated and legitimately involved in the pastoral life of the Church…. Lay people are sometimes mobilized solely to serve the specific interest of the hierarchy. They are hardly empowered to act in their areas of specialization, much less given the necessary formation."[223]

The second source of the feudalistic manner of Church administration in South Eastern Nigeria is the *Igbo* people's traditional understanding of the priesthood. The *Igbo* people have an understanding of the Catholic priesthood from the lens of the traditional religion. For the Igbo person, the priest is the mouth piece of the spirit he/she serves. From this lens, the members of the Catholic clergy are seen as the mouth piece of God. Through them the sacraments which are the means of reaching God are dispensed.[224] The Igbo priests or title holders are held in high esteem such that no one can challenge them in the vicinity of their church or challenge their words because they stand for justice and righteousness. People therefore maintain a correct attitude of not causing offense towards them.[225] Causing an offense or maltreating the priests or title holders is an abomination and will bring about chaos and the anger of the gods upon the

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[222] Ibid.

[223] John Ekeocha, "The Image of the Church as the Family of God: A Systematic Study in the Igbo Catholic Church of Nigeria" (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, Washington DC, 2020), 410, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

[224] Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *Church and Inculturation: A Century of Roman Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria*, (Obosi, Anambra: Pacific College Press, 1985), 18.

[225] Ibid., 7.

land. In line with this traditional understanding of priesthood, Wankar remarks that "the Church in Nigeria focuses its self understanding at the level of ecclesiastical hierarchy, to the complete neglect of the major constituents of the local community, namely the laity and the theologians."[226]

In the same vein, Uzukwu holds that for a living Church community to emerge in *Igbo* land, the heart of the gospel must challenge the heart of the Igbo person.[227] As such, the heart of the gospel message of equality and co-responsibility must challenge the "established identity (without reflection) between title taking, priestly service to spirits and the catholic priestly ministry…."[228] Such established identity between the Igbo tradition of title taking (and/or priestly service of Spirits) and the Catholic priestly ministry creates a sense of privilege, exclusion of others and entitlement reserved only to those (the priests) who have taken the title and as such see themselves as the only "ministers" of God. Thus, baptismal co-responsibility presents a paradigm for overcoming this dichotomy and the consequent clericalism that follows it.

3.5. Conclusion

From the above exposition, one can see that catechetical ministry is an indispensable ministry of the Church for the faith formation of the believers.[229] Through catechesis, Christian faith is imparted and strengthened in the believers. In the Church of South Eastern Nigeria, the result of this work of evangelization, as we have seen, is that there has been a rapid growth of the Church since the time of the early missionaries which has borne fruits in the establishment of many new

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[226] Wankar, *The Dual Reality of Salvation and the Church in Nigeria,* 33.
[227] Uzukwu, *Church and Inculturation*, 27-28.
[228] Ibid., 29.
[229] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *General Directory for Catechesis,* 7rd ed., (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004), no 60.

parishes, and in the embrace of priestly and religious life by the indigenous Igbo people.[230] But we have also seen that there is need for the *Igbo* Catholic Church to reconsider its manner of engaging in catechetical ministry to engage the lay people in a more co-responsible way. This will help for a more robust and dynamic Church to emerge in *Igboland*.

Lessons can be drawn from the models of the early Holy Ghost Missionaries to *Igboland*, and from John Paul II's statement that, "the Church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy. For the Gospel cannot become deeply rooted in the mentality, life and work of a people without the active presence of lay people."[231] Thus, a new model of being Church and of understanding the priesthood is needed. Such model of the Church as *Family* and of the priesthood as *representation* offers an alternative way of understanding and doing ministry in the Church of South Eastern Nigeria. These notions of Church as *Family* and the priesthood as *representation* will be taken up in the next chapter.

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[230] Chigere, *Foreign Missionary Background and Indigenous Evangelization in Igboland,* 481.
[231] John Paul II, *Address to the Bishops of Japan on Their Third Ad Limina Visit*, (3 March 1990) no 5, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1990/march/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19900303_giappone-ad-limina.html; cf also Vatican Council II, Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes,* (7 Dec.1965) no 21, at The Holy See. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html.

Chapter Four

Envisioning a New Model of Church in South Eastern Nigeria

To begin this chapter, I would like to say something on ministry. A good understanding of

ministry will help to put in a proper place the claims that this chapter is making. According to

Kathleen Calahan (2010), "ministry is the vocation of leading disciples in the life of discipleship

for the sake of God's mission in the world."[232] Ministry is a distinctive vocation among the many

vocations in the Church. As such it does not obliterate the reality of discipleship but is rather a

further living out of the life of discipleship.[233] Every baptized person is called to a life of

discipleship but not everyone is called to a ministerial service in the Church. While ministry

emerges from a personal call, it requires discernment by the community for its authentification.

