

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF CLERGY-LAITY COLLABORATION FOR THE
ENHANCEMENT OF THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF NNEWI, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This thesis explores the nature and extent of clergy-laity collaboration for the enhancement of the Church's mission in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi. Despite the teachings of Vatican II regarding clergy-laity cooperation in the work of the Church—chiefly that all members of Christ's faithful by their baptism have a share in the mission of the Church—it appears that in most places within Nnewi diocese that clergy and lay collaboration is not what it could be. There seems to be a lopsided appropriation of ministry by the clergy to the near exclusion of the laity. Therefore, the focus of this research is to get a sense of what is actually going on in this regard between the clergy and the laity in terms of collaboration for ministry, and to determine some of the reasons for this phenomenon, as well as identifying some means of addressing concerns.

Relevant literature confirms that clergy-laity collaboration continues to be a topic of interest to members of Catholic faithful. Along with the related literature which is available, this work contributes to the existing body of knowledge regarding clergy-laity collaboration and augments this literature by reflecting on some specific Igbo cultural considerations. By looking only at Nnewi diocese, this work offers a more focused context for the study of collaboration. This study grapples with the extent to which the Church's proposed vision for its mission is actually implemented in a concrete, locatable, nameable, and sizeable context. And, as the name of our field of study indicates, practical theology commits itself to contextual specificity.

In order to further contextualize this thesis, the context-sensitive questionnaires, interviews, interactions, and careful personal observations significantly corroborate the working hypothesis: that clergy-laity collaboration in the Nnewi Diocese does not fully reflect the vision

laid out in Vatican II documents. In order to explore this pastoral issue and how it might be addressed, I refer to both the rich theological insights from the official documents of the Church and to other theological sources and documents on the richness of traditional Igbo values and practices. Such values include: the principle of “*egbe bere, ugo bere*” (live and let live); “*Igbo enwe eze*” (monarch-less sense of Igbo leadership structure); “*Njikoka*” (togetherness is greater); “*Bunu-Bunu, I bu anyi danda*” (no task is impossible to accomplish when people work together); “*igwebuike*” (strength in unity); as well as the call for a shift from the prevalent “*Uka Fada*” (Father’s Church) mentality to a more collaboration-inspired “*uka oha/anyị*” (the people’s/our Church). These values encourage a sense of more fully living out the baptismal mandate in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi.

With greater clergy-laity collaboration, a sound Igbo culture-infused project of re-educating both the clergy and the laity—will increase awareness of the importance of collaboration—through theological and ecclesiological formation, ongoing catechesis, opportunities for taking initiative and involvement in decision-making, among other things. In order for a stronger, more vibrant Church to emerge, there is a need for greater clergy-laity collaboration.

Abbreviations

CQ	Clergy Questionnaire
CI	Clergy Interview
LQ	Laity Questionnaire
LI	Laity Interview
PC	Parish Council
LM	Land Mass
P	Population

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Introduction

The documents of Vatican II often describe the Church as the people of God, which is made up of different but complementary categories of members.¹ These categories are broadly defined as the laity and the clergy. Vatican II documents emphasize that effective participation of both the clergy and the laity is required for the flourishing of the mission of the Church.² In other words, this mission is not an exclusive preserve of either the clergy or the laity. By their baptism, all the members of the faithful (which is another name for the people of God) are called to be evangelizers and active participants in the life of the Church. Furthermore, Vatican II stresses that the clergy and the laity should work together, which means that they should collaborate in the mission of the Church. In particular, *Lumen Gentium*, that is, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church states that “the faithful by baptism are made one body with Christ and are constituted among the people of God. They share in the prophetic, priestly and kingly functions of Christ and in their own way share in the mission of the whole Christian people both within the Church and the world.”³ *Lumen Gentium* also states that “the distinction which the Lord made between the sacred ministers and the rest of the people of God implies union, for the pastors and the other members of the faithful, are bound to each other by mutual needs.”⁴ These passages describe Vatican II’s vision of collaboration between the clergy and the laity and established the parameters for implementing this vision in carrying out the mission of the Church. Based on this

¹ FLANNERY AUSTIN, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*) in *Vatican Council II: Conciliar Documents*, (Ibadan: The Caxton Press, 1990), # 13.

² VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 30.

³ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 31.

⁴ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 32.

teaching, the practice of clergy-laity collaboration should be of primary importance to each diocesan Church.

The practice of clergy-laity collaboration came into focus in a particular way for me as a student in the MPTH program at Saint Paul University in Ottawa during my student placement. The partnership between the pastor and the laity at Canadian Martyrs Parish, where I did my practicum, was a source of inspiration. In this parish, the pastor and the laity collaborated very well in various committee meetings that I attended, and as a result, the goals of the parish were more easily achieved. The dialogue at meetings, and the engagement of the laity in the ministries of the Church was a new experience for me. This experience has helped me clarify and put into sharper focus what began as a working hypothesis. As I pursued my Doctor of Ministry Program, this focus became a question that I thought needed attention in my diocese and so has become the driving force behind this thesis.

The thesis recognizes that writers such as Clement Onwunata, and Cajetan Ebuziem have dealt with the topic of clergy-laity collaboration.⁵ However, these authors dealt with clergy-laity collaboration in the whole of Igboland which is rather large and diverse consisting of thirteen (13) dioceses. This work limits the study of clergy-laity collaboration to Nnewi diocese.

⁵ CLEMENT ONWUNATA, in his work *Towards an inculturated African Communal Model Ecclesia: Clergy-Laity Collaborative Ministry in Igboland of Southern Nigeria*, dealt with the relationship between the clergy and the laity in the whole of Igboland which comprises of more than twelve dioceses. CAJETAN EBUZIEM, in his work *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context*, also treated collaboration as it obtains in the whole Igboland

Research Problem

The research problem I intend to investigate is the existence of marginal practice of clergy-laity collaboration in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi. Collaboration between the clergy and the laity for the enhancement of the mission of the Church in the said diocese seems to be minimal. The present practices in terms of fuller participation of the laity in the pastoral life of the Church leaves much to be desired. There is apparent lack of empowerment, lack of respect for the laity, and the laity is not often consulted in matters that concern them. In other words, the laity does not seem to be given an opportunity to voice their opinion. It appears the clergy dictates for the laity and often acts as lone rangers in the decision making thereby taking the mission of the Church as the clergy's exclusive reserve.

Research Question

In the light of the above research problem, this thesis will seek to answer the research question: what is responsible for the minimal practice of clergy-laity collaboration in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi? This research question opens up the corollary questions: why is fuller clergy-laity collaboration lacking in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi? What are the necessary steps and practices to be taken to improve clergy-laity collaboration in Nnewi diocese? A fuller collaboration between the clergy and the laity will enhance the mission of the Church in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi. To proceed, I must first learn about, through field findings, the extent and the quality of clergy-laity collaboration and its effectiveness in promoting the mission of the local Church.

Research Aim

The research aim is to help create awareness that each and every member of the Church—whether clergy or laity—is responsible for the mission and the life of the Church. It is my perception that this awareness is considerably lacking in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi and one

of my aims is to bring this topic to the forefront. Moreover, it is the teaching of the Church that each member of the Church is endowed with gifts. Bringing these gifts together ensures that the mission of the Church will flourish since our gifts complement one another. As Saint Paul wrote, in his first letter to the Corinthians: “there is a diversity of gifts, but the spirit is the same. There is a variety of ministries, but the Lord is the same. There is a variety of works, but the same God works in all.”⁶ A situation where some of these gifts are neglected, or more precisely, where some members of the Church are not encouraged to offer their gifts, jeopardizes the full realization of the mission of the Church.

Relevance

This project is relevant for the diocese of Nnewi because it is a relatively new diocese established in 2002 with its first bishop. The diocese is working towards putting in place various ecclesiastical structures and towards charting a course that will stand the test of time. The diocese needs to be informed and theologically well-founded on a theoretical and practical basis to provide good ecclesiastical foundations for the future and to ensure the establishment and maintenance of standards that are solid, all-embracing and evangelically productive.

Practical Theology

As a doctoral ministry thesis, this is first of all a qualitative study in practical theology. According to John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, practical theology is a “discipline which is fundamentally hermeneutical, correlational, critical and theological.”⁷ It is hermeneutical because “it believes in interpretation, critical because it approaches both the world and

⁶ 1Cor. 12:4-8 *Christian Community Bible*, Catholic Pastoral Edition (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, Twenty-Ninth Edition, 2002).

⁷ JOHN SWINTON & HARRIET MOWAT, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, (London: SCM Press, 2006), p76.

interpretations of Christian tradition with hermeneutics of suspicion, correlational because it tries to simultaneously reflect different perspectives—Scripture, the Christian tradition and other sources of knowledge that allow for deeper insight and understanding, and finally theological, because it locates itself in the world as an unfolding eschatology of the gospel narrative which believes that truth is attainable.”⁸ The practical theologian “challenges specific forms of practice in the light of Scripture and Tradition, and in this way, theory and practice are held together in critical tension with each feeding into and off the other; each constantly challenging, enhancing and clarifying the other.”⁹ Practical theology falls within “an overarching methodological frame of theology. With this new understanding, theological discourse is understood as a ‘process’ rather than ‘product.’”¹⁰ This is why Elaine Graham maintains that what lies at the heart of this form of theological reflection is a relationship between theory and practice, between theological discourses and the practice of faith. Theological reflection should no longer be left to the ministers, but extended to the entire life and witness of the Church; a duty shared commonly both by the clergy and laity alike.¹¹ Input from both is obviously critical for this study.

According to Stephen Bevans, “the role of a trained theologian is that of articulating more precisely what people are expressing more generally or vaguely, deepening their ideas by providing them with the wealth of the Christian tradition, and challenging them to broaden their horizons by presenting them with the whole of Christian theological expression.”¹² Bevans maintains that theology is too serious a business to be left in the hands of theologians alone. “It is not a finished product produced by experts, rather an activity of dialogue, emerging out of a

⁸ SWINTON & MOWAT, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p 76.

⁹ SWINTON & MOWAT, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p 82.

¹⁰ ELAINE GRAHAM, *Theological Reflections: Methods*, (London: SCM Press, 2005), p 5.

¹¹ GRAHAM, *Theological Reflections: Methods*, p 6.

¹² STEVEN A. BEVANS, *Models of Contextual Theology*, (Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books, 2010), P 18.

mutual respect between ‘faith-ful’ but not technically trained people and ‘faith-ful’ and listening professionals.”¹³

Therefore, this project seeks to explore the nature of laity-clergy collaboration in Nnewi diocese, by engaging in dialogue with both groups. It hopes to uncover what may hinder this collaboration and what might help promote it in order to create a more effective ministry. Therefore the overall structure of this thesis will use the theological methodology and framework from Richard Osmer. Osmer presents a four part hermeneutical circle/spiral which he describes by the following questions: “What is going on, why is it going on, what ought to be going on, and how might we respond?”¹⁴ The responses to these questions will be uncovered in the thesis that follows.

Ethnography

Ethnography will be used as part of the qualitative approach for this project. This approach provides “an account of human social activity out of which cultural patterning can be discerned.”¹⁵ It relies on personal experience and participation, not just observation. “The researcher becomes part of the setting and in so doing begins to understand that setting, sometimes in ways which challenge and confront those who are ‘natural’ to the setting with new insights, knowledge and truths.”¹⁶ An ethnographer attempts to “get at the ‘truth’ of a situation by living in that situation and gaining deep understanding within.”¹⁷

¹³ BEVANS, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p 18.

¹⁴ RICHARD OSMER, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), P 4.

¹⁵ MERRIAM B. SHARAN, *Qualitative Research: A guide to design and Implementation*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Press, 2009), p 28.

¹⁶ SWINTON & MOWAT, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p 166.

¹⁷ SWINTON & MOWAT, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p 166.

I chose ethnography as the qualitative approach for this study because as Creswell states, ethnography “deals with a cultural group and explores their beliefs, language, behaviours and issues such as power, resistance and dominance.”¹⁸ Dealing with culture and the relationships embedded within it is a significant part of this study. Ethnography uses the “lens of culture to understand the phenomenon.”¹⁹ The ethnographic method requires close contact with the research subjects. According to Creswell, ethnography is a “qualitative design in which shared and learned patterns of values, behaviours beliefs and language of a culture-sharing group is described and interpreted.”²⁰ Researchers who are critical ethnographers “speak out against inequality and domination.”²¹ In other words, in service of theology, ethnography can be a tool of empowerment and of “emancipation of groups marginalized in society.”²² Therefore, the use of the ethnographic method is justified since it calls for changes in the society and addresses problems such as the inequality in relationships between the clergy and the laity; in addition to my own experience, this gap in relationship has been reported by authors studied as part of the literature review below as well as by respondents to my questionnaires and interviews. This ethnographic approach will help provide materials to answer Osmer’s first two questions in the hermenutical circle: What is going on with clergy lay collaboration, and why is it going on?²³

My Position in the Study

My position in this project will be that of an observer. I will combine observation, with interviewing both the clergy and the laity in Nnewi diocese. Being an observer implies that I will

¹⁸ JOHN CRESWELL, *Qualitative and inquiry research design (Choosing among five approaches)*, (California: Sage Publications, 2007), p 70.

¹⁹ Sharan, *Qualitative Research*, p 29.

²⁰ CRESWELL, *Qualitative and inquiry research design*, p 68.

²¹ CRESWELL, *Qualitative and inquiry research design*, p 70.

²² CRESWELL, *Qualitative and inquiry research design*, p 70.

²³ OSMER, P 4.

carefully view the activities. I will try to “stay sufficiently detached in order to observe and analyze”²⁴ so as to describe what is going on in the most accurate manner to outsiders as well as participants. What this means is that I will share as intimately as possible in the life and activities of both the clergy and laity of Nnewi diocese whom I am observing in order “to develop an insider’s view of what is happening.”²⁵ I will attempt both to see what is going on and also to feel what it is like to be in this group. The fact that Nnewi is my home diocese gives me an advantage since being born and raised in the culture enables me to understand the people's experience better. In other words, I am a member of the group that I am studying. However, I recognize that being both part of the culture and an ordained priest poses some potential problems which I will address in the Design section of this thesis. I was conscious of my desire to see a better clergy-laity collaboration in my diocese and I tried not to be influenced by this desire as I gathered and worked with the data.

The participants in the research will have the opportunity to speak, to narrate their experiences regarding clergy-laity collaboration in the diocese, to suggest ways to enhance it, and to describe the influence of power, authority and culture on these experiences. It is expected that through this exercise I will enable members of the faithful to become aware of the factors that hinder collaboration in the diocese and thus become better able to address these factors. My approach is consistent with Creswell’s view that “critical ethnography empowers people by giving them more authority, challenging the status quo and addressing concerns about power and control.”²⁶

²⁴ CRESWELL, *Qualitative and inquiry research design*, p 68.

²⁵ A Synthesis of Ethnographic Research, http://www-bcf.usc.edu/-genzuek/ethnographic_research.pdf (Accessed May 12, 2017).

²⁶ CRESWELL, *Qualitative and inquiry research design*, p70.

Design

This work is an ethnographic study. It is a qualitative study of a very focused question around clergy-laity collaboration; so, it would use a much more focused approach to answer a very specific question. The methods and tools that I used for data collection are purposive sampling, questionnaires and interviews. Sampling was used to weight the responses in accordance with the criteria of qualitative research. I chose a sample of clergy and laity attentive to a mix of gender and age. I distributed questionnaires to both clergy and laity. I also conducted interviews with both clergy and laity. The research questions for both questionnaires and interview are contained in appendices IV, V, VI and VII. The questions used for both questionnaires and interviews were open-ended. The justification for this is that it offered participants the opportunity “to pursue any direction and use any words to express what they wanted to say.”²⁷ It also ensured the anonymity of the respondents. Each interview lasted at least forty minutes. The interviews were done primarily in English with three people preferring to be interviewed in Igbo which I later transcribed and translated in English. A fidelity check by a third party who is a lecturer in one of the Nigerian universities was conducted. The third party reviewed my version of the transcription and translation for accuracy. The interviews were audio-recorded. I attended four parish council meetings and took notes regarding the collaboration I observed.

The data collected were presented, interpreted and analyzed first, by bringing out the significant points that emerged from the questionnaires, interviews and parish council meetings, which were grouped into three themes. Secondly, a table that summarized the findings was offered in a way that gave a profile of the responses for ease in grasping the variety voices in the

²⁷ TIM SENSING, *Qualitative Research: A Multi Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Thesis*, (Oregon, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers 2011), p 89.

study. This provided a rich and yet more concise description of Osmer's questions regarding what is actually going on in the Diocese of Nnewi regarding clergy-laity collaboration. It also pointed towards why it may be happening.

Rationale for the Choice of the Method

Alongside the research design, I employed a qualitative approach for this work and used maximum variation sampling by selecting from people that volunteered, a variety of persons according to age gender marital status, etc. The rationale for the open-ended questions was that it gave participants the opportunity to respond to the questions, while pursuing different lines of thought. This is consistent with the view of Swinton and Mowat who state that, in order to understand what is actually going on within a situation, "it is necessary to understand the meaning of the actions, the way the situation is being interpreted by those performing within it and the reasons behind the ways the individuals and communities act in the particular ways that they do."²⁸ This approach also enabled me to be open to new areas of research that were raised as part of the responses and allowed for unexpected insights to be explored.

Participants

The participants were fifty people on the whole, comprising of two groups, clergy and laity. Group one was made up of ten priests (clergy), who responded to the clergy questionnaire. I also conducted eight interviews with other priests who were not involved in responding to the questionnaires. The second group was made up of lay people. Twenty members of the laity were given questionnaires, and sixteen returned them. No names appeared on the completed questionnaires, and information on gender was not collected. I conducted sixteen interviews with lay people from four parishes. Nine men and seven women aged twenty-five years and older

²⁸ SWINTON & MOWAT, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p 38.

participated. They included a religious brother and a religious sister, Catechists, Catholic men, Catholic women, and some youth. All the participants were Catholic and of Igbo extraction. They spoke the same language and had the same cultural background.

With the permission of parish priests, I also observed four parish council meetings in two urban parishes and two rural parishes with the goal of obtaining a balanced picture of what is going on in the diocese. This was an attempt to have another observation point into the kind of clergy-laity collaboration that is already taking place.

Procedure:

I obtained permission from the bishop of Nnewi diocese to conduct this research in his diocese. I distributed the questionnaires randomly to priest volunteers at the pastoral centre where they had their annual retreat. I did this because there were more priest volunteers than questionnaires. The priests are from both urban and rural parishes, and as a member of this diocese I know many of them to some extent. I distributed the questionnaires randomly i.e. without taking into account where they were sitting.

For the laity interviews, questionnaires and parish council meetings, I chose two urban parishes and two rural parishes, in order to ensure some diversity among the parishes. I recruited the participants myself by the following method: The parish priests in the selected parishes introduced me during mass telling the parishioners the reason for my visit and indicated that I would speak with them after mass. The priests left at the end of mass and I talked to those parishioners who chose to stay behind. It is from those people that I recruited the participants attempting to have a mix of gender and age represented.

