

**THE CONCEPT OF PRIESTHOOD IN GHANA WITH A PARTICULAR
REFERENCE TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

By

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work towards the MPhil (Religious Studies) and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published by any person or material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree of the University, except where due acknowledgment has been made in the text for sources used.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the mysterious “King Melchizedek of Salem, priest of the Most High God” (Heb 7:1; Gen 14:18).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Apostolicam Actuositatem
AICs	African Indigenous/Initiated/Independent Churches
MDCC	Musama Disco Christo Church
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
OT	Optatam Totius
PDV	Pastores Dabo Vobis
PO	Presbyterorum Ordinis
RH	Redemptoris Hominis
SC	Sacrosanctum Concilium
SO	Standing Order

ABSTRACT

The study sought to examine the concept of the Catholic priesthood in the light of its historical development, theology, vocation and challenges associated with it. The study made use of qualitative and quantitative methods of research. It used the descriptive research design in a social survey, with the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi as a case study. Non-probability (quota and purposive) sampling technique was used to select Catholic priests from the Archdiocese for interview (via the use of questionnaires). The findings were analysed manually and descriptively.

For the Catholic Church, priesthood is a divine call to service through which the individual participates in the priesthood of Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Church in spite of the challenges associated with it. It was also revealed that the evangelical counsels; vow of poverty, obedience and chastity/celebrity were some of the challenges in the priestly ministry. The vow of obedience stood out as the most common challenge to most priests.

The study recommends that the Church should continue assisting priests in times of challenges. Parish priests and priests in hierarchical positions should maintain a brotherly relationship with assistant priests.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	v
ABSTRACT	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0. Background to the Study	1
1.1. Statement of Problem	2
1.2. Objective of the study	3
1.3. Research Questions	4
1.4. Justification of the Study	4
1.5. Significance of the Study	5
1.6. Limitations of the Study	5
1.7. Methodology	6
1.8. Literature Review	7

1.9. Organization of the Study	16
--------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER TWO

THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD

2.0. Introduction.....	18
2.1. Etymology of the term “Priest”	19
2.2. Historical development of the Catholic Priesthood	19
2.3. Theology of the Catholic Priesthood	24
2.4. The Vocation to the Catholic Priesthood	24
2.5.0. The Formation of Candidates for the Catholic Priesthood	28
2.5.1. Human Formation	30
2.5.2. Spiritual Formation	33
2.5.3. Intellectual Formation	35
2.5.4. Pastoral Formation	37
2.6. The Rites of Ordination to the Catholic Priesthood.....	39
2.7. The Life and Ministry of Catholic Priests	44
2.8. Conclusion	51

CHAPTER THREE

PRESENTATION OF FIELD FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

3.0. Introduction.....	52
3.1. Groupings of respondents	53
3.2. Nature of the Catholic Priesthood.....	54
3.3. The Call of the Priest	24
3.4. Challenges in the Catholic Priesthood	57
3.5. Views of formators pertaining to formation of candidates	60

CHAPTER FOUR

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD

4.0. Introduction.....	64
4.1. The Old Testament (OT) Background	64
4.2. The New Testament (NT) Background	72
4.3. Conclusion	79

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NOTION OF PRIESTHOOD FROM OTHER RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES

5.0. Introduction.....	80
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5.1. Priesthood in African Traditional Religions	80
5.2. Christian Priesthood.....	83
5.3. The Protestant Ministry	84
5.3.1. The Presbyterian Ministry	86
5.3.2. The Methodist Ministry	87
5.4. General introduction to the African Indigenous Churches (AICs)	89
5.4.1. Musama Disco Christo Church (Army of the Cross of Christ Church).....	90
5.4.2. Priesthood/Ministry in Musama Disco Christo Church.....	93

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.0. Introduction.....	97
6.1. Summary.....	97
6.2. Recommendations.....	100
6.3. Conclusion	101
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	103

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0. Background to the Study

The various Christian denominations have people who have been set apart by virtue of ordination to make the presence of God real in the communities of faith “through the performance of sacramental, preaching, teaching and pastoral functions” (Ekem, 2009:101). In most Protestant denominations, such people are pastors or ministers of the Gospel. In the Catholic tradition, such people receive the sacrament of Holy Order through sacred ordination that initiates them into the holy priesthood.

Ratzinger (1990) explains the sacrament of ordination to the priesthood to imply “this man is in no way performing functions for which he is highly qualified by his own natural ability nor is he doing the things that please him most and that are most profitable. On the contrary (sic) — the one who receives the sacrament is sent to give what he cannot give of his own strength; he is sent to act in the person of another, to be his living instrument” and for that matter is referred to as a priest. The Catholic priesthood differs in essence from that of protestant tradition, because Catholic priests perform sacerdotal functions by offering the sacrifice of the Holy Mass.

According to the *Presbyterorum Ordinis*; a document of the Second Vatican Council on the life and ministry of priests, “the Lord Jesus, [...] has made his whole Mystical Body a sharer in the anointing of the Spirit with which he himself is anointed” (PO 2) and in him all the faithful have been transformed into a holy and royal priesthood. Among the faithful who have been transformed into a holy and royal priesthood, the Lord Jesus Christ again “established ministers [...] to unite them together in one body in which ‘not all the members have the same function’ (Rom 12:4). These ministers in the society of the faithful are able by the sacred power of Orders to offer sacrifice and to forgive sins, and they perform their priestly office publicly for men in the name of Christ” (PO 2).

God gives priests the grace to participate in the sacred office to be ministers of Christ among the “holy and royal priesthood”. The ministry of Catholic priesthood begins with “the evangelical proclamation” and has its source of power from the sacrifice of Christ. Through this ministry, “the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is made perfect in union with the sacrifice of Christ. He [the priest] is the only mediator who in the name of the whole church is offered sacramentally in the Eucharist and in an unbloody manner until the Lord himself comes (1Cor 11:26)” (PO 2).

1.1. Statement of Problem

In his work *Priest and Bishop: biblical reflections*, Brown (1970) elucidates his position on the Catholic priesthood by tracing its biblical background through the Old Testament

to the New Testament. For him the Catholic priesthood has a direct relation to the priesthood of Jesus, and “particularly as explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Jesus’ priesthood must be understood against the background of the OT”. Again, he asserts that the disciples, apostles, presbyter-bishop and the one who presided over the Eucharist are the antecedents for the priestly ministry in the New Testament.

However, some people suppose the Catholic priesthood is the same in essence as the ordained ministry in the Protestant tradition. Other people also assume that the Catholic Church refers to her ordained ministers as priests simply because of their longer years of formation for the ministry.

The problem is that many people in Ghana do not comprehend the concept of the Catholic priesthood, which is sacramental in its self. This kind of priesthood is different from the royal priesthood or the common priesthood of all believers. Halligan (1986:133) affirms, the people of God consist of “universal priesthood” and “ministerial priesthood”, with the latter finding its root in the “Sacrament of Orders”. Hence, this thesis would facilitate a comprehension of the Catholic priesthood.

1.2. Objective of the study

The main objective of the study was to determine the concept of the Catholic priesthood in terms of its nature, identity and the functions of the priest among the people of God. In pursuance of the main objective, the researcher aimed at looking at the historical

development of the Catholic priesthood and its theology, vocation to the Catholic priesthood, formation of candidates for ordination to the Catholic priesthood, life and ministry of the priest and its challenges.

1.3. Research Questions

The research questions below guided the researcher in achieving the main objective of the study.

- What is the general concept of priesthood?
- What is the nature of the Catholic priesthood?
- What form does the call to the Catholic priesthood take?
- What constitutes formation of candidates to the Catholic priesthood?
- Who determines a candidate's genuine vocation to the Catholic priesthood?
- What constitutes the ordination of the Catholic priest?
- What are the challenges associated with the life and ministry of the Catholic priest?

1.4. Justification of the Study

The researcher chose this particular topic because a greater number of Ghanaians claims to be Christians. All these Christians have either a priest or a minister who attends to

their spiritual needs. That makes it necessary for one to know the concept of the ordained ministry/priesthood. The researcher being a Catholic, focused on the Catholic priesthood because it is different in essence from its parallels in protestant tradition. In addition, to help avoid misapplication of the term “priest” due to misunderstanding.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The study, trying to enlighten people on the general concept of priesthood, presents a better understanding of Catholic priesthood and identifies the basis of such priesthood. The study serves as a wake-up call to reflect critically on the place of the priest in the faith community and the state of the Catholic priesthood in Ghana. It brings to light the challenges that characterize the life and ministry of priests and suggests what the Catholic Church could do in helping priests in times of crisis. The study also arouses the interest of students to pursue and explore further dimensions of the Catholic priesthood. It therefore adds to knowledge.

1.6. Limitations of the study

The study is limited because it covers only the concept of ministerial priesthood with emphasis on the Catholic Church. In dealing with the concept of priesthood, the researcher could not cover every dimension of the priesthood because of time constraint. He therefore delved into the historical development of the Catholic priesthood, theology of the priesthood, vocation, and formation of candidates for the priesthood, ordination to the priesthood and the life and ministry of the Catholic priest.

Even here, the researcher could not discuss some serious burning theological issues such as the ordination of women and priestly celibacy in detail since the researcher is not a theologian but a student of Religious Studies. The researcher could not also retrieve all the questionnaires administered.

1.7. Methodology

The researcher employed qualitative and quantitative methods of research with the use of primary and secondary sources for data collection. These included the use of encyclopaedias, encyclicals, theological books on the priesthood and interviews conducted via administration of questionnaires. The study used the descriptive research design in a social survey, with the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi as the case study. The study population was about two hundred and fifty (250) priests within the Archdiocese. The views of the priests were solicited through questionnaires for their description of the nature, call and challenges of the priesthood.

Non-probability (quota and purposive) sampling technique was used to select a sample size of sixty (60) respondents from the five (5) deaneries of the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi, with each deanery assigned with a quota of twelve (12). Out of the sixty (60) questionnaires distributed, the researcher was able to retrieve fifty (50) answered questionnaires. Therefore, the total number of respondents was fifty (50). The answered questionnaires were carefully analysed manually and descriptively by the researcher.

The researcher also interviewed additional twenty (20) seminary formators from St Hubert Minor Seminary, St Gregory the Great Provincial Seminary, Spiritan Formation Centre and Society of African Missions' formation house, all in the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi, for their views pertaining to the formation of a Catholic priest. These particular seminaries were chosen because of their location in the Ashanti region, and that enabled the researcher to have easy access to the formators as he also resides in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The field findings were thus, a descriptive survey of the views of the priests and formators in the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi.

1.8. Literature Review

Many scholars have carried out researches and written on various Christian themes and teachings, beliefs and practices, such as the institution of the Eucharist, the priesthood of the laity and ordained ministry. The concept of priesthood has always been associated with worship; and “a priest is a man whose duty it is to offer worship to God” (Perrin 1964:19). Perrin (1964:42) explicates that because of the love that Christ has for the Church, he has endowed her with his most precious priesthood “in the order of grace and in the order of glory”. From his explication, the deduction is that priesthood is sacramental in nature; it is actually a Sacrament that Christ has given to his Church. In addition, through the gift of the priesthood Christ remains in person with his Church in the order of grace. For that matter, one can only participate in that kind of priesthood within the Church. Perrin’s work summarizes the identity of the priest and acknowledges the priesthood as a Christian institution, which originated from Christ to his Church.

Halligan (1986:133) argues that the Church or Christian community is made up of the “universal priesthood” and the “ministerial priesthood” and the latter can only be realized in the “sacrament of Orders”. The Catholic priesthood is identified with the “ministerial priesthood” which is different from the “universal priesthood”. Jesus Christ the high priest established the ministerial priesthood and those belonging to this priesthood attend to their priestly duties publicly in the name of the one who established the sacred office.

On the issue of the ministerial priesthood, Kloppenburg (1974:292) holds an opinion similar to Halligan’s position and affirms:

The mystery of Christ is present and operative only through the ministerial priesthood. The priest, the man chosen by God, is the visible sign, the means and living instrument, of Christ the eternal Priest amid the community of believers. Through the special sacrament he receives, the priest is ontologically qualified to build, sanctify, and rule the Church in the name and person of Christ and with his authority. As a possessor of genuine sacred power that is to be exercised publicly for men in the name of Christ, the priest can present himself to the people as the authentic representative or Vicar of Christ, in whose name and with whose authority he preaches, sanctifies and directs.

Both Halligan and Kloppenburg from the above, agree that the priest does not act or attend to his priestly duties on his own accord; rather he does that as a representative of Christ among the people of God. They also agree on the sacramental nature of the priesthood. For them, after ordination the priest becomes the sacrament of Christ. Their work helps the researcher to identify the source of power of the priest and comprehend priestly functions.

In writing on the historical introduction to the Sacraments in the Catholic Church, Martos (1982:464) asserts that among all the named ministries in the early Church “there was no specifically priestly ministry, no priesthood in the Catholic sense”. He suggests that it was because priesthood was associated with ritual offering of animals and other sacrifices in the Temple by the Jewish priests. In addition, the Christians did not identify themselves as a distinct group of people until the destruction of the Jewish Temple and the dismissal of the Christians from the Synagogue by the Jews. These incidents brought the Christians to the realization of their identity as the new Israel, which led to the development of a Christian priesthood to replace that of the Jews.

Brown (1970:17, 18, 19) shares Martos’ position and further posits that the concept of a special Christian priesthood emerged to replace the Jewish priesthood due to several major interventional developments. Two of these developments were primarily the need for Christians to think of themselves as comprising a new religion, which was clearly different and separate from that of the Jews, and was taking the place of the Jews as “God’s covenanted people”. The second development was due to the recognition given to the Eucharist “as an unbloody sacrifice replacing the bloody sacrifices” which were no longer offered in the Temple due to the destruction of the Temple. He supports this view with reference to some Christian writings that appeared at the beginning of the second century. According to him, *Didache* 14 instructs believers to “assemble on the Lord’s Day, breaking bread and celebrating the Eucharist; but first confess your sins that your sacrifice [*thysia*] may be a pure one ... for it was of this the Lord spoke ‘Everywhere and always offer me a pure sacrifice’.” Should Brown’s assertion be true

that the second century Christian community thought of the Eucharist in a sacrificial context, then it was only appropriate to recognize whoever presided over the celebration as a priest who led the worshipping community in offering sacrifice. This recognition given to the one who presided over the celebration significantly contributed to the emergence of the concept of Christian ministerial priesthood.

Kloppenburger (1974:275) again expounds: “The one, eternal Priest is always the principal minister in liturgical actions; it is in order to make his presence perceptible to men that he needs instruments, namely, the ministerial priests (bishops and presbyters) who ‘are uniting themselves with the act of Christ the Priest’ (PO 13f/561). Christ is always present, ‘so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes’ (SC 7a/141)”.

O’Malley (1995:223) further argues that the priest who presides over the Eucharist does not play the role of Jesus, rather he allows himself to be taken over and be used by Jesus Christ who is the source of all priesthood and “the true celebrant”. However, other men can only have a share in that priesthood insofar as Christ the High Priest empowers them. O’Malley continues that whenever the priest proclaims the Word, forgives sins, and transubstantiates bread and wine, he is only acting *in persona Christi* and *persona ecclesiae* “in the person of Christ and in the person of the Church”. During these rites “the power of Christ” and the power of the worshipping community are concentrated on him.

The implication is that the priest derives his authority from Christ and the Church. In this context, the Church is made up of the worshipping community in which the priest is a member. Being a priest and a member of “the body of Christ” does not make him the head because Christ is the sole head of the body. What makes the priest different from the other members of “the body of Christ” is his triple function of Sanctification, Teaching and Governing. He is a Sanctifier because he offers sacrifice, as a Teacher he proclaims the Gospel and as a King he governs and guards the properties of the Church.

The priest obtains the ability to perform these triple functions from his ordination as affirmed by Schmaus (1975:185): “the ordination of priests is the sacrament of differentiation within the people of God. For the ordering of its life, different kinds of services are necessary which cannot be done by all members of the people in the same way: there are tasks whose fulfilment requires special authority”. The triple functions of the priest are examples of the “tasks whose fulfilment requires special authority”.