Ministerial discernment involves the community's recognition and authorization of the charism

of the individual through its representative (the bishop).[234]

Ministry is not what one confers on oneself. It is grace given by God for the formation of

disciples, that is, the building up of the Church for the sake of its mission in the world. The

traditional notion of ministry is the proclamation of the word of God and the celebration of the

sacraments and pastoral care. Ministerial positions in the Church have historically been

conferred through the act of ordination or laying on of hands which installs one into an office.[235]

But with the Second Vatican Council, ministry has further been understood as the grace of the

Spirit given to the baptized people of God by which they carry out certain public responsibilities

for and in the name of the Church. Thus, "Christian ministry is the public activity of a baptized

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[232] Kathleen Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2010), 50.
[233] Ibid., 49.
[234] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry, (*Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), 10.
[235] Walter Kasper, *Leadership in the Church,* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2003), 50.

follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to witness to, serve and realize the kingdom of God…."[236] Ministry thus understood in light of the Second Vatican Council, is a public function on behalf of the community that sets the minister on a relationship with the ecclesial community as its representative. The clergy, by the virtue of their ordination, stand in a unique way as representatives of the Church in its ministerial functions.

4.1. Recapitulating the Issue

Missionary evangelization in South Eastern Nigeria, has witnessed a huge growth since the early twentieth century. This growth came about through the cooperation of the missionaries and the indigenous *Igbo* people. A part of the success of this missionary work of the Holy Ghost Fathers, as mentioned before, is the growth in priestly vocation. The Catholic priestly ministry, as Uzukwu makes the case, was received in *Igboland* through the lens of the traditional priestly service. The traditional priests who serve the gods are seen as the mouth piece of the gods. Their position in the community is non-political. As such they are able to stand in justice, fairness and at the service of all. However, the Catholic priestly ministry in *Igboland* of South Eastern Nigeria deviates from this traditional notion of priesthood by assuming a political significance. The priest by virtue of "ordination" which translates in Igbo language as *echichi* is seen as being set apart. *Echichi* in *Igboland* connotes "giving of title" which often suggests a "successful life", "wealth", etc. In this regard, the priest stands higher than other members of the community (who have not received the echichi), just as his ministry is higher than every other ministries in the

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[236] Emil A. Wcela, "Ministry in the New Testament," *Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, *Pathway Towards the Future,* ed. Zeni Fox, (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 34.

Church. Enjoying a high status in the community, the priest is able to exert influence in the life of the community of believers. His words and decisions are often unquestionable. Doing so will be a taboo and the questioning of God.[237]

This priestly position is often abused such that the priest dominates rather than leads in the servant model of leadership. In light of this abuse that is strengthened by the hierarchical/pyramidal model of being Church, how can the clergy and the laity work in a co-responsible way? How best can theology, as Uzukwu asks, explain to *Igbo* people the meaning of hierarchy in the Church?[238] What model of being Church can best help the Church in *Igboland* to realize a co-responsible relation between the clergy and the laity?

4.2. The People of God Ecclesiology

To address the above questions, this chapter proposes a new way of being Church and of doing ministry in the Church in South Eastern Nigeria that arises from the people of God ecclesiology. This new way guarantees an inclusive ministry which differs from the clericalized way of doing ministry that concentrates power in the hand of the clergy. This clericalized way of doing ministry often shows unbalanced relationships in the exercise of power in the different areas of Church life.[239] The new way that this chapter proposes draws inspiration from the mutual ministry that characterized the early Church, and the Igbo family system where every member of the family is a subject with rights and obligations as a member of the family. In these models where everyone works for the good of the group, ministry is seen as service and representation.

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[237] Elochukwu Uzukwu, *Church and Inculturation: A Century of Roman Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria*, (Obosi, Ananmbra: Pacific College Press Ltd, 1985), 13-21.
[238] Ibid., 23.
[239] Rafael Luciani, "From the Synod on Synodality to the Synodalization of the Whole Church: Towards a New Ecclesial Reconfiguration in the Light of Synodality," *Inglesia Viva* 287, (Julio-Septiembre 2021), 99. ISSN. 0210-1114.

Thus, the people of God ecclesiology proposes that every baptized person is a subject in the Church's mission, and that ministry as service is what characterizes the ecclesial community.

4.3. The People of God as Subjects

The notion of the people of God as subjects in the Church's mission, as we mentioned in chapter one of this thesis, comes from the baptismal grace that makes all the baptized equal members of the Church.[240] The newness of the Christian life is both the foundation and title for equality that exists among all the baptized people in Christ.[241] Equality of all the people of God means that "they share a common dignity from their rebirth in Christ, they have the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection. They possess in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity. Because of the one dignity flowing from baptism, each member of the lay faithful, together with ordained ministers and men and women religious, shares a responsibility for the Church's mission."[242] The fact that lay people are called within their different professions and works of life to bring Jesus into their professions and to transform the temporal order of things grounds the assertion that they are subjects in the Church's mission in their very vocation as lay people.