I first explained to them that clergy-laity collaboration entails that both the clergy and the laity have to work together for the Church to move forward; that Vatican II teaches that every baptized Christian has a role to play in the mission of the Church. Two women asked for clarifications regarding Vatican II and I explained to them that Vatican II is a council which was convoked in Rome on 11th October 1962 under Pope John XXIII and closed on 8th December 1965 under Pope Paul VI. Among other things, the council brought to the awareness of the laity that they have rights and responsibilities in the Church. It called for active participation of all the faithful in the mission of the Church. One of the fruits of the council is that we now celebrate the Mass in our own language. It emphasized that priests and the laity have to work together.

I made it clear to them that they were under no obligation to participate in the study (i.e. participation was voluntary). I then selected a sampling of some religious brother and sisters, Catechists, laymen, laywomen, and youths (twenty in number), from the people since the number of the persons who volunteered was more than I needed. I expressed my thanks to the others, and they left. I also made it clear to the participants that anyone was free to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions without suffering any negative consequences. I read out the instructions to them, emphasizing that the exercise was meant for the growth of the diocese and the empowerment of the laity. I also stressed that it was important for them to feel free to express their views, and I assured them that their responses would be kept confidential. In this way, I employed a qualitative approach for this work and used maximum variation sampling.

The open-ended questions focused on their experience with respect to the nature of collaboration in the diocese—what they thought hinders it, what they believe enhances it and the recognition of any benefits that accrue from it. The interview lasted for forty (40) minutes for each participant while the completion of the questionnaire took approximately one hour.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. I carefully read and reread the interviews and questionnaires. I then formed a general impression of their experiences and opinions regarding the collaboration between the clergy and the laity in the diocese, and the impact this relationship has on the mission of the Church.

I continued to read and review the findings of the questionnaires and the interviews going through them carefully, and eventually began colour-coding common points. The commonalities I then clustered together and gathered into themes. I used these themes to begin to analyze the data. I also noted the responses that stood out from the others by offering a particular or differentiated insight into the clergy-laity relationship. While analyzing the data, I made the anonymity of the respondents a priority so that in the end, only the ideas expressed were reflected in the project and nothing about the sources was revealed. I did this by replacing the identity of the participants with an alphabetical and numerical code. For example, Clergy Interview One was coded as CI. 1.

As I described earlier, I attended their parish council meetings as an observer. The parish priests introduced me at the beginning of the meetings, informing the members of the reason for my visit. I sat in the midst of the people and quietly observed the proceedings of the meeting, made notes of my observations during the meeting and wrote reports on my observations after the meeting. I then went carefully through the notes I had made and compared them with the themes I had collected from the questionnaires and interviews. I wanted to see if there was anything that confirmed the data and if any significant issue arose which did not appear in the questionnaires and interviews.

My role in the research was that of an observer. I observed what was going on, conducted the interviews and distributed questionnaires to the participants. I collected the questionnaires

after the participants had given their responses. I tried to make sure to underline that their own experience and ideas were what was important to this study.

I realize that I might be somewhat biased given my desire to improve clergy-laity collaboration in my diocese. Although, being a member of one of the groups being studied, I needed to pay attention to my role in the interviews in terms of power relations especially with the laity. I tried to address this as I gathered and worked with the data. Conscious of my role as an observer, I was also aware that as a priest myself, I might have my own blind spots as a member of the clergy. It is equally pertinent to recognize that there is always a possibility that the researcher may influence the participants. In this case, since I am a priest, it is likely that some of the lay interviewees will tell me what they think I want to hear given the power differential that my role affords. However, I tried to mitigate this by assuring them that my position as a priest is not relevant to the research which is geared towards the progress of the diocese. I did not have the same concern with my fellow priests because it is my experience that as priests we generally say what we think to one another. I further stressed to everyone that I would protect their confidentiality.

The questions were open-ended and the focus was on the nature of collaboration that exists in Nnewi diocese: what hinders it, what enhances it and the benefits that are derived from it. The interviews were conducted in both the English and Igbo languages to allow access to more complete data. These questions were used in order to give participants the opportunity to touch on various areas of the clergy-laity relationship in their responses to the questions.

Limitations of the Research

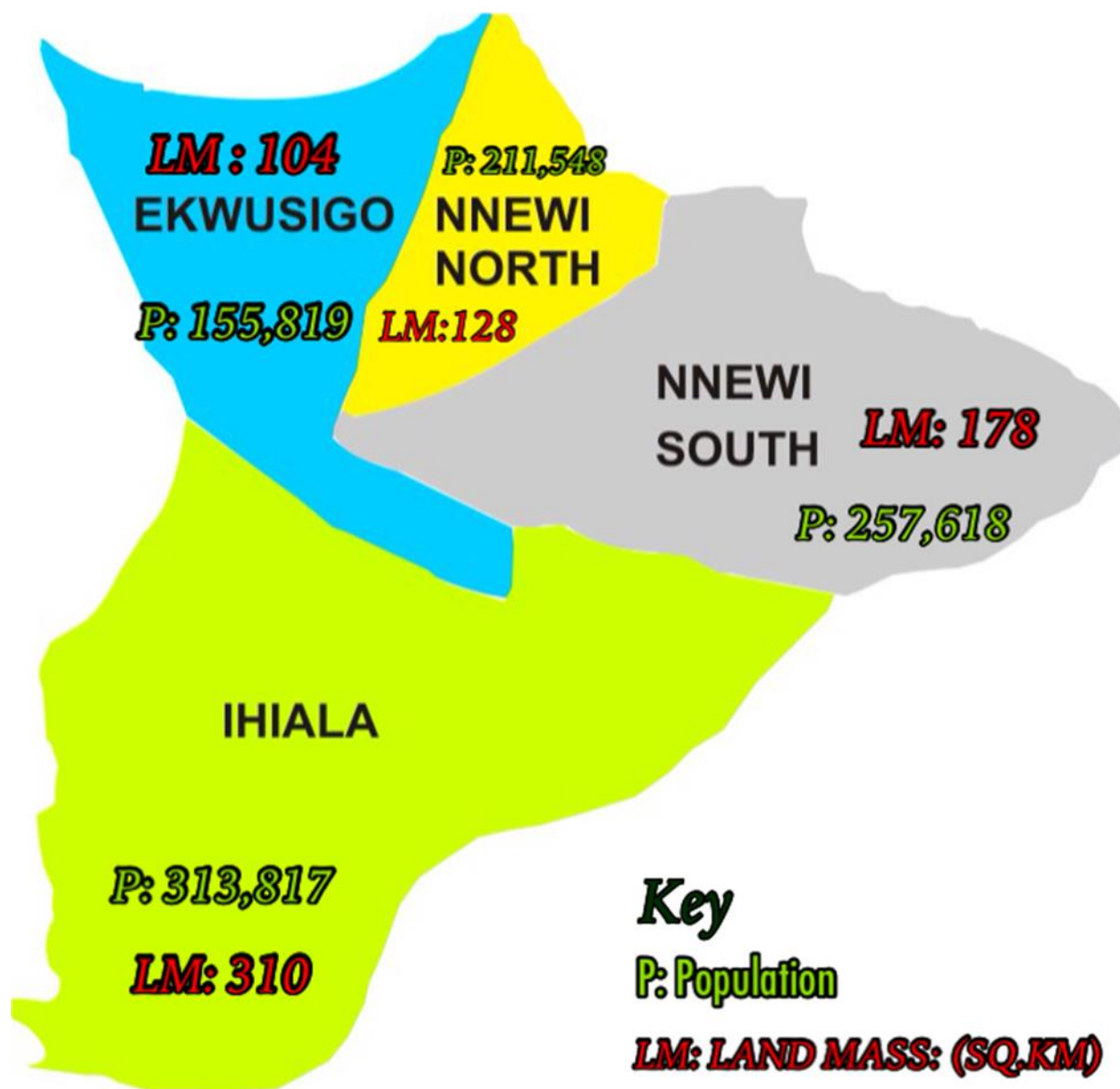
One of the limitations of the research is that I am a member of the clergy and given the way the laity relates with the clergy in Igboland, I do not know how cautious the lay respondents were in their responses. Secondly, because I know at least cordially, many of the priests in the diocese they also may have not always been transparent in their responses. Thirdly, I only considered as participants those who were attending Church and those who do not attend may have interesting and alternate views. Fourthly, it is possible that the priests and the members of the parish council in the parishes visited may have tried to play it safe during the meetings because of my presence in their midst. Fifthly, the thesis did not deal with the exclusion of women in leadership in the Catholic Church which is a very complex concern. It is beyond the work of this thesis worthy of a study of its own.

Outline of Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter offers a detailed picture of Nnewi diocese and presents background information on the geographical area, the history, the population, the parishes, the priests, and the medical and educational institutions. This chapter also looks at the arrival of the early missionaries and the extent of lay participation in the mission of the Church in that era. Chapter two traces the origin of clergy-laity distinction in the Church and the vision of Vatican II on this issue. The chapter also outlines the rights, duties, and formation of both the clergy and the laity along with the various sources of this formation. Chapter three discusses related literatures and some theological ideas on clergy-laity collaboration from which a theoretical framework for the thesis was developed. Chapter four examines collaboration from the viewpoint of ethnocultural leadership in Igbo culture. This section describes leadership in general before presenting Igbo leadership styles from both a

theological and an ethical perspective. Similarly, it touches on the role of religion and religious leadership in Igboland and considers some pertinent effects of missionary activities on Igbo culture. Chapter five presents the data collected and analysis of the findings. Chapter six discusses what has been learned from the study with the view of the Church and some theologians. Chapter seven completes the discussion by making suggestions for a way forward to improve clergy-laity collaboration in order to promote the mission of the Church, which is the fullness of life for all (John 10:10).

1. Map of Nnewi Diocese and its geographical components



The map below shows the four local governments that comprise the diocese of Nnewi together with data on the land mass and population.

CHAPTER ONE

1. A Brief History of Nnewi Diocese

In order to better understand ministry practices in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi, I will begin with a brief history of the diocese. By way of context, I will describe its early beginnings as a diocese, and provide statistics on the number of parishes, the number of priests, men and women religious, statutory bodies and academic institutions in Nnewi diocese. The period of the early missionaries and the participation of the lay people in that era will be looked at briefly. The cultural background of the people will also be examined.

The creation of a new diocese serves the missionary mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ to His apostles to bring the Good News to every nation, race, culture and people. Ever since the apostles received this mandate, Christians, especially Christian missionaries, have continued to bring the light of the faith to different peoples.²⁹ The “background history of Nnewi diocese is closely tied to the birth of Catholicism in the old Onitsha Archdiocese.”³⁰ What is today known as Nnewi Diocese is a product of Onitsha Archdiocese. “The Diocese of Nnewi was not a virgin territory. It was already a stronghold of the Catholic faith with two ecclesiastical Regions with over 47 parishes with a population of over 300,000 Catholics out of a total population of 500,000.”³¹ Nnewi diocese, like every diocese, offers people an opportunity to come closer to God and His Son Jesus Christ in the Spirit.³² The creation of a new diocese opens new doors and brings the good news nearer to the people by offering greater services. It permits better

²⁹ www.nnewidiocese.org (Accessed January 20th 2016).

³⁰ DONATUS E. IKE: “Achievements, Challenges and Prospects,” in *Catholic Diocese of Nnewi at Ten*, Donatus E. Ike & Vitalis Anaehobi (eds.), (Nnewi: CathCom Press 2012), p 15.

³¹ HILARY. O OKEKE, *Upon No Other Foundation Than Faith in Jesus Christ*, (Nnewi: CathCom Press, 2012), pp 32-33.

³² GABRIEL EMEASOBA, “Behold, Nnewi Diocese is 10! God Has Been Faithful to Us”, <http://wwwfrgab.blogspot.it/2012/02/behold-nnewi-diocese-is-10-god-has-been.html> (Accessed 26th January 2016).

organization of the people of God and makes pastoral activities less burdensome. Collaboration between the clergy and the laity is the instrument that can facilitate the Church's pastoral activities in every diocese. It is the intent of this thesis to examine how clergy-laity collaboration will assist in achieving the goals set by the diocese at its inception.

Nnewi diocese was created in November 2001 and was inaugurated on the 10th day of February 2002. The diocese is located in the northern part of Anambra State in south-eastern Nigeria. It occupies four local government areas, namely Nnewi North and Nnewi South, Ekwusigo and Ihiala excluding Amorka and Uli on its south west border with Orlu diocese.³³ The diocese covers an area of 662 square kilometers (256 sq mls) and comprises the following towns: Nnewi, Ukpok, Amichi, Ogbodi, Unubi, Ekwulumili, Azigbo, Osumenyi, Ezinifite, Utuh, Ebenator, Akwaihedi, Ozubulu, Oraifite, Ichi, Ihembosi, Okija, Azia, Ihiala, Mbosi, Orsumoghu, Lilu, Isseke and Ubuluisiuzor.³⁴ The official announcement of the creation of the diocese was made by the Vatican from the Holy Trinity Cathedral Onitsha in November 2001. The new Diocese began to function with the ordination and installation of Rt. Rev. Msgr. Hilary Odili Okeke as its first Bishop on February 10, 2002. On the day of inauguration, the bishop stated, among other points, that the focus of the diocese was “to build a community of faith and communion of love...creating the family of God that clearly manifests the care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue and trust....”³⁵ It is my contention that this vision of the bishop will be realized only through a collaboration between the clergy and the laity. One goal of this thesis is to examine how collaboration will help to achieve this vision.

³³ IKE, in *Catholic Diocese of Nnewi at Ten*, p 26. Although Amorka and Uli towns are in Anambra state, the two towns belong to Orlu diocese.

³⁴ IKE, in *Catholic Diocese of Nnewi at Ten*, p 27.

³⁵ HILARY OKEKE, *Upon No Other Foundation*, p 11.

1.1 Nnewi Diocese Facts and Figures

Today, Nnewi diocese comprises 544,789 Catholics³⁶ with four Regions, ten Deaneries, ninety-nine parishes and two chaplaincies.³⁷ With the ordination of nineteen Priests in 2016, the total number of priests in Nnewi Diocese is two hundred and ninety-nine (not including the fourteen who have gone to meet the Lord). This implies that the ratio of lay persons per priest is 1,820. The diocese has grown from forty-seven parishes in 2002, to ninety-nine parishes and may soon grow beyond that. It has two hundred and forty-three diocesan major seminarians³⁸ and forty-four major seminarians who belong to the Holy Family Fathers and Brothers of the Youth. This is a group formed in the diocese whose clerics (sacred ministers) are incardinated in the Diocese of Nnewi until the group achieves its Pontifical right. The diocese has forty-four nursery schools and twenty-three nursery/primary secondary schools with a total number of 7,215 pupils. It has forty-three primary schools and twenty-four secondary schools with a total number of 9,427 students.³⁹ It has one home/school for physically challenged children. The diocese has recently founded a school of theology⁴⁰ where both religious brothers and nuns and lay people are trained. There are three diocesan seminaries—St Paul minor seminary Ukpok, Our

³⁶ Catholic as used in this thesis refers to the Roman Catholics i.e.those who affiliate with the church of Rome.

³⁷ St Luke's chaplaincy serves the Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital Nnewi while St Camillus De Lellis Chaplaincy serves the College of Health Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nnewi.

³⁸ As of October 6, 2015, the diocese has 243 diocesan major seminarians to resume studies for the 2015/2016 Formation Year.

³⁹ Nnewi Diocesan Liturgical Diary & Directory, (Nnewi: CathCom Publications, 2016), p 12.

⁴⁰ The diocese established St Paul school of theology in 2009. This institution offers theology courses to both the laity and religious brothers and sisters (nuns). The courses are taught in English. It offers a four-year program. A diploma in theology is awarded after the first two years and on completion of four years, the student is awarded a diploma certificate in theology. Currently, there are one hundred and fifty-three (153) students in the institution. The number of students that have graduated from the institution between its inception in 2009 and 2016 is one hundred and seventy-six (176).

Lady of Assumption minor seminary Okija⁴¹ and St Gabriel spiritual year seminary Ozubulu. Holy Ghost Juniorate Ihiala, a minor seminary, which belongs to the Holy Ghost congregation, is also within the diocese. The diocese owns two hospitals—Our Lady of Lourdes hospital Ihiala and Joint hospital Ozubulu as well as three maternity hospitals—St Mary’s maternity hospital Orsumoghu, Visitation hospital Orsumenyi and Mater Misericordiae hospital Nnewi. There are also many convents and fraternities for men and women religious, and a monastery for nuns—St Benedictine monastery, Ozubulu. This indicates that many members of the clergy and religious in the diocese are engaged in the school and hospital apostolates.

Within the diocese, there is a laity council, a Catholic men’s organization, a Catholic women’s organization, a Catholic youth council, a Catholic boys’ organization and a Catholic girls’ organization. There are also the Knights (Knights of St Sylvester, St Mulumba, and St John); pious/devotional groups like Legion of Mary, Saint Anthony, Saint Jude, Catholic Charismatic Renewal, Sacred Heart Society, Saint Vincent de Paul Society, Pioneer Total Abstinence Society, Saint Ann’s Society, Abu oma, the Choir, Purgatorian Society, and Block Rosary, among others. These statutory bodies and organizations have members of the clergy as chaplains or co-ordinators.

Indeed, the diocese has made immense strides with respect to growth and expansion. It has achieved impressive feats in terms of economic and human resources. Evangelization and Catechetical Formation is listed as the first priority in the diocesan ‘Pastoral Plan’. Included in the plan is the commitment “to proclaim Jesus Christ and to faithfully instruct all believers in the Way of the Lord.”⁴² The diocese has employed several means “to provide functional and

⁴¹ Our Lady of Assumption seminary is scheduled to open either this year or next year.

⁴² HILARY OKEKE, *Faith Rooted and Built up in Christ*, (Nnewi: Cathcom Press, 2011), p 120.

functioning structures that can meet the need for efficient and effective evangelization and pastoral care of the people.”⁴³

Prior to the creation of the diocese, the Nnewi Catholic community (an umbrella community uniting all four quarters of Nnewi town) built the Cathedral of Our Lady of Assumption in Nnewi. The diocese has “a long-term plan to have a diocesan University where individuals would graduate from not only as scholars but also as gentlepeople and ultimately, as saints. The diocese hopes to train more pastoral agents for the formation of the people’s conscience at all levels of life.”⁴⁴ From my perspective, this follows in the footsteps of the early missionaries who embarked on a "school apostolate",⁴⁵ which contributed immensely to their success; the school apostolate also seems to be a fruitful starting point for my study of collaboration.

1.2 Coming of the early missionaries

“The light of Christianity first shone on the South-Eastern part of Nigeria with the arrival of the Irish Holy Ghost missionaries under the leadership of Fr. Joseph Lutz, in Onitsha on Saturday, December 5, 1885. Fr. Joseph Shanahan joined them in 1902, and when the mantle of leadership fell on him in 1905, history was set to record the evangelization of what is today known as Nnewi Diocese.”⁴⁶ “The stream of this evangelization was to flow through two main

⁴³ OKEKE, “Forward” in D. E. Ike and V. Aniehobi (eds.), “Achievements, Challenges and Prospects” in *Catholic Diocese of Nnewi at Ten*,” viii.