Hahn (2010:134) also expounds that, “through holy orders, the Church’s priests are conformed to Christ in a unique way. In our priestly family, they serve in the person and place of the divine first born, the only begotten son of God. It is from him, above all others that they learn to be priests. They succeed as they imitate him”. From Hahn, we deduce that the priest is not a man of his own; rather a man of Christ and a man for the community of believers as he is “conformed to Christ in a unique way” to “serve in the person and place” of Christ. Hahn’s view supports O’Malley’s earlier position. Again,

Hahn identifies the entire Christian community as a “priestly family” and the ordained priest has a significant role to play. It seems that Hahn affirms the royal priestly status of all the baptized and he echoes the views of Halligan and Kloppenburg.

McCauley (1981:174,175,176) suggests that the priest becomes the Christian community’s “public reminder of the word and action of Christ”. He observes that priests are “[...] not so much mediators for the community, but reminders, in the sacrifice, of the one mediator Christ; not even particularly great lovers of the community, but voices that repeat for the community the good news and the absolution pronounced by Christ”. It seems that the priest as “a simple reminder” is obliged to relive Christ’s priesthood in all spheres of life, as the Christian community must be reminded of who Christ is through his actions. In living and proclamation of the Gospel, the celebration of the Eucharist and administration of other Sacraments, the priest responds to his vocation and becomes the “simple reminder” of who Christ is to the Christian community. McCauley’s work is a contribution to readings in contemporary sacramental theology and it helps the researcher to identify the Catholic priest as “a simple reminder” of the Christian community i.e. the presence and identity of the priest ought to carry the Gospel of the Lord.

In his contribution to systematic theology from the perspective of Catholic theology of holy Orders, Power (1991) discusses the subject from the origins of the New Testament, through the early Christian centuries and medieval ages to contemporary period. He

discusses the subject of Order holistically to include the diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate. Power (1991:292) emphasizes that ordination was not limited to “[...] the ministry of sacrament or liturgical priesthood” but assigned “ordination to the threefold ministry of Word, sacrament and pastoral care”. The inference is that Catholic priests are ordained to proclaim the Gospel and this should not be sacrificed for anything. Furthermore, they are also ordained to administer the sacraments and shepherd the people of God entrusted to their care. In addition, priests ought to offer guidance and counselling to the people of God, as they are obliged by their ministry to do so.

Ekem (2009:118), discussing the origin of the Catholic priesthood affirms that the Catholic Church considers her priesthood as a direct derivation from the Christological priesthood expounded in the letter to the Hebrews. The priests of the Catholic Church are in a realistic sense “participants in Christ’s unique priestly sacrifice, serving as mediators through whom the latter is vividly brought home to others [...] during celebration of Mass”. It is very significant to note that Catholic priests being “participants in Christ’s unique priestly sacrifice” does not imply that they played a role in Christ’s sacrifice of willingly giving up himself to be crucified for the salvation of all humanity. Rather it should be seen in the light of re-enacting the exact sacrifice of the crucifixion at Calvary whenever they preside over the celebration of the Holy Eucharist or the Mass. In other words being “participants in Christ’s unique sacrifice” means that through the grace that they receive in the sacrament of sacred ordination, they act *in persona Christi*.

Further, commenting on the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, Ekem argues, “It is highly debatable whether the Second Vatican Council has really succeeded in modifying, to any far-reaching degree, the traditional Roman Catholic concept of priesthood”. He is of the opinion that the Second Vatican Council attempted to modify the traditional concept of the Catholic priesthood but that was without much success. Nevertheless he acknowledges that the Catholic Church “has since then been clearly affirming the priestly functions of the laity”. In the researcher’s opinion, the Second Vatican Council re-examined and reaffirmed the traditional concept of the Church’s priesthood. The researcher holds this view as a result of the fact that it is clearly stated in *The sixteen documents of Vatican II* that: “The same Lord, however, has established ministers among his faithful to unite them together in one body in which ‘not all the members have the same function’ (PO 2). It is also emphasized in the same document that “Through the ministry of priests, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is made perfect in union with the sacrifice of Christ”.

In relation to the priestly functions of the laity, the Council again did not develop a new teaching, as Ekem seems to suggest. The Council reaffirmed and emphasized an old teaching of the Church enshrined in her catechism that the sacrament of baptism gives the baptized “a share in the priesthood of Christ and provides the basis for communion with all Christians”. It seems that the Council, in emphasizing the priestly nature of the baptized, has succeeded in helping the laity to know and appreciate their priestly identity and to relive this identity even in their everyday activities. This is well captured in the Council’s Decree on Apostolate of the Laity as:

The apostolate of the social milieu, that is, the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in which a person lives, is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be properly performed by others. In this area, the laity can exercise an apostolate of like toward like. It is here that they complement the testimony of life with the testimony of the word. It is here, where they work or practice their profession, study, reside, spend their leisure time or have their companionship, that that they are more capable of helping their brethren. (AA 13)

Mathew (1996) suggests that the doctrine of the royal or the baptismal priesthood of all believers opposes and nullifies the existence of what he refers to as “unbiblical doctrine of sacerdotalism and the existence of a Brahman-like priestly class within the church”. However, Hardon (1998) opines that the priesthood of Christ is the sole fundamental priesthood in the Church and all other priests are participants in that Christological priesthood. To Hardon (1998), the participation is of two forms namely, the royal priesthood of all the baptized and those ordained into the ministerial priesthood which is identified with the sacrament of Holy Orders. He puts up a defence for the ministerial priesthood with reference to the Last Supper, claiming in that very night the Lord instituted not only the Last Supper but also the ministry of the priesthood. His claim postulates the thoughts that the Last Supper and the priesthood are inseparable and places the Last Supper in a sacrificial context. In such a sacrificial context, it will take only priests to preside over the command by the Lord of doing this “in commemoration of me”.

Mathew's position against the ministerial priesthood suggests that any baptised Christian can preside over the celebration of the Last Supper that the Lord instituted. This may create chaos and indiscipline in the Church as each member may claim the right to officiate the celebration by virtue of his baptism. Again, on Mathew's position, we observe that in the celebration of the Last Supper in protestant traditions such as the Methodist and the Presbyterian churches, it is always officiated by an ordained minister and not just any baptized member of the community even though their understanding of the Last Supper is different from that of the Catholic Church. From the above discussion, it seems that Mathew's position is not valid and practicable even in some Protestant denominations.

1.9. Organization of the Study

The study is divided into six different chapters. The first chapter contains the general introduction that includes the background to the study, statement of problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, limitations of the study, methodology, literature review and organization of the study. Chapter two focuses on the Catholic priesthood looking at its historical and theological developments, the vocation to the priesthood, and formation of candidates for the priesthood, ordination to the priesthood and life and ministry of the Catholic priest. In chapter three, the researcher presents the field findings and analysis of data collected. Chapter four focuses on the biblical background of the Catholic priesthood. Chapter five is made up of a general concept of priesthood and this comprises the African traditional religious view of priesthood, priesthood in the African Independent Churches, and priesthood/ministry in the Methodist and the

Presbyterian Churches. Chapter six contains a summary of the study and some recommendations.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD

2.0. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed the general introduction of the thesis, which illuminates that some people have been set apart in the various Christian traditions by virtue of ordination or commissioning to make the presence of God real to the faith communities and administer the Sacraments. It was noted that in the Catholic tradition, such people receive the Sacrament of Orders through sacred ordination and this makes them ministerial priests in the essence of the word. As ministerial priests, they differ from universal priests. It was also realized that the study would add to knowledge and help appreciate the place of the priest in the faith community.

In this chapter, we shall look at the etymology of the term “priest” and focus on the Catholic priesthood; with particular attention to its historical development, theology and vocations. We shall as well delve into the formation of the candidates to the priesthood, the rites of ordination to the priesthood and the life and ministry of the Catholic priest.

2.1. Etymology of the term “Priest”

Etymologically, the word “priest” is derived from the French *prêtre* and the Greek *πρεσβύτερος* (*presbyteros*). The word in Greek was however translated into English as “elder”. The term was mostly used in the late antiquity to refer to the elders of the Jewish and Christian communities. In the course of Christian application of the term, “the semantics of the term shifted from the ordained person’s place in ecclesiastical polity to his role as a cultic celebrant” (The Encyclopedia of Religion 1987:529, Vol. II). The Latin and Greek word for priest as a “cultic celebrant” is *sacerdos* and *ἱερεύς* (*hiereus*) respectively. These words emphasize religious connotation in the sense that the *sacerdos* or *ἱερεύς* (*hiereus*) plays religious functions such as interpreting the meaning of events, performing the rituals of the religion and offering sacrifices on his own behalf and on behalf of the worshippers.

The term “priest” in English has assumed the meaning of the Latin *sacerdos* or Greek *ἱερεύς* (*hiereus*) than *πρεσβύτερος* (*presbyteros*). The office or position of the priest is the priesthood. Priesthood as a term could also refer to a guild of priests. A concept of priesthood exists in some eastern religions, African traditional religions and some Christian denominations such as the Catholic Church.

2.2. Historical development of the Catholic Priesthood

The New Testament testifies to the appointment of elders to oversee the affairs of the early Christian community (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28). The appointed elders were to watch

over the community and be shepherds over the flock that God purchased with the blood of Jesus and have been entrusted into their care. The functions of the elders included guarding the flock against false teachings that may erupt within the community (Acts 20:30). Some ministers were also appointed by the community to serve the internal needs of the community such as equal distribution of food (Acts 6:1-6). The apostles and elders laid hands on and prayed over those appointed into various ministries within the early Church (Acts 6:6; 13:1-3, 1 Tim 4:14).

It is significant to know that among all the various ministries within the early Church, one cannot identify a particular priestly ministry as found in the context of Catholicism. Priesthood at that time was “identified with ritual offering of animal and other sacrifices to God, and there was no one in the community designated to do this” (Martos 1982:464). In addition was the fact that “the first generation of Christians, who were almost all Jews, accepted the legitimacy of the Jewish priesthood, and showed this by continuing to worship at the temple” until its destruction in 70 CE by Roman soldiers. The Jewish cultic priesthood also ceased to exist because of the destruction of the temple. The Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah were troubled and wondered how the destruction of the temple could be part of God’s plan for Israel.

According to Martos (1982:464), a Jewish Christian who lived in Rome composed a response to the troubling questions that were raised after the destruction of the Temple by Jews who believed in the messiahship of Jesus. (The name of the author of this work

is unknown but the work itself became known as the “letter to the Hebrews”). In his “letter to the Hebrews”, the unknown author developed the thought that the crucifixion of Jesus was a perfect sacrifice to God which replaced the temple offerings. The priest and victim of the sacrifice was Jesus himself and his priesthood superseded that of the Jewish religion because he is not a priest by ancestry but “a high priest of a new and eternal covenant between God and his people, a high priest of the same order as Melchizedek, whose priesthood had no beginning and no end”. The Church was then seen as the replacement of the old Israel with “a new priesthood and a new high priest who by his perfect life and sacrificial death had become the perfect mediator between God and man (Heb 3:1-10:18)”.

Some early Christian writers such as the author of first Peter developed the notion that all Christians were involved in priestly activities in the form of their worship and daily activities (1 Pet 2:1-10). By the end of the first century, this notion aided Christians to develop a comprehensive priesthood that emanated from the Jewish tradition but went beyond it. The Christians saw themselves as priestly people forming a priestly nation with Jesus Christ as the high priest although no specific people were referred to as priests (Martos 1982:465).

The episcopate, presbyterate and diaconate emerged as the most important ministries during the second century (McGoldrick 1990:898). In addition, Gelpi (1990:1015) observes the emergence *monepiskopos*, which was a reference to one bishop presiding

over a local Christian community; later on, “episcopal supervision of Christian cult evolved into episcopal control”. By the third century bishops were often (and rarely presbyters) referred to as high priests of the new covenant. He opines that the tendency of referring to the bishops and presbyters as priests attained its highest point during the fourth century through a theological movement called Sacerdotalism. For him, Sacerdotalist theology was a reflection of the new political status of Christianity as a religion recognized by the Roman Empire and later as the sole lawful religion of the state.

The theologians within the movement (Sacerdotalism) intended to guard episcopal authority from imperial invasion. Basil of Caesarea is cited to be the first theologian to lay the foundation of the theology of Christian ministerial priesthood by teaching that “bishops participate directly in the priestly authority of Christ in church matters in a manner analogous to the emperor’s direct participation in divine authority in secular matters”. Sacerdotalist theologians also portrayed bishops as the Levitical priests of the new covenant. This kind of teachings gave bishops priestly function different in essence from that of the priesthood of the entire faith community. Within the fourth century, presbyters or priests became second in terms of clerical authority to the bishops as the former began to preside over the Eucharistic celebration mostly in the rural areas where bishops could not be present (Gelpi 1990:1015).

Other authors assert that the scholastic theologians of the Late Middle Ages identified priests as the foremost ministers of the Christian Eucharistic sacrifice. For the theologians, the priests were endowed with power by ordination to transubstantiate bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, forgive sin, baptize, and administer the last unction or the sacrament of anointing of the sick. Contributing on the character of priestly ordination, Gelpi (1990:1016) affirms that ordination leaves “a mysterious spiritual mark on the soul [and] conformed the ordained to Christ the great high priest of the new covenant and enabled them to function as sacramental channels of grace for the laity”.

Martos (1982:499) reports that priests in medieval Christianity “were the primary mediators between God and man in almost every aspect of Christian life”. Priesthood in that period was mostly thought of in terms of “sacramental, liturgical and cultic ministry” with other functions recognized “in terms of authority, office, and jurisdiction”. Some theologians of that period limited the priestly function to the offering of the Mass and considered other functions such as preaching and administration as mere ministerial functions that are not necessarily priestly, and this kind of thoughts indirectly prepared the ground for the Protestant rejection of the priesthood.

The Second Vatican Council affirms in its document on the life and ministry of priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* that by the sacred power of Orders, priests are empowered to

offer sacrifice and forgive sins and the ordained are to attend to their priestly duties in the name of Christ (*PO 2*). The Council taught that the office of the priestly “ministry has been handed down, in a lesser degree indeed to the priests” through the bishops who are successors of the apostles. The bishops as successors participate in the mission that Jesus handed over to the apostles. Jesus sends out the bishops just as he sent out the apostles. The priests are therefore working together with the bishops to accomplish the mission. They share in the priesthood of the bishops. The Council made it clearer that priests “can be co-workers of the episcopal order for the proper fulfilment of the apostolic mission entrusted to priests by Christ”.

From the discussion so far, one can observe that the priesthood has been going through gradual developments since the second century. From the fourth century through the Middle Ages to the Second Vatican Council, the priest has always been considered as the one endowed with power to preside over the Eucharist and administer the sacraments. The Second Vatican Council also places emphasis on the preaching of the Gospel as a priestly duty and not a mere ministerial function.

2.3. Theology of the Catholic Priesthood

According to Perrin (1964:19), “the idea of priesthood is inseparably bound up with that of worship; a priest is a man whose duty it is to offer worship to God”. The notion of worship of a deity and priesthood are ancient phenomena that are as old as humankind. It is therefore not out of place for a community to appoint one of its members as a priest

to organize and lead in the worship of a deity. Although it is not out of place, the danger involved is that there could be a notion of priesthood which could remain “purely on human level” without any divine essence.

“The Gospel does not establish a religion which mankind set up for the worship of God, but a religion which God himself came down to reveal” (Perrin 1964:19). The priest in this religion is not an ordinary man chosen by the community just to lead and organize worship, but Jesus Christ who is the sole mediator between God and man. The priesthood of Jesus Christ is not a mere human invention; it is divinely revealed. The Catholic priesthood is therefore derived from this divine revelation and the Catholic priest and his functions can only be comprehended through the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The Catholic priest then derives his source of power from Jesus Christ.

It is well stated in the *Presbyterorum Ordinis* that the Lord Jesus Christ “has established ministers among his faithful to unite them together in one body in which ‘not all the members have the same function’ (Rom 12:4). These ministers in the society of the faithful are able by the sacred power of Orders to [...] perform their priestly office publicly for men in the name of Christ” (PO 2). The afore-mentioned text affirms and elucidates that Christ instituted the sacramental priesthood and differentiates it from the common or universal priesthood that is attained by baptism. The difference is known by virtue of the former functioning publicly as priest in the name of Christ.