Thus baptism introduces the faithful into a new way of living as equal members of the Church where no one is more important than the other. All are co-workers in God's mission contributing to the service of that mission in their different roles as ordained people or lay. In this community of equal men and women, the Holy Spirit continues to pour his gift of love giving to each one

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[240] Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964) no 32, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii/documents/vat-ii_const_lumen-gentium_en.html.

[241] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World, *ChristiFideles Laici* (30 December 1988) no 15, at The Holy See. https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christififeles-laici.html.

[242] Ibid

gifts as it pleases the Spirit. Through these gifts or charisms of the Spirit, Christ continues to unify the people of God, to purify the Church and to fill it with life.[243] The biblical foundation of the people of God as subjects in the Church's mission is expressed in such passages as Ephesians 2:19 which speaks of the gentile believers as no longer strangers and foreigners to the promises of God: you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (ESV).

The new life in Christ that baptism introduces the baptized into requires conversion from all the members. The baptized are called to conversion to the fact that they are no longer aliens to one another but have become brothers and sisters, sharing life in the one fatherhood of God and in the one motherhood of the Church.[244] The ecclesial community thus is a community where no one is an object but where mutual service to one another brings about acceptance and disarms from autocratic and domineering tendencies.

The whole people of God are subjects in the mission and ministry of the Church because the ministry of the Church belongs to the whole of God's faithful. The Church's ministries are for the service of the whole Christian community. In these ministries, lay people have a legitimate ministry. The document, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, states that "the laity can also feel themselves called, or be called, to work with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community for its growth and life, by exercising a great variety of ministries according to the grace and charisms

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[243] Michael A Fahey, "Ecclesial Community as Communion", *The Church as Communion*, James H. Provost ed. (D C :Canon Law Society of America, 1984), 7.

[244] Luciani, "From the Synod on Synodality to the Synodalization of the Whole Church," 101; also, Francis, The Apostolic Exhortation to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013) no 26, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_ exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

which the Lord is pleased to give them."[245] Sharing in the priesthood of Christ through baptism, the people of God are a priestly people. As a priestly people, lay people bring God to the world and the world to God through their life of service in the Church and in the world.

The concept of the people of God as subjects in the Church's mission is an appropriate model for the Church in South Eastern Nigeria because of its theological emphasis on the equality and co-responsibility of all the members which stands as an antidote to the clericalism and feudalistic understanding of power in the Church. The clergy, in their capacity as the leaders of the people, have important roles in animating the community of believers, and in manifesting those leadership qualities that make for unity and for the growth of the Church.[246] I shall further discuss this later.

The ecclesiology of the people of God as subjects differs from the clerical structure that is operative in the Church which positions the clergy at the apex of the power structure and the laity at the base. The positioning of the clergy at the apex of the Church and societal structure, and the laity at the base creates a dependency syndrome which affects people's approach to societal issues. Often times, societal/family issues that need lay people's expertise or a common sense approach by the people are spiritualized and brought to the clergy for solution. The religious leaders don't often make a distinction between "normal" social/cultural issues and spiritual issues but give an impression that everything that goes wrong happens as a result of demonic attack or witchcraft. Such excessive dependency on the clergy for what the common

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[245] Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation to the Episcopate, to the Clergy and to All the Faithful Evangelii Nuntiandi, (December 8, 1975) no 73, at The Holy See. https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

[246] Synod of Bishops, "The Ministerial Priesthood *Ultimis Temporibus*," nos 1-2, in *Vatican Council II. Volume 2: More Conciliar Documents*, edited by Austin Flannery (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1982), 684-685.

person can do for him/herself leads to the stifling of initiatives and hinders growth, and the formation of mature and responsible Christians.[247]

The clerical structure also creates another kind of problem of respectability, whereby a form of aura or mystery is created around the clergy that in turn produces a negative result in the perception of the priesthood. Respectability of the clergy (who wears clerical dress, live in rectories, serve in parishes or in seminaries, or in mission fields) sometimes distances people from the clergy, or the clergy from the people thereby creating a kind of separation of the clergy from the realities of people's lives.[248] This situation has the consequence of making the clergy lose touch with where the people's real needs are and in this situation the clergy live in the midst of the people but are separated from their real situations.[249] Uzukwu emphasizes this as one of the outcomes of the system of formation of seminarians in Africa that so much shields seminarians from the realities of life by providing for them everything they need from formation to the priesthood.[250]

The new way of doing ministry as a people of God overcomes this situation of estrangement from the reality of people's lives by emphasizing co-responsibility as a way of mutual interaction and interdependence in ministry.[251] The practice of co-responsibility takes cognizance of the dynamic roles of the faithful in the Church and the world through men and women in the society who influence the society in light of the gospel values, and through people working and speaking

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[247] Gabriel T. Wankar, *The Dual Reality of Salvation and the Church in Nigeria,* (New York, N.Y: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2017), 180-181.
[248] Edward P. Hahnenberg, *Ministries: A Relational Approach*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003), 21.
[249] Luciani, "From the Synod on Synodality to the Synodalization of the Whole Church," 102.
[250] Uzukwu, *A Listening Church*, 95-97.
[251] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium,* no 32.

explicitly for or in the name of the Church as the representatives of the Church.[252] As such, co-responsibility calls for a regular interaction by way of meetings, synods etc of the lay and clergy people knowing that both must exist in harmonious and respectful relation to be able to manifest the reality of the Church as a community in communion. Such harmonious relation is needed as much in the catechetical ministry by which faith is fostered in the believing community.