⁴⁴ GABRIEL EMEASOBA, “Behold, Nnewi Diocese is 10,” <http://www.frgab.blogspot.it/2012/02/behold-nnewi-diocese-is-10-god-has-been.html> (Accessed 26th January 2016).

⁴⁵ School Apostolate is the means that the missionaries used for proselytizing and educating people. In fact, the “Catholic missionaries leaned heavily on the school. The school was their chief instrument of evangelization.” (Ikenga Ozigboh, *Igbo Catholicism*, p 95).

⁴⁶ CELESTINE A. OBI (ed.), *A Hundred Years of Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985*, (Onitsha: Africana Fep Publishers 1985), p 12.

courses almost concurrently: one having Nnewi as its source and the other Ozubulu/Ihiala.”⁴⁷ These missionaries left the comfort of their countries to minister in an unknown area, ready to die for their faith and indeed many did die in the course of spreading the faith.

The hard work and the indomitable spirit of sacrifice of these early missionaries paid off with much success. Thus, “the seed of what is today known as Nnewi Diocese was sown in 1906. From the two centres (Nnewi and Ozubulu/Ihiala), the evangelization of Nnewi Diocese was to spread like wildfire.”⁴⁸ As quoted in a previous footnote, these early missionaries “leaned very heavily on the school and made the school their chief instrument of evangelization.”⁴⁹ In fact, education was their central focus.

Under the leadership of the missionaries, many people were brought into the Church, who helped to make Catholicism strong in the area known today as Nnewi diocese. It is important to remember that some of these converts were attracted to the faith by the advantages which the missionaries offered. These advantages included the influence wielded by those who possessed the White man’s language (which was acquired through the schools), and also other social services, such as food, clothes and shoes (which the missionaries gave to the people). In addition, they offered free health services.⁵⁰ Ekechi offers the following perspective on the success of the Catholic missionaries,

Because the Catholic Fathers taught English in their schools instead of vernacular which the protestants adopted, they were able to attract a large number of young men who were eager to “learn book.” And because English has become the passport for higher

⁴⁷ Catholic Diocese of Nnewi, *Liturgical Diary & Directory for Catholic Diocese of Nnewi*. (Nnewi: The CathCom Publications 2015), p 23.

⁴⁸ Catholic Diocese of Nnewi, *Liturgical Diary & Directory* 2015, pp 23-24.

⁴⁹ IKENGA R. A. OZIGBOH, *Igbo Catholicism: The Onitsha Connection 1967-1984*, (Onitsha: Africana-Fep Publishers, 1985), p 95.

⁵⁰ OKEKE, *Upon No Other Foundation*, (Nnewi: Cathcom Press, 2012), pp 34-35.

positions in the government and business circles, Protestants as well as others availed themselves of English education provided by the Catholic missionaries.⁵¹

Based on this assessment of the situation, it is not surprising that people were eager to take advantage of the opportunities, in the form of formal education, offered by the early missionaries. The people sent their children to the schools opened by the missionaries not only to represent the people but also to acquire whatever advantages that might come from the education introduced by the missionaries. This is the reason why *Ezulu*, sent one of his sons to school to learn the white man's wisdom in order to be his (Ezulu's) representative. He advises his son thus,

I have sent you to be my eyes there (in the school). Do not listen to what people say—people who do not know their right from their left. No man speaks a lie to his son; I have told you that before. If anyone asks you why you should be sent to learn these new things tell him that a man must dance the dance prevalent in his time....⁵²

From the above cite, it is clear that Ezulu had the foresight to send his son to school because of the anticipated advantages of education and its importance for the future. Uzukwu goes on to note that the provision of medical services also made a lasting impression on the people.⁵³ This contributed in no small way to the tremendous success of the missionaries. Certainly, converts were also made as a result of spiritual values such as the selflessness with which the missionaries cared for the sick, the poor, the abandoned and the marginalized. Nevertheless, many converts were drawn to the Church because of the expectation of future societal benefits, such as the ones

⁵¹ EKECHI F. K, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914*, (London: Anchor Press Ltd., 1972), pp 102-103.

⁵² CHINUA ACHEBE, *Arrow of God*, introduced by K.W.J. Post (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday 1969), pp 212-213.

⁵³ ELOCHUKWU UZUKWU, *Evangelization in South-Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985-Reflections on the Past, Prospects for the Future*, (Enugu, Nigeria: Snaap Press, 1985), p 11.

previously noted. During this time of tremendous growth in the Church in this part of the world, the laity played an important role which I will describe below.

1.2.1 Lay Participation in the early Missionary Era

The work of the early missionaries would have been almost impossible without the help of the lay people, who played a significant role in the area known as Nnewi diocese. Donatus Ike noted that the “youths trained by the Church as teachers and catechists proved to be great agents of grass-roots evangelization.”⁵⁴ The Church relied increasingly on the services of the numerous ‘teacher-catechists’,⁵⁵ who were indispensable to the early missionaries and the people. These teacher-catechists were the instruments through which the early missionaries reached out to the entire people, engaged in meaningful communication and delivered the message of the gospel.⁵⁶ In describing the role of these teacher-catechists, Vincent Nwosu writes that the catechist usually stayed near the resident priest and wielded authority next to the parish priest.⁵⁷ The authority of these catechists stemmed from the fact that they spoke and understood English, the language spoken by the priest. These teacher-catechists were given special training on the catechism. “One became a catechist and teacher following his appointment as a teacher.”⁵⁸ They were teachers, catechists and interpreters. This was my experience as well when I was growing up. After the readings on Sundays or during any service, the priest preached in English while the teacher-catechist interpreted to the people in the Igbo language. These teacher-catechists played a very important and active role in spreading the faith in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi. Without these

⁵⁴ IKE, in *Catholic Diocese of Nnewi at Ten*, p 28.

⁵⁵ Teacher-catechists are those whom the early missionaries trained as teachers who took up the task of school apostolate together with the work of being catechists. They were interpreters between the missionaries and the people. They played a very important role.

⁵⁶ HILARY OKEKE, *Catechists: Apostles Ever Relevant*, (Nnewi, Nigeria: CathCom Press, 2009), v.

⁵⁷ VINCENT A. NWOSU, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria: The Onitsha Story 1903-1983*, (Onitsha: Rex Charles & Patrick Ltd. Religious Publications 1990), p 27.

⁵⁸ NWOSU, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p 27.

catechists, the missionaries would not have been able to communicate with the people in their own native language (Igbo).

“Their deployment both as teachers and catechists is as a result of the twin role of schools as the major means of proselytization and imparting of education in the secular sense.”⁵⁹ These teacher-catechists taught in the school from 8.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m. and then taught catechism in the evening, and after that, they visited the people in their homes to talk to them about the faith. On Sundays, they conducted religious sessions for the adherents.⁶⁰ Nwosu reports that these teacher-catechists “were expected to conduct Sunday service at their stations on weekends.”⁶¹ These stations were outposts that were usually attached to a central parish. The teacher-catechists visited the sick, baptised those in danger of death and made funeral arrangements. They “prepared the catechumens for the reception of the sacraments and selected those they considered ready to be presented to the priest for examination and admission into full Church membership. They also made recommendations about who should receive other Church sacraments such as marriages and funerals and about who should be suspended from the Church. The priests usually relied very much on the catechist’s testimony about any member of the local Church.”⁶² This was because the teacher-catechists lived in the community and had a firsthand knowledge of the people and whatever was going on in the community.

⁵⁹ NWOSU, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p 26.

⁶⁰ EMEFIE IKENGA METUH & CHRISTOPHER I EJIZU, *Hundred Years of Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985 the Nnewi Story*. (Ibadan: Clavarianum Press, 1985). P68. The adult catechumens met mostly in the evenings to learn songs and catechism as well. Sunday was a day of worship for both the pupils and the catechumens. And teacher Joseph would lead the young community of adherents. Apart from conducting religious sessions for the pupils and adult catechumens in the school/church premises Mr. Ekwerekwu spent substantial part of the day visiting people in their homes to talk to them about the catholic faith. Soon the young teacher became very popular in the area and his house was reported to have become a regular visiting center for many elders of the community p 68.

⁶¹ NWOSU, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p 35.

⁶² NWOSU, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p 54.

The missionaries visited the teacher-catechists, travelling from the centre where they lived to celebrate the sacraments. On such occasions, the teacher-catechist gave oral and sometimes written accounts on the status of their stations—the school and the Church. The priest in charge of the parish advised them, where necessary, on how to deal with different pastoral and school problems.⁶³ Nevertheless, these teacher-catechists were initially trained by the missionaries themselves prior to the establishment of teacher training colleges. From the account given by Nwosu, “each priest organized the training of teachers and catechists the way he could, given the facilities available to him; there is evidence that with time some minimum standards were required of teachers so trained before they could be employed by the Church as catechists and teachers.”⁶⁴ These teachers were expected to pass the yearly examinations on religious instruction and to take a short course every year on the method of imparting religious instruction.⁶⁵ Because of their influence in society, parents were always proud and happy to send their children to live with these teacher-catechists. I had the rare opportunity to be among such beneficiaries when I was growing up; I lived with a notable teacher-catechist (headmaster) and a strict disciplinarian, Mr. Patrick Okonkwo.

Apart from the teacher-catechists, there were other lay volunteer bodies that helped in the teaching of catechism, including the confraternity of Christian doctrine (CCD) and the Legion of Mary. The CCD was made up of volunteer male and female teachers of catechism.⁶⁶ They organized catechism lessons for children and adult catechumens both in the Church and in specially selected places in the villages. They were supervised by priests and catechists.⁶⁷ These lay people shared their faith with their brothers and sisters at the grass-roots level. They offered

⁶³ NWOSU, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p 31.

⁶⁴ NWOSU, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p 32.

⁶⁵ NWOSU, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p 32.

⁶⁶ NWOSU, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p 35.

⁶⁷ NWOSU, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p 36.

themselves, their time, and energy, and, in some cases, their property, in order to spread the gospel. These important roles and activities of evangelization demonstrate that all were called to participate in the mission of the Church. Left solely to the missionaries, it would not have been possible to achieve this important work. As Nwosu affirms, “the work of missionaries would have been well-nigh impossible without the help they got from hundreds of catechists or teacher-catechists in various mission stations and towns since the early years of missionary activities in Nigeria.”⁶⁸ This is also true today; it is not possible for the clergy alone to bring the mission of the Church to fruition without the collaboration of the laity. Next, I will discuss the present state of clergy-laity relations in Nnewi diocese from the perspective of the clergy.

1.3 Clergy/Laity in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi

1.3.1 Clergy

God has blessed and continues to bless Nnewi diocese with a good number of priests who are devoted to the work of enhancing the mission of the Church. These priests have in no small measure borne eloquent witness through their parish ministry and other assignments. Nevertheless, collaboration between the clergy and the laity seems to be limited, and the very strong collaboration that marked the early beginnings of the diocese is less apparent. Present practices need to be reviewed with a view to encouraging greater participation of the laity in the pastoral life of the Church. There is also an apparent lack of empowerment, a lack of respect for the laity, and a lack of consultation in matters that concern the laity. It appears that the clergy dictates for the laity and often act as lone rangers in the decision making in such a way that the mission of the Church becomes their exclusive preserve. This is contrary to a significant aspect of teaching found in Vatican II documents which reflects the need for the clergy and the laity to

⁶⁸ NWOSU, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, xiii.

collaborate in the mission of the Church. In the dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, it is stated that “all the members of Christ’s faithful share in the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the Church and to the world.”⁶⁹

This vision of the Church regarding collaboration does not seem to be fully practiced by the Church leadership in Igboland of which Nnewi Diocese is a part. The Church is seen as the priests’ Church, *uka fada*.⁷⁰ This perception of the Church as the priests’ Church prompted Hippolytus Adigwe to state that “(...) we, in Nigeria, have to make our bold step to move out of our traditional concept of the Church being that of the bishops and priests, in order to adequately recognize the dignity of the lay person arising from the sacrament of baptism, with its consequent obligations and rights.”⁷¹ The clergy of the Catholic Church in Igboland, including Nnewi, appear to see the laity as subjects who must be instructed by them on virtually every administrative activity in the parish including liturgical functions, projects, and financial matters. The clergy often seem to make decisions without considering the role of the laity in the mission of the Church. Commenting on this practice, Bishop Okeke observes that this is caused by:

The attitude of some Church leaders, especially priests who arrogate to themselves exclusive responsibility for the things of the Church. They collect money, utilize it and account to no body! Even where there is the parish council, the priest assumes responsibility without giving the lay faithful a sense of belonging and participation in the affairs of the Church.⁷²

⁶⁹ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 31.

⁷⁰ Uka fada literally means priest’s church. This is what the Catholic Church in Igboland is called. It gives the impression that the Church belongs to the priest. The reason for this is that the missionaries not only brought the Church, but it was also their instructions that were carried out by their lay collaborators at that time. This is seen today as well even with the indigenous priests.

⁷¹ HIPPOLYTUS ADIGWE (ed.), *Priests and Religious on Mission: Dossier on Inauguration of the PMU in Nigeria*, Published by national office pontifical mission societies mission Nigeria 2004), p 6.

⁷² OKEKE, *Upon No Other Foundation*, p 110.

This type of behaviour alienates the lay faithful from the clergy and also prevents them from offering advice, if they have any, since they are treated like strangers in their own Church. Addressing this point, Hilary Achunike opines that “it is unfortunate to note that priests are still lording it over the people.”⁷³ This attitude, which denies the laity the opportunity to exercise their rights and responsibilities, constitutes a stumbling block to collaboration. The Church, which is the people of God, includes both the clergy and the laity, not just the clergy. One of the goals of this thesis is to increase the awareness of the faithful in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi that the Church is not just the priests’ Church and that the mission of the Church is meant to be achieved through clergy-laity collaboration. In keeping with this goal, the next section will deal with the role of the laity in Nnewi diocese.

1.3.2 Laity

The lay faithful in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi make up about ninety-nine percent of the population of the diocese.⁷⁴ They therefore, make up the clear majority of the Church (in numbers but not in power). The laity are the catechists, the Churchwardens, doctors, lawyers, traders, choir members, and the members of the religious societies and the statutory bodies. They have contributed a great deal to the development and progress of the diocese. The catechists, in particular, still do a lot of work. They are the ever-present assistants to the priests. They are always in the parish office in the morning and give catechetical instructions or at times marriage courses in the evening. They are always present for the sacrament of baptism and accompany the priest during the visitation of the sick in homes and hospitals. Shorter describes their role clearly when he says: “The catechist is... the collaborator of the priest. His role is to proclaim the good

⁷³ HILARY C. ACHUNIKE, “Overview of the History of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi, and the Lessons for Renewed Evangelization in the Diocese. (Missionary Heritage of the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi, 1885-2005),” in *Synod Acta, First Nnewi Catholic Diocesan Synod* 3-10 April 2005 (Nnewi: CathCom Publishers, 2006), p 60.

⁷⁴This can be seen from the facts and figures presented on page 13 of this thesis.

tidings through his whole life and be a faithful assistant of the parish priest. He strengthens the faith of the good Christians and especially follows the lapsed ones.”⁷⁵ Shorter clearly implies that the catechist is indispensable to the priest. It should be noted, however, that in Nnewi diocese as well as in most dioceses in Igboland, the catechists are always male; there are no female catechists at present.

Other groups also contribute towards the progress of the diocese. For example, the choir devotes its time and voices to sing during liturgical rites. The Catholic women’s organization, which is one of the statutory bodies, supplies food to the seminaries in the diocese every week. In fact, the lay faithful in Nnewi diocese are very generous. It is the lay people who make up the workforce and provide the material and financial resources to carry out projects in the diocese. The laity supports these projects by donating significant sums of money. Some of them have built Churches singlehandedly and donated them to the diocese. Many of them have also paid for the training of priests in advanced education and even funded seminarians who are still in formation in the seminary. Some of the priests seem not to recognize the sacrifices being made by these groups. However, Bishop Okeke acknowledges this work: “he was privileged to have people who were already doing a lot on their own to build up their parishes.”⁷⁶

Nevertheless, in spite of all these laudable achievements, it is important to recognize that the lay faithful are not yet aware of their full responsibilities in carrying out the mission of the Church. Apparently, because of the power and authority difference, they have no choice than to often leave the priest with the full responsibility to do everything including the right to make arbitrary decisions on issues that should be discussed with the parishioners. The laity also expect

⁷⁵ SHORTER A., & KATAZA E. (eds.), *Missionaries to Yourselves: African Catechists Today*, (London: Godfrey Chapman, 1972), p 21.

⁷⁶ OKEKE, *Upon no other Foundation*, p 69.

the priest to give instructions before they do anything. This sometimes prevents them from being creative and from thinking for themselves.

The laity sometimes involve themselves in some forms of traditional religious practices such as secretly consulting diviners and fortune tellers, who prepare charms for them, with which to protect themselves. In other words, they still hold on to some traditional religious practices (albeit secretly). Bishop Anthony Gbuji expresses this as follows:

Many of our Catholics are not committed Christians. Our churches are full on Sundays; the confessionals are besieged every weekend; our altars are crowded with communicants. By and large, idolatry is still a problem very much with us. It shows itself in many forms of superstitious beliefs and practices, fear of witchcraft and charms. Many Catholics would run to the priest for Mass in the morning and go to the spiritual churches and fortune tellers in the evening.⁷⁷

This attitude and these behaviours of the lay faithful could even be the reason why the laity seem not to be committed or eager to participate in parish activities. Also, this behaviour can sometimes be traced to the Igbo cultural background. For this reason, it is important for this study to describe some of the cultural practices which may underlie this behaviour.

1.4 The Socio-Cultural Background of the People of Nnewi Diocese

This section will briefly look at aspects of the traditional culture of the people of Nnewi. The rationale for looking at the culture and traditions is as follows: both the clergy and the laity make up the society, and the culture and traditions must have some influence on both of them. In

⁷⁷ ANTHONY O. GBUJI, "Formation of Agents of Evangelization: Nnewi Diocesan Synod, April 2005" in *Synod Acta. First Nnewi Catholic Diocesan Synod 3-10 April 2005*, (Nnewi: KathCom Publishers, 2006), p 82.

other words, “human life and actions are subject to the pushes and pulls of the environment.”⁷⁸ Nnewi diocese could be viewed as a system with interrelationships, and given that systems can be complex, one must look at issues within a system from multiple perspectives. This makes it important to examine the socio-cultural influences on the diocese not only in the contemporary context but also from an historical and a future perspective. This will give a more accurate picture of the real situation and will help to ‘explore the complex dynamics of the issue’ of laity-clergy collaboration in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi in order to enable the “development of a transformative and illuminating understanding of what is going on.”⁷⁹ The areas to be examined include cultural, sociological, and religious factors. In the next section, I will describe some aspects of the traditional culture which provide context to my study.