Kloppenburg (1974:273) explains that the Council of Trent affirmed: “Christ at the Last Supper, wishing to leave his Church a visible sacrifice, gave his body and blood to the Apostles, ‘making them priests of the New Testament at that time’” in support of the view that the Catholic priesthood was instituted by Christ during the Last Supper. Christ made the Apostles priests while instituting the Eucharist or the Last Supper in order for them to fulfil the command he gave for the continuation of the Supper in his memorial (Lk 22:19). The Apostles also transmitted the power to preside over the Eucharist to their disciples and the same power is transmitted to Catholic priests at sacred Ordination.

Hahn (2010:33) affirms this position:

In time, those men [the apostles] passed on their priestly ministry through a sacramental rite: the laying of hands (see Acts 6:6). The apostles ritually placed their hands upon the men who would be their co-workers and successors. By this rite of ordination, the apostles conferred the gift of priesthood on a new generation (see 2 Tim 1:6). And so it has passed through the millennia, to the priests who serve us today. Through this action, those who are ordained receive the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and so they receive power to perform actions that are properly divine.

The imposition of hands is a symbol of invocation of the Holy Spirit upon those men who became co-workers and successors of the apostles. It also signified the new office or order those men were to assume. Granting that the same power given to the Apostles had been transmitted to them, then all Catholic priests are partakers in the office of the Apostles implying that they are obligated to continue the celebration of the Eucharist and also continue the mission of the twelve as mandated by Jesus Christ. In this mission

the priests are called to the proclamation of the Gospel to the entire human race (Mk 16: 14-15). The focus of the proclamation of the Gospel is the conversion of unbelievers to faith in Jesus Christ.

Burghardt (1981:168) outlines four general functions of the Catholic priest and in the first function; he asserts that “the priest is ordained to proclaim the word of God”. Secondly, the priest is expected to build the Christian community. In this function lies the leadership responsibility of the ordained priest. In his position as a leader, he must not command the lay around and lord it over them but appeal to their hearts and minds in order to “co-ordinate the charisms of the community as found in individual members”. Furthermore as an ordained priest, he must render service to humanity and finally the priest is ordained to preside over the Eucharist, which is the fulcrum of the Catholic faith. Those who become priests in the Catholic Church are those that the Lord graciously grants the gift of priestly vocation.

2.4. The Vocation to the Catholic Priesthood

Vocation means a “calling”. Vocation is a personal call offered freely and must be accepted willingly. Though the Christian vocation is a gift from God to humanity, the family contributes to the individual’s realization of his vocation to the priesthood by bringing him up in the faith. In support of this opinion, Bushman commenting on the Second Vatican Council’s decree on formation of priests, *Optatam Totius* in Trouve (1999:328), points out that “a vocation to the priesthood has as its foundation a vibrant

faith which ideally develops in the family”. The vocation to the Catholic priesthood is a gift from God that “is never bestowed outside or independently of the Church”. John Paul II exhorts in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* that the priestly vocation “is a call, by the Sacrament of Holy Orders received in the Church, to place oneself at the service of the People of God with a particular belonging and configuration to Jesus Christ and with the authority of acting ‘in the name and in the person’ of him who is the Head and Shepherd of the Church” (PDV 35). He teaches that each priest receives his personal call from the Lord Jesus Christ through the Church as a gracious gift. The priestly vocation is characterised primarily by a divine initiated dialogue through which the individual responds. God is the one who first takes the initiative to call the individual. This is evident in how he called the prophets of old (Jer 1:4-5) and how Jesus called the disciples who later became the apostles (Mk 3: 13). In chapter three, there would be a discussion on how one is called into the priesthood and also the form of the call as part of the data gathered on the field. The call to the Catholic priesthood is a continuous process that does not end even after ordination. The Lord continues to call even those who have received ordination to accept their vocations as priests daily and work towards that sacred vocation they have willingly embraced.

2.5.0. The Formation of Candidates for the Catholic Priesthood

Jesus called twelve men among his disciples to be with him whom he also made apostles (Mk 3:13-15). These men were with him throughout his ministry during which he taught and formed them into the very people he wanted them to be. Jesus taught them how to pray (Lk 11:1-4) and gave them insight to some of the parables he used in his

teachings which the crowd were not privileged to comprehend (Mt 13:10-23). He gave this special formation to the twelve because he knew he would later send them out for the proclamation of the kingdom. The twelve that he chose spent enough time with him and had intimacy with him. The Catholic Church believes that Jesus continues to call people to be sent out for the same mission. The Catholic Church therefore learns from the example of Jesus by giving adequate and proper formation to those he (Jesus) calls in our age at the various Seminaries.

John Paul II explains: “the ‘seminary’ in its different forms, and analogously the ‘house’ of formation for religious priests, more than a place, a material space, should be a spiritual place, a way of life, an atmosphere that fosters and ensures a process of formation, so that the person who is called to the priesthood by God may become, with the Sacrament of Orders, a living image of Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church” (*PDV* 42). During the formation period candidates for the priesthood are consciously trained to offer their entire being to Jesus, learn from him and follow him as the apostles did, and also develop intimate relationship with him through daily prayer and meditation on the Scriptures and Eucharistic celebration.

John Paul II confirms this opinion in his acknowledgment:

The Synod Fathers have grasped in a direct and deep way the original and specific meaning of the formation of candidates for the priesthood, when they say that ‘To live in the seminary, which is a school of the Gospel, means to follow Christ as the Apostles did. You are led by Christ into the service of God the Father and of all people, under the

guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus, you become more like Christ the Good Shepherd in order better to serve the Church and the world as a priest. In preparing for priesthood, we learn how to respond from the heart to Christ's basic question: 'Do you love me?' (Jn21:15). For the future priest the answer can only mean total self-giving'. (*PDV* 42)

Catholic priests are given holistic formation to aid give themselves out totally to Christ and humanity. John Paul II emphasizes on four major pillars of the holistic formation offered in all the seminaries and these are – human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formations (*PDV* 42).

2.5.1. Human Formation

The human formation of the candidate is the foundation of the priestly formation without which the future ministry of the candidate would be in chaos. Proper human formation leads the candidate onto auto discovery (i.e. self knowledge), development of good relationships and affective maturity. John Paul II elucidates that “the priest, who is called to be a ‘living image’ of Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church, should seek to reflect in himself, as far as possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the Incarnate Son of God and which is reflected with particular liveliness in his attitudes towards others as [...] narrated in the Gospels” (*PDV* 43).

The priest cannot pursue his ministry without having any relationship with humankind as he proclaims the Gospel and administers the Sacraments “in the name and the person of Christ” to the faith community. The priest is ordained to perform his priestly duties among humankind and acts on behalf of the latter in relation to God (Heb 5:1) and this

cannot be achieved if the priest does not relate well to those he had been ordained for. In performing his duties, the priest must avail himself as a bridge and not an obstacle to those who are drawing closer to the Lord.

For this reason and others, the candidates for the priesthood are formed in a way that enables them develop their human personality in order to “know the depths of the human heart, to perceive difficulties and problems, to make meeting and dialogue easy to create trust and cooperation, to express serene and objective judgments” (PDV 43). In addition candidates are formed to cultivate good human qualities such as loyalty, respect for humanity (for the old, young, rich and poor) honesty, compassion, affability, generosity, forgiveness, justice and prudence to enable them bear problems that may be associated with pastoral responsibilities in the priestly ministry. The priest is called to be a father to the people and as a father; it is of great importance to relate well to his “children”. Candidates are also formed in areas of moral conscience to enable them appreciate the need to be obedient to moral obligations and guide the consciences of those who would be entrusted into their care.

John Paul II again exhorts that affective maturity “is a significant and decisive factor in the formation of candidates for the priesthood”. Affective maturity is achieved through “education in true and responsible love” and it assumes an awareness of the central place of love in the life of humankind. In his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, John Paul II asserts, “Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible

for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it” (*RH* 10.1). John Paul II explains that this kind of love must be holistic in the sense that it should entail the whole being including the physical, psychic and spiritual aspects “which is expressed in the ‘nuptial meaning’ of the human body [...] to which a person gives himself to another and takes the other to himself” (*PDV* 44). When this is well understood and well grasped, the truth about human love would be realized and appreciated. In a society where love and sex have been reduced merely to bodily selfish pleasure, candidates for the priesthood are offered education on human sexuality that presents and recognizes chastity as a “virtue that develops a person’s authentic maturity and makes him [...] capable of respecting and fostering the nuptial meaning of the body” (*PDV* 44).

John Paul II in his apostolic exhortation on the formation of priests in the circumstances of the present day affirms:

Education for responsible love and the affective maturity of the person are totally necessary for those who, like the priest are called to celibacy that is, to offer with the grace of the Spirit and the free response of one’s own will the whole of one’s love and care to Jesus Christ and to his Church. In view of the commitment to celibacy, affective maturity should bring to human relationships of serene friendship and deep brotherliness a strong, lively and personal love for Jesus Christ. As the Synod Fathers have written, ‘a love for Christ, which overflows into a dedication to everyone, is of the greatest importance in developing affective maturity. Thus the candidate, who is called to celibacy, will find in affective maturity a firm support to live in chastity in faithfulness and joy’ (*PDV* 44).

It is therefore imperatively important that during the priesthood formation, candidates grow and develop affective maturity that would enable future priests renounce anything with love that may threaten the priestly ministry. It also aids them to develop a proper interpersonal relationship with both men and women.

2.5.2. Spiritual Formation

When the human formation of the candidate for the priesthood is well carried out it then leads into spiritual formation. John Paul II posits that through revelation and Christian experience it has been noted: “spiritual formation possesses the unmistakable originality which derives from evangelical newness” (PDV 45). He again emphasizes that spiritual formation “is the work of the Holy Spirit and engages a person in his totality. It introduces him to a deep communion with Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, and leads to the total submission of one’s life to the Spirit, in a filial attitude towards the Father and a trustful attachment to the Church” (PDV 45). Spiritual formation helps to appreciate the work of Jesus on the cross and draws the candidate into a deeper communion with him. The spiritual formation of the future priest “unifies and gives life to his *being* a priest and his *acting* as a priest” (PDV 45).

The essential content needed for the spiritual formation of the candidates for the priesthood is highlighted in the Second Vatican Council’s document *Optatam Totius*:

The spiritual training [formation] should be imparted in such a way that the students might learn to live in an intimate and unceasing union with the Father through His Son

Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Conformed to Christ the Priest through their sacred ordination, they should be accustomed to adhere to Him as friends, in an intimate companionship, their whole life through. They should so live His Paschal Mystery themselves that they can initiate into it the flock committed to them. They should be taught to seek Christ in the faithful meditation on God's Word, in the active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially in the Eucharist and in the divine office, in the bishop who sends them and in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor, the children, the sick, the sinners and the unbelievers. They should love and venerate with a filial trust the most Blessed Virgin Mary, who was given as mother to the disciple by Christ Jesus as He was dying on the cross (OT 8).

From the text, we realize that the Council demands that candidates for the priesthood should be developed “to live in an intimate union with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit”. It implies that the Council places a demand on candidates to develop a personal relationship with the Holy Trinity. Out of this relationship, they could perceive a proper conception of the triune God through their personal experience. This kind of intimacy that the Council seeks to promote begins at Baptism and continues to be nourished through the Sacraments, especially, daily reception of the Eucharist. When the priest is able to develop and maintain such intimacy with the Holy Trinity, he would then offer good spiritual guidance to the faithful and encourage them to pursue and deepen their personal relationship with the Lord as that kind of relationship had already been initiated at their baptism.

The Council, in the text again spells out the Christological dimension of the formation to the priesthood by insisting that candidates for the priesthood “should be taught to

seek Christ”. The Council provides the path that should be taken in seeking Christ. The path involves “faithful meditation on God’s Word, in the active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially in the Eucharist and in the divine office, [...] and in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor, the children, the sick, the sinners and the unbelievers”.

In meditating upon the Word, the future priest hears in his inner most part the voice of the Master he seeks to follow and also by participating in the sacred mysteries of the church, he experiences the mysteries of God. Seeking Christ in the poor and the marginalized also helps the future priest not to discriminate in his ministry because in doing so he might not recognize the Christ that he seeks. The candidates for the priesthood are to seek Christ daily and when they find him, others are to be invited to encounter that same Christ. Being a priest in a church that has the sole mission of evangelization one cannot refuse to seek Christ daily, as he ought to witness Christ to those who do not know Him and even those who lack a deeper knowledge of who the Christ is.

2.5.3. Intellectual Formation

In responding to the call to evangelization, priests are to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to all and sundry. In a sophisticated world with highly sophisticated minds, priests have a sacred duty to champion the course of bringing the light of the Gospel to such minds. This duty makes it a necessity for candidates for the Catholic priesthood to seek a high

level of intellectual formation. John Paul II asserts that intellectual formation “is a fundamental demand of man’s intelligence by which he ‘participates in the light of God’s mind’ and seeks to acquire a wisdom which in turn opens to and is directed towards knowing and adhering to God” (*PDV* 51). The future priest shares his benefits from intellectual formation together with the community that would be placed under his care. When with the human formation the future priest integrates the product of intellectual formation with a Christian spirituality that entails a personal encounter with Jesus, he becomes very effective in the pastoral duties that would be assigned to him.

One of the most vital and greatest stages of the intellectual formation is the introduction of candidates to the study of Philosophy, which enables candidates to appreciate “the links between the great philosophical questions and mysteries of salvation which are studied in theology under the guidance of higher light of faith” (*PDV* 52).

John Paul II posits:

Only a sound philosophy can help candidates for the priesthood to develop a reflective awareness of the fundamental relationship that exists between the human spirit and truth, that truth which is revealed to us fully in Jesus Christ. Nor must one underestimate the importance of philosophy as a guarantee of that ‘certainty of truth’ which is the only firm basis for a total giving of oneself to Jesus and to the Church. [...] Philosophy greatly helps the candidate to enrich his intellectual formation in the ‘cult of truth’, namely, in a kind of loving veneration of the truth, which leads one to recognize that the truth is not created or measured by man but is given to man as a gift by the Supreme Truth, God; that, albeit in a limited way and often with difficulty, human reason can reach objective and universal truth, even that relating to God and the radical meaning of existence; and that faith itself cannot do without reason and the effort of ‘thinking through’ its content as that great mind Augustine bore witness: ‘I wished to

see with my mind what I have believed, and I have argued and labored greatly'. (*PDV* 52)

In the study of Philosophy, the candidate realizes the identity of the priest and “his apostolic and missionary commitments are closely linked to the question about the nature of truth” (*PDV* 52). Most importantly, the study of Philosophy prepares the candidate for the study of sacred doctrine of theology, which is the centre of priestly intellectual formation. The study of theology deepens the faith of the candidate by intriguing in him the desire to question and critically reflect on his own faith. It deepens the faith by leading to a deeper personal relationship with Jesus Christ in the Church and this would enhance the pastoral ministry of the future priest. In addition, candidates are introduced to the study of human sciences such as Sociology, Anthropology and Psychology.

2.5.4. Pastoral Formation

The purpose of the entire formation given to candidates for the priesthood is to usher them into “communion with the charity of Jesus Christ the good shepherd” (*PDV* 57), hence there cannot be a holistic formation without pastoral formation although various aspects of the formation has pastoral character. The Second Vatican Council declares that “the entire training of the students [candidates for the priesthood] should be oriented to the formation of true shepherds of souls after the model of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd [...] Therefore, all the forms of training, spiritual, intellectual, disciplinary, are to be ordered with concerted effort towards this pastoral end,” (*OT* 4). Pastoral formation like the other pillars of the formation “develops by

means of mature reflection and practical application”. For John Paul II it needs to be learnt through pastoral or practical theology and that is

a scientific reflection on the Church as she is built up daily, by the power of the Spirit, in history; on the Church as the ‘universal sacrament of salvation’ as a living sign and instrument of the salvation wrought by Christ through the word, the sacraments and the service of charity. Pastoral theology is not just an art [...] it is theological in its own right because it receives from faith the principles and criteria for the pastoral action of the Church in history, [...] (PDV 52).