4.4.1. Catechesis

The mission of the lay people is not only on the political sphere. Lay men and women also carry out their ministry of evangelization and catechesis in the family as teachers of faith to their children. Quite often, children are baptized as infants and the parents make a promise to bring them up in the Catholic faith. Thus the family is where the teaching/instructing and handing on of the Catholic faith begins.[253] Lay people also engage in ministry in the Church as catechists, ushers, lay readers, catechism teachers. All these necessitate that the formation of lay people should be of great importance to the Church. Apart from making the formation of catechists affordable for parishes, the Church in South Eastern Nigeria should also consider making catechetical training possible for other community leaders such as the youth and children's ministry leaders, zonal (or Basic Christian Community) leaders, catechism teachers. Regular on-going formation in faith programs will also help to nurture the faith of the community not only in the basics of the Christian faith but also in the social teachings of the Church.[254]

Lay people seen as subjects and co-workers with the clergy should provide an impetus for the Church in South Eastern Nigeria to commit more fully to the formation of the laity. When lay

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[252] Robert Schwartz, Servant Leaders of the people of God: An Ecclesial Spirituality for American Priests (Mahwah: Paulist,1989), 71.
[253] Yves Congar, *Laity, Church and World*, trans. Donald Attwater, Baltimore, Maryland:Helicon Press, 1960), 75.
[254] Wankar, *The Dual Reality of Salvation and the Church in Nigeria,* 170.

people are formed in a manner that they understand their roles and responsibilities in the community, and in a manner that does not make them to be dependent on the clergy for the things that they can do themselves, they become active agents in transforming the society bringing the gospel values into the realities of the societal and family life.[255]

Lumen Gentium's salient point, which we have previously alluded to in chapter one, in regard to ministry comes as a reminder to pastors that pastors should also know that they are not meant by Christ to shoulder alone the entire saving mission of the Church towards the world.[256] They have a responsibility of identifying the Charisms of the lay people and of promoting those charisms for the building up of the Church. Referencing, once more, Pope John Paul II's appeal to the Church of Africa on the formation of the agents of evangelization, the pope says that "the most important (resource), after the grace of Christ, is the people. The whole people of God in the theological understanding of *Lumen Gentium*—this people, which comprises the members of the body of Christ in its entirety—has received the mandate, which is both an honour and a duty, to proclaim the Gospel…The whole community needs to be trained, motivated and empowered for evangelization, each according to his or her specific role in the Church."[257] This follows that the laity must not be made mere objects, even if they have a duty to be subordinate to the hierarchy because of the role Christ has given to the clergy as leaders and teachers of God's people.

In the same line of conversation, Congar asserts that "spiritual vitality is given to all members of the Church by the Holy Spirit, for some that they may grow and show forth a Christian life and

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[255] Synod of Bishops, *Ultimis Temporibus*," no 3, in *Vatican Council II. Volume 2: More Conciliar Documents*, 692.

[256] Lumen Gentium, no 30.

[257] John Paul II,The Church in Africa *Ecclesia in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000*, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, John Paul II (United States Catholic Conference Washington, D.C, 1995), no 53.

to others that they may lead and guide."[258] Because the Church is an organic whole, the lay

people are living and thinking subjects, people whose contributions to the Church cannot be

given up.[259] The image of the Church characterized by this sense of recognition and inclusion of

the individual and communal responsibility of all the faithful is *community*. Community thus

understood connotes equal membership in carrying out the Church's apostolate, and necessity of

every member as having been gifted by the Spirit for the good of the group (I Cor 12:7; I Cor 14:

12).

  Developing a collaborative understanding of ministry is important for the Church in South

Eastern Nigeria. As the document of the Nigerian Bishops says, it is necessary for the clergy to

esteem the place, role and contribution of those in Consecrated Life and be ready to engage in

collaborative ministry with the lay faithful.[260] It is thus important that the clergy 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."[261] These attitudes or dispositions in the clergy foster a sense of cooperation

based on the understanding that each member of the faithful is a subject in the Church's mission.

 As subjects and agents with a mandate from the Lord to recreate the world that is imbued with

the gospel values, the laity needs a favorable environment to achieve this mission (Mt 28:29).