1.4.1 Community Spirit

The Igbo people speak a common language (the Igbo language). They practice an extended family system and engage in other cultural practices peculiar to the Igbos. Ndigbo, including those in Nnewi, are naturally egalitarian and communitarian. Communitarianism promotes mutual assistance and cooperation, communal living and empowerment of both the individual and the community. The fact that one is a Christian does not sever or detach one from exhibiting community spirit. Individualism is a vice, if not a crime among the Igbos. According to F. C Ogbalu, “the Igbos believe that they owe a great deal of responsibility to all with whom they are related.... Abdicating their moral obligation in favor of personal luxury is regarded as a crime when a person regarded as their responsibility lives in misery and squalor.”⁸⁰ The Igbo

⁷⁸ EDWARD FARLEY, “Ecclesial Contextual Thinking,” in Darren C Marks, (ed.), *Shaping a Theological Mind: Theological Context and Methodology*. (Ashgate Publishing Co., 2002), p 15.

⁷⁹ SWINTON & MOWAT, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, v.

⁸⁰ F. C. OGBALU, *Igbo Institutions and Customs*. (Onitsha, Nigeria: University Publicity Company, 1968), p 8.

concept of power and authority is structured and determined by the kindred system known as “*umunna*”. This kindred (*umunna*) is a very powerful structure that supersedes the power of the individual. It informs the popular Igbo saying “*umunna bu ike*” (power belongs to the kindred).⁸¹ Mutual assistance and cooperation are the rule of communal living among the Igbos and this is for the empowerment of the individual and the community. The Igbo people cherish cooperation very much because they know that no one can singlehandedly achieve much in isolation from fellow human beings. Thus, the ideal pattern of the Igbo way of life is that of existence-in-relation. “One of the principles of Igbo philosophy that brings this out is *Igwe bu ike*-togetherness, solidarity, or cooperation with others is strength.”⁸² This communal assistance and cooperation of the Igbos extends to every activity and so they share in one another’s sorrows and joys. Failure to participate in these communal activities without any cogent reason may result in disciplinary action, against that defaulting member, by the community. Francis Arinze described it thus: “...to exist is to live in the group, to see things with the group, to do things with the group. Life is not an individual venture each one for himself.”⁸³ This brings to mind the description of early Christians in Acts and Corinthians where they lived and did everything as with one heart and one mind. Every member of the Igbo community is obliged to cultivate an authentic spirit of solidarity. Individuals are not deprived of their rights nor excused from their duty in the community. The Igbo spirit of solidarity fosters the development of positive values in Igbo culture.

⁸¹ CHIKA J. UZOR, *Living between Two Worlds: Intrapersonal Conflicts Among Igbo Seminarians-An Inquiry*, (Bern, Germany: Peter Lang AG, European Academic Publishers, 2003), pp186-187.

⁸² MARTIN M. OKPALA, *The Igbo People and the Search for Security: A Moral Evaluation*, (Roma: Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis Academia Alfonsiana, 1985), p 33.

⁸³ FRANCIS A. ARINZE, *Sacrifice in Igbo Religion*, (Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1970), p 4.

1.4.2 Justice, Honesty, Hospitality and Generosity

Justice, honesty, hospitality and generosity are among the important Igbo cultural values. The principle of justice gives the people the freedom to pursue and enjoy the gifts of nature without discrimination and undue constraints. The Igbo symbol of justice is the *ofo* which represents innocence, honesty and transparency. The Igbos believe that one who holds the *ofo* is honest and transparent and acts with justice. When an Igbo person is convinced that he is executing justice they will always say *aji m ofo* (I am innocent, or I am acting with justice). It is the Igbo belief that one who is innocent and just will always be protected by the gods hence the Igbo saying “*Ilo na asi na egwu onunu, ofo na ogu ana ekpochi,*” (when the enemies are plotting your downfall, justice will be rendering it ineffective). Justice in Igbo culture requires that each person be given their due. Justice also means *egbe bere ugo bere* (let the kite perch and let the eagle perch or live and let live).

Hospitality and generosity are demonstrated by the attitude of one who succeeds in life. An Igbo person believes that success would not have been achieved without the help and support of the community. As a result, they do not hesitate to help and support others. A successful person wants others to succeed as well so that all will help in building the community.

However, contrary to the way of life described above, there are some Igbo cultural practices that conflict with the teachings of the Church as can be seen in the discussion below. These include, *Ichi Ozo* (title taking), *Ibu Ofo* (carrying of the *ofo*), *Iti Mmanwu* (masquerading), *Inu iyi* (oath taking) and other such practices.

1.4.3 Ichi Ozo

Ichi Ozo is a traditional institution with very significant social consequences in the Igbo society. “It is a religious *cum* social association into which men are initiated.”⁸⁴ It imparts a cultural symbol of prestige and respect on the holder. According to Edmund Ilogu, the holders of the *Ozo* title “belong to the nobleman’s rank—a social status marked out by the honour accorded to those holding that position. They also take precedence in all public entertainments and feasts irrespective of their age.”⁸⁵ The primary aim of the *Ozo* institution was to affirm the power alleged to come from the spirit world through ritual initiation. The problem is that this title is tied to one idol or another and that there are some traditional rituals to be performed in the shrines of these idols, with prescribed materials. Some Catholics who take this title perform these rituals clandestinely or send other people to go and carry out the sacrifice on their behalf. Writing about the *ozo* title, Gabriel Emeasoba postulates that “Catholics join either secretly or openly in this idol worship while in others, they give money for the procurement of materials for idol worship while pretending not to openly join in the worship.”⁸⁶ Performing these rituals by proxy suggests that these Catholics are aware that the practice is contrary to the Church’s teachings.

1.4.4 Ibu Ofo

Ibu Ofo is a practice in which the oldest male in the family, village or clan keeps the *Ofo* symbol and becomes its (*Ofo*) custodian on behalf of the family, village or clan. “*Ofo* is an object of religious symbolism loaded with spiritual power and authority, forming an assured medium of

⁸⁴ EDMUND ILOGU, *Christianity and Ibo Culture*, (Netherlands: Leiden E.J. Brill, 1974), p 32.

⁸⁵ ILOGU, *Christianity and Ibo Culture*, p 32.

⁸⁶ EMEASOBA, “The Dialogue of Faith and Culture in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi,” in *Catholic Diocese of Nnewi at Ten*, p 110.

communication with the spirit powers.”⁸⁷ The holder or custodian of *ofò* owes his authority to the fact that he is the representative and mouth piece of the “ancestors.”⁸⁸ It is a twig from a particular plant species known as *detarium elastica*⁸⁹ and is associated with the Igbo traditional religion. Nwoye Chinwe describes the *Ofo* as follows:

The *ofò* in Igbo land embodies various kinds of authority and sacredness. It is the general belief that the holder of the *ofò* could communicate with a variety of supernatural forces including various spirits, and the dead. In this way, he is perceived to act as an agent of social control since he could invoke punishment by supernatural forces on refractory lineage members.... Its most important aspect is its symbolism of ancestral authority, especially when it is formerly handed on to *Okpara* (first-born son) through the ‘Abamn’obi ceremony. The *ofò* is believed by the Igbo to have been set aside by *Chukwu* (God) as the symbol of truth.... The *ofò* is handed down from generation to generation, and thus becomes, for the Igbo, the embodiment of the spirits of the ancestors. Hence, Meek (1937: 105) describes it as the Igbo means of transmitting Holy Orders.⁹⁰

From this quote, it can be seen that the *ofò* is a symbol of authority which bestowed on the holder the right to represent both a living people and spirits, including the dead.

⁸⁷ GEORGE U. DINE, *Traditional Leadership as Service among the Igbo of Nigeria*, (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis, 1983), p 42.

⁸⁸ Ancestors are the last category of good spirits and Africans accord them much respect... their role is to transmit life from *Chukwu* (God) in an unbreakable current to their offspring and descendants.... It is characteristic of an ancestor to possess spiritual and bodily qualities such as superhuman powers and nearness to God. By virtue of this quality of nearness to God, the ancestor acts as a mediator between God and his/her earthly relatives. (Onwumere A Ikwuagwu, *Initiation in African Traditional Religion* Echter Verlag GmbH, Wurzburg, 2007), p 43.

⁸⁹ CHRISTOPHER, I. EJIZU, *Ofo: Igbo Ritual Symbol*, (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1978), p 23. (the *ofò* tree is known to the Nigerian forestry division as *Detarium Elastica*).

⁹⁰ CHINWE M. A NWOYE, “Igbo Cultural and Religious worldview: An Insider’s perspective” in *International journal of sociology and anthropology* vol.3(9), p 314-315, 21st Sept 2001. <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJS> (Accessed 22nd November 2013).

It is therefore the symbol of authority and the staff of office of the eldest male in the family or kindred; it is a symbol of the presence and authority of the ancestors.⁹¹ Afigbo views *Ofo* as the supreme ancestral symbol as well as the staff of traditional authority which symbolizes justice, truth and right living.⁹² According to Ikenga Metuh, “the *Ofo* is a cult symbol said to have been given to man by God himself for communicating with Him through the ancestors.”⁹³ The custodian of the *Ofo* becomes the medium of communication between the ancestors and the family, village or clan. Ejizu describes it as “the links between *Chukwu* (God) and man, the dead and the living, the living and the unborn.... It is the means of prayer to the gods; it is used for swearing in all grave cases...”⁹⁴ In the morning, after prayers of thanksgiving, petitions for blessings and protection from God, the custodian strikes the cultic symbol (the *Ofo*) on the ground and the people present will chorus “*IHIAA*” (*so be it*). The custodian of the family or village *Ofo* cannot bequeath the attendant social position to his son at death. The succession follows the principle of the oldest male in the family or village, as the case may be. When perchance the position of the oldest man in the village, family or clan, falls on a Catholic (the person who should carry the *Ofo*), it becomes a problem sometimes if the person refuses to take custody of the *Ofo*. In writing about this problem of *Ibu Ofo* Bishop Hilary Okeke says:

on account of its (*Ibu Ofo*) association with aspects of African Traditional Religion that are unacceptable to Christians, Christians are forbidden to take up the *Ofo* but are encouraged to respect the institutions and values inherent in the system.... If the oldest man is a Catholic, he may ask for

⁹¹ IKENGA METUH, *Comparative studies of African Traditional Religions* (Onitsha, Nigeria: IMICO Publishers, 1987), p 150.

⁹² ADIELE E. AFIGBO, *The Warrant Chiefs*, (London: Longman, 1972), p 7.

⁹³ AFIGBO, *The Warrant Chiefs*, p 150.

⁹⁴ CHRISTOPHER I. EJIZU, *Ofo: Igbo Ritual Symbol*, pp 25-26.

Christian symbols, such as the Crucifix or Bible to be his mark of authority and position.⁹⁵

The bishop's position has not solved the problem because some members of the lay faithful still insist that the person must have the *ofo* since the bible or the crucifix is not our cultural Igbo symbol. It also suggests that tensions remain between traditional religious practices and Catholic identity.

1.4.5 Iti Mmanwu

Apart from the *Ozo* title taking and *Ibu Ofo*, *Iti Mmanwu* (masquerading) is also an aspect of the culture that runs contrary to the teachings of the Church. The masquerade is culturally regarded as a spirit. Masquerading is a cult into which male adults in the community are initiated; this is done through a pagan ritual in a nocturnal ceremony in which an oath of secrecy is administered to the initiates. The initiation, which is called *Ima Mmuo*, is performed before one or two masquerades. The non-initiates, who are called *Ogbodu*, cannot move about freely when the masquerade is being displayed during festivals or funerals. In order to identify with their peers and also to enjoy that societal identity which the initiation offers, Christian youth and adults opt to be initiated into this masquerade cult. This practice is contrary to the tenets of Christianity which describes such a practice as believing in other gods, and initiates to the masquerade cult are denied Holy Communion in the Church for being involved in idolatry. Some youth indulge in a secret or clandestine initiation into the cult because of it.

1.4.6 Inu Iyi

The practice of *Inu Iyi* is another aspect of the cultural tradition that runs contrary to the tenets of Christianity. This practice involves swearing on a fetish or a deity as a last resort for

⁹⁵ HILARY OKEKE, *Faith Rooted and Built up in Christ: Pastoral Letter to the People of God in Nnewi Diocese*, (CathCom Press Nnewi, 2011), # 124.

settlement whenever two or more people disagree over a matter.⁹⁶ It is a means of adjudicating between two contending parties. One swears an oath to justify one's claim to property, which is rightly his/her own, and which someone else is claiming falsely. Furthermore, if one is accused of any offence, the accused may be compelled to swear at the deity's shrine to prove one's innocence. It is believed that if one is guilty and still goes ahead to swear, such a person will die within a specified period. Christians who do not want to swear on this fetish or the shrine of the deity are forced to do so unwillingly. Some fear being ostracized from the community for failing to swear and thus go ahead and comply with the swearing. Some who refuse to swear are ostracized even by their fellow Christians who claim that it is our tradition and that this tradition should be upheld.

These cultural issues have posed significant challenges to an authentic living of the Christian faith. The Christian faithful are forced to follow a double standard or to be involved in dual religious practices. According to Emeasoba, "through thorough catechesis, many of the faithful (of Nnewi diocese) have received the Gospel wholeheartedly while at the same time participating in the cultural life of their communities in a way that does not contradict the faith."⁹⁷ In order to appreciate the tensions experienced by the Nnewi people, it is helpful to look at some other religious rituals practised before the arrival of the missionaries.

1.5 Religion Before the Coming of the Early Missionaries

Religion has deep roots in the life of the Igbo people. Before the advent of Christianity, the Nnewi people practised the traditional Igbo religion. They believed in one God, and in many

⁹⁶ JOHN O. ALUTU, *Nnewi History (From the Earliest Time to 1980/82) Third Edition*, (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1986), P 390.

⁹⁷ EMEASOBA, "Behold, Nnewi Diocese is 10," <http://www.frgab.blogspot.it/2012/02/behold-nnewi-diocese-is-10-god-has-been.html> (Accessed 26th January 2016).

deities, ancestors and evil spirits. This helped them to accept the Christian religion quickly because the tenets were similar to what they were practising. According to Metuh and Ejizu, “many converts accepted the Christian belief in one God, many angels, saints and devils because paralleled beliefs in one God, many deities, *Alusi*, evil spirits and ancestors existed in Traditional Religion.”⁹⁸ Nnewi people believed and many still believe that these deities exist and are very powerful. Some still believe that they have the power to bring fortune or misfortune and to inflict penalties for breaking their taboos.

It is not uncommon to find a few Christian converts who sometimes relapse into traditional religion as a result of one problem or another. In a time of difficulty and crisis, many Christians secretly consult these deities and offer sacrifices to appease them. Many Igbo people want an instant answer to their prayers in moments of crisis, and invoke traditional religion to attain it, for example, in sickness, childlessness, death, etc. Many times, it seems that the laity patronize the diviners, and witch doctors, along with the pastors even of other Christian denominations whom they see as powerful, in such moments of crisis and difficulty. I will say that I believe this practice is prevalent to all the Igbo people including those in Nnewi. This will help us to understand Geoffrey Parrinder’s experience when he says: “I have seen a dozen or twenty separate pots and shrines at the house of a pious layman.”⁹⁹ Parrinder’s experience confirms that the Igbo people have always been tied to the traditional culture, even when they were Christians. However, the particular practice that Parrinder describes is not common now since no Christian would likely display such objects openly even if the person indulges in the practice secretly.

⁹⁸ METUH & EJIZU, *Hundred Years of Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria*, p 182.

⁹⁹ GEOFFREY PARRINDER, *West African Religion: A Study of the Beliefs and Practices of Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Ibo, and Kindred Peoples*, (Great Britain: Redwood Burn Limited, 1975), p 61.

The religious leader in the traditional Igbo religion serves as a link between the people and the spiritual world (God, spirits and invisible things). The Igbo people consider the religious leader as wise, intelligent and talented, a person who has outstanding qualities and so should be accorded unmitigated respect and obedience. It appears that some members of the clergy try to assume the Igbo model of religious authority, seeing themselves as absolute rulers and the laity as subjects who have no right to share authority with them. Apparently, they do not see the need for the contribution or collaboration of the laity. Also, they apparently do not want their authority to be questioned in any way.

Prior to the arrival of the missionaries, the traditional Nnewi person was an African Traditional Religionist, who practised the ancestral cult which is the core of Igbo traditional religion. However, now the majority have been converted to Christianity. "An ancestor is a departed spirit who stands in particular close relation with a tribe or family."¹⁰⁰ It is indeed through the worship of God and the veneration of the ancestors that the people show solidarity with the spiritual world; this is also where they see the link between their religion and their life. For most Nnewi people, the dead are the invisible members of the family and they still influence the activities of the living from the spirit world. These ancestors are known as the living-dead. These living-dead members constitute the ancestral world of the family. The memories of these dead members are recalled and invited to participate in whatever ceremony is being performed. This is expressed in prayers said on such occasions. A libation is poured to them as a sign of their participation in such celebrations and activities. Sacrifices are offered to the ancestors to honour them and to ask for blessings and protection. As Lawrence Madubuko states: "the Igbo worldview is a two-tier world of visible and invisible. These worlds are not mutually exclusive,

¹⁰⁰ UKA M. EMELE (ed.), *Readings in African Traditional Religion: Structure, Meaning, Relevance, Future*, (Bern, Peter Lang Inc. 1991), p 46.

but overlap. Beings in the two worlds interact.”¹⁰¹ Uka’s perspective is similar to that of Mmadubuko’s. He (Uka) writes that “the world of men¹⁰² and the unseen world of the spirits maintain something like a symbiotic relationship which however requires people to serve as the link between their fellow men on the one hand and God, spirits and divinities on the other.”¹⁰³ The ancestors fulfill the function of linking the living with God and the divinities. Chika Uzor describes the functions of the ancestors as follows:

The ancestors are good ‘spirits’, well-disposed and caring for the welfare of their descendants. As ‘living-dead’ they have enhanced powers and influence. Since they are part of their human families, they know the needs of their people and at the same time have full access to the channels of communicating directly with *Chukwu* and the deities. Being closer to the Supreme Being and the deities, they act as intermediaries between these other spiritual beings and their families. In virtue of their new status they have better knowledge of the goings-on in the spirit world. From this vantage point, they can constantly warn their families and *umunna* of an impending catastrophe and advise them in how best to attract the most favorable fortunes.¹⁰⁴

One can see that the ancestors play a significant role in Igbo traditional religion and the life of the community. This resonates in ways with the Catholic understanding of the communion of the saints and has some parallels with the understanding of God’s sacramental presence in the world.

¹⁰¹ LAWRENCE MADUBUKO, “Igbo World-view” in *Bigard Theological Studies*, Vol. 14 No.2 (July-December 1994), P 7.

¹⁰² The exclusive language in the quotes in this work has been preserved despite its archaism.

¹⁰³ UKA M. EMELE (ed.), *Readings in African Traditional Religion: Structure, Meaning, Relevance, Future*, p 48.

¹⁰⁴ CHIKA UZOR, *Living between Two Worlds: Intrapersonal Conflicts Among Igbo Seminarians-An Inquiry*, (Bern, Germany: Peter Lang AG, European Academic Publishers, 2003), p 213.