The study of pastoral theology is to illumine the practical aspect of the pastoral formation through “involvement in certain pastoral services which the candidates to the priesthood should carry out with a necessary progression and always in harmony with their educational commitments. It is a question of pastoral ‘experiences’, which can come together in a real programme of ‘pastoral training’ which can last a considerable amount of time” (PDV 57). The sense of awareness that pastoral formation is not a matter of “mere apprenticeship” focused on introducing a candidate to some field techniques for the *job* is imbibed in him by initiating the candidate into “the sensitivity of being a shepherd, in the conscious and mature assumption of his responsibilities, in the interior habit of evaluating problems and establishing priorities and looking for solutions on the basis of honest motivations of faith and according to the theological demands inherent in pastoral work” (PDV 58).

A complete pastoral formation would lead the candidate for the priesthood to the knowledge that the existence of the Church is by the work of the divine and it is only

the divine who sustains the Church. This would prompt the future priest not to rely on his own abilities in sustaining the Church but the Spirit of God. The pastoral formation again introduces the candidate to the communion and missionary dimension of the Church. In this case, the future priest would know how to relate to all members of the Church – bishops, priests (secular), deacons, religious priests, brothers and sisters and the laity. The candidate for the priesthood would also be prepared to live the missionary dimension of the church and be ready at all time to evangelize, as the church exists to evangelize.

The four major pillars of the formation of the candidates for the Catholic priesthood are human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. A holistic formation of the candidate for Catholic priesthood cannot be completed without these four pillars. After a candidate has been taken through all these pillars of formation successfully and is found worthy of becoming a Catholic priest, he is then presented to the bishop who then administers to him the sacrament of sacred Orders. Haligan (1986:143) observes that the bishop ordains the candidate into the diaconate Order. The candidate becomes a transitional deacon for a minimum period of six months; afterwards the deacon then receives the Sacrament of Ordination to the priesthood.

2.6. The Rites of Ordination to the Catholic Priesthood

The Catholic encyclopedia defines ordination as “the act of consecrating men to be the sacred ministers for the worship of God and for the sanctification of all people”.

Schmaus (1975:185) posits that ordination to the Catholic priesthood differentiates the priest from the people within the Christian community. He refers to the priest's ordination as "the sacrament of differentiation within the people of God". Halligan (1986:134) identifying with such thoughts also affirms, "By their vocation and ordination priests of the New Testament are truly set apart in a certain sense within the midst of God's people [...] that they may be totally dedicated to the work for which the Lord has raised them up". The sacramental character of ordination does not only distinguish the ordained from the non-ordained but also configures the ordained to the person of Christ and enables him to act in *persona Christi* (person of Christ). Halligan (1986:143) supports the assertion that when men are ordained to the priesthood "they are signed with a specific character and are configured to Christ the Priest and are thus able to act in the person of Christ our Head". It is important to note that once the sacrament of ordination is validly conferred, it cannot be repeated and it is irreversible because of the "specific character" it imprints on the individual.

The power to ordain is resided in a consecrated bishop. Ordination to the priesthood can only be valid and licit when it is presided over by a consecrated bishop who is in communion with the Church. According to Halligan (1986:135), the sacrament of ordination ought to be celebrated in a Cathedral church on a Sunday or a holy day of obligation, but due to pastoral reasons it could be celebrated in an ordinary church or even oratory on other days including ordinary weekdays. The celebration of the Sacrament of ordination takes place within Holy Mass after the liturgy of the Word and the structure of the rite entails: election, promise of obedience, litany of the saints,

imposition of hands and prayer of ordination, investiture with stole and chasuble, anointing of hands, presentation of bread and wine to the newly ordained and kiss of peace.

At the end of the liturgy of the Word begins the election of candidate(s). The candidate for ordination is called to come forward, and a representative of his family presents him to the Church for ordination. The bishop inquires from the candidate of his request and he answers that he seeks for ordination into the priesthood. The bishop inquires of the worthiness of the candidate for the sacrament from a priest who has been involved in the seminary formation. The priest answers in the affirmative and requests that the bishop ordain the candidate. The congregation also gives their consent mostly through clapping and shouts of “Amen”.

The candidate to be ordained goes before the bishop and makes a promise of obedience. As he does so, he kneels before the bishop and places his hands between those of the bishop. The candidate promises to be obedient to the bishop and all his successors. This is followed by the invocation of the Litany of the Saints.

The candidate then prostrates with head towards the altar while the bishop, priests and the whole church kneel and invoke the Litany of the Saints through singing or recitation. This prayer asks for the intercession of the saints in order that God may look favourably upon the candidate for ordination. A prayer follows asking that the Holy Spirit may be poured upon him. While these prayers are being said, the faithful are to

join their prayers for the candidate to those of the bishop. The gift of the Holy Spirit is conferred upon the candidate(s) by imposition of hands and through the prayer of ordination.

At the ordination of a priest, the bishop presiding over the celebration imposes his hands on the candidate. All priests present at celebration also impose hands on the candidate in silence as well. The Bishop alone then imposes his hands and says the prayer of consecration or ordination over the candidate. Detscher (1990:909) suggests that the imposition of hands symbolizes that the candidate is to be ordained into the presbyterial college of the local Church and that gives him a “share in the council of the presbyterate”. He again elucidates that the act of imposition of hands is in keeping with an ancient text found in the *Apostolic Tradition*, which is believed to have been written by Hippolytus. It was declared in *Sacramentum Ordinis* (1947) by Paul XII “the imposition of hands was the sacramental matter of ordination and the epicletic section of each prayer of consecration was the sacramental form of ordination” (Detscher 1990:909). After the prayer of consecration, the candidate is a priest and is invested properly with the stole and chasuble that are appropriate for the celebration of the Eucharist.

The bishop proceeds to anoint the palms of the new priest. It is a symbol of the anointing of the Holy Spirit that took place through the imposition of hands and the prayer of ordination. It also symbolizes the priest’s distinctive participation in Christ’s priesthood by the sacrifice he would offer with his hands. Schmaus (1975:188) opines

that the anointing of hands of the new priest was gradually introduced from the eighth century and was generally adopted as element of the ordination rite but until the twelfth century, it was thought of as a separate form of consecration.

The new priest is presented with bread on a paten and a chalice of wine. These are the symbols of the priest's duty to offer the sacrifice of the Holy Eucharist and to follow the example of Christ crucified. They are brought up by the lay faithful and presented to a deacon who takes them to the bishop. The bishop then presents them to the newly ordained priest saying, "Accept from the Holy People of God the gifts to be offered to him. Know what you are doing, and imitate the mystery you celebrate, and model your life to the mystery of the Lord's cross" (Detscher 1990:910). This gesture emphasizes the close relationship between the rites of ordination and the celebration of the Eucharist. The priest is ordained for the faithful and to offer sacrifice. The primary duty of the priest is to preside over the celebration of the Eucharist.

The bishop and all priests present offer a kiss of peace, which may include hugs and whispering of congratulatory messages to the newly ordained priest(s). This is to acknowledge the admittance of the newly ordained to the rank of a co-worker with the bishop and the other members of the local clergy who assist the bishop in the diocese. The priests welcome the newly ordained as a fellow co-worker in their shared ministry. The normal celebration of the Mass continues with the newly ordained participating fully as co-celebrant. The researcher also observed during priestly ordination at the Sacred Heart Cathedral Parish, Navrongo-Bolgatanga Diocese on 8th October 2011 that

the newly ordained priest said a prayer of blessings over the ordaining bishop, formators at the seminary and his parents in the course of the Mass. The newly ordained now enters and participates fully in the life and ministry of the Catholic priesthood.

2.7. The Life and Ministry of Catholic Priests

The Catholic priest may live his own life but this should not be in contradiction to the teachings of the Catholic Church. As a priest, he is a representative of the Church and does not act in his own person but in the person of Christ. The Church calls her priests to a life of perfection, invites priests to embrace voluntary poverty, celibacy and obedience to the pope, bishops and superiors.

Catholic priests are primarily called through baptism to a life of perfection in the same way just as all baptized Christians are called. Priests are obliged to work towards attaining this perfection in a special manner because of their ordination. In affirming this opinion, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council assert:

Priests are bound, however, to acquire that perfection in special fashion. They have been consecrated by God in a new manner at their ordination and made living instruments of Christ the Eternal Priest that they may be able to carry on in time his marvelous work whereby the entire family of man is again made whole by power from above. Since, therefore, every priest in his own fashion acts in place of Christ himself, he is enriched by a special grace, so that, as he serves the flock committed to him and the entire People of God, he may the better grow in the grace of him whose tasks he performs, because to the weakness of our flesh there is brought the holiness of him who for us was made a High Priest 'holy, guiltless, undefiled not reckoned among us sinners' (Heb 7:26). (PO 12)

The Church urges all her priests to make every effort to attain growth in holiness to enable them become “[...] consistently better instruments in the service of the whole people of God, using for this purpose those means which the church has approved” (*PO* 12).

The Second Vatican Council teaches that it takes sincerity and indefatigability in attending to priestly duties in “the Spirit of Christ” to arrive at such holiness. Priests being ministers of God’s word have it as a sacred duty to teach others the Word. Should they be committed to this sincerely and be opened to the Spirit themselves, they would receive the Word first before teaching others. It is the same Word that would make them grow daily and shape them into more perfect followers of the Lord Jesus Christ who called them. Priests act in the person of Christ when offering priestly services, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, which is a re-enactment of the Christ’s sacrifice at Calvary in which he “gave himself for the sanctification of men” (*PO* 13). The Church then requests of her priests “to take example from that with which they deal, and inasmuch as they celebrate the mystery of the Lord’s death, they should keep their bodies free of wantonness and lusts” (*PO* 13).

Evangelical Counsels characterize the life of the Catholic priest and the priest ought to live the counsels by making a promise or taking vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. The Catholic Church demands that the life of her priests should not be marked by affluence and at the same time, the Church does not call her priests into extreme poverty. The Church encourages that as part of their lives priests should not

focus on money or be overly indulged in monetary affairs but should only be concerned with what would enable a decent living. In brief, the Church invites all her priests “to embrace voluntary poverty by which they are more manifestly conformed to Christ and become eager in the sacred ministry. For Christ, though he was rich, became poor on account of us, that by his need we might become rich [...]. By living this form of life, priests can laudably reduce to practice that spirit of poverty commended by Christ”.

Chastity in the case of the Catholic Church belonging to the Latin rite refers to celibacy. Celibacy is recognized and appreciated by the Church as a gift from God that must be accepted willingly and freely. It was imposed on all who entered into sacred Orders of the Latin Church. Vatican II also approves and confirms celibacy as a priestly way of life. The Council “exhorts all priests who in following the example of Christ freely receive sacred celibacy as a grace of God, that they magnanimously and wholeheartedly adhere to it, and that persevering faithfully in it, they may acknowledge this outstanding gift of the Father which is so openly praised and extolled by the Lord (cf Mt 19:11)”. Celibacy is suitable for the priestly life as it enables priests to be more committed and dedicated to Christ and his work with undivided heart.

Obedience is very essential in the life of the Catholic priest. Among all the three promises or vows that characterize the priestly life and taken at the diaconate ordination, it is only obedience which is taken again at the priestly ordination. The priest also makes this promise of obedience again to any bishop translated into his diocese. Addai-Mensah (1997:37) encourages the priest “to be true to himself and not

contradict by the way he lives what he had publicly sworn [in reference to the promise or vow of obedience] for which people at the ordination ceremony showed their appreciation by their applause”. He again comments that “the vow of obedience is the most difficult” as it confronts the freedom of priests, and their freedom “as human beings in a way through the vow of obedience becomes limited”. The essence of obedience is emphasized in the *Presbyterorum Ordinis* by urging priests “[...] to dedicate their own will by obedience to the service of God and their fellow men. In a great spirit of faith, let them receive and execute whatever orders the Holy Father, their own bishop, or other superiors give or recommend” (PO 15).

In addition to their priestly lives, Catholic priests do not live in isolation. As far as they are human, they relate to others. As a relational being, the life of a priest also involves direct relationship with the bishop, fellow priests who are his brothers in ministry and the laity. The Second Vatican Council recommends: “Bishops should regard priests as their brothers and friends and be concerned as far as they are able for their material and especially for their spiritual well-being” (PO 7). In view of the recommendation, priests ought to recognize and relate to their bishops as true dependable brothers who would support them both materially and spiritually. In relating to their bishops as recommended, “Priests never losing sight of the fullness of the priesthood which the bishops enjoy, must respect in them the authority of Christ, the supreme shepherd. They must therefore stand by their bishops in sincere charity and obedience” (PO 7). The relationship between priests and bishops should be that of mutual respect, dependence and love towards one another and not that of a slave and a master as the Council

affirms: “by reason of the gift of the Holy Spirit which is given to priests in Holy Orders, bishops [must] regard them as necessary helpers and counsellors in the ministry and in their role of teaching, sanctifying, nourishing the people of God”.

Priests are to relate to their fellow priests as brothers because by ordination they are ushered into membership of the Presbyterium of the Catholic Church in which they have other priests as brothers. The Council affirms in the *Presbyterorum Ordinis*: “priests by virtue of their ordination to the priesthood are united among themselves in an intimate sacramental brotherhood” (PO 8). Due to this sacramental brotherhood, it is required of priests to support one another and cooperate effectively in pursuit of “building up the body of Christ” that may require several duties and new methods. The works assigned to various priests may be different yet it should be seen in the broader sense as part of building up the Church of God. Being brothers in the same ministry, priests must offer mutual assistance to develop their intellectual and spiritual life.

Priests who are chosen among men and ordained to minister to men and not angels cannot pursue their ministry without developing a relationship with the laity. Both priests and the laity must develop and maintain a healthy relationship with mutual respect for each other. Priests are spiritual directors and shepherds so they must be available, approachable and accessible to the laity. They must develop and maintain a kind of relationship that would command respect and filial trust from the laity. The relationship between priests and laity should encourage the latter to play her role in the mission of the Church. In view of this, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council

admonish priests to “sincerely acknowledge and promote the dignity of the laity and the part proper to them in the mission of the Church. And they should hold in high honour that just freedom which is due to everyone in the earthly city” (*PO 9*).

So far, we have been discussing the life of the Catholic priest without laying much emphasis on his ministry although his life as a priest cannot be separated from his ministry as the latter runs into the former. The discussion from this juncture would lay emphasis on the ministry of the priest. The Catholic priest is committed to the ministry of the Word, Sacraments and a pastoral ministry. The priest is committed to the duty of proclamation of the Word or Gospel to all and sundry.

The priest has the sacred duty to proclaim the Word of salvation through which “the spark of faith is lit in the hearts of unbelievers and fed in the hearts of the faithful”. The proclamation of the Word may take different forms such as formal preaching during Eucharistic and Para-liturgical celebrations and even the way he lives his life as a priest. The Second Vatican Council observes the importance of the Gospel proclamation and therefore proclaims:

To all men, therefore, priests are debtors that the truth of the Gospel which they have may be given to others. And so, whether by entering into profitable dialogue they bring people to the worship of God, whether by openly preaching they proclaim the mystery of Christ, or whether in the light of Christ they treat contemporary problems, they are relying not on their own wisdom for it is the word of Christ they teach, and it is to conversion and holiness that they exhort all men (*PO 4*).

The ministry of the Word prepares the grounds for the Sacramental ministry of the priest. It is only when the Word is proclaimed that people come to faith and would be able to receive the Sacraments. The ministry of the Sacrament strengthens the faithful who are on pilgrimage on this land and draws them closer to God. Vatican II affirms in the *Presbyterorum Ordinis*: “By Baptism men are truly brought into the People of God; by the sacrament of Penance sinners are reconciled to God and his Church; by the Anointing of the Sick, the ill are given solace; and especially by the celebration of Mass they offer sacramentally the Sacrifice of Christ” (PO 5).