Thus, the Nigerian political environment fraught with corruption and mismanagement must be

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[258] Yves Congar, *Laity, Church and World*, trans. Donald Attwater (Baltimore, Maryland: Helicon Press, 1960), 40.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, *I Chose You: The Nigerian Priest in the Third Millennium*, (Abuja, Nigeria: Catholic Secretariat, 2004), 22. Https://www.cbcn-ng.org/docs/g7.pdf.
[261] .Ibid.

permeated with the gospel message of accountability and servant leadership. The clergy must speak up against the corrupt practices in the nation, and the lay faithful must rise to the occasion in demonstrating good leadership in the political realm.

One of the demands being placed on the Church in Africa is for it to evolve in a manner that will be authentically African. This, as well, has been the aspiration of the African Church since the Second Vatican Council to grow into a mature and adult Church.[262] Growing into a mature adult African (Igbo) Church includes showing lay leadership examples in politics devoid of corruption, as is usually the case in the African traditional settings. Such resources as accountability, honesty, love, hard work, trust, ingenuity and a sense of fraternity needed for the creation of a more just society must be emphasized and inculcated through catechesis in the ecclesial community and the society at large. These are values for which the traditional African societies, such as the Igbo society, are known.[263] They are also fundamental values of the gospel message that the Church proclaims (Jn 13:34; 1 Thes 2:9). Thus, Pope John Paul II asks the Church in Africa during the Synod assembly on *Ecclesia in Africa* to "look inside yourselves. Look to the riches of your own traditions, …to the faith which we are celebrating in this assembly" to draw the resources the Church needs for such needed transformation into an African Church.[264]

The Church in South Eastern Nigeria is no longer only a recipient of the gospel message. The Church is now a proclaimer of that message. As such the Church in *Igboland* must search for its own identity and authentic expression of Christianity in a manner that will reflect its identity as

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[262] Chukwudum B.Okolo, *The Liberating Role of the Church in Africa Today*, (Eldoret, Kenya, AMECEA Gaba Publications,1991), 65.

[263] Nkem Hyginus M. V. Chigere, *Foreign Missionary Background and Indiginous Evangelization in Igboland*, (Munster: Lit., 2001), 85.

[264] *Ecclesia in Africa and its Evangelizing Mission Towards the Year 2000*, no 48.

an egalitarian *Igbo* Church while remaining faithful to its missionary vocation from God.[265] This identity must reflect in the social and political life of the nation that is notoriously religious and yet severely wounded by corruption and bad governance. The Church can draw, for the formation of its members, from the *Igbo* family values.

4.4.2. The *Igbo* Family and Political Structure: A Source of Inspiration

The *Igbo* family is a place where one feels a sense of belonging and an obligation to work for its good. Of the African family and the bond of love that exists therein, John Mbiti, as quoted by Simeon Tsetim Iber writes that "the deep sense of kinship, with all it implies, has been one of the strongest forces in traditional African life. Kinship is reckoned through blood and betrothal (engagement and marriage). It is kinship which controls social relationship between people in a given community…"[266] As such, a member of a family who truly wants to live according to the dictates of family ties cannot subjugate the other to a position of less importance in the family. Rather, the worth of every member of the family is appreciated and each one's opinion matters in family deliberations.

In this regard of filial connections in family, the African Synod of 1994 took the theme *Ecclesia in Africa* which portrays the Church as family of God where "care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust" are nurtured.[267] Church seen as family or people of God where everyone is a subject reflects the attitude of care and compassion and eschews any form of entitlement that subjugates others placing them in a second class position.

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[265] Vatican Council II, Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes* (7 December 1965) no 22, at The Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council /documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html.

[266] Simeon Tsetim Iber, *The Principle of Subsidiarity in Catholic Social Thought: Implications for Social Justice and Civil Society in Nigeria,* (New York, N.Y: Peter Lang publishing inc., 2011), 19.

[267] *The Church in Africa Ecclesia in Africa and Its Evangelization Mission Towards the Year 2000*, No 63.

The Igbo sense of community life reflects in its manner of governance as a communal participation. As such statements like *Igbo Enwe Eze—Igbo* people have no king (which means that *Igbo* people do not engage in autocratic leadership as kings are known to be autocrats) reflects this form of governance. In the *Igbo* society, the pattern of community organization builds from the nuclear family to the village group. The village is made up of clans, and clans are made up of kindreds, and kindreds are made up of extended families. The head of the principal clan presides over the assemblies of the village with the other heads in attendance. But when it comes to matters that affect the life of the clans constituting the village group, consultations are carried out. Such consultations allow families or clan members to discuss the issue and then send their opinions on the matter before a final decision is reached.[268]

This form of community leadership operates with an understanding that every male head of a household is a subject in the community projects and in the community's decision-making process. There are, also, other strands of community organization that guarantee the participation of women, and young adults respectively in the running of the community. But unlike these forms of community organization, the idea of Church as family must be stripped of all patriarchal dominance, which often subordinates women to men. The idea of Church as family must be allowed to shine out with the novelty of the gospel equality of all the people of God.[269] This *Igbo* traditional leadership system can enrich the manner of exercising leadership in the *Igbo* Catholic Church. The manner of the seminary formation of students is essential in realizing this transformation.