Ejizu and Metuh attest that Igbo traditional religion is a very liberal religion that allows its adherents to adopt other religious beliefs and practices in addition to their own. As evidence of this, many places where Christian missions are located today in Nnewi town were given to them by the adherents of the traditional religion. As Ikenga Metuh reports:

Many plots of land donated to the Christian missions were formerly properties of some of the deities. For example, *Okwuani* (housing the present Nnewi diocesan secretariat, bishops house, the cathedral, the diocesan bank, the Catholic press the CWO secretariat, Maria Regina comprehensive high school, Immaculate Heart primary and secondary schools Mater Misericordiae Hospital) belonged to *Ani* (earth deity), [hence the name *Okwu ani*]. *Akwu udo* belonged to deity udo; *akwu nweke* belonged to deity *nweke*.¹⁰⁵

In addition to these positive and charitable dispositions of the traditional religionists in Nnewi, with the advent of Christianity, there has also been “a suppression of inhuman practices of the traditional beliefs such as the killing of twins, the *osu* caste system, slavery, and disposing of a child that develops the upper tooth first.”¹⁰⁶

Along with the civil war, the advent of Christianity had a great impact on some of these cultural practices, which as a result, have either been radically changed or have almost fallen into oblivion in favour of Christian practices.

1.5.1 Effect of the Civil War on Igbo Traditional Religion and Cultural Values

The civil war of 1967-1970 between Nigeria and Biafra (the latter comprising mainly the Igboland) ravaged and destabilized the traditional religion and some of the cultural values to the advantage of Christianity. The response of the Church during the civil war with its care of those

¹⁰⁵ METUH & EJIZU, *Hundred Years of Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria*, p181.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.182

wounded and marginalized, drew people to the faith so that often it replaced the traditional religion. Ikenga Metuh describes the situation as follows: “the ravages of the civil war further destabilized the traditional society and traditional religion; while the wide-scale relief and charitable works organized by the Church during the civil war endeared her to the people and brought many people into her fold.”¹⁰⁷

The Church continued its influence on the traditional culture. In a bid to dissuade her members from taking the *Ozo* title, the Church does the initiation ceremony and also gives awards to some deserving members in place of the titles given to individuals in the traditional ritual. Awards include knighthood, whereby some members of the Church are conferred with the honour of Knight of St John or St Sylvester or another saint. Some are also given an award as pillars or patrons of one Church organization or another, such as “pillar or patron” of the Catholic Men’s or Catholic Women’s organization and so forth.

Having looked at certain aspects of the socio-cultural background of the diocese, one can quickly discover that this background has had some influence on the attitude of both the clergy and the laity. There is the challenge of “superficial adherence to the word of Christ.”¹⁰⁸ Additionally, there is the ‘authority wielding’ character of the clergy that could have been inherited from the local culture. Furthermore, the passive and docile character of the laity may have been informed by the social structure that demands unmitigated obedience and submission to the religious leader. The clergy also apparently see nothing wrong in being autocratic and dictatorial just like the deity priests of the traditional religion. It also appears that the clergy see themselves as the titled/initiated who have the right to dictate while the laity seemingly see

¹⁰⁷ METUH & EJIZU, *Hundred Years of Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria*, p 179.

¹⁰⁸ OKEKE, *Upon No Other Foundation*, P 33.

themselves as the non-titled/non-initiated who must obey whatever directions the clergy give them.

The question that this Doctor of Ministry research explores is the practice of clergy-laity collaboration for the enhancement of the mission of the Church in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi. The first question is to determine whether the current practice is in conformity with the mission of the Church as described by Vatican II which states that “the distinction between the sacred ministers and the rest of the people of God involves union, for the pastors and the other faithful are joined together by a close relationship...the latter should collaborate with the pastors in the mission of the church.”¹⁰⁹

Vatican II stresses that the relationship between the clergy and the laity must reflect that of the early Church. This was the case for the first converts in Nnewi; they were in the minority, but the way that they collaborated in carrying out their Christian activities in the town endeared them to the people and won them great respect. Writing about the early converts of Nnewi, Metuh reports that,

Although the Christian population in Nnewi was still in the minority, their impact in the society had become very noticeable in general scheme of things in the town. The Christians were recognized and respected by the rest of the community as a distinct group. Among themselves, a tremendous spirit of community and collaboration had developed. Particularly in such things as funeral and public celebrations, the different stations in the town converged to share in one another's joys and sorrows. This moral boosting practice ...endeared the group to other members of the society.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 32

¹¹⁰ METUH & EJIZU, *Hundred Years of Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria*, p 98.

One can see that in spite of the small number of Christians during the early missionary era, Christians had a positive impact on the society because of their practice of collaboration. Today one might be tempted to ask why Christians seem not to have the same impact on the society given that they are now in the majority. Bishop Hilary Okeke's view is that "the combination of improper evangelization and inadequate catechesis produced Christians who did not understand the import of their faith and the demands it makes of them in their daily lives."¹¹¹ While we agree that improper evangelization and inadequate catechesis are responsible for the poor understanding of rights and duties, the class distinction between the clergy and the laity also seems to be a contributing factor. Measures that strengthen the relationship between priests and parishioners would help bridge the gap between the two, opening up more opportunities for genuine collaboration.

Conclusion

The aim of this Chapter is to describe the diocese of Nnewi and the environment in which the clergy and the laity find themselves, as well as the cultural practices they follow. Some of the practices described have changed while many others have not. Some of the traditional practices still exist side by side with Christian practices. This Chapter shed some light on two of Osmer's methodological questions, namely, "what is going on" as well as "why it is going on". As we noted, clergy-laity collaboration seems not to be adequately practiced in Nnewi diocese, and the reason for this appears to have many cultural, historical, and social roots.

It will be of vital importance for this thesis at this point to examine the distinction between the clergy and the laity as it is described by the Church. This will be discussed in the next Chapter

¹¹¹ HILARY OKEKE, *Upon No Other Foundation*, pp 35-36.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Clergy–Laity Distinction in the Church

In the previous chapter, we discussed the history of Nnewi diocese, the arrival of the early missionaries and the people who collaborated with them, and the present structure of the diocese. We also described the role of the clergy and the laity of the diocese and relevant aspects of the socio-cultural background of the diocese together with the challenges posed to the spread of the gospel by some of these cultural practices. Before we examine the implications of the relationship between the clergy and the laity for the mission of the Church, it is important to recognize the current distinction in the roles. Therefore, this chapter sets out to describe the current clergy/laity distinction in the Church. (The Church that I am referring to is the Roman Catholic Church and not other Christian Churches).

In recent times, a lot has been discussed regarding the clergy-laity distinction in the Church. Many people have seen this distinction as a characteristic which the Church borrowed from the civil society. These people argue that this distinction diminishes the status of the laity and deifies the clergy. They argue further that the clergy-laity distinction did not exist in the original Church structure since Christ did not leave any administrative blueprint.¹¹²

This chapter begins with the definition of the terms laity and clergy and identifies who belongs to each group. It will also look at the formation of the members of each group and their

¹¹² OKERE THEOPHILUS, “Church Organization as a Root Cause of Anti-Clericalism” in *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation* ed. Obinwa Ignatius (Nigeria: Africana First Publishers Ltd, 2006), p 94 “Our problem may have begun with the introduction of political power in the structure and running of the Christian Church. Political power was early put in the place of spiritual power which in itself would need neither structures nor hierarchies or at least such as we have learned to know them and borrow them from the princes of this world. There was no administrative blueprint left by Jesus for what was clearly intended as a church in the sense of a spiritual community leading a spiritual movement in the world.”

various roles. The history of clergy/laity distinction in the Church will be traced before examining the theological foundations of clergy/laity collaboration in the Church.

2.1 Definition

2.1.1 Clergy

“The term ‘clergy’ refers to “persons who are ordained and who are ordinarily called to full-time (recently also part-time or non-stipendiary) service to carry out the preaching office. Etymologically, ‘clergy’ is derived from the Greek *kleros*, meaning ‘lot’ or ‘inheritance’, possibly a reference to the tribe of Levi having the Lord as their lot (Deut 18:2).”¹¹³ “Since the 2nd century, the word cleric has been the common name applied to those who, according to St. Jerome, ‘belong to that body of men who are the portion of God and at the same time have God as their lot.’”¹¹⁴ “The clergy does not belong to the class that is distinct from the congregation, but performs a particular service within the universal priesthood: the public proclamation of the Word of God and the administration of the sacraments as commissioned...Thus, the clergy and the general priesthood are not in competition with each other...”¹¹⁵ This quote affirms that though ministerial priests hold a different office, they are not different from the rest of the members of the Church but, like every other member, they contribute their quota for the growth of the Church; they are complementary to rather than in competition with the rest of the Church.

According to Kenan Osborne “*kleros* translates the Hebrew word *goral*, which is translated into English as ‘lot’ ... The Greek word *kleros* also means both dice and a space, such

¹¹³ HANS DIETER BETZ, DON S. BROWNING, BERND JANOWSKI, EBERHARD JUNGEL (eds.), *Religion Past and Present, Encyclopedia of Theology Vol.3*. (Leiden, Boston: Koninklijke Brill 2007). p236. (See also New Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. 3. John P Whalen (Censor Deputatus). New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p 948.

¹¹⁴ JOHN P. WHALEN M.A., S.T.D. (Censor Deputatus). *New Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. 3* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p 948.

¹¹⁵ HANS DIETER BETZ, DON S. BROWNING, BERND JANOWSKI, EBERHARD JUNGEL (eds.), pp 237-8.

as a lot.”¹¹⁶ Martyn Percy, for his part, writes that the term clergy “derives from clerk, referring to a (functional) person of learning and duty.”¹¹⁷ From what is seen so far, the word clergy describes a class of individuals that perform specific functions. This function is not performed in isolation but within a group or community. In the following section, we will look at the functions/roles carried out by the clergy.

2.1.2 Duties and Roles of the Clergy

The roles and duties of the clergy arise from their vocation as leaders of the Christian community. According to Vatican II, “Priests by sacred ordination... are promoted to the service of Christ the Teacher, Priest and King. They share in his ministry, a ministry whereby the Church here on earth is unceasingly built up into the people of God, the body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹⁸ Priests will be powerless to serve the people of God if they remain aloof from their life and circumstances.¹¹⁹ The roles and duties of the clergy, therefore, include directing the people of God in matters of faith, sharing the Word of God with them, celebrating the Eucharist, and administering the sacraments of reconciliation, initiation, marriage and anointing the sick. This means that the clergy “preside over the community’s prayer and worship in order that the community’s worship might unify the community as one body.”¹²⁰ The clergy also have the duty of “promoting the kind of active apostolate which is common to the whole Church....”¹²¹ The priest should make himself available to the lay faithful and must always be ready and open to listen to them. “The ministerial priest, by the sacred power that he has, forms

¹¹⁶ KENAN B. OSBORNE, *Ministry: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church. Its History and Theology*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), p 11.

¹¹⁷ MARTYN PERCY, *Clergy: The Origin of Species*, (New York: continuum International Publishing Co. 2006), p 54.

¹¹⁸ VATICAN II, *Decree on the ministry and life of priests Presbyterorum Ordinis*, # 1.

¹¹⁹ VATICAN II, *Decree on the ministry and life of priests Presbyterorum Ordinis*, # 3.

¹²⁰ KATHLEEN A. CAHALAN, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010), p 58.

¹²¹ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 23.

and rules the priestly people; in the person of Christ he effects the Eucharistic sacrifice and offers it to God in the name of all the people.”¹²²

Priests nourish the community spiritually by preaching the word of God to it. “Ministers, invested with a sacred power, are at the service of their brothers and sisters, so that all who belong to the people of God and therefore enjoy true Christian dignity may attain salvation through their free combined and well-ordered efforts in pursuit of a common goal.”¹²³ Priests are “to recognize and promote the dignity and responsibility of the laity in the Church and use their prudent advice and confidently assign offices to them in the service of the Church, leaving them freedom and scope for activity.”¹²⁴ Vatican II reminds the clergy that the mission of the Church is not left in the hands of the clergy alone but that it is the duty of all the faithful.

The pastors indeed know well how much the laity contributes to the welfare of the whole Church. For they know that they themselves were not established by Christ to undertake alone the whole salvific mission of the Church, but that it is their exalted office so to be shepherds of the faithful and also recognize the latter’s contributions and charisms that everyone in his own way will, with one mind, cooperate in the common task.¹²⁵

Recognizing the contributions and charisms of lay people will not only enhance the common task but also make every member feel that she belongs to the Church. Also, it will motivate every member to cooperate in whatever undertakings the Church embarks on. An example from Acts of the Apostles describes the selection of the seven deacons where both the apostles and all of the disciples were involved in the selection. (Acts 6:1-

¹²² VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 10.

¹²³ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 18.

¹²⁴ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 37.

¹²⁵ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 30.

6). Leading the people is one of the duties of the clergy, but ruling or commanding is not.

Peter Okuma echoes the teaching of Vatican II:

The hierarchy is not set up to take upon itself the entire salvific mission of the Church in the world; its role is rather to lead the faithful... so that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common understanding with one mind... Thus, in their diversity all bear witness to the wonderful unity in the body of Christ as people of God.¹²⁶

The role of the clergy is, therefore, to lead and make the faithful aware that while they have different roles to play in the mission of the Church, they have equal dignity. St Augustine of Hippo was very much conscious of this role. While addressing the members of the Church, St. Augustine told them: “When I am frightened by what I am to you, then I am consoled by what I am with you. To you I am the bishop, with you, I am a Christian. The first is an office, the second a grace; the first danger, the second salvation.”¹²⁷ St. Augustine reminds us that all members of the Church are Christians whether they are clergy or laity though they have different functions. Theophilus Okere argues that, in the Church, “we can and we should try to let egalitarianism supersede or at least modify the imported and unchristian feudal spirit that gave us the obsequious “My Lords” and “Monseigneurs” in Church structures and attitudes and more significantly, the arrogance and insolence of office.”¹²⁸ Okere’s perception needs to be taken seriously since it could be one of the reasons why some members of the clergy

¹²⁶ PETER C. OKUMA, *Towards an African Theology: The Igbo context in Nigeria*, (Brussels: Peter-Lang, 2002), pp 111-112. (quoting Hans Heimerl)

¹²⁷ AUGUSTINE AURELIUS SANCTUS, *Sermons 354-430*, ed. John E. Rotille. Translated by Edmund Hill, (New York: New City Press, 1990-1997), p292.

¹²⁸ THEOPHILUS OKERE, “Church organization as the root cause of anti-clericalism” in *Collaborative ministry in the context of inculturation*, Ignatius Obinwa (ed.), (Onitsha: Africana First Publishers, 2006), p 99.

exhibit much power and authority and the laity see themselves as mere servants in the Church.

Okere notes that collaborative ministry “represents an effort to remodeling the overly hierarchical mentality that is proving an obstacle to the work of the Church. (But) for one thing, people are too shy to criticize, much less to demystify or demythologize hierarchy.”¹²⁹ Okere asserts that a hierarchical mentality “has led to sycophancy as people vie unduly for favours from the exalted ones.”¹³⁰ He further submits that this mindset “induces in the people a dependency syndrome as they flatter and bribe and fawn their way in desperate, shameless obsequiousness towards the seat of power and favour.”¹³¹ It appears that the laity adds to the problem by trying to curry favour with the clergy. Apparently, “it has corrupted otherwise good priests with authority and arrogance leading them to wield power like ‘kings of Gentiles’ and to treat the people of God not as fellow pilgrim Christians but as underlings.”¹³² The priests that fit into the category that Okere describes fall short in carrying out the duties and proper roles of the clergy.

We must also acknowledge that human beings are imperfect. They are simply not experts in all things. Some priests have limited managerial ability and experience, and specialization and mutually beneficial relationships are paramount for achieving progress in every endeavour, including the mission of the Church. It is also important for the clergy to note that they are not alone in being responsible for the mission of the Church since the laity are also responsible. Priests, therefore, have to recognize the role of the laity in the mission of the Church. In a letter

¹²⁹ THEOPHILUS OKERE, “Church organization as the root cause of anti-clericalism” in *Collaborative ministry in the context of inculturation*, Ignatius Obinwa (ed.), p 100.

¹³⁰ THEOPHILUS OKERE, “Church organization as the root cause of anti-clericalism” in *Collaborative ministry in the context of inculturation*, Ignatius Obinwa (ed.), p 100.

¹³¹ THEOPHILUS OKERE, “Church organization as the root cause of anti-clericalism” in *Collaborative ministry in the context of inculturation*, Ignatius Obinwa (ed.), p 100.

¹³² THEOPHILUS OKERE, “Church organization as the root cause of anti-clericalism” in *Collaborative ministry in the context of inculturation*, Ignatius Obinwa (ed.), p 100.

to Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Pope Francis pointed out that pastors are not conceding anything to the laity by recognizing their role and potential in bringing the Gospel to the world; the laity are just as much members of the ‘holy, faithful people of God’ as the clergy.¹³³ Pope Francis goes on to say that it is “even impossible to think that we, as pastors, should have a monopoly on the solutions for the multiple challenges that contemporary life presents.”¹³⁴ The Pope is making a clear statement that neither the clergy nor the laity has the sole task of tackling the problems of society but that both must work together.

From what we have seen so far, the roles and duties of the clergy include: proclaiming the word of God, administering the sacraments, and ordering the life of the community. The clergy cannot perform these roles and duties well without proper formation. Let us now examine how the formation of the clergy prepares them to carry out these functions.

2.1.3 Formation of the Clergy

2.1.3.1 The Family

The family is the foundation of human society. It is the smallest unit in the social structure of every society. One cannot talk about the formation of priests without first considering the family because priests are ordinary human beings who come from families, “whose faith, charity and piety make them the first seed-bed of vocations.”¹³⁵ The family is, therefore, the foundation of the Church and the principal place for formation in faith and life.

¹³³ POPE FRANCIS, “letter to Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops and president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America,” (Catholic Herald).
<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2016/04/27/pastors-and-laity-should-stand-together-for-justice-says-pope-francis/> (Accessed on May 11th, 2016).

¹³⁴ POPE FRANCIS, letter to Cardinal Marc Ouellet.

¹³⁵ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Training of Priests Optatam Totius*, # 2.

Vatican II calls the family the “domestic church;”¹³⁶ since it is usually in the family that one first learns about God. Pope Francis remarks that “the faith we have received is a gift that came to us, in many cases, from our mothers and grandmothers. They were the living memory of Jesus Christ within our homes. It was in the silence of family life that most of us learned to pray, to love and to live the faith.”¹³⁷ This shows how important the family can be in the formation of faith.