By virtue of ordination, the priest is entrusted with a pastoral ministry as he shares in the office of Christ the shepherd, and head of the Church. In exercising his pastoral ministry, the priest is expected to teach his flock the faith of the Church and ensure that individual members of the flock are led to the Holy Spirit who would enable them live the faith. Living the faith entails not living according to the desires of the self but surrendering the personal will to the demands of the teachings of Christ. Different categories of people make up the flock, the priest is obliged to “treat all with exceptional kindness in imitation of the Lord” and render equal pastoral care for all. It is required of the priest to pay attention to the needs of the youth, married couples and parents. The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council suggest a kind of preferential pastoral care for the poor and weak of the community. They state, “Although they have obligations toward all men, priests have a special obligation to the poor and weak entrusted to them, for our Lord himself showed that he was united to them, and their evangelization is mentioned as a sign of messianic activity. [...] and above all, priests

must be solicitous for the sick and the dying, visiting them and strengthening them in the Lord” (PO 6). The pastoral ministry of the priest is not limited to the individual care of the faithful but it is extended and culminated in uniting the entire faithful to establish a church that would live in charity with one another and also in unity with the universal Church.

2.8. Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has been entirely on the Catholic priesthood with a focus on the historical development, theology, formation of candidates for the priesthood, ordination to the priesthood and life and ministry of the priest. The four major pillars of the priestly formation- human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral were also discussed. It has been observed that the Catholic priest shares in the priesthood of Christ and acts *in persona Christi* during his ministerial functions.

The next chapter would be a discussion and analysis of the data collected on the field. This would reveal how the priest is called to the priesthood or in other words, how the priest receives his vocation. It would also include the kind of challenges priests experience in their life and ministry, and what the Church does to help priests during moments of challenges.

CHAPTER THREE

PRESENTATION OF FIELD FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

3.0. Introduction

The previous discussion has been on the Catholic priesthood with emphasis on the historical development, theology, vocation, formation, ordination and the life and ministry of the priest. This chapter is a presentation and analysis of the data gathered from the field. The field findings were obtained within the Catholic Archdiocese of Kumasi. The Archdiocese is made up of five (5) deaneries with two hundred and forty nine (249) priests as at August 2012. The number comprises one hundred and forty three (143) priests who have been incardinated into the diocese, ninety-two (92) diocesan priests and fourteen (14) expatriates (Ghana Catholic Diary and Directory 2013).

The researcher used questionnaires to solicit for views of the priests for a description of the Catholic priesthood with emphasis on the nature of the priesthood, the call or vocation to the priesthood and challenges in the life and ministry of the priest. Non-probability sampling technique was used to select a sample size of sixty (60) priests from the five (5) deaneries within the Archdiocese, with each deanery assigned with a quota of twelve (12). Out of the sixty (60) questionnaires distributed, the researcher was able to retrieve fifty (50) answered questionnaires; therefore, the total number of

respondents was fifty (50). In addition, the researcher interviewed (via questionnaires) twenty (20) seminary formators (trainers at the seminary) from St Hubert Minor Seminary, St Gregory the Great Major Seminary, Spiritan Formation Centre and Society of African Missions' formation house, all in the Archdiocese for their views pertaining to the formation of priests with emphasis on who determines a candidate's genuine vocation to the priesthood and how this is done.

3.1. Groupings of respondents

The respondents were divided into five different groups based on the number of years each had spent in the holy priesthood. The first group comprised priests who were not more than five (5) years in the ministry (i.e. the under-five) and they formed the majority with twenty (20) representing forty per cent (40%) of the total respondents. The second group was made up of priests who were more than five (5) but less than eleven (11) years in ministry and this represents sixteen per cent (16%) of the respondents i.e. eight (8). The third category of respondents were those who had spent eleven years and above but not more than fifteen (15) years in the priesthood and the fourth group was also made up of priests who had been in the priesthood from sixteen (16) up to twenty (20) years. Both the third and fourth group represent twelve per cent (12%) each i.e. six (6) respondents for each group. The fifth category was made up of respondents who had been in the priesthood for twenty one (21) years and above and they were ten (10) representing twenty per cent (20%). The groupings enabled the researcher to identify some challenges that were peculiar to a specific group of priests.

3.2. Nature of the Catholic Priesthood

From the various answers provided by the respondents, we deduce that the Catholic priesthood is an answer to a divine call to participate in the priesthood of Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Church. The priest by his ordination is configured to Christ or becomes *alter Christus* and acts in *persona Christi*. The priest is called to serve the people of God through total surrender of his life to God for the salvation of souls. All the fifty respondents (100%) to the question on the nature of the priesthood emphasized that the priesthood is of service in nature. The key word in the priesthood is “service” and priests are to serve in whatever capacity the Church places them. It is also in accordance with the assertion of Burghardt (1998:168) that priests are to render service to humanity. Out of the total percentage (100%), ten per cent (10%) representing five (5) respondents also added that the Catholic priesthood is celibate and male oriented in nature because of ecclesiastical discipline rather than theology.

3.3. The Call of the priest

The research findings revealed that the call to which the Catholic priest answers is a strong and irresistible desire to embrace the priestly ministry in spite of the challenges and difficulties involved. A genuine call stems out of extreme love for God and desire to be used by God to serve humanity in that state of life. A genuine call would lead to an interest in the priesthood while an interest may not necessarily lead to a call. An interest in the priesthood alone cannot constitute a call, as the former may be a mere admiration for the ministry due to ones encounter with a priest. The interest may also be

because of the perceived seemingly “good living” that priests enjoy. Thirty-six (36) of the respondents, representing seventy two per cent (72%) claimed that they received a genuine call that later generated an interest in them while fourteen (14); representing twenty eight per cent (28%) claimed that their desire to be priests was both a call and an interest at the same time. The respondents realized their call to the priesthood at various stages of their lives. Four (4) representing eight per cent (8%) had their call before teenage, twenty-six, representing fifty two per cent (52%) at adolescence and twenty, representing forty per cent (40%) became conscious of their call at adulthood (this includes students in the tertiary institutions, people learning trade, workers and the unemployed). One significant deduction from the above is that God calls people into the ministry of the priesthood at all stages of life and the call cannot be limited to a specific stage.

According to the researcher’s findings on the field, the call to the priesthood may take several forms. Some may be dramatic while others may take ordinary forms. Four of the respondents, representing eight per cent (8%) claimed to have been called through persistent dreams; another eight per cent (8%) heard an unknown voice admonishing them to serve God as priests, two (2) representing four per cent (4%) were called through the serene Seminary environment while they were on visit, six (6) representing twelve per cent (12%) received their call as a result of inspiration and good exemplary lives of their parish priests; eighteen representing thirty-six per cent (36%) felt called while they were very actively participating in church activities and even serving on the

youth council while sixteen representing thirty-two per cent (32%) felt called through their services as altar boys or Mass servers.

The individual priests reacted differently when they became conscious of their calling into the sacred Catholic priesthood. Thirty-four (34) of the respondents representing sixty-eight per cent (68%) claimed to have willingly accepted the call with excitement and prayer, while sixteen (16) representing thirty-two per cent (32%) were hesitant from the initial stages but with prayer, they were able to accept the call. According to thirty-two (32) representing sixty-four per cent (64%) of the respondents, their family offered them full support in their decision to be priests. Sixteen (16) representing thirty-two per cent (32%) had a mixed reaction from family as some members were in support of the decision and others opposed it. Two (2) respondents representing four per cent (4%) also claimed that they had total opposition from the entire family and this continued even during their Seminary formation but the family hesitantly gave in at the time of ordination.

In answering a question to find out the possibility of refusing the call to the priesthood and its consequence, eighteen (18) representing thirty-six per cent (36%) of the respondents said no with the reason that one cannot refuse a divine call simply because God initiates it. Thirty-two representing sixty-four per cent (64%) of the respondents were also of the view that they could have said no to the call but the consequences would have resulted in unfulfillment in life.

3.4. Challenges in the Catholic Priesthood

After accepting the call and going through formation, the candidate is ordained into the priesthood, and then begins the life and ministry of priests. The life and ministry of a Catholic priest also comes along with its own challenges. The respondents identified challenges in the priesthood as the daily struggles, obstacles and difficulties that characterize the priestly life and ministry. All respondents representing hundred per cent (100%) said they have all gone through one challenge or the other in their priestly ministry.

In listing some of the challenges in the priesthood, the evangelical counsels namely: obedience, celibacy/chastity and poverty appeared to have been the commonest challenge to all the groups of the respondents, followed by stress and the negative attitude of some parishioners. About forty-five representing ninety per cent (90%) of the respondents listed obedience to God through their superiors, parish priests and older priests as a challenge. For them it is very difficult to obey and discern the will of God through obedience to authority or superiors. Still in connection with obedience, respondents see it as a great challenge to maintain appropriate relationship with authority without showing signs of disobedience. For most respondents to identify obedience as one of their challenges confirms the assertion of Addai-Mensah (1997:37) that “the vow of obedience is the most difficult” as it limits the freedom of priests as human beings.

Thirty-five representing seventy per cent (70%) of the respondents also included loving their state of poverty as a challenge. For them, poverty becomes a challenge because of the pressure put on them by their respective families to make financial contributions. According to them in times of financial difficulties, members of their families demand financial support from them, especially to pay school fees, health bills and even money to start a trade. Thirty-two representing sixty-four per cent (64%) of the respondents also included chastity as challenge. For them chastity is equivalent to priestly celibacy and should always begin from the mind, it is a challenge to always make the conscious effort to keep the mind pure regardless of what the eyes may see.

Twenty-seven (27) representing fifty-four (54%) of the respondents confirmed that stress is another challenge in their ministry. About twenty-five representing fifty per cent (50%) of the respondents also included in the list of challenges, the attitude of some parishioners that appear to be unacceptable such as gossip, yet the priest must maintain appropriate relationship with them.

Fourteen (14) representing seventy per cent (70%) of the respondents who had been in the priesthood for not more than five (5) years shared that the ability to maintain healthy relationship with the opposite sex without any emotional attachments is a challenge. There are also two peculiar challenges to priests who have been in ministry for twenty-one (21) years and above. Seven (7) representing seventy per cent (70%) of such priests saw it as a challenge to keep up with their prayer and spiritual life with emphasis on

being faithful to the praying of the Office of the Hours. The same percentage (70%) of respondents thought of it as a challenge to correct some of the long held, but erroneous opinions that some parishioners have concerning the Church, such as the Church belongs to the clergy and not recognizing that the Church is a family, for which reason both the laity and clergy should possess her.

The ability of priests to rise above their various challenges strengthens them and makes them faithful to their ministry. All respondents shared that in attempts to overcome their challenges, they develop a hopeful attitude towards the challenge, resort to prayer and counselling and take other pragmatic steps based on the particular challenge. Forty-five (45) representing ninety per cent (90%) of the respondents said that the Church continues to help priests to overcome challenges through on-going formation, regular retreats and recollections and those with extreme challenges are sent to rehabilitation centres which are manned by the Church for assistance.

In spite of all the challenges associated with the priesthood, forty-eight (48) representing ninety-six per cent (96%) of the respondents said they do not regret being in that vocation while two (2), representing four per cent (4%) also said they sometimes regret but the feeling of regret does not last long. They emphasized that they experience the feelings of regret when their family members are in dire need of money and they are not in the position to help.

3.5. Views of formators pertaining to formation of candidates

This set of questions was administered to twenty (20) formators from St Hubert Minor Seminary, St Gregory the Great Major Seminary, Spiritan Formation Centre and Society of African Missions' formation house to know their views on significant issues peculiar to the Seminary formation of the candidate to the priesthood. In answering a question concerning who determines a genuine call to the Catholic priesthood, all the twenty (20) respondents representing hundred per cent (100%) concluded that, God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son or the Holy Spirit (the Holy Trinity) is the principal determiner through the Seminary formators. Fourteen (14) representing seventy per cent (70%) of the total percentage added the candidate himself; twelve (12) representing sixty per cent (60%) included the endorsement of the bishop and eight (8) representing forty per cent (40%) included the local parish of the candidate through their endorsement.

From the above, the principal determiner of a genuine call is the Holy Trinity through a careful and faithful discernment by the candidate himself, the local community or parish that the candidate belongs to, Seminary formators, and endorsed by the bishop. The place of the candidate in determining his call is very important because when he is able to identify and embrace the call, the formators then guide the individual candidate to arrive at a full realization of his call.

In an attempt to know the criteria used in determining one's call to the priesthood, the formators included three main criteria in their various answers. Again, all the twenty (20) respondents representing hundred per cent (100%) made mention of the candidates response to the seminary formation as one of the criteria. Ten (10) of the respondents, representing fifty per cent (50%) also included the candidate's outward behaviour and comportment while fourteen (14) representing seventy per cent (70%) also included the candidates constant interest in the ministry.

In brief, all stakeholders in determining a genuine call to the priesthood depend on the principal determiner who is the Holy Trinity through prayer and how the candidate responds to the four main pillars of the formation, namely: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. All these include a life of prayer, love for Scripture and the Eucharist (spiritual formation). The candidate ought to respond positively to the formation. The formation ought to influence the life of the candidate both at the Seminary and at home when he is on holidays. The stakeholders take into account how the formation moulds the outward behaviour and mode of comportment of the candidate. In these ways, the candidate's interest in the priesthood will be manifested.

On the issue of the possibility of ordaining men without genuine vocation (priestly calling), fourteen (14) respondents, representing seventy per cent (70%) answered "yes" while four (4) representing twenty per cent (20%) answered "may be" and two (2) representing ten per cent (10%) was emphatic that it could never be possible. From this

statistic, one could conclude that there is the probability of ordaining men without genuine priestly vocation. Nevertheless, the call to the priesthood is a daily affair that does not end at ordination, therefore those who may not have priestly vocation as at ordination could have priestly calling afterwards.

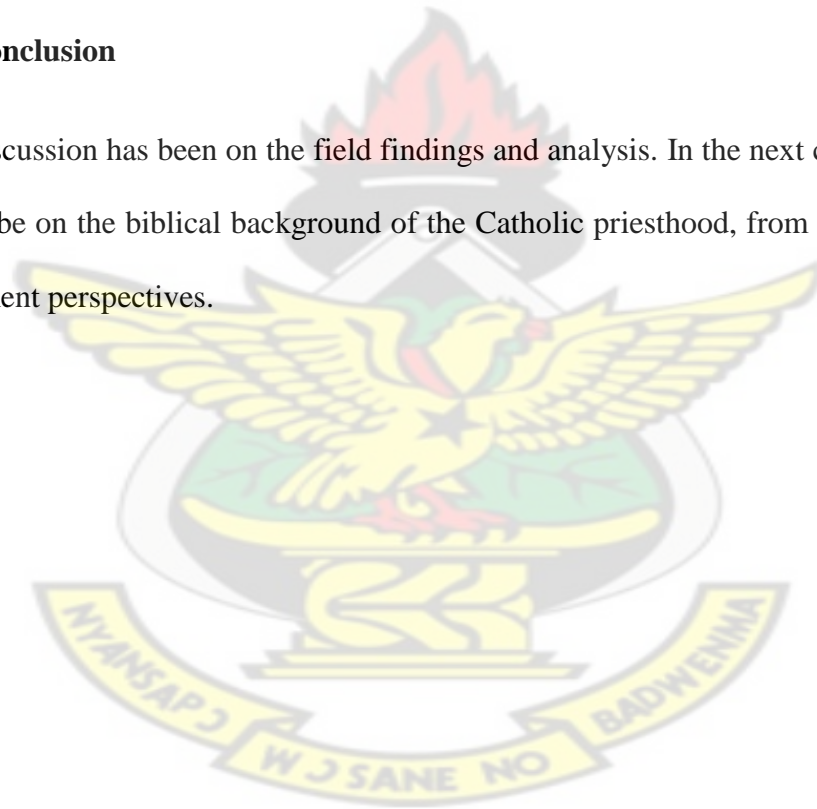
The Sacrament of ordination to the Catholic priesthood is irreversible. From the above also, we have narrowly established the possibility of granting ordination to men without genuine priestly vocation. In finding out what respondents would do, should men without genuine vocation be ordained, the finding was that formators do not have direct responsibilities in such cases. However, they gave out some suggestions for consideration. Ten (10) representing fifty per cent (50%) said they would suggest to the bishop to send such priests to retreat centres for guidance, counselling, meditation and prayers with the hope that they may identify their priestly call and continue with the ministry because there is the possibility of identifying one's priestly vocation after ordination. The other ten (10) who also represents fifty per cent (50%) suggested that the Church should offer counselling to such priests to enable them identify their actual vocation, and priestly faculties should be withdrawn from such priests who do not have the priestly vocation. They suggested that the Church should not abandon such priests but help them to resettle in life.