4.4.3. Seminary Formation

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[268] Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *A Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 15.
[269] Ibid., 66.

The present seminary system of formation of priests is a fruit of the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The Council of Trent asked for the establishment of seminaries in dioceses for the proper formation of seminarians for the priesthood. But while this idea has borne fruits in a better training program for the seminarians, it laid much emphasis on the priest as a man set apart from the people. Thus, seminarians are trained to keep themselves distinct from lay people and to separate themselves from the mundane life of the ordinary Christian.[270] Fostering this sense of apartness in the seminarians/clergy has a negative effect in clergy relations with the laity as it supports dichotomy between the laity and the clergy and fosters clericalism.

Looking at the formation of priests in Nigeria, one can commend the efforts of the seminary formators in trying to instill discipline in the seminaries. However, some important elements are still lacking in the formation system of the seminarians. The seminarians are introduced to parish life early in their formation years. At the end of every academic year the seminarians are sent to work in parishes where they are supposed to learn to work in collaboration with the laity. They work with the different organs of the laity, such as the women's organization, men's organization, youth ministry, the choir group etc. The seminarians engage in teaching and sometimes conduct retreats for the above mentioned groups. The apostolic work usually lasts for about six weeks except for the period of one year when seminarians serve in the parish for the full one year. This is usually at the end of one's study of philosophy, or between the first two years of his theological studies.

But, while these trainings help the seminarians to achieve some level of familiarity and competence in working in parish settings, the downside of it is that the seminarians are looked at

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[270] Kenan B. Osborne, "Priestly Formation," in *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigation*, eds. Raymond F. Bulman and Frederick J. Parrella (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 125.

as "little priests" and are pampered by the laity who cater for all their needs. A sense of entitlement begins to develop alongside a feeling of superiority over the laity. The seminarians assume a position of authority and privilege while the laity, (including the lay ministers) defer to them.

By fostering this attitude, clericalism continues to be sustained and co-responsibility becomes an ideal yet to be attained. This mindset reflects how the faithful understand ministry as the preserve of the clergy, and the consequent clericalized Church that it breeds. A situation where seminarians are trained or taught alongside other lay people is a way of improving on the Nigerian, and indeed, on the whole Church's structure of priestly formation.[271] This will help the seminarians to learn to relate with the laity in a co-responsible way and in a manner that portrays ministry as service.

5. A New Understanding of Ministry as Representation and Service

Ministerial functions are indispensable in the life of the Church. But a functional approach to the ministry of the priesthood breeds unhealthy relations of superiority versus inferiority between the clergy and the lay people.[272] A functional approach sees ministry as that which only the priests do. Such functional approach to ministry does not adequately account for the relationship of complementarity that exists in ministry between the ordained and the lay people. This complementary relationship whereby the work of the lay people has a priestly character to it is based on the common priesthood of all the faithful.

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[271] Richard Lennan, John F. Baldovin, Liam Bergin, Jacqueline Regan et al, "To Serve the People of God: Renewing the Conversation on Priesthood and Ministry*", Origins vol.* 48 no. 31(2018): 491.
[272] Ibid., 485.

The lay and the ordained ministries are not two opposite ministries. They differ in the sense that the ordained people stand in a sacramental and representational relationship with the Church in a manner that a lay person does not. The clergy are ordained to represent the community. However, a lay ecclesial minister also stands in a representational relationship with the Church as she/he is called to represent the community in a particular ministry. But he/she does not represent in a sacramental way as the clergy. However, the relationship that exists between the laity and the clergy is that it is from the ranks of the faithful that they are chosen to be ordained for the ministry.[273]

In this sense of a common sharing in the priesthood of Christ, the whole people of God are subjects in the mission of God. So the relationship of the clergy to the laity should not be that of dominance but one of fraternity and complementarity. But while each one's role (lay and ordained) is distinct and vital, the Church is the sacramental referent of the sacrament of orders.[274] In this regard also, the priest does not take presidency only in the liturgy but also before the community of the faithful as the leader of the ecclesial community because the three offices of priesthood, kingly service and prophetic ministry are intrinsically connected.[275] But ministerial service should be for the building up of the community.

The duty of building up the community has always been there as part of what it means to be Church, the community of God's people. Kasper holds that official ministry did not arrive in the

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[273] Gerald O'Collins & Michael Keenan Jones, *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ* (Oxford university Press, 2010), 276.
[274] Susan Wood, "Priestly Identity: Sacrament of the Ecclesial Community," *Worship 69, (1995)*: 111.
[275] Ibid., 115.