The term family comes from the Latin word *familia* which in turn translates to members of a household. Black’s Law Dictionary defines the family as “a group consisting of parents and their children—also termed immediate family.”¹³⁸ It describes “a varied network of relationships between parents, children and other persons in a social system. In ethically shaped small-scale societies, family groups are bearers of religious rituals and centres of religious community.”¹³⁹ The family is a nursery where child formation takes its primary root; it is the starting point for every individual. According to Brenda Almond, the family “is, and always has been, the foundation of communities in which the cherishing of each individual person can flourish, and perhaps the only one that can survive social change; preserving the shape and structure of civil society...”¹⁴⁰ The family shapes the society and is as well shaped by the society and culture. The family provides the greater part of the formation which the individual needs for life. For Peschke, “the family provides the necessary and early formation of a child so that the child may

¹³⁶ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 2.

¹³⁷ POPE FRANCIS, letter to Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops and president of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America. (Catholic Herald). <http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2016/04/27/pastors-and-laity-should-stand-together-for-justice-says-pope-francis/> (Accessed May 11th 2016).

¹³⁸ BRYAN A. GARNER (ed.), *Black’s Law Dictionary Seventh Edition*. (Minnesota: West Publishing Co. 1999), P 620. Also, Fourth Pocket Edition, 2006), p 302.

¹³⁹ HANS DIETER BETZ et. al. (eds.), *Religion Past & Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion* Vol. V (Leiden, Boston: Koninklijke Brill, 2009), p 44.

¹⁴⁰ BREDA ALMOND, *The Fragmenting Family*, Kindle Edition Oxford: Clarendon Press 2003 Loc. 81- 89.

achieve a balanced personality.”¹⁴¹ “It is within the family that children learn the art of community living... They also develop their intelligence, conscience, ability for hard work, respect and so on.”¹⁴² According to Kudirat B. Sanni et.al., “families are the strongest socializing forces of life. They teach children to eschew unacceptable behaviour, to delay gratification and to respect the right of others. Conversely, families can teach children aggressive, anti-social, and violent behaviours.”¹⁴³

Formation of a child which generally starts at home is formalized at school and continues during the individual's experience after school. Overall, the family has a significant influence on society. “The children learn to speak by listening to their parents and talking with them; they acquire their moral values and standard of conduct by observing their parents.”¹⁴⁴ The training or formation one receives in the family is manifested in the behaviour that one exhibits in society and reveals the kind of household one comes from. The family is, therefore, the first place to learn and what is learnt is only meaningful to the extent that it helps the society. The family enables the children to function as valuable members of the society into which they were born.¹⁴⁵ The children first learn from the family what kind of behaviour will be rewarded, punished or ignored. The family “is still the most important institution for the socialization and education of children, including in sophisticated societies.”¹⁴⁶ Those persons who make up the clergy and the laity come from the same social foundation – the family. We shall not forget, however, that

¹⁴¹ CARL H. PESCHKE S.V.D, *Christian Ethics* Vol. 2, (Dublin: Goodliffe Neale, 1978), p 243.

¹⁴² ALVIS OJORE & HELLEN OTIENO, *Collaborative Ministry in the Family*, (Nairobi: Pauline Press, 2001), p 65.

¹⁴³ KUDIRAT B. SANNI, et al., “Family Types and Juvenile Delinquency Issues among Secondary School Students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria: Counseling Implications,” <http://www.krepublishers.com/02-Journals/JSS/JSS-23-0-000-10-Web/JSS-23-1-000-10-Abst-PDF/JSS-23-1-021-10-954-Sanni-K-B/JSS-23-1-021-10-954-Sanni-K-B-Tt.pdf> (Accessed on September 6th, 2016).

¹⁴⁴ ROBERT WERNICK, *The Family*, (New York: Time-Life Books, 1974), p 14.

¹⁴⁵ WERNICK, *The Family*, p 12.

¹⁴⁶ HANS DIETER BETZ et. al. (eds.), *Religion Past & Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion* Vol. V (Leiden, Boston: Koninklijke Brill, 2009), p 48.

families are made up of human beings who also have limitations as well as positive potential and that there are many dysfunctional families in society. People come from backgrounds that are characterized by both burdens and gifts as a result of the changes in family structure. Authors Kudirat B. Sanni et.al. noted that:

during the past century, significant changes in family arrangements have occurred, modern family structures vary widely. Its form is diversifying with, for example, the increase in one-parent families and non-marital unions as well as extended family arrangements. Differing family structures may directly impact on the stability of the family, home and the functioning of children.¹⁴⁷

The children from these varied family backgrounds ultimately make up the members of the clergy and the laity.

It is clear that parents are most often the first and primary teachers of children and so they ultimately play a fundamental role in the formation of both the clergy and the laity. Vatican II teaches that

it rests with the parents to prepare their children from an early age, within the family circle, to discern God's love for all men and women; they will teach them little by little, and above all by their example, to have concern for their neighbour's needs both material and spiritual... Children must be trained, besides, to go beyond the confines of the family and take an interest in both ecclesial and temporal communities.¹⁴⁸

The family unit may either develop or harm the society and the Church depending on the type of formation it offers to the child. In my experience, it is the early formation I received in

¹⁴⁷ KUDIRAT B. SANI, et al., "Family Types and Juvenile Delinquency Issues among Secondary School Students in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria".

¹⁴⁸ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, #30.

my family that implanted in me such virtues as faith, love, honesty, respect, hard work, etc. However, every family is different, and people from other families may have had different experiences. My point is that the well-being of the family affects the welfare of the Church. Since both the clergy and the laity come from families, they can also try to support and heal dysfunctional families. A healthy family formation can bring about a healthier clergy and laity. Parents stand as witnesses and cooperators of the fruitfulness of Mother Church.¹⁴⁹ In other words, the family plays an indispensable role in the formation of the Christian laity.

In the family, the father, mother and children all work together for the good of the family. The parents have their responsibilities, and the children have theirs. It is in the family, therefore, that the child experiences collaboration for the first time. A person who has a vocation to the priesthood enters the seminary to continue the formation already begun in the family. Let us look briefly at seminary formation.

2.1.3.2 Seminary Formation

The seminary is an appropriate place to learn how “to answer the pastoral requirements of a particular area where the ministry is to be exercised.”¹⁵⁰ The seminary formation builds on the foundation which the family has started, as I have noted above. As a house of formation for candidates for the priesthood, the seminary has a major role to play in the continuation of faith formation. This is because what is taught in the seminary should reflect the way of life of the people among whom the seminarians will work. The priests-to-be are best formed following the

¹⁴⁹ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 41. “Christian married couples and parents, following their own way, should support one another in grace all through their life with faithful love, and should train their children in Christian doctrine and evangelical virtues. Because in this way they present to all an example of unflinching and generous love, they build up the brotherhood of charity, and they stand as witnesses and co-operators of the fruitfulness of the mother Church, as a sign of, and a share in that love which Christ loved his bride and gave himself to her.”

¹⁵⁰ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Training of Priests Optatam Totius*, #1

example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd.¹⁵¹ The seminarians should be prepared for the pastoral ministry in such a way as to learn how to represent Christ to the people—Christ who came not to be served, but to serve. Vatican II made it clear that priests should realize that “they are not destined for a life of power and honours, but are destined to be totally dedicated to the service of God and pastoral ministry.”¹⁵² The seminarians need to be formed in such a way that they “learn to use their freedom wisely, act energetically on their own initiative and work harmoniously with colleagues and the laity.”¹⁵³ They are to cultivate the gifts which are most conducive for dialogue with people, such as the ability to listen to others and to inspire and encourage apostolic activity among the laity.¹⁵⁴ If these characteristics are central to the formation goals of the seminary, they will be more easily practised when one eventually becomes a priest.

However, it could be said that the nature of seminary formation in Igboland does not always positively influence the seminarians’ actions and the extent of their collaboration with the laity in the parishes when these seminarians become priests. It might also be that the candidates in formation are not always given the freedom to make suggestions based on their apostolic work experience. This experience should be shared when the seminarians come back to the seminary after apostolic work so that other seminarians can learn from their experiences. Furthermore, if the formation house (seminary) exhibits an authoritarian system, the seminarians may not be open to narrate their experience for fear that they might be expelled. Clement Onwunata writes that

¹⁵¹ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Training of Priests Optatam Totius*, # 4.

¹⁵² VATICAN II, *Decree on the Training of Priests Optatam Totius*, # 9.

¹⁵³ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Training of Priests Optatam Totius*, # 11.

¹⁵⁴ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Training of Priests Optatam Totius*, # 19.

(Collaboration is not possible) where seminarians are brought up under threatening and unhealthy atmosphere, situations where their rights are not guaranteed, and they study under tension and intimidation that make them consciously or unconsciously imbibe these principles as they bear them patiently until they are finally ordained. Then, after their ordination and having been posted to work in a parish, they begin to implement them by practising their acquired authoritarian power with those placed under them like the laity and even their fellow priests. How would one collaborate with those he looks down on?¹⁵⁵

From Onwunata's perspective, it appears that the type of formation that the seminarians received may foster the ordination of priests who are authoritarian and very poor at collaboration. In describing the laity as 'those placed under the priest', even Onwunata inadvertently reinforces the very practices he is criticizing. This demonstrates how entrenched the lack of collaboration is in seminary formation. The proper duties and roles of priests, particularly in respect to the relationship with the laity, need to be clearly apparent to priests in training. If this is not done, the laity will remain at the beck and call of the priest, and the formation will be counterproductive in achieving collaboration between priests and laity. Commenting on the mode of seminary formation in Igboland, Chika Uzor laments that "instead of being taught how to serve his community the seminarian learns how to be a distinguished dignitary reminiscent of the pre-Vatican II priestly identity in Europe or a medieval lord."¹⁵⁶ The priests teaching in the seminary must demonstrate collaboration through their relationship with seminarians in formation; this will have more impact on the seminarians than theorizing.

¹⁵⁵ CLEMENT O.G. ONWUNATA, *Towards an Inculturated African Communal Model of Ecclesia: Clergy-Laity Collaborative Ministry in Igboland of Southern Nigeria*, (Montreal: University of Montreal, 2007), p 108.

¹⁵⁶ CHIKA UZOR, *Living between Two Worlds: Intrapersonal Conflicts Among Igbo Seminarians-An Inquiry*, (Bern, Germany: Peter Lang AG, European Academic Publishers, 2003), p 340.

Having assessed the members of the clergy, and examined their duties and roles together with their formation, let us now look at the laity.

2.2 Laity

The word ‘laity’ “translates the Latin adjective *laicus* a derivative of the Greek equivalent *laikos* (belonging to the people), the noun ‘laity’ has its original source in the Greek word ‘*laos*’ (people).”¹⁵⁷ Laity refers to “all baptized persons who enjoy no degree of participation in the hierarchy and hence are not in the clerical state.”¹⁵⁸

When referring to the laity, in the theology of the People of God, “*laos* is a religious designation of Israel as ‘the people of God’, the community (Hebrew *edah*) or assembly (*qahal*), people who belong to Yahweh, keep his law, and worship him.”¹⁵⁹ In the Septuagint (LXX), “this term describes the people of Israel in contrast to the people of the (pagan) nations... It describes all the people of God consisting of believers and distinguishes it from the ‘not-people’.”¹⁶⁰ For Karl Rahner, “layman in the theological sense is one of the *laos* of God; in other words, someone who is eminently sanctified, consecrated, called from the world lost in sin and death into the *ekklesia* of God and his Christ, into the host of those who have been visibly and tangibly called to salvation by baptism...”¹⁶¹ Maureen Dolan writes that in the early Church, “those who belong

¹⁵⁷ THOMAS W. GILLESPIE, “The Laity in Biblical Perspective,” in *the New Laity: Between Church and World*. Ralph D. Bucy (ed.), (Texas: Word Book Publishers, 1976), p 14.

¹⁵⁸ JOHN P. WHALEN M.A., S.T.D. (Censor Deputatus). *New Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol. 8 New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p 327.

¹⁵⁹ CESLAS SPICQ, OP. *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament Vol. 2*, translated and edited by James D. Ernest, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996 p 371. Gerard Philips writes also that *laos* in the Greek Bible gives us ‘*laicus*, lay,’ which designates the chosen people, the holy nation consecrated to Jahweh. (The role of the laity in the Church. Trans. by John Gilbert & James Moudry. Mercier Press Cork, Ireland 1955, p 8.)

¹⁶⁰ HANS DIETER BETZ, DON S. BROWNING, BERND JANOWSKI, EBERHARD JUNGEL (eds.), *Religion Past & Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion* Vol 7 p 242.

¹⁶¹ KARL RAHNER, *Theological Investigations* Vol. II Man in the Church Translated by Karl-H Bruger (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1963), p 319.

to God are the baptized and they believe in Christ. They are the *'laos'* of God (the chosen people), *'eklectoi'* (the elect), *'mathetai'* (the disciples), *'adelphoi'* (the brothers)."¹⁶²

Dolan points out that “the earliest reference to the terms lay and cleric is found in the letter of Clement at the end of the first century. At the beginning of the third century, the terms lay, and cleric began to signify distinct categories among the people. The lay person is now described negatively as non-cleric.”¹⁶³ In other words, the laity are “adherents of a religious tradition who do not act as religious specialists or function within a defined socio-religious class.”¹⁶⁴ But the laity form the majority of the members of the people of God. This imbalance continues to remain an important aspect in the whole collaborative challenge of today’s Church as we consider the huge number of lay people in contrast to the limited extent to which they are considered able to contribute.

In Vatican II the word “laity” means “all the faithful with the exception of those in the Holy Orders, and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church.”¹⁶⁵ Next, I will discuss the laity in the Church.

2.2.1 The Laity in the Church

“The faithful, who by baptism are incorporated into Christ, are considered the people of God, and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the

¹⁶² MAUREEN DOLAN, *Partnership in Lay Spirituality: Religious and Laity find new ways*, (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2007), p 24.

¹⁶³ DOLAN, *Partnership in Lay Spirituality*, p 26.

¹⁶⁴ HANS DIETER BETZ, DON S. BROWNING, BERND JANOWSKI, EBERHARD JUNGEL (eds.), *Religion Past & Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion Vol 7* p 287.

¹⁶⁵ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium* # 31.

world.”¹⁶⁶ The laity are the ordinary Catholics, men and women, who attend mass on Sunday and participate in that which makes them Catholic; the laity also live lives comparable to those of their friends and neighbours who are of other faiths. The role of the laity is crucial because they are to proclaim the Christian message and exemplify the Christian way of life in their homes, neighbourhoods, and the entire society. “It is through the committed laity that the Church’s presence and influence can be felt everywhere. Without their witness, the Church’s outreach and transformative power is crippled.”¹⁶⁷ Anne Rowthorn describes the laity as the prime ministers of the Church who constitute up to ninety-nine percent of Church membership.¹⁶⁸ In other words, the laity form the clear majority of the members of the Church and their impact is felt in every aspect of the larger society.

The laity makes up the membership of the people of God “whose responsibility it is to be a witness and living instrument of the mission of the Church through the gifts they have received.”¹⁶⁹ According to Yves Congar, the lay person “is one for whom, through the very work which the Lord entrusted to him, the substance of things in themselves is real and interesting.”¹⁷⁰ The recognition of the mandate by Christ to go and preach to all nations creates in every faithful person the readiness to offer their talents and intelligence to the mission of the Church. “At baptism, the faith is committed to them, as a deposit sealed by the Holy Spirit, they become responsible for it when they are given grace and power to be faithful.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁶ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 31.

¹⁶⁷ JOHN BOWDEN (ed.), *Christianity: The Complete Guide*, (United Kingdom: The Bath Press, 2005), p 1046.

¹⁶⁸ ANNE ROWTHORN, *The Liberation of the Laity*, (Wilton, Connecticut: Morehouse Barlow Co. Inc., 1986), p 5.

¹⁶⁹ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 33.

¹⁷⁰ YVES CONGAR, *Essential Writings: Selected with an Introduction by Paul Lakeland* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010), p 83.

¹⁷¹ CONGAR, *Essential Writings*, p 101.

The Holy Spirit allots his gifts according to his will and distributes special graces to the faithful of every rank. “By these gifts, he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church.”¹⁷² In fact, the layperson’s special and indispensable role in the mission of the Church cannot be overemphasized. The laity, by performing their duties, share in the mission of the Church. “Through baptism and confirmation, all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself... Thus every lay person, through the gifts given to him or her, is at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church itself according to the measure of Christ’s bestowal.”¹⁷³ Pope John Paul II points out that the laity are missionaries by baptism and emphasizes that “the need for all the faithful to share in this responsibility is not merely a matter of making the apostolate more effective, it is a right and duty based on their baptismal dignity.”¹⁷⁴ It is therefore by the Lord himself that lay people are assigned their apostolate. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* comments on the apostolate of the lay faithful by stating:

Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their baptism and confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped, in association, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth.... Their activity in the ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it.¹⁷⁵

This quote does not suggest that the apostolate of the laity is the same with the apostolate of the ordained ministry. “The ministry properly belongs to the bishops who are constituted pastors within the Church so that they are teachers of doctrine, priests of sacred worship, and ministers

¹⁷² VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 12.

¹⁷³ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 33.

¹⁷⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter, Redemptoris missio (Mission of the Redeemer)*, (Rome: December 7, 1990), # 71.

¹⁷⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Nairobi, Kenya: Pauline Publications, 1992), # 900.

of governance. Priests cooperate with the bishop, under his authority as assistants and advisors.”¹⁷⁶ The teaching of the catechism is very clear but the question is whether all the faithful (clergy and laity) recognize the necessity of this right and duty of the laity, and, if they do, what effort are the clergy making to encourage and empower the laity, and what effort are the laity themselves making to appropriate these rights and duties.

Similarly, the decree on the missionary activity of the Church states that “the Church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy.”¹⁷⁷ It is clear from this perspective that by virtue of the gifts at baptism, one is automatically chosen to be part of the apostolate of the Church, an apostolate which derives from one’s vocation as a Christian. However, it is to be noted that although “all Christians are called to ministry in the broadest sense of Christian service, and some are called to ministry in a particular sense, notably ordained ministry”¹⁷⁸ the other members of the faithful should collaborate with the ordained ministers. In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican II clarifies this:

Although by Christ’s will some are established as teachers, dispensers of the mysteries and pastors for others, there remains, nevertheless, a true equality between all with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful in the building up of the Body of Christ. The distinction which the Lord has made between the sacred ministers and the rest of the people of God involves union, for the pastors and the other faithful are joined together by a close relationship: the pastors of the Church should minister to each other, and the

¹⁷⁶ROBITAILLE, L, “Collaboration and Cooperation between the Clergy and the Laity in the Parish and Chancery, in *Periodica* 89 (2000), p 607.

¹⁷⁷ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity Ad. Gentes*, # 21.

¹⁷⁸ CAHALAN, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p 52.

rest of the faithful; the latter should eagerly collaborate with the pastors and teachers.¹⁷⁹

It is true that the laity has a role to play for the enhancement of the mission of the Church but the question remains, as seems to be the case in Nnewi Diocese, whether they are aware of this fact and whether the opportunity exists for them to exercise this role effectively.

The importance of active laity within Church communities cannot be overemphasized, so the laity ought to cooperate with the clergy in the apostolic and missionary activities of the Church. By virtue of their call to lead, the clergy need to create an enabling atmosphere that will dispose the laity to fulfil their duty. The Vatican II document on the apostolate of the laity makes this clear.