It is said that the vocation to the Catholic priesthood is a gift that God grants to men. Notwithstanding that, the study proves that there is the possibility that not all who have

been gifted in this vocation could receive sacred ordination. According to fourteen (14) respondents representing seventy per cent (70%), this could happen when formators fail to seek God's intervention and rely solely on their knowledge and experience, although it is not often. Six (6) representing thirty per cent (30%) were also very emphatic that men who have genuine priestly calling cannot be denied ordination because God who initiates the call in them will always make a way out for them.

3.6. Conclusion

The discussion has been on the field findings and analysis. In the next chapter, the study would be on the biblical background of the Catholic priesthood, from the Old and New Testament perspectives.



CHAPTER FOUR

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD

4.0. Introduction

The previous chapter was a presentation and analysis of the field findings. In that chapter, one deduces that the Catholic priesthood is of service, celibacy and male oriented in nature. There are various challenges that mark the life and ministry of the Catholic priest, yet from the data collected, it became known that the most difficult challenge for most priests is being faithful to the vow or promise of obedience. This chapter is to verify if such a Catholic concept of the priesthood has any biblical foundation. The discussion would be from the Old and New Testament perspectives.

4.1. The Old Testament (OT) Background

McFarlan (2003:220) defines priest in the context of the Old Testament as a man who was “specially set apart for the duties of animal sacrifice and other religious rites in the tabernacle or local shrine and later in the Temple of Jerusalem”. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1972:1069) affirms, “Priests are the principal functionaries in divine services, their special task being to engage in cultic ceremonies which they conducted mainly in the Temple”. The priest was the link between the ordinary worshipper and God.

It seems that in the early Jewish communities, there was no clear definition of the priesthood and it was not an exclusively reserved duty of a specific tribe as it became later. In different times in the Old Testament period, the patriarchs in their capacity as the heads of families performed what could be regarded specifically as priestly functions although they never applied the term to themselves. For instance, it is recorded in the Scriptures (Gen 8:20-21) that at the end of the flood, Noah erected an altar and offered sacrifice to the Lord. It is said of Abraham to have offered a ram as burnt offering in place of his promised son Isaac (Gen 22: 1-14) and it is also made known that Jacob killed an animal and offered it as a sacrifice (Gen 31:54). These few examples point out that there was no explicit connection between sacrifice and priesthood in the patriarchal period.

However there is the story that the patriarch Abraham during his lifetime encountered the mysterious Melchizedek who is identified to be a king and a priest of the Most High God (Gen 14:18-20). Melchizedek offered the sacrifice of bread and wine while Abraham also gave him one tenth of the spoils accrued from his military expedition. Melchizedek received Abraham's offering of one tenth of the spoils not as a result of royalty but the former being a priest of the Most High God as we can recognize in the later well-organized Israel, one tenth or tithe was offered to the Levitical priests and not the kings. There is the need to point out clearly that Melchizedek's priesthood has no link with the later Levitical priesthood and Melchizedek's priesthood cannot be used to argue for the existence of a particular priesthood at the patriarchal period.

There could not have been an organized priesthood under the leadership of Aaron or his sons immediately after the exodus from Egypt. Although Moses was never called a priest in the Pentateuch, there are some pentateuchal traditions that present “Moses performing ‘priestly’ acts: he appears, for example, to ‘preside’ at Aaron’s ‘ordination’ and to manipulate the sacrificial blood at the liturgy which follows (see Ex 29)” (Mitchell 1982:24). In the history of Israel, Moses mediated between God and the people, and transmitted divine messages that he received from Yahweh to the people. If these activities could be described as ‘priestly’, then “Moses acts as a priest in the transition period between the exodus from Egypt and the beginnings of Hebrew settlement in Canaan”.

In later times, there was the emergence of a defined priestly office that some men devoted their whole time to. Brown (1970:6) argues that the emergence of defined priestly office was due to growth in the social organization of Israel and this contributed to the development of professional priesthood, “especially in connection with the tribe of Levi”. The professional prowess of the tribe of Levi culminated exclusively in the Levitical priesthood.

Several scholars have advanced different hypotheses about the origin and emergence of the Levites as a class of professional priests. However, Mitchell (1982:27) cites the hypothesis of Aelred Cody to be the most convincing. He suggests that in Aelred Cody’s hypothesis, the exact origin of the tribe of Levi is unknown and therefore deems

it appropriate to assume that it was a full secular tribe such as Reuben, Dan, and Gad etc. For unknown reasons the tribe of Levi could not acquire or maintain land during the tribal settlement in Palestine. The members of the tribe took residence among members of the other tribes, although they were all “people of the same racial stock [...] [they] were not members of the tribe among whom they lived”. The Levites then took to specializing in “priestly jobs such as priestly attendants and oracular consultants”.

McFarlan (2003:220) explicates that traditionally all priests were to be descendants of Levi. A descendant of Levi becomes a priest because he has been born into such a priestly tribe. Further affirmation is placed on the above explication by other authors including Mitchell (1982:28), affirming that the position of the Levitical priest was not acquired through any ritual act such as “ordination”. The Levite assumed his position by exercising priestly functions. The Levitical priesthood was more of a craft than a “sacred office” or “divine vocation”. Brown (1970:7) also emphasizes that the Levitical priest entered into that ministry by virtue of his birth. He became a priest because of being a member of the priestly tribe. His calling by God to that priesthood should only be regarded in terms of “divine providence guiding his birth”. For that matter, Brown does not recognize this specialized Old Testament priesthood as “a vocation or a charism in the modern sense of the term”. On the other hand, the Catholic priesthood is a vocation or charism in the modern sense of the terms and it is not limited to a particular tribe such as the Levites in the Old Testament.

The Levites as priests guarded jealously their status perhaps because “the tribe had no land to serve as economic base of operations”. Nevertheless, not all Levites became priests and not all priests were Levites. For instance Zadok who was initially not linked with Levi became a priest in the royal house of David during the latter’s reign, and later his descendants also claimed priestly rights and were referred to as Zadokites. They also served as priests when Solomon ascended to his father’s throne.

We observe from Ezekiel 44:15 that some Levitical priests were descendants of Zadok and it points out to a relationship between the Levites and Zadokites. In support of the observation, Mitchell (1982:43) affirms that in the “restored post-exilic community” both Levites and Zadokites traced their ancestry to Aaron. It is important for us not to lose sight of the fact that the author of Exodus lists Moses and Aaron among the descendants of Levi (Exodus 6:14-27). The Zadokites claimed supremacy over the Levitical priests and Mitchell defends Zadokites supremacy by referring to Ezekiel 44:6ff that God reduced the priestly status of the Levites as “they proved to be unreliable in their care of the sanctuary” and due to Aaron’s role in the Israelites rebellion at Merribah. God transferred the priesthood to Eleazar who is a son of Aaron (Num 20:24-29) and in 1 Chronicles 6:50-53, he is presented as a direct ancestor of Zadok.

In the post-exilic Jewish community, the priests whether Levites or Zadokites, were cultic functionaries endowed with the responsibility of attending to daily sacrifices,

while the high priest was not obliged to attend to such daily sacrifices. His obligatory day was the annual Day of Atonement during which he offers “sin offerings of bull and goats for the priests’ transgressions”, sprinkle blood and burn incense in the Holy of Holies for atonement of sin, and performs the rites of purification, which also involved sprinkling of blood at the altar in the sanctuary.

The Old Testament priesthood, be it a Levite or Zadokite, was not devoid of sanctity. The priest was made holy for the purpose of his office and by the office itself. Yahweh commanded all Israel to be holy as He is holy (Lev 19:2) and this placed a greater demand of holiness on the priest as he mediated between God and the people. It is affirmed in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1972:1080) that “the priests being essentially servants of God enjoy greater holiness than the rest of the people [...] the holiness of the priests equals the holiness of the house of God itself”. There were several external signs that affirmed the “identification of the priests with the holiness of the house of God”. Purity was demanded from the priest in all his endeavours but greater purity was demanded of him during his priestly duties. In maintaining the purity attached to the priestly duties, the priests of the Old Testament were subjected to special obligations and restrictions.

Again, “a blemished priest cannot approach the altar or enter the temple in order to serve there [...]; they must wash their hands and feet in the laver in the court (Ex 30:18-21). [The priests put on special garments to signify that they have been set apart from

the people for a specific duty]. Though not required to abstain from wine at all times, they are forbidden to drink wine and other intoxicants during the performance of their cultic or didactic duties (Lev 10:9; Ezek 44:21)” (*Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1972:1080).

The priests of the Old Testament were set apart to perform specific priestly functions. The primary function of the priest in the Old Testament was the performance of sacrifice. The priest had an outstanding duty to offer sacrifices on the altar that stood on the Temple court. This particular function of the priest has been classified into two major roles: “sprinkling the blood and burning portions of the sacrifices” (*Encyclopaedia Judaica* 1972:1076). The ordinary priests performed these functions daily while “the high priest was entrusted with the sin offerings, especially that of the Day of Atonement”. The priests said a prayer of blessing over the people. Besides the offering of sacrifices the priests were also in charge of maintenance of the Temple. They carried out routine inspections on the Temple grounds to identify what needs to be repaired and solicited funds to carry out such repair works (*Harper’s Bible Dictionary* 1990).

Again, the *Harper’s Bible Dictionary* (1990) elucidates that the priests performed purification rites for those who suffered diseases or physical impurity. The methods of purification rites involved the victim waiting for a specific time, taking a bath, washing clothes and items used during the period of disease or impurity, “being sprinkled with water by the priest, and bringing [offering] a sacrifice the blood of which would be

sprinkled on one's behalf by the priest". It was also the duty of the priests to diagnose the disease and purify the victims of the disease and objects affected by such impurity.

Brown (1970:10) also expounds two additional functions of the Old Testament priests and these are the consultation of the *Urim and Thummim* at the sanctuary and a teaching function. The consultation of *Urim and Thummim* refers to the casting of sacred lots to help identify God's will in a particular situation. For instance King Saul used *Urim and Thummim* to determine who had sinned against God (1 Sam 14:41-42). In Deuteronomy 33:8, Moses decreed that the Lord would reveal His will to the Levitical priests through *Urim and Thummin*. It seems the priests gradually lost the performance of this sacred function of determining the will of God to the prophets during the monarchical period.

The priests of the Old Testament also served as teachers. The function of teaching is also ascribed to the priests in Deuteronomy 33:10. As priests, they were the teachers of the *Torah*. The function of giving instruction concerning the *Torah* although did not exist as a special established institution, was part of their everyday activities. For instance, the instruction and guidance given in matters of impurities and diseases were all aspect of teaching the *torah*.

The Old Testament priesthood as seen from the above discussion was a religious institution that emerged and developed gradually during the Jewish settlement in

Palestine after the exodus from Egypt. It has also been elucidated in the discussion that the sons of “Levi” emerged as a professional class of priests who jealously guarded their status, as it was also their sole source of income. The institutionalized priests were once famous in the royal house as they consulted *Urim and Thummim* in order to proclaim the will of God but they lost the performance of this function to the prophets.

We can conclude that in the early history of Israel, specifically during the patriarchal period, the patriarchs, although did not apply the term priests, performed functions such as offering sacrifices that would later be recognized as priestly functions. Also during the exodus, Moses served as a mediator between the people and God by receiving and transmitting divine communication to the people and from the people to God. Such functions could be classified as priestly. So far we have discussed the nature of the priest and his functions from the Old Testament perspective, we now shift our focus to the New Testament.

4.2. The New Testament (NT) Background

Several authors including Gleeson (2006:4) point out that a thorough study of ministry from the New Testament perspective shows the impossibility of enumerating the exact ministries that existed in the NT. For the purpose of this study, we shall concentrate on the presbyterate. However, since we cannot discuss the presbyterate in isolation, we shall commence the discussion with the ministries of the episcopate and diaconate, before narrowing it down to our focus of study (presbyterate).

Macquarrie (1977:431) asserts that “in the first few centuries, throughout the whole Church, the various kinds of ministry of which we read in the New Testament had become consolidated into the familiar three orders of bishops, priests and deacons”. He further illuminates that “the bishops were thought of as the successors of the apostles, who were supposed to have founded [...] the principal sees of the ancient Church; the priests (or presbyters) corresponds to the pastors indifferently called ‘bishops’ or ‘presbyters’ in the New Testament; while the deacons represented those inferior orders of ministry which we can also see in the New Testament”. It seems that the idea of the bishops being the successors of the apostles is more of tradition rather than biblical evidence from the NT perspective.

The title “bishop” is translated from the Greek word *episkopos*, which means “overseer”, the bishop, therefore is an overseer of God’s flock. The bishop ought to be wholesome and exhibit if not all, most of the qualities that Paul enumerated in his letters to Timothy and Titus (1 Tim 3:1-8; Titus 1:6-9). The title “bishop” was used to describe “the function of the presbyter (elder)” during the NT period (Toon 2001:170). The implication of such an opinion is a lack of clear distinction between the bishop and the presbyter; the latter could be referred to as bishop due to his functions. The bishop is a presbyter who presides over gatherings of presbyters. Functioning in this manner earns him the title “bishop”. In his contribution to the issue of any distinction between presbyters and bishops, Ratzinger (1990) postulates that, Jewish Christian leaders were referred to as presbyters while the leaders of the Gentile churches were referred to as “bishops and deacons” for the first time in Philippians 1:1. This postulation assumes no

clear distinction between the two. McKenzie (1968:97) affirms the position that there is no clear distinction between the bishop and the presbyter as there is between the former and the deacon.

Some theologians such as Macquarrie (1977:432,433) postulate that the diaconate is the least among the three clearly defined special ministries in the NT and recognize its prototype in the ministry of the seven i.e. Stephen and his companions (Acts 6:1-7). Burge (2001:320) also traces the beginning of the diaconate to the appointment of the seven whose primary duty was to help with the distribution of food in order for the apostles to continue effectively with preaching (Acts 6:1-7). Although the seven were called to “service” (*diakonia* in Acts 6:1,4), Luke, the author of Acts, does not refer to the seven as “deacons” although tradition ascribes the institution of the diaconate to the choice of the seven and their praying over by the apostles (Dunn 1990:50).

The primary duty of the chosen seven was to serve at table by distributing food and other material goods. However, we observe that they were not limited to these duties as Stephen was noted for performing great signs and wonders (Acts 6:8) which led to his martyrdom; Philip, one of the seven, was also a missionary who preached to and baptized an Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). It seems that, from the Jerusalem Church the diaconate spread to the Gentile churches. Paul extends greetings to the deacons (*diakonois*) and lists them next to the bishops (*episkopois*) in his letter to the Philippians (1:1).

Many authors including Wallace (2001:369) associate the presbyterate with the beginning of the church, “taking their [presbyters] place along with the apostles, prophets, and teachers”. He identifies the presbyterate at Jerusalem with James in “the government of the local church after the manner of the synagogue (Acts 11:3; 21:18)”. Gleeson (2006:8) affirms the position that the presbyterate was “a form of leadership in Jewish synagogues (Acts 15:22) and practiced by the first Christians, who were themselves Jews”. The presbyters functioned as overseers in the absence of apostles and essentially as teachers and preachers (1 Tim 5:17). The kind of presbyterate practiced by the first Christians should not be thought of as today’s priests even though the Second Vatican Council referred to today’s priests as presbyterate (Gleeson 2006:8).

The presbyterate in the Catholic sense is associated with sacerdotalism and for that matter her priesthood is in essence of the term, although the New Testament does not apply the term “priest” to any single person. With the exception of the priest of Zeus (Acts 14:13); any reference to priests and high priest in the Gospels and Acts “assume an historical and religious continuity with the Old Testament” (*New Bible Dictionary* 1996:960). The entire Christian community is commissioned as a “royal priesthood” and “holy nation” (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6) by virtue of baptism, making them participants in the priesthood of Christ.

The concept of a “royal priesthood” and “holy nation” is not peculiar to Christians, because in the Old Testament, God referred to the Jews as “a priestly kingdom and holy

nation” (Exodus 19:6). The reference made to the Jews as “a priestly kingdom and a holy nation” did not conflict or prevent in anyway the emergence of the developed institution of the Jewish priesthood.