Church at a later stage of the Church's history. There was never any initial period without ministries: they are as old as the Church itself.[276]

The admonition of the Catholic bishops of Nigeria to the Nigerian priests is noteworthy here. The bishops advice that "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."[277] In essence, servant leadership is a model of leadership that corresponds with the notion of ministry as representation.

In recent times, there is an increasing understanding in the religious and non religious sectors that the leadership quality in an organization and the organizational performance are directly related.[278] This means that the success or failure of an organization is largely dependent on the quality of leadership at work in the organization. Thus, community leaders such as the clergy must bear in mind that their role as leaders of the people is to foster a harmonious coordination of the various ministries in a spirit that respects the dignity of each ministry and minister. Servant leadership thus is a team spirit that is the opposite of the dictatorial leadership form which we often see in the Church. A servant leadership model builds collaboration. This point is well captured by Jane Regan who emphasized that persons who are invested in the shared enterprise constitute a community, and by engaging in a respectful and reciprocal way with each other, strengthen their relationship and enhance the capacity of the community to fulfill its

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[276] Kasper, *Leadership in the Church,* 50.

[277] CBCN, *I chose you*, 17.

[278] Margret Kelly, "Leadership*," A Concise Guide to Catholic Church Management,* ed. Larry Boone, (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2010), 9.

shared endeavor.[279] The ground for a shared endeavor to thrive is when there is an understanding that all members are the agents and subjects of the project.

Leadership as service does not only promote good relations within the body of Christ but, as Avery Dulles remarks, it "seeks to give the Church new relevance, a new vitality, a new modernity, and a new sense of mission."[280] It gives a better sense of ministry as rooted in co-responsibility and service.

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[279] Jane E. Regan, *Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Transforming the Parish Through Communities of Practice* (New York/Mahwah,NJ: Paulist Press, 2016), 35.
[280] Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church,* (New York, N.Y: Doubleday publishers, 1987), 98.

Conclusion

Our tour through the centuries has shown that relation between the clergy and the laity has often not been a co-responsibility one. The positioning of the lay people in the Church has been the cause to this lack of coresponsibility. Lay people, as we have seen in chapter two, have often been positioned as second class members of the Church such that their ministry was subsumed in that of the clergy.[281] In the contemporary times, the Second Vatican Council has brought some fresh understanding of Church as the whole people of God entrusted with the Church's mission. But despite this new understanding about the Church there remains some hesitancy in a majority of the clergy to encourage co-responsibility in ministry. The clergy fear a lay take-over of the Church while the lay people feel that the Church is too clericalized.[282] Thus progress towards a fuller realization of communion in the Church is hampered.

This hesitancy in collaborating with lay men and women shows how lay people have been positioned in the Church as recipients in ministry. Such attitude does not portray an inclusive Church where everyone is called to participate actively in the evangelization task of the Church.

History also shows that some circumstances in which the Church lived contributed to fashioning and sustaining the attitude of disfranchising lay people and relegating them to a secondary position. Such circumstances include the threats of heresy and the need to preserve orthodoxy of faith. Ignatius of Antioch reflected this attitude in his letter to the churches of Asia (Magnesia, Rome etc) where he emphasized that the unity of the Church should be built around the bishop

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[281] Kenan B. Osborne, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church Its History and Theology*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 115.

[282] Kenan B. Osborne, "Envisioning a Theology of Ordained and Lay Ministry: Lay/Ordained Ministry-Current Issues of Ambiguity", in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood* edited by Susan K. Wood, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), 202-203.

and his clergy.[283] The other circumstance that helped to foster unhealthy relations between the lay people and the clergy is the Church's alignment of itself to the patterns of the monarchical societies of the west. The era of Constantine up to the eighteenth century saw a huge alliance between the Church and the State. That alliance culminated in the one Church-one State religion of the medieval period. In that Church of the medieval period, the clergy were the representatives of the Church in its relation with the civil authorities. The role of the laity, as we mentioned in chapter two, was diminished while the clerical role was exalted.[284]

The feudal system of the medieval centuries whereby power was concentrated on the feudal lords became, also, a model of the hierarchical/pyramidal Church administration. In that system, the clergy were at the apex of the pyramid and possessed more power while the lay people were disempowered.

The patriarchal culture of the Judeo-Roman world as well affected the Church's practice of ministry. The patriarchal system relegates women to the background while upholding men as the ideal of the human person and of divine representation.[285] The role of the Catholic clergy as the representatives of God to the community reflects this cultural influence of the Judeo-Roman world.