Bishops, parish priests and other priests of the secular and regular clergy will remember that the right and duty of exercising the apostolate are common to all the faithful, whether clerics or lay; and that in the building up of the Church the laity too have parts of their own to play. For this reason, they will work as brothers with the laity in the Church and for the Church and will have a particular concern for the laity in their apostolic activities.¹⁸⁰

Brothers/sisters are siblings sharing common parents. That shared parentage tasks them with supporting each other and not allowing their birth order to interfere with their essential fraternity. This principle applies to the fellowship which should exist between the clergy and the laity. The characteristics of the lay apostolate which have their foundations in union with Christ through baptism must always be borne in mind. Full participation in the body of Christ takes place through the sacraments of initiation—Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist. In Baptism, the person is welcomed into the Christian community. Confirmation emphasizes that membership in

¹⁷⁹ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 32.

¹⁸⁰ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 25.

the Church entails responsibility for the Church's work. The companionship of all members of the community is expressed in the Eucharist. Since all who have received these sacraments are fully incorporated into the Church and are equally parts of the one body, they are equally responsible for the Church's ministries.

Having provided a description of the laity, we shall now look at their formation both in the family and in other areas.

2.2.2 Family Formation for Laity

The foundation laid by the family has been discussed in the section on the clergy but it is also included here in order to highlight the importance of family formation for the laity. In fact, it is a common foundation that both clergy and laity share—so in some sense, it ought to strengthen the common ground between them. Children grow up under the guidance of their parents, who are their first teachers. Parents train them by words and by the good example of their own lives. They take it upon themselves to correct, teach and admonish the child when the child does wrong. Parents also affirm the gifts of their children and encourage and direct them in the proper use of those gifts. Hence, they can exercise a great deal of influence on the formation of their children. Vatican II alludes to the vital role the family plays in the life and mission of the Church in any Christian community. It states that “the mission of being the primary vital cell of society has been given to the family by God Himself. This mission will be accomplished, if the family, by the mutual affection of its members and by family prayer, presents itself as a domestic sanctuary of the Church.”¹⁸¹ The influence of the family in society is such that if the family is healthy, the society will surely function well; on the other hand, if the family is dysfunctional, then the society will suffer. This is logical because “a sound tree cannot bear bad fruit nor does a

¹⁸¹ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 11.

bad tree bear sound fruit.”¹⁸² The society also impacts the family. This can be observed from the rapid changes going on in families today resulting both from changing family structures and from technological inventions and other developments in society. As a result of societal influence, children sometimes resist their parents’ instructions and choose to follow the cultural norms of the time, for better or worse. Given this situation, it is necessary that the laity receive religious formation in addition to the training which is received in the family.

2.2.3 Formation/Religious Education

There is a need for the formation of the laity in their roles and responsibilities in the Church. Vatican II states that the apostolic training of the laity “acquires a special character precisely from the secularity proper to the lay state.”¹⁸³ It goes on to say that: “education for the apostolate presupposes an integral human education suited to each one’s abilities and conditions. For the layman ought to be, through an intimate knowledge of the contemporary world, a member well integrated into his own society and its culture.”¹⁸⁴ The goal of this formation is to help the laity in their growth in faith and in the development of their Christian lives, and to make them aware of what is expected of them as far as the faith and the Church’s mission are concerned.

In his Post-Synodal exhortation on the special assembly for Africa of the synod of bishops, Pope John Paul II emphasizes that “the laity are to be helped to become increasingly

¹⁸² Mt. 7: 17-18.

¹⁸³ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 29.

¹⁸⁴ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 29.

aware of their role in the Church, thereby fulfilling their particular mission as baptized and confirmed persons.”¹⁸⁵

Lay people are to be trained for their mission through suitable centres and schools of biblical and pastoral formation. Similarly, Christians who occupy positions of responsibility are to be carefully prepared for political, economic and social tasks by means of a solid formation in the Church's social doctrine, so that in their places of work they will be faithful witnesses to the Gospel.¹⁸⁶

The importance of establishing centres of formation for the laity is critical as this will clarify what the Church's expectations of the lay faithful are. It is therefore necessary, through formation to make the laity aware of the fact that they have a vital role to play in the Church's various fields of ministry.

Pope John Paul II says that “the practical dimension of the formation of the laity should be shaped by the rhythm and demand of life of the laity in the world. It should address their specific concern and contribute to their growth in a deeper sense of responsibility and their collaboration in the mission of the Church.”¹⁸⁷ The work of evangelisation is enormous and requires the participation of all baptized people. At present, formation is focused more on the clergy than the laity and this limits the missionary capacity of the Church. However, formation of the laity is also important and is needed to achieve collaboration between the clergy and the laity. The need for collaboration is a central point in this thesis.

¹⁸⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici*, # 170. Also, *Encyclical Letter Redemptoris Missio*, # 171.

¹⁸⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Ecclesia in Africa*. (September 4, 1995), # 90.

¹⁸⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Christifideles Laici*, # 63.

To ensure that the laity are effective in carrying out their vocation related to the mission of the Church, they need to be properly formed on a continuous basis. Having looked at the formation of the laity, let us now discuss the roles and duties of the laity.

2.2.4 Duties/Roles of the Laity

The laity are called to work in the Church as well as in the world. They participate in, and share in, the mission of the Church through their functioning as priests, prophets and kings—the identity they inherited by their baptism. They exercise this apostolate in the family as “the domestic Church”¹⁸⁸ in the parishes through various statutory bodies e.g. Catholic Women’s Organization, Catholic Men’s Organization, Catholic Youth Organization, etc. and religious/pious societies. Lay people play a role in evangelizing and transforming the world in which they live and work with the spirit of Christ and his Gospel. They perform their functions both in the Church and in the civil society. They function in leadership and financial administration, carry out pastoral care, and act as lectors, acolytes, and judicial vicars, etc. Vatican II is clear about the important role the laity plays when it states:

By reason of their special vocation, it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will... They are called by God that, being led by the spirit of the gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world... by fulfilling their particular duties. Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope and charity they must manifest Christ to others.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 11.

¹⁸⁹ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 31.

The laity serves as the “salt of the earth and light of the world;”¹⁹⁰ they are the light that illuminates the world and the salt that gives taste to the society through their interactions with people. This is one of the main characteristics of the laity.

The Church documents, such as *Lumen Gentium*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, and *Gaudium et Spes* and the Code of Canon Law, identify the characteristics of the laity as a life lived in the midst of the world and ‘secular affairs’. Regarding this secular dimension, Pope John Paul II states “all the members of the Church (both clergy and laity) are sharers in the secular dimension but in different ways. In particular, the sharing of the lay faithful has its manner of realization and function, which according to the council, is adequately and particularly theirs. Such manner is designated with the expression “secular character.”¹⁹¹ It is equally important to say that the code of canon law specifies that the laity is obliged to make an effort to see that the divine message of salvation is proclaimed wherever they find themselves.¹⁹² The laity have to proclaim the message ‘in season and out of season’. However, one cannot give what one does not have. Acquiring knowledge of Christian teachings is thus *sine qua non*.

The laity is called to participate actively in the whole life of the Church. Not only are they to animate the world with the spirit of Christianity, but they are also to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of human kind.¹⁹³ In keeping with the teaching of Vatican II, the code of canon law cited earlier recognizes that the laity have been called by God and have specific rights and duties.

¹⁹⁰ Mt. 5:13-14.

¹⁹¹ POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Christifideles Laici*, # 15.

¹⁹² CODE OF CANON LAW, # 225. Since lay people, like all Christ’s faithful, are deputed to the apostolate by baptism and confirmation, they are bound by the general obligation and they have the right, whether as individuals or in associations, to strive to ensure that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all people throughout the world. This obligation is all the more insistent in circumstances in which people are able to hear the gospel and to know Christ only through the laity.

¹⁹³ VATICAN II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, ## 42-45.

In the Church, the laity are to be involved in catechetical instructions, in visiting the sick, and in undertaking activities in areas where they have expertise, such as finance, administration of schools, etc. Vatican II is clear on this point.

The laity should develop the habit of working in the parish in close union with their priests, of bringing before the ecclesial community their own problems, world problems, and questions regarding man's salvation, to examine them together and solve them by general discussion. According to their abilities the laity ought to cooperate in all the apostolic and missionary enterprises of their ecclesial family.¹⁹⁴

It is also the duty of the lay person to engage in politics in order to see that the light of Christ is brought to bear on the way governments lead people, to make sure that governments provide safe and healthy structures for education, health care, social services etc., and to see that legislators make just laws. "Any attempt by the laity to refuse or shy away from this responsibility seriously deters the Church from realizing its mission."¹⁹⁵ It follows then that the laity must strive to see that the mission of the Church is realized; this calls for commitment on the part of the laity rather than indifference and inactivity regarding the mission of the Church.

Having provided definitions of clergy and laity, and having described the formation of both and their duties and roles as they relate to one another, let us now look at the historical distinction made between the clergy and the laity in order to understand its impact on clergy-laity collaboration.

¹⁹⁴ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem)*, # 10.

¹⁹⁵ BENEDICT ETAFO, "The Triplex Munera of the Laity in Praxis: A Canonical Perspective," in *Lay People in the Church and in the World* (eds.), Ben O. Etafo & Hilary O. Okeke. (Nigeria Canon Law Series No. 1 published by Canon Law Society of Nigeria 1993), p 94.

2.3 Clergy-Laity Distinction in History

2.3.1 Early Church (Apostolic Age and Church of the Fathers)

Clergy and laity are both members of the people of God (the faithful). Laurier Guy states that at the beginning of the Church, there was no clear notion of the laity or clergy as a separate group. What the Church did have from the beginning was the view that different people have different charisms and that there are various tasks to be fulfilled in the Church.¹⁹⁶ According to Guy,

At first the church ministry involved no sharp clergy-laity distinction because ministry operated significantly in terms of giftedness and function. However, at the end of the first century there arose an increasing sense of major ministries being permanent offices, to be exercised for a life time on the bases of proper appointment. The view naturally led to the primary church officers (bishops, presbyters, deacons) becoming separated off from the rank-and-file of the congregation, resulting in a sharp “clergy-laity” division in the third century.¹⁹⁷

However, early Church communities were perhaps so small that there was no further need for explicit and codified structures and organizations. According to Renwick and Harman:

The very essence of the Church’s first two centuries was simplicity. There was an absence of that formalism and pomp which took possession of the field in later times... Christians met for worship whenever they could, often in private homes and sometimes in more public places. Their worship was free and spontaneous under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and had not yet become inflexible in its form through the use of manuals of devotion. The Church was vigorously active. Not only the pastor but also many of those present took part in the

¹⁹⁶ LAURIE GUY, *Introducing Early Christianity: A Topical Survey of its Life, Beliefs and Practices*, (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2004), pp 83-85.

¹⁹⁷ LAURIE GUY, *Introducing Early Christianity*, p 93.

services, for to them the priesthood of all believers was a tremendous reality.¹⁹⁸

This depicts the early Church as a brotherhood and sisterhood of equal partners. It also implies spontaneity stemming from the Holy Spirit as opposed to a formalized programme for fellowship. Schillebeeckx points out that although leading the community was recognized as a particular charism, it still had no particular significance as a ministry of the Church; it was one of the many services which all members of the community owed to each other. Thus, originally the leader of the community did not seem to have had any special name for their ministry. In other words, there was no leadership or institutional form.¹⁹⁹ The people of the early Church saw themselves as faithful members of one community without distinction between members. Ikenga Oraegbunam described it thus: “the Church of the New Testament was that of the ‘fellowship of the faithful’—a community of believers who enjoyed the same dignity, marked by unity and singleness of purpose despite difference in charismatic gifts.”²⁰⁰

As the Church began to grow and spread throughout the Roman Empire, we begin to find the first elements of institutional organization and of Christian life and worship in the organization. A strong case could therefore be made that a significant aspect of Roman political hierarchy was adopted by the Church. The Church was arguably influenced by the organizational pattern of the Roman Empire which consisted of a rigid dualism: ‘masters and servants, monarchs and subjects, lords and commons etc.’²⁰¹ The Church, by adopting the Roman

¹⁹⁸ RENWICK A. M, & HARMAN, A. M, *The Story of the Church*, Second and Enlarged Edition, (England: Inter Varsity Press, 1986), pp 22-23.

¹⁹⁹ EDWARD SCHILLEBEECKX, *The Church with a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1985), pp 60-61.

²⁰⁰ IKENGA K E ORAEBUNAM, “The missionary role of the catholic laity towards Nigerian nation building” in *Collaborative ministry in the Context of Inculturation*. Ignatius Obinwa (ed.), (Onitsha: Africana First Publishers, 2006), p 164.

²⁰¹ “The Roman emperor/empire set up the blueprint of culture and civilization and the church copied this blueprint. The age of the empire in Europe eventually led to the age of feudalism and the church also copied it. With imperialism and feudalism now internalized, the church’s hierarchy, its bureaucracy and its administration absorbed

organizational pattern, abandoned the idea that all her members were ‘faithful’ members of one community of believers—the community of the faithful. The Church now began to stratify the faithful by the specific functions they performed.

The faithful is the general term for all those who make up the people of God. The terms clergy and lay person denote those who have specific functions in the Church. The terms, as we saw earlier in this chapter (pp. 49 and 61) “are used to designate some specific faithful on the basis of the principle of distinction of functions. Faithful applies to all members of the Church on the basis of the principle of fundamental equality.”²⁰² This principle of fundamental equality led the members of the early Church to see themselves as a community of equals.

“It is most probably fair to say that the need for organization (in all aspects of the life of the Church) led to the development of what we know as the clergy.”²⁰³ As a result of this development, almost all ministries fell into the hands of the clergy relegating the laity to the status of spectators. As Maureen Dolan describes it, “the clericalization of almost all ministries accounted for the diminished status of the lay person since the priests undertook all ministries except those relating to financial support, by the end of the fifth century.”²⁰⁴ This created a virtual monopolization of all ministries by the clergy which is not in the best interests of the Church and which created division within the Church. Peter Casarella says that “the theologians forced a separation between the popes, bishops, monks and clergy, on the one hand and on the

the spirit of feudalism in a world now populated by masters and servants, monarchs and subjects, lords and commons, clergy and laity in a rigid dualism....” Okere T, in *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation*, P 96.

²⁰² LOUIS MUNOZ, “The role of the Laity in the Church and in the World,” in *Lay people in the Church and in the World*. Eds. Ben O. Etafo & Hilary O. Okeke, Nigeria Canon Law Series No. 1. (Published by Canon Law Society of Nigeria 1993), p 66.

²⁰³ CELESTINE CHIGBOH, *Collaboration of the Laity in the Parish Community*, (Roma: Pontificia Universitas lateranensis, 2008). P1 (quoting T. Hoebel, *Laity and Participation: A Theology of Being Church*. Oxford 2006, p 48).

²⁰⁴ MAUREEN DOLAN, *Partnership in Lay Spirituality: Religious and Laity find new ways*, (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2007), p 26.

other hand, the emperor, princes, knights, peasants, lay men and lay women.”²⁰⁵ This separation implied a distinction in status. As Yves Congar writes,

the depreciation of the laity began to appear in the classical age of the Fathers. Since the conversion of Constantine, the Church had enjoyed the favour of authority. This favour took the form, among others, of granting privileges to the clergy: bishops, priests and monks obtained important immunities.²⁰⁶

Before the conversion of Constantine, the whole Church (priests and the lay faithful) saw themselves as the people of God suffering persecution from the hands of the ruling society in which they lived. But with the edict of Milan, which made Christianity the state religion throughout the Roman Empire, the clergy began to associate themselves with the ruling class, seeing themselves as a class apart from the rest of the people of God. This close association with the powerful authorities led to the priests developing a class consciousness and a desire to be treated as royals with undue immunities and privileges.²⁰⁷ From late middle ages down to the Renaissance, *litteratus* (‘one who knows letters’, that is, Latin) was synonymous with ‘cleric’, whereas the synonym for ‘layman’ was *ilitteratus* or *idiota* (a simple person, one who cannot explain things).²⁰⁸ Therefore, it can be said that hierarchical structures were entrenched in the Church after the end of the persecution of the Church by the ruling powers and the society.

²⁰⁵ PETER CASARELLA, “Disciples in the midst of the world: Collaboration of the lay faithful in the sacred ministry of their pastors,” in *called to holiness and communion: Vatican II on the church*, Boguslaski, S. & Fastiggi R. (eds.), (London, 2009), p 224.

²⁰⁶ YVES CONGAR, *Christians Active in the World* (Translated by P.J. Hepburne-Scott) (New York: Herder and Herder 1968), p 4

²⁰⁷ GREGORY AMULUCHE NNAMANI, “What is an Inculturating Church?” in *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation* ed. Ignatius Obinwa, (Onitsha: Africana First Publishers Ltd. 2005), pp 359-362.

²⁰⁸ CONGAR, *Christians Active in the World* (Translated by P.J. Hepburne-Scott), p 5.

2.3.2 Clergy-Laity distinction in the Medieval Church

“The clergy/laity divide has existed since the 4th century with the establishment of Christianity as the state religion by Emperor Constantine and with the transformation of the clergy into a kind of civil service, with all the political and economic privileges of rank and status.”²⁰⁹ Throughout the middle ages, the laity was regarded as inferior to the clergy,²¹⁰ resulting in the Church hierarchy abandoning some of the characteristics of the early Church. Some of these characteristics included “brotherhood and sisterhood of equal partners on the basis of baptism,”²¹¹ and community assembly in the house of one of the members. However, this does not mean that there were no presiders in the early Christian community. It is noteworthy that although Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, insisted on the authority of the bishop, he made it a point of duty to consult both his priests and the laity for their opinions, advice and consent. Hence, he writes to his clergy: “from the beginning of my episcopate, I decided to do nothing of my opinion privately without your advice and the consent of the people.”²¹² This statement from Cyprian describes someone who listens to the people, values their contributions and works in close collaboration with them— someone who practices collaboration. Priests might learn from Cyprian that the consent of their parishioners is crucial in the Church. Unlike many members of the clergy today, Cyprian focused on carrying out the ministry rather than dwelling on the status of his office.

According to Schillebeeckx, this quest for status and power was fueled by the council of Trent. He states that “the view of the Church held by the council of Trent was very strongly

²⁰⁹ RICHARD MCBRIEN, *Doing Ministry: A Theological Pastoral Handbook*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), p 38.

²¹⁰ JOHN P. WHALEN, (Censor Deputatus). *New Catholic Encyclopedia* Vol. 8. (New York: Mcgraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p 331.

²¹¹ SCHILLEBEECKX, *The Church with a Human Face*, pp 47.

²¹² WILLIAM J. RADEMACHER, *Lay Ministry: A Theological, Spiritual and Pastoral Handbook*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), p 57.

hierarchical—pope, bishops, priests, deacons, and then a long way away, the believing community.”²¹³ The impression was given that the power of the priest is in the exercise of consecration and absolution. According to Vatican II, “the Lord also appointed certain men as ministers... These men held in the community of the faithful the sacred power of order, that of offering sacrifice and forgiving sins and were to exercise the priestly office publicly on behalf of men in the name of Christ.”²¹⁴ The sacerdotal character, which is obtained by the anointing, is what distinguishes the clergy from the laity.