Brown (1970:17) posits that the early Christians recognized the Jewish priesthood as valid and therefore did not conceive of their own priesthood. The early Christian community thought of herself as “a movement within Judaism differing only in some features (especially in the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, that with him God had inaugurated the eschatological times, and [...] Gentiles could now participate fully in the blessings of Israel without formally adopting all the precepts of the Law of Moses)”. The Christians identified themselves as the “renewed Israel” and were in anticipation that all Israel would soon join the “renewal movement”. The author of Acts accounts that Jerusalem Christians continued their daily attendance to the Temple although they were also gathering to break bread in their homes (Acts 2:46). Paul also continued to go to the Temple and in some cases participated in offerings (Acts 21:26).

Various authors including Martos (1982:464) affirm that “the first generation of Christians, who were almost all Jews, accepted the legitimacy of the Jewish priesthood, and showed this by continuing to worship at the temple” until its destruction in AD 70 by Roman soldiers. All these serve as proofs that the early Christians did not reject the Jewish priesthood from the initial stages so they did not see the need for the development of their own form of priesthood.

The concept of “special Christian priesthood” in place of the Jewish priesthood gradually emerged due to several reasons and realizations. Christians began to identify themselves not just as a movement, but a new religion different from Judaism and a replacement of the Jews as “God’s covenanted people”. Some Christians interpreted the destruction of the Jewish Temple as God’s rejection of the Jews due to their failure to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. The Jews also, in an attempt to purge their religion of foreign elements, excommunicated all sects from their Synagogues including Christians (Brown 1970:17, 18, 19). Martos (1982:464) and Brown (1970:18) situate the composition of the letter to the Hebrews in that era of the Temple destruction and excommunication of all Jewish sects from the Synagogues.

The most striking theme in the letter to the Hebrews is the prominent presentation of Jesus as an eternal *ἀρχιερεύς* (high priest). The presentation of Jesus as a *ἱερεύς* (priest) may be surprising because the historical Jesus was not a priest and appears to have been a critic of the temple practices and was at odds with the Jerusalem priesthood (Mk 11:15-18). The author defends his presentation of Jesus as a *ἱερεύς* (priest) by appealing to the Old Testament’s mysterious figure of Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20), who is identified as a priest long before the institution of the hereditary order of the Levitical priesthood. The author presents Jesus’ priesthood in the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:17). Powell (2009:438) observes, “[...] that neither the genealogy nor the death of Melchizedek reported in the Bible indicates [...] the superior [and eternal] priesthood that he represents [...], having neither beginning nor end” (Heb 7:3).

The priesthood of Jesus Christ is an element of the new and better covenant of which he is the mediator by virtue of his submission and willing offering of embracing death by the cross. He is the only mediator because his sacrifice is the means of reconciliation between God and human beings. It has taken away sin, which is the obstacle to the relationship between God and humanity. It has also made possible a restoration of the relationship. Bourke (1995) affirms: the superiority of the new covenant to the old is based on the eternity of its priesthood that is in Jesus Christ. The author of the letter to the Hebrews emphasises that Jesus is a royal priest, whose death has been the ultimate sacrifice that had rendered continuation of animal sacrifice ineffective. He also presents Christianity as a perfect replacement of the old Israel. Christians then took on the identity of the new Israel. As the new Israel, Christians needed to replace the Jewish bloody sacrifice.

Brown (1970:19) again asserts that the replacement was found “when the Eucharist was seen as unbloody sacrifice replacing the bloody sacrifices no longer offered in the now-destroyed Temple”. He opines that, as early as the end of the first century or the beginning of the second century, Christians identified the Eucharist as a sacrifice. He supports his opinion with a quotation from *Didache* 14: “Assemble on the Lord’s Day, breaking bread and celebrating the Eucharist; but first confess your sins that your sacrifice [*thysia*] may be a pure one... for it was of this that the Lord spoke”. Acknowledging the Eucharist as sacrifice meant that whoever presided over that sacrifice then functioned as priest and it contributed to the emergence of a special Christian priesthood.

The Catholic priesthood is associated with the celebration of the Eucharist as the unbloody sacrifice that has replaced the bloody sacrifice that has been offered once and for all by Jesus Christ the eternal high priest. Whenever the Eucharistic sacrifice is celebrated in the Catholic sense, it is the re-enactments of the actual sacrifice that Jesus offered in which he was both the victim and the priest. The Catholic priesthood emanates from the priesthood of Jesus Christ; and the ordained priests are priests in the order of Melchizedek.

4.3. Conclusion

In this chapter, the discussion has been on the biblical background to the Catholic priesthood. It has been traced from the patriarchal period through the exodus to the settling in Palestine and the rise of the Levitical priesthood. We deduce from the New Testament that the term “priest” did not apply to a single person but the entire Christian community. The early Christian community also accepted the Jewish priesthood until Christians realized their identity as the “new Israel” and accepted the Eucharist as a replacement of the Jewish bloody sacrifice leading to the emergence of a special Christian priesthood to which corresponds the Catholic priesthood. The next chapter is a notion of priesthood from other religious perspectives. Such a discussion is necessary because all religions and denominations have priests or equivalent persons who fulfil special religious roles.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NOTION OF PRIESTHOOD FROM OTHER RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES

5.0. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the discussion was on the biblical background of the Catholic priesthood. We have observed the biblical background of the Catholic priesthood from the period of the Old Testament through the New Testament. In this chapter, the researcher would briefly discuss a notion of priesthood from other religious perspectives. The focus of the discussion would be on the parallels of the Catholic priesthood in the African Traditional Religion and with emphasis from the Akan perspective, some mainline churches within the Protestant tradition and the African Indigenous Churches (AICs). The parallel of the Catholic priesthood in Protestant tradition is clerical ministry (pastoral) or representative priesthood.

5.1. Priesthood in African Traditional Religions

In African traditional religions, the priest can be a man, woman called by the gods, trained and dedicated to a particular public or family shrine or sacred grove for ritual purposes in the interests of the community he, or she serves. Ekwunife (1999:26) describes a traditional priest as “someone summoned either by the divinity or by his

community or by some form of religious impulse to fulfil a religious function for the salvation of the community or for self-devotion”.

According to African scholars such as Mbiti (1969:68), Opoku (1978:74) and Quarcoopome (1987:77), priests in traditional African set up are essentially the chief intermediaries; they stand between man, God and or other divinities associated with the African worldview especially in sacrificial matters. The priest's essential role in African society is quite different from the roles of other specialists of African Traditional Religion like kings, queens, diviners, mediums, prophets and rain makers, to mention but a few. The essential role of the priest in sacrificial affairs does not mean that the other specialists noted above do not offer ritual sacrifice on behalf of the community or on their clients. In offering ritual sacrifices, they perform priestly functions although they are not recognized as priests. In support of this, Mbiti (1969:188) notes that the Baganda king used to make an offering and sacrifice of nine men, nine women, nine cattle, nine goats, nine fowls, and nine loads of bark cloths and cowry shells. Ekwunife (1999:11) also observes that the *Asantehene* who occupies the golden stool is by virtue of his position the main presider of ritual offerings and sacrifices during the *Adae* festival.

There are two types of priesthood in the African society; Quarcoopome (1987:74) categorizes them into lay and professional priesthood. Those who make up the lay priesthood are the family or clan heads who officiate at the domestic and ancestral shrines where they lead the household in making offerings and prayers. Those who

belong to the professional priesthood are those connected to the cult of the divinities. The Yoruba of Nigeria refer to them as *Olorisha* while they are known as *Akomfo* among the Akans of Ghana. These professional priests are set aside from birth to dedicate their lives to the priesthood by virtue of inheritance from any of the parents or a relative. The candidates for the professional priesthood may also be chosen through the medium of spirit possession. In the latter, the spirit of a divinity may possess a person of his choice and the one chosen may be secluded from the public for training for a period, depending on the divinity. The period ranges from three weeks to three years or more.

The choice of a divinity for the priesthood is formally trained in the art of the priesthood at the traditional centres for training priests and priestesses. At the end of the training, the candidate for the sacred office goes through the rite of initiation into the priesthood (Quarcoopome 1987:76).

The African traditional priest is a significant religious and social figure due to the essential roles he or she plays in the community. Mbiti (1969:188) posits that as an intermediary, the priest is also the religious symbol of God and the divinities among the people. He speaks and understands the language of the divine so he is expected to translate and interpret this language to the people whenever the need arises. The priest also performs ritual sacrifices and offerings on behalf of the community. For instance, when there are national disasters such as plagues, death, famine and drought, to mention a few, the priest offers the required sacrifice to God, the ancestors and the other divinities concerned.

The traditional priest is also an important social figure because after his priestly training he becomes the custodian of societal or communal customs, knowledge and wisdom, taboos and the history of the society. In support of this view, Opoku (1978:74) affirms, “priests are [...] repositories of communal knowledge and traditions”. The privileged position of the priest makes him an advisor to the chief or king and a ritual expert. The traditional priest together with the chief is the custodian of the traditions and culture of the community. He sees to it that the inhabitants of the community adhere to the traditional norms and culture of the land. The priest also assumes the position of a judge in some instances such as managing and resolving conflicts that involve witchcraft accusations and curses. He administers oath for restoring confidence in a community or adjudicating justice on the offended party. He is also recognized as an opinion leader. He is primarily a presider over rituals and this earns him the position of an elder in the traditional community. We have seen the concept of priesthood from African indigenous perspective; we would now examine the concept from Christian perspective with our focus on the Protestant tradition.

5.2. Christian Priesthood

The collective role of the people of God or the Christian community involves “the common task of helping to effect *Missio Dei* on earth by contributing to the material and spiritual wellbeing of their fellow creatures” (Ekem 2009:101). The Catholic Church also teaches that because of their baptism all Christians assume a sacerdotal function and dignity; with Christ as their High Priest “offer worship, sacrifice and glory to God” (Catholic Encyclopedia and Dictionary). The role of the baptized in the

celebration of divine worship reflects clearly the sacerdotal functions they assume in their baptism. The baptized laity shares in the common priesthood of all believers. It is therefore in the light of fulfilling “the common task of helping to effect *Missio Dei* on earth” and participating in the “[offering of] worship, sacrifice and glory to God” that we can then speak of a common Christian priesthood or a common Christian ministry.

Christian priesthood or Christian ministry is also a particular reference to the clergy who are set apart by virtue of ordination or commissioning in the various Christian traditions to preach the gospel, administer sacraments and perform other pastoral functions (Ekem 2009:101). The various Christian denominations have different titles for the ordained or the commissioned representatives who perform clerical functions. We have already observed that in the Catholic tradition, such persons are solely males referred to as priests in the essence of the term. However, in the Protestant tradition they are both males and females referred to as pastors or ministers, and in some African Independent Churches within the same Protestant tradition, they are referred to as priests or prophets/prophetesses. The synonymous use of the terms priest and minister in this chapter would be in reference to the clergy or the ordained persons, unless otherwise stated.

5.3. The Protestant Ministry

We observe from *Microsoft Student Encarta 2009* that, Protestantism as a major Christian division aside Catholicism and Orthodoxy, began as a movement with the

purpose of reforming the Christian Church in the West, and this led to the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, which separated the Reformed churches from the Roman Catholic Church. The declared intention of the initial reformers was to restore the Christian faith to what it had been from the early beginning and keep “what they thought of as valuable from the Roman Catholic tradition that had developed during the intervening centuries”. The Protestant movement paved the way for the sixteenth (16th) century Reformation.

Four main Protestant traditions emerged from the Reformation and these were the Lutheran, Calvinist, Anabaptist and Anglican. In spite of their considerable differences in doctrines and practices, they agreed in rejecting papal authority and emphasized on the authority of the Scriptures and the importance of the faith of the individual. In recent times, all Christian churches that do not belong to the Catholic tradition have been identified with Protestant tradition (Microsoft Student 2009).

It is important to note that almost all Protestant churches hold similar or even the same view on priesthood or the ordained ministry with exception to the Anglican Church that shares the same view with the Catholic Church. We now turn our attention to some of the churches in Ghana that can be identified with the Protestant tradition, namely: the Presbyterian Church and the Methodist Church. We are focusing on these churches from the Protestant tradition because they are the largest, vibrant and well-organized mainline Protestant churches in Ghana.

5.3.1. The Presbyterian Ministry

Agbeti, (1986:3) dates back the genesis of Christianity in Ghana in the then Gold Coast to 1482 with the arrival of the merchants and explorers from Portugal at the Coast, to be specific Elmina in the central region. The Portuguese merchants and explorers being Catholics, on their arrival mounted a cross and an altar and celebrated the first Mass. During this period, Christianity was limited only to the merchants, explorers and their crew. The Christian presence on the land was not intensive until the arrival of the Basel missionaries in 1828 who begun active and sustained Christian activities.

Samwini, (2006:44) observes that the first Basel missionaries served as chaplains to the Danish merchants who inhabited the Christiansburg castle. There was a fall out between the chaplains and the missionaries because the former insisted that chaplains should concentrate on their chaplaincy works without interference into their merchandise. A chaplain, Andreas Riis, then left the castle for Akropong in 1835 where he established the first inland mission station. He established a second one by 1847 with the help of David Rochester with Mrs. Rochester and Joseph Mohr. These were West Indian missionaries.

The concept of the ordained ministry in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana has its roots in the concept of ministry introduced by the Basel Evangelical Missionary Society. Ekem (2009:102) affirms that the concept is also a reflection of the comprehension of ministry that was upheld during the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant Reformers

laid emphasis on the common priesthood of all believers that is attained by the individual in the reception of the Sacrament of Baptism. They were also quick to admit the existence of “representative priesthood” which is not superior to the common priesthood of all believers and does not require any sacerdotal function.

Ekem (2009:103) again posits that those who are called into the ordained ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Ghana are representative priests who stand as “servants or ministers of God in relation to the *ecclesia Dei*, ministers of the Word and Sacraments rather than priestly mediators in the Roman Catholic sense of the word”. The Presbyterian ordained ministry falls within the category of presbyters who have it as their duty to preach the Word and also to administer the Sacraments. The concept of ministry embraced by the Presbyterian Church is not different from that of the Methodist Church; both churches hold the same foundational beliefs concerning the ministry. We now turn to the concept of the ministry in the Methodist Church.

5.3.2. The Methodist Ministry

According to Agbeti, (1986:55) the Wesleyan Missionary Society arrived in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) in the year 1835 as a response to the invitation by a “Bible Band” under the leadership of William de Graft and George Blankson. These leaders requested for missionaries as well as copies of the Bible through the British governor of the Gold Coast. The Rev Joseph Dunwell, together with the Methodist Mission Society volunteered to come and they arrived in 1835. By March of the same year, fifty

indigenous people became registered members of the Methodist Society. The Rev Joseph Dunwell died in the same year of his arrival. Other Wesleyan missionaries came to continue what Dunwell had started. The Wesleyan Mission persevered in spite of the problems such as the high mortality rate and it was out of this mission that the Methodist Church Ghana was established. A District Synod under the authority of the Methodist Church of Great Britain administered the Church until she attained autonomy on 28th July 1961 as the result of her “signing of the Deed of Foundation of the Methodist Church” at Cape Coast (S.O. 2 (1)).

Concerning the concept of priesthood/ordained ministry in the Methodist Church, the constitution of the Methodist Church states:

Christ’s Ministers in the church are stewards in the household of God and shepherds of his flock. Some are called and ordained to this sole occupation and have a principal and directing part in these duties, but they hold no priesthood differing in kind from that which is common to the Lord’s people and they have no exclusive title to the preaching of the gospel or the care of the souls. Others, to whom also the Spirit divides His gifts as he wills, share these ministries with them. (S.O. 4 (1)) [...]

[Furthermore] the Methodist Church holds the doctrine of priesthood of all believers, and consequently believes that no priesthood exists which belongs exclusively to a particular order or class of persons; but in the exercise of its corporate life and worship, special qualifications for the discharge of special duties are required, and thus the principle of representative selection is recognized (S.O. 4 (4)).