All these realities invite the Church, local and universal, to a regular examination of itself in light of its beliefs and practices as the Church can sometimes imbibe the practices of the world around it which may not reflect the authentic mirror of itself as a sign of unity of all people. The Second Vatican Council provided such an opportunity for this kind of self examination. The significance

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[283] Ignatius of Antioch, "Letter to the Magnesians, 2-7; 13," in *Ministry*, ed. Joseph Lienhard (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), no 7.
[284] Osborne, *Ministry,* 115.
[285] Elizabeth A. Johnson*, She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2013), 18.

of the Second Vatican Council in addressing the issue of relations in the Church through its choice of *communion* and *participation* as the image of the Church it wanted cannot be underestimated.[286]

But while much has been achieved with the Second Vatican Council in terms of relations in the Church, more work still needs to be done. At mass with bishops, priests, and religious at cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul Philadelphia, on September 26, 2015, Pope Francis said in regard to collaborative ministry that "one of the great challenges facing the Church in this generation is to foster in all the faithful a sense of personal responsibility for the Church's mission, and to enable them to fulfill that responsibility as missionary disciples, as leaven of the Gospel in our world."[287] This, for Francis, calls for a creative way of "adapting to changed situations, carrying forward the legacy of the past not primarily by maintaining our structures and institutions, which have served us well, but above all by being open to the possibilities that the Spirit opens up to us and communicating the joy of the Gospel, daily and every season of our life…" [288] Thus the pope recognizes that the Church is still on the path to realizing a fuller participation of all the faithful in the mission of the Church, and that to do this, creative ways of responding to the call of the Spirit must be fostered.

In line with Pope Francis, this thesis has argued that coresponsibility from the perspective of the People of God ecclesiology is a way forward in realizing that full participation of all the faithful in the Church as the Second Vatican Council called for. Some examples of the progress made in relations between the clergy and the laity include the exercise of diocesan synods, parish pastoral councils, and liturgical inculturation in local churches. The presence of these structures has

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[286] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, no 7.
[287] Pope Francis: With the Smell of the Sheep, ed. Giuseppe Merola, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2017), 113.
[288] Ibid.

witnessed more lay participation in parish ministries. In the United States of America, for example, the number of lay people ministering in the Church as lay ecclesial ministers, since the Second Vatican Council, has been on the increase.[289] This is a sign of more lay commitments to Church ministry and a better clergy-laity relation than in the previous years before the Council.

History has also shown that lay leadership in ministry has helped the Church to navigate through different challenging periods. Such example was seen with the monastic movement of the west which brought spiritual renewal to many people at a time that the clergy could not adequately satisfy the spiritual yearning of the people.[290] Thus lay involvement in the Church's ministry can be seen as the movement of the spirit prompting the lay people to action. O'Meara writes that, "the Holy Spirit would not leave the entirety of the Church to passivity and monoformity; it would not isolate a single group, a small caste, a sacral priesthood to exercise all public roles in the Church."[291]

The Second Vatican Council's recovery of the baptismal dignity of the faithful makes co-responsibility of the whole people of God an indispensable element for talking about Church. While co-responsibility does not mean laicization of the Church or the blurring of the distinction between the unique roles of the lay and the ordained vocations, the equality and active participation of every member of the Church which it calls for makes co-responsibility the most suitable way of exercising ministry in the Church that is the people of God. In the notion of co-responsibility, as noted before, there is a recognition of the people of God as subjects and as equal members of the Church based on baptism.[292] Consequently, co-responsibility fosters

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[289] Charles Zech et al, *Catholic Parishes of the 21st Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 40.
[290] Joseph H. Lynch and Philip C. Adamo, *The Medieval Church: A Brief History*, second edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 44.
[291] O'Meara, "Being a Ministering Church: Insights From History*," Lay Ecclesial Ministry*, 56.
[292] Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium* 32.

fellowship in the Church and calls for the empowerment of the faithful, through education/catechesis, and by creating enabling structures for harmonious relations between the clergy and the laity to flourish.

The practice of co-responsibility is needed in the Church because it is a way of guaranteeing unity and communion in the diverse peoples and charisms that make up the Church. Because of the different cultures and charisms of the people of God, unity in a co-responsible Church becomes not uniformity but "a sacramental and spiritual unity in Christ first established in baptism and then expressed, nourished, and brought to maturity in the Eucharistic communion."[293]

In the Church in South Eastern Nigeria, the inclusive family spirit of the Igbo society where every member of the family has a sense of belonging and cooperation in the family presents a paradigm for laity-clergy relation in the catechetical ministry. In this paradigm suffused with the values of love, care and sense of responsibility, no one is less important, all are subjects and leadership is exercised and experienced as service for and to the group. Catechesis as an exercise in ministerial leadership in the Church has been, from the time of the missionaries, an effective and collaborative means of evangelizing the *Igbo* people. Adequate training of the catechetical agents, and fostering of co-responsible relation with the lay ecclesial ministers are what are needed in the *Igbo* Church of today. Doing these will enhance the image of the *Igbo* Church as a Church of communion, a Church that is the people of God.

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[293] Susan K. Wood "Continuity and Development in Roman Catholic Ecclesiology*," Ecclesiology 7*, 147-172, (2011), 153. Doi 10.1163/174553111X559517.

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