The Methodist Church recognizes some people as “called of God”, gives them a theological formation in a seminary and ordains such people into her ministry. The

ordination symbolizes the church's recognition of the "minister's personal call". The ordination also sets the minister apart to proclaim the Word and to administer the Sacraments. It is well enshrined in S.O. 4 (5) of the Methodist constitution that, "[...] for the sake of Church Order and not because of any priestly virtue inherent in the office [of the ordained minister], the Ministers of the Methodist Church are set apart by ordination". The ordained ministry is not a priestly ministry and for that matter, the minister does not perform any exclusive priestly function. The only recognized priesthood is that of all believers which includes both the minister and the laity. The ministers and lay people in the Methodist Church share the same common priesthood. We have seen the concept of the ministry from two mainline churches; we now turn our attention to the priestly ministry among the African Indigenous Churches (AICs) with specific reference to Musama Disco Christo Church (Army of the Cross of Christ Church).

5.4. General introduction to the African Indigenous Churches (AICs)

The African Indigenous Churches refer to churches founded in Africa by Africans and primarily for Africans. The "indigenous" can be substituted with initiated, independent or instituted. The implication is that such churches could be referred to as African Initiated/Indigenous/Independent/Instituted Churches (Atuahene, 2010:19, 20). For the purpose of this study, we would opt for Indigenous rather than Initiated/Independent/Instituted. The purpose of the AICs is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and interpret the Gospel to suit the African situation and worldview. Scholars such as Arnold Turner have used the term African Indigenous Churches in

describing churches that contextualize the Gospel to suit the African conception of God through her beliefs and practices. Examples of the AICs are the Church of the Twelve Apostles; founded by Grace Tani, John Nackabah and John Hackman, Apostles Revelation Society which was founded by Mr Charles Kobla Nutonuti Wovenu who was generally known as Prophet Wovenu, and Musama Disco Christo Church (Army of the Cross of Christ Church); also founded by Joseph William Egyanka Appiah who became Prophet Jemisemiham Jehu-Appiah. In the attempt to discuss the concept of priesthood in the AICs, the researcher would focus on the Musama Disco Christo Church, as it is one of the few, if not the only African Indigenous Church, that recognizes ministerial priesthood. The priests of the Musama Church function in the essence of the term.

5.4.1. Musama Disco Christo Church (Army of the Cross of Christ Church)

The Musama Disco Christo Church (Army of the Cross of Christ Church) was started as a prayer group called *Egyidifu Kuw* (Faith Society) within the local congregation of the Methodist Church at Gomoa Oguan in 1919 in the Central Region. It was under the leadership of the then Catechist of the Methodist Church by name Joseph William Egyanka Appiah who became known as Prophet Jemisemiham Jehu-Appiah, *Akaboha I*. The Musama Disco Christo Church (Army of the Cross of Christ Church) came into existence after the expulsion of the then Catechist Appiah from the Methodist Church by the Rev Gaddiel Acquah, the then Circuit Superintendent Minister in 1922. His expulsion was due to some beliefs and practices that were alien to Methodism but were

held up by Appiah and the prayer group (mdccgh.blogspot.com, assessed on July 13, 2012).

According to Baeta (1962:33), the Rev Acquah referred to such practices as occult and cautioned “Methodists were not like that” and ordered Appiah to desist from those practices. His failure to adhere to the order led to his expulsion from the Methodist Church. Members of the prayer group who sympathized with him also followed him. The prayer group was then transformed into the Musama Disco Christo Church (Army of the Cross of Christ Church) on 19th October 1922 (mdccgh.blogspot.com).

Prior to the arrival of Rev Aquaah and the expulsion of Catechist Appiah from the church, the latter had been accused of practicing “curious magical rites and customs, and indulging in the use of secret medicine and special drugs obtained from India and America”. The Rev Assan (who was later replaced by Rev Aquaah) investigated the matter but did not realize any truth in the accusation and therefore could not take any disciplinary action against Appiah (Baeta 1962:28).

The organizational structure of the Musama Disco Christo Church (Army of the Cross of Christ Church) is a blend of elements of African culture (mostly Akan) with Christian heritage. The Prophet Appiah laid down a succession plan in the form of a dynasty, which he became its precursor with the title *Akaboha I*. The *Akaboha* is

regarded as a paramount chief of a state with *Nana* as his royal title and resides in a holy royal town called *Mazano* (my town). The *Akaboha* has his own elders, linguists and other functionaries of an Akan traditional royal home. He also created the office of the *Akatitibi* for the wife of the *Akaboha*. In every respect, the *Akatitibi* functions as a queen mother exercising her responsibilities in the context of African Christianity (Ekem 2009:122).

In terms of doctrines and practices, Baeta (1962:40) argues that the Musama Church emphasizes the equal authority of the Old and New Testaments and argues for the practice of polygamy, ritual purification and sacrifices by appealing to the Old Testament, especially Leviticus. The church has her own version of the Apostle's Creed by replacing the section with "Catholic Church" with "Musama Disco Christo Church and all true Christian churches everywhere in the world".

The Musama church also believes in the existence of good angels who work for the welfare of humankind and bad angels or demons who constantly work against humankind. The church also emphasizes a strong belief in divine healing. There is the custom of *kanedua* (lamp-post) which suggests "the priesthood of each head of a household". This custom entails the head of a house fixing a lamp-post in the middle of the compound, and when it is done, it becomes a necessary requirement for the head to gather the entire household around the lamp-post with a lit lamp and lead evening prayers daily. Baeta, (1962:45) again emphasizes that aside these priestly functions,

there are other priestly functions which are strictly reserved for the ministerial priests and the ultimate of all the priestly functions is solely reserved for the *Akaboha* whose office is also that of a High Priest.

5.4.2. Priesthood/Ministry in Musama Disco Christo Church

The ordained ministry in the MDCC consists of pastors and prophets/prophetesses who are headed by the *Akaboha* who is regarded as a high priest. In essence, both the pastors and prophets/prophetesses function as priests who mediate between the lay people and the spiritual realm. The pastors and prophets/prophetesses offer priestly mediation for the entire congregation. In support of this view, Ekem (2009:129) asserts that “both ministries are in their own respects, committed to the task of representing the laity before God, and of being channels of divine revelation, whether through preaching, teaching, counselling, administration of the sacraments, or acts of effecting divine healing in the physically and spiritually afflicted”. For instance, the prophets/prophetesses are healers who mediate through prayer and fasting to bring healing to the lay who struggle with health. They are also involved in spiritual warfare against evil spirits on behalf of the members of the church and seek for direction and guidance from the spiritual realm. Ekem (2009:125) posits that the pastors are in charge of preaching, administering of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and the management of the local church.

In a personal interview with Feenakoma Charles Amissah-Arthur (a priest for twenty-eight years and the administrative officer of MDCC) on 28th November 2012 at the Elders Council Office in *Mazano*, he explained that God might call people into the MDCC ministry through various means such as dreams, visions and even sicknesses. Those who are called through sicknesses are mostly struck by illnesses and are healed on their visit to the church. After they have been healed, it is then revealed to them that they are being called to be priests of the MDCC and until they opt for the priesthood, the illness would be revisited on them. According to Amissah-Arthur in the same interview, elderly persons in the church guide those who feel called to discern properly into their call. The moral characters of those who feel called are taken into consideration to determine how genuine the call may be. Candidates for the ministry are offered priestly training and practices of the church at *Mazano* and afterwards taken to Good News Theological College in Accra for theological studies.

Ekem (2009:125) affirming what is said above also stressed that candidates for both the offices of the pastor and prophet/prophetess undergo training at *Mazano*, which may last for six months to two years or more depending on the candidate's previous qualifications. Ordination into the pastoral and prophetic offices is in two stages in the sense that candidates who passed out from training are put on probation for a period and depending on their performances, they are finally ordained into their respective offices by the *Akaboha* at *Mazano*. It is also the sole prerogative of the *Akaboha* to promote them to higher ranks in the ministry when he deems it fit.

Baeta (1962:45) acknowledges the existence of a “Holy Place” in which there is the “Holy of Holies” at *Mazano* and the *Akaboha* as the “High Priest” enters into the sacred place during consecration and ordination of prophets/prophetesses and pastors/priests to pray on their behalf (ordinands for the ministry). Baeta again alleges that the *Akaboha* is also the only minister of the church who is bestowed with the mandate to enter into the “Holy of Holies” to pray on behalf of the whole church at any time of his choice. Ekem (2009:128) also explicates that as the “Highest Spiritual Head of the Church”; the *Akaboha* enters into the “Holy Place” and performs the annual rite of marking their holy objects “with the blood of an unblemished ram”. He also anoints “the foreheads of participants as well as the doors of the representative houses in a way similar to ancient Israel’s Passover ritual in Egypt”. It seems that, the activities of the *Akaboha* at the “Holy of Holies” such as offering prayers on behalf of the church is an allusion to a Jewish practice in which the priest on duty goes into the Holy of Holies in the Temple to pray on behalf of the people (Lk 1:5-8). It also supports the view that the *Akaboha* is not just a priest in word but in essence and endowed with all sacerdotal functions within the Musama Disco Christo ecclesial context.

5.5. Conclusion

The foregoing discussion focussed on the notion of priesthood as found in the African Traditional Religions, and the Protestant tradition with references to the Presbyterian and Methodist ordained ministries. The concept was also discussed from the perspective of the Musama Disco Christo Church as an African Indigenous Church. The priests

within the African Traditional Religions and the Musama Disco Christo Church function as ministerial priests in essence while the ministers within the Presbyterian and Methodist churches are only representative priests and do not function in the essence of the term. The next chapter is the final chapter and contains a summary of the entire study and some recommendations based on the research findings.

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CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.0. Introduction

The parallels of the Catholic Priesthood in the African Traditional Religion, Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church and Musama Disco Christo Church have been discussed briefly in the previous chapter. We observed that the African traditional priests are mediators between the deity and the adherents of the religion while the Presbyterian and Methodist ministers are representative priests who do not function in any way as mediators. It was also discussed that the ministers in Mussama Disco Christo Church are priests who function as mediators between God and their congregation. The spiritual head of the church (the *Akaboha*) is bestowed with authority to perform all sacerdotal functions in the context of the Mussama Disco Christo Church. In this final chapter, the researcher would draw some conclusions from the thesis and make recommendations based on the field findings.

6.1. Summary

The thesis has been on the concept of ministerial priesthood in Ghana with emphasis on the Catholic Church. The Catholic priesthood is a divinely initiated call to which one answers by going through seminary formation, accepting ordination and participating in the priesthood of Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Church. By ordination, the priest is no longer a man of his own as he becomes *alter Christus* and acts in *persona*

Christi and he is ordained for the people of God. The Catholic priest is a man of service who ought to serve in whatever capacity the Church places him.

Furthermore, the Catholic priest is a man of distinction by virtue of the Sacrament of Ordination by which he is set apart to perform sacerdotal functions such as presiding over the celebration of the Eucharist, which is a re-enactment of the Christ's sacrifice at Calvary in a bloodless manner. For the priest, the mandate to do so was handed over to him at his ordination and it was the same mandate that Christ handed over to the apostles at the Last Supper. For the Catholic priest, he shares in the priesthood of Christ and plays the triple functions of Christ namely- a priest, prophet and king. The identity and authority of the Catholic priest resides in Jesus Christ the High Priest.

The Catholic priesthood has its background in the Bible from the Old Testament through the New Testament. Although the New Testament does not apply the term to a specific office, the Catholic priesthood has a New Testament background. The early Christians did not abandon the Old Testament priesthood until the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE by Roman soldiers and the excommunication of all Jewish sects from the Synagogue. After these incidents, the early Christians reflected on the Eucharist as a replacement of the Jewish sacrifice, therefore the one who presided over the Eucharist acted as a priest and was recognized as a replacement for the Jewish priest.

Although the study focused on the Catholic priesthood, it also narrowly included the concept of priesthood within the African Traditional Religions with emphasis on the Akan concept, and the parallels of the Catholic priesthood in the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches as Protestant traditions and the Musama Disco Christo Church (MDCC) as an African Indigenous Church.

From the study, we deduce that the African traditional priests are men or women, who are summoned by the gods, trained and commissioned for their priestly office. They become priests within the context of African traditional religions and preside over sacrificial offerings. As part of their priestly roles, they mediate between the divinities and the community. The traditional priests are also the custodians of the traditional laws and customs.

The parallel of the Catholic priesthood within the Protestant Churches is the ordained ministry. Members of the ordained ministry within the Protestant Churches are referred to as reverend ministers or pastors. They may be referred to as priests but not in the context of Catholic tradition. Such Protestant priests only act as “representative priests” but are not priests in the essence of the term and do not have any exclusive sacerdotal functions. Meanwhile the MDCC recognizes the existence of a priestly ministry reserved for those ordained in the church. For the MDCC, such priests are not just “representatives” but priests in essence who possess sacerdotal rights within the context of the MDCC.

6.2. Recommendations

These recommendations are made as a result of the researcher's field findings. From the study, it has been noted that Catholic priests are to serve in whatever capacity the Church places them. In their service, they serve the people of God, the Church, for whom they are ordained. For that matter, priests must make themselves available, approachable and accessible to the people of God. Priests should draw closer and carry themselves in a way that would make the people of God open up to them for assistance for the salvation of their souls. In doing so, the congregation should also not take priests for granted but give them the full respect and support that their sacred office deserves.

Furthermore, the field findings revealed that the most difficult and common challenge for all priests is the promise/vow of obedience. It is the recommendation of the researcher to all parish priests and priests occupying hierarchical positions to deal with assistant priests with much love and not to lord over them. They should enter into dialogue with assistant priests on issues rather than making it appear to be a command for them to obey without complaint. Parish priests and priests in other superior positions should promote and maintain filial relationship with assistant priests as the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council admonished.

Again, the study revealed that some relatives put undue pressure on priests for financial support, making the vow of poverty difficult for such priests. The researcher recommends intensive education for the laity to know that priests in Africa are not

monthly salary earners and for that matter may not be in the position to provide constant financial support. For this reason, relatives of priests should desist from seeing them as their source of income. Nevertheless, the Church should also consider increasing stipends given to her priests in order for them to be able to assist their relatives financially when the need arises. In Ghana and specifically with the Akans, males are obliged customarily to contribute financially in the upbringing of their nephews and nieces. The Akan Catholic priest, who simply has just enough to survive, finds it difficult in fulfilling his customary obligation towards his nephews and nieces.

In addition, we observe from the study that some Catholic laity holds the erroneous view that the church is a clerical society. There is the need to emphasise in catechism that the Church is not clerical but hierarchical. The laity should be made to know that the Church is a family of God, in which both the clergy and the laity have their respective responsibilities and roles without confusion. The lay members ought to identify themselves as true members of the Church which is the family of God, and also assume more active roles in this sacred family.

6.3. Conclusion

The entire study has elucidated the concept of the Catholic priesthood and has clearly shown how distinct the Catholic priesthood is from the ordained ministry within the Protestant tradition. The distinction lies in the fact that the Catholic priesthood is a priestly ministry in the essence of the term, and realistically Catholic priests are

mediating servants who offer sacrifice. They are *alter Christus* and acts *in persona Christi* when offering priestly duties such as administering the Sacraments. However when the same term is applied to Protestant ordained ministers, it is only used in the metaphorical sense, thus they are “representative priests”. The study has also explicated that the Catholic ministerial priesthood is different in degree from the baptised/universal priesthood or the priesthood of all believers.



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QUESTIONNAIRE

For priests only:

1. How long have you been a priest?
2. What is the nature of the priesthood?
3. What is the difference between an interest to the priesthood and a call to the priesthood?
4. In your situation was it a call or an interest to the priesthood?
5. When did you realize your call?
6. How were you called?
7. How did you react as an individual to the call?
8. How did your family react to your call?
9. Could you have refused the call? If yes, what would have been the consequences? And if no why?

Challenges to the Catholic priesthood

10. How do you define challenges to the priesthood?
11. Are there challenges in the priesthood? If yes have you experienced any?
12. List five of the challenges?
13. What is your attitude towards these challenges?
14. What do you do specifically to overcome these challenges?
15. How does the church help priests to overcome such challenges?
16. Suggest what the church should do to help priests in times of challenges?
17. Do you have any regret for being a priest and why

QUESTIONNAIRE

For Seminary Formators only:

1. Who determines a genuine call to the priesthood?
2. How do you determine a genuine call to the priesthood?
3. Is it possible to ordain men who have no priestly calling?
4. Should the above happen what do you do in your capacity?
5. Is it possible not to ordain men who the Lord has genuinely called?