Schillebeeckx points out that long after Vatican II, the theology of the laity was talked about, but, on closer inspection, one discovers that this theology of the laity “continues to dwell on the medieval concept—that of ‘obedient dumb subject’, those under the control of the ones ‘in the know’.”²¹⁵ This pyramidal hierarchical structure of the Church community “focused only on the top and devalued the laity at the base of the pyramid, so that they became merely the object of priestly pastoral concern.”²¹⁶ The hierarchy became oblivious to the fact that the community of first disciples of Jesus was an assembly and gathering of equal partners, with no difference between slave and free, male and female, Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.²¹⁷

Reflecting on the question of priestly status, William Rademacher states that the council of Trent emphasized “being in the state of priesthood, rather than doing the ministry. This widened the gap between the ordained clergy and the non-ordained laity.”²¹⁸ Rademacher goes

²¹³ SCHILLEBEECKX, *The Church with a Human Face*, p 200.

²¹⁴ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (Presbyterorum Ordinis)*, #2. (... priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in person of Christ the head).

²¹⁵ SCHILLEBEECKX, *The Church with a Human Face*, p 157.

²¹⁶ SCHILLEBEECKX, *The Church with a Human Face*, p158.

²¹⁷ There is no longer any difference between Jew or Greek, or between slave and freed, or between man and woman: but all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

²¹⁸ WILLIAM J. RADEMACHER, *Lay Ministry: A Theological, Spiritual and Pastoral Handbook*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company New York 1991), p 74.

on to say that “Vatican I reinforced the concept of ministry ‘from above.’ The mission of the Church, through the laws of jurisdiction, flowed from the top to the lowest levels.”²¹⁹ When power flows from top to bottom, those at the bottom are often neglected and marginalized. “Since the Gregorian reform, the Church has built a Berlin wall between the sacred and the secular. Clerics on the side of the sacred often make decisions and then announce them to the laity on the other side. The real Church structures remain on the clerical side, while the laity often deal with window-dressing.”²²⁰ This describes the situation well because it seems as if the laity is just there to beautify the structure while the clergy takes charge of everything important that is being done. This practice, which runs contrary to that of the early Christians, was the situation until Vatican II.

2.3.3 Clergy-Laity distinction: Vision of Vatican II

The documents of Vatican II describe the Church as the people of God and the Body of Christ and emphasize the common identity of all the members of the Church. The significance of this image is that all the faithful are equal members in the one household of God through baptism and also that every member is a part of the body of Christ. Every part has its own function without which the body cannot function well.²²¹ I am not suggesting that the clergy/laity distinction should be scrapped entirely since after all a lay person cannot celebrate Mass or the sacrament of reconciliation. Rather what I am saying is that the specific ministry of the laity, as well, deserves renewed attention as well because it is essential for the mission of the Church.

Vatican II emphasizes lay-clergy collaboration but this seems not to be strictly adhered to. To reinforce this point, the Church document entitled “*On Certain Questions Regarding the*

²¹⁹ RADEMACHER, *Lay Ministry*, p 77.

²²⁰ RADEMACHER, *Lay Ministry*, p 229.

²²¹ This image of the Church as the people of God will be discussed further as we progress in this work.

Participation of the Laity in the Ministry of the Clergy” teaches that the laity only participates in the ministry of the clergy instead of having a sense of ministry which is their right by baptism.²²² This document makes a distinction between the members of the Church where some members only participate in the ministry of others, and this stance seems to limit collaboration.

However, the phrase ‘people of God’ used by Vatican II in its description of the Church reminds us that the Church is a community and not a dual society of priests and lay people. Nevertheless, Veronica Anisionwu observes that, in spite of Vatican II teachings on clergy-laity collaboration, “there is still found among some clerics something of mistrust, low opinion.... towards the initiatives or activities of the laity. As a result, the laity complains that they are not taken seriously when they take part in certain Church matters or merely give their opinions about them.”²²³ Given Anisionwu’s observation, the laity are justified in their complaints because this attitude of the clergy towards the laity deprives the laity of their rights when the clergy mistrusts them and undermines the laity’s self-esteem or self-worth. The failure of the clergy to take the laity seriously also discourages the laity when they need to be encouraged and empowered. Anne Rowthorn expresses it superbly, “when people’s contributions are not valued, when their voices are not heard, when their insights go unnoticed, when they have been prevented from giving their gifts, their humanity is denied.”²²⁴ The laity has the right to share in the mission and the apostolate of the Church. They also have the right and freedom to speak and be listened to. In addition, they have the right to receive objective information regarding the pastoral needs and

²²² Roman Congregations and Pontifical Councils, *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of the Clergy* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), ## 38 & 39.

²²³ VERONICA ANISIONWU, *The role of the laity in missionary activities of the church in Igbo of Nigeria*, (Roma: Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana, 1994), pp 8-9.

²²⁴ ROWTHORN, *The Liberation of the Laity*, p 23.

affairs of the Church. When the laity are denied these rights, it shows that the apostolate of the laity is not taken seriously.

“The apostolate of the laity is only taken seriously when a real ‘world’ exists to confront the Church and the Church is aware of it... In those conditions priests and laity feel themselves to be called and yoked to the same task: the laity are no longer mere passengers in a ship navigated by the clergy alone: they are in, their own place, part of the ship’s company.”²²⁵ The clergy needs to involve the laity in the whole pastoral work of the Church if they want them to feel personally called and committed to the Church’s ministry.²²⁶ “There is only one mission of the Church, entrusted to the whole ecclesia, priests and faithful, to each one according to what he is and the place he occupies. This mission includes a primary objective, to make disciples of all nations, and a second, which is to teach the commandments of Christ...”²²⁷ This will be difficult to achieve without active clergy-laity collaboration.

2.4 The Call for Collaboration

Cajetan Ebuziem maintains that the best way to achieve the vision and mission of the Church is through collaboration between the clergy and the laity. According to Ebuziem:

In order to be effective in groups, societies, sodalities, organizations and clubs, we need to follow the signs of the time and engage in collaborative efforts, rather than lone ranging. Whether we need to organize a pastoral council meeting or a neighbourhood clean-up, to carry out a

²²⁵ YVES CONGAR, *Christians Active in the World*, translated by Philip J. Hepburne-Scott (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), p 8.

²²⁶ YVES CONGAR, *Christians Active in the World*, p 13. “If our pastoral work aims at producing real spiritual acts, and ensuring that something really happens spiritually, then the faithful are personally involved, and called to commit themselves; they can do something with us: not only when they are the beneficiaries of our ministry, but as members of the ship’s company, jointly responsible with us for the voyage, co-operating in the whole pastoral work, for which the priest, under the authority of the bishop, is obviously the one chiefly responsible and the leader, or, to keep our metaphor, the ship’s captain.”

²²⁷ YVES CONGAR, *Christians Active in the World*, p 17.

building project, to build a charity organization network, to facilitate group process... what we need most are collaborative skills and relationship building.”²²⁸

Collaboration provides a sense of belonging and offers the opportunity to work together and to sustain the community as brothers and sisters. This process also enables us to achieve more than we would have achieved if we were to work individually. It gives us the chance to share and combine gifts for the common good. Collaboration facilitates the development of a community of helping not hindering, a community where there is respect and trust among different members.

Ebuziem’s position is an affirmation of Pope John Paul II’s exhortation which calls for a ‘Spirituality of communion’, in the following excerpt from his Apostolic Letter:

A Spirituality of communion means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as “those who are a part of me.” This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, “but also as a gift for me.” A Spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to “make room” for our brothers and sisters, bearing “each other’s burdens” (Gal 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy. Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without

²²⁸ EBUZIEM, *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context*, p 163.

a soul, “masks” of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.²²⁹

Communion between the clergy and the laity must not be mechanical. It must be open to accept, cherish and value the gift of every member, use it appropriately, and see every member as a contributor. Okere puts it beautifully when he says:

Behind the idea of collaborative ministry is the realization that the ministry, the apostolate is a vast vineyard, with more than enough work for all, with a division of labour, with different charisms for the up-building of the Church of God. It is the body of Christ, with each representing only a part or fraction of the complex and with each one’s role crucial even if it seems negligible. As the Igbo say, *nwa gwere oso, kwu na nri*, ‘a little child that only pounds the *foofoo* or grinds the pepper is part of the cooking team.’²³⁰

According to this thinking, the faithful, (clergy and laity), should not underestimate each others role no matter how insignificant it seems. Each person contributes to the achievement of the common goal and to the vision and direction of the Church.

Conclusion

This chapter provided definitions of the clergy and laity along with an explanation of how one is assigned to each of the two categories, and the formation and roles of each category. From its definition, we see that the clergy does not belong to a class that is separate from the congregation, but merely performs a specific or distinct service within the universal priesthood of the community. Clergy are chosen from the members of the baptized and ordained to serve the

²²⁹ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Inuente* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana January 6, 2001), # 43.

²³⁰ THEOPHILUS OKERE, “Collaborative Ministry and Renewal in the Church: Comments on the Nigerian Context,” *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, Vol. 17 (2005), p 97.

people of God. The laity, on the other hand, are all baptized persons who enjoy no degree of participation in the hierarchy and hence are not in the clerical state.

Both the laity and the clergy are members of Christ's faithful and both come from the family, which is foundational to the formation of both clergy and laity. As we can see from the discussion of the roles and responsibilities of the clergy and laity (pp 50-54, 70-72), their duties and responsibilities complement each other. The problem is not that there are different roles but rather that these differences are weighted, or valued, one over the other, one better than the other.

This chapter also described the distinction between the clergy and the laity in the early Church, and in the medieval Church, as well as the Vatican II vision of the Church. Originally there was no distinction between the clergy and the laity. The separation started with the edict of Milan during the time of Constantine after Christianity gained freedom from persecution. The clergy began to see themselves as different from the rest of the people, modelling themselves after the civil rulers.

The clergy and the laity together are the people of God; both are called to the one mission of the Church and this forms the theological foundation of their collaboration. The next chapter looks at the vision of the Church and the theological foundations of clergy-laity collaboration.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In the last chapter, we traced key moments in the history of clergy-laity differentiation in the Church. Having seen the history of clergy-laity distinction, this chapter will, in conducting a literature review, develop for the thesis a theoretical framework from the teachings of Vatican II and views of some theologians on clergy-laity collaboration. Themes from these sources will serve as the model for envisioning fuller collaboration between the clergy and laity in Nnewi diocese. In particular, the idea of the people of God in the teaching of the Vatican II will serve as a central paradigm, while Elochukwu Uzuoku's notion of listening, Paul Lakeland's idea of laity liberation and Ebuziem's sense of *umunna bu ike* among others will be used to elaborate this central paradigm. The Vatican II concept of the people of God points to common baptism which makes us members of the people of God endowed with different gifts which when brought together achieves the mission of the Church. These will be made clearer as the chapter proceeds. Ebuziem's emphasis on *umunna bu ike* is an Igbo term for communion. Uzuoku's stress on listening puts before us the essential place of dialogue among people. Lakeland, by focusing on liberation of the laity, makes justice imperative in all Church dealings. These theoretical ideas by echoing unity in different ways point to collaboration and as such help me develop a concept I choose to call *solidarity in common task*, which is captured in the Igbo concept of *njikoka* (which is literally translated as "togetherness is greater").

3.1 Church as the People of God

The documents of Vatican II describe the Church as “a sacrament—a sign and instrument... of communion with God and of unity among all men...”²³¹ Referring to the Church as the people of God clearly brings out the nature of communion in the Church. The horizontal dimension of communion is shown by representing the Church as a people while the vertical dimension shows that it is not just any type of people but the people of God.²³² The vision of the Church as the people of God stresses the community nature of the Church rather than its hierarchical structure. This notion of the Church implies that all believers are stakeholders who relate to each other as subjects and work together for the good of the Church. Vatican II emphasizes that “the clergy will remember that the right and duty of exercising the apostolate are common to all the faithful, whether clerics or lay, and that in the building up of the Church, the laity too have parts of their own to play. For this reason, they will work as brothers with the laity in the Church and for the Church and will have a special concern for the laity in their apostolic activities.”²³³ The vision of Vatican II in this regard is more of a return to the Church’s roots than a completely new position on how the Church sees its members. In line with this, Edward Schillebeeckx notes that the earliest Christian communities were integrated into an existing network of ‘face to face’ relationships. These communities formed a brotherhood and sisterhood of equal partners, which can now be used as an example for collaboration between the clergy and the laity. Schillebeeckx then concludes by urging the Church leadership to be less hierarchical and to consider new and possible alternatives to the present order, thereby giving the

²³¹ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 1.

²³² PAUL LAKELAND, *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church*, (New York: Continuum Press, 2002), p 221.

²³³ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 25.

Church a human face.²³⁴ Both the clergy and the laity constitute the family of God and are responsible for promoting the mission of the Church which is also the mission of Christ.

Ebuziem concurring to the image of the Church as people of God states that “the common priesthood of believers is the basis of equality of all Christ’s faithful, including the pope, the priest, the catechist, the Christian mother and the infant just baptised this morning.”²³⁵ As a result, each member of the faithful is to have a sense of belonging. Ebuziem uses the Igbo concept of *Umunna bu ike* to convey the Igbo idea of a sense of belonging. This feeling of belonging is demonstrated in the way that Igbo people hold meetings where they discuss important matters; in such meetings, each member freely makes their opinion known as a stakeholder. This practice makes every member of the community feel that they are bona fide members of the community and not outsiders. The Church is incomplete without the participation of both the clergy and the laity. In parishes where collaboration between the clergy and the laity is lacking, the pastor is generally not fully effective and the whole community of Christians suffers.

In his own view, Paul Amakiri asserts that “just like no one scene or one’s role can constitute the whole drama; neither the clerics nor the laity can perform completely all the functions of the Church without the other. It is the beginning of the decay of ministry when one of the sectors feels that it can do without the other.”²³⁶ The phrase ‘people of God’, used by Vatican II in its description of the Church, reminds us that the Church is a community and not a dual society of priests and lay people. The phrase signifies a family with a common father (God) and every member enjoys equal dignity and full membership in the family. It is therefore the

²³⁴ SCHILLEBEECKX, *The Church with Human Face*, pp 78-195.

²³⁵ EBUZIEM, *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context*, p 85.

²³⁶ PAUL AMAKIRI, *This is Our Church*, (Owerri: Assumpta Press, 1988), p 22.

vision of Vatican II that all members of the Church participate actively in the mission of the Church. This view of the Church captures well the idea of solidarity in common task (*Njikoka*) which encourages every member of Christ's faithful to be involved in the activities of the Church. It appears that this is far from being practiced today, as is apparent in some of the sections above which described Nnewi Diocese.

Lakeland argues that the laity are denied the opportunity to participate actively in the Church's mission. According to him, "the laity needed to get beyond a passive understanding of their role in the Church... because they have been baptized into an apostolic Church, a Church which is sent, and a Church with a mission."²³⁷ The mandate given to the Church by Christ is to evangelize and in this work of evangelization every member of the Church is called upon; no one is exempt. It is not a question of giving orders and obeying orders. The lay person "will not only practice obedience but also cultivate a spirit of initiative... (and) must also deepen faith through serious reflection, the opposite of passivity. It is not enough to rely on pastors' directions."²³⁸ Lakeland expresses the need to encourage the laity to take initiative and become active in the ministries, which are meant to be performed by the laity. This is what it means to be active. When the laity relies only on the directions of the pastor then it becomes difficult for them to take initiative and in a situation where one cannot take initiative, one never matures but rather remains perpetually a child. In order to avoid the laity relying completely on the pastors' direction, a revised Church order/structure is required to replace the hierarchical pyramidal structure, which has given power and control to the clergy.

To buttress the above point, Peter Caserella suggests that "the model of purely passive recipients of prophetic instructions is to be replaced by the image of active participants. The lay

²³⁷ PAUL LAKELAND, *The Liberation of the Laity*, p 28.

²³⁸ LAKELAND, *The Liberation of the Laity*, p 46.

apostolate complements that of the ordained and is just as essential to the mission of the Church as that of the clergy.”²³⁹ Casarella points out that “the laity and the ordained priest are both called to holiness and to share in the one priesthood of Christ... Christ’s priesthood cannot be divided into parts. No one is given just a part of the person. Christ encounters each one of us in the totality of his personhood. Lay people and clergy alike are called to partake wholly of the sacrificial love that pours out from Christ’s priesthood.”²⁴⁰ This implies that the clergy and the laity cannot function well without each other, so, there must be clergy-laity collaboration if the common goal of the Church is to be achieved. Many members of the clergy have seen themselves as the privileged few who have the laity to command and control. Seemingly, they keep the people ignorant so that they will be easier to control. Both lay people and priests are apostles, each in their own way, and so both should collaborate in the mission of the Church.

Uzukwu also stresses the need for collaboration between the clergy and the laity as members of the people of God. Also he points out that this is critical of the present practice and the relationship of the clergy towards the laity which he refers to as “hierachology” instead of ecclesiology. Uzukwu declares that

the picture is one of an absence of dialogue and a lack of respect of genuine rights. Instead of dialogue where interlocutors listen heart to heart and become friendly and available for the service of one another, we have a Church of power, of rank and privilege, of “differentiation from” instead of “identification with.”²⁴¹

The Church being the people of God implies that the members ought to identify with one another and respect everyone’s legitimate rights. If someone’s legitimate rights are not respected, that

²³⁹ CASARELLA, “Disciples in the midst of the world,” p 230.

²⁴⁰ CASARELLA, *Disciples in the Midst of the World*, p 257.

²⁴¹ ELOCHUKWU E. UZUKWU, *The Listening Church: Autonomy and Communion in African Churches*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books. 1996), p 121.

person feels alienated. When people feel that they have the power and the privilege to manipulate others they may see the others as inferior or as lower class. Uzukwu's opinion is that without dialogue, listening becomes greatly hampered.

Pope Francis is also of the view that it is part of the pastor's mission to encourage many kinds of "pastoral dialogue out of a desire to listen to everyone and not simply to those who would tell him what he would like to hear. Yet the principal aim of these participatory processes should not be ecclesiastical organization but rather the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone."²⁴² Pope Francis implies that the leadership of the Church should not only encourage active participation of all the faithful but also recognize their necessary role in the evangelizing ministry of the Church. The pope's point is also that it is the mission of evangelization not organization— another way to say hierarchy as earlier echoed by Uzukwu—that is important for working together. We can only talk about the Church as the body of Christ when cooperation, mutual dialogue, respect and true love of God exist among the members.

To build up the body of Christ, every member must be considered equally important; no talent or gift should be ignored. There is no doubt that, in a situation where dialogue and mutual collaboration seem to be lacking, people feel that their presence and contributions in the Church are not recognized. This situation results in some people drifting to other denominations where they think that their voices will be heard. They often see the Catholic Church as being too rigid. With regard to this, Lakeland states that:

our separated brethren accuse the Church of being far too clerical and stifling the laity. They believe in 'the priesthood of the faithful', to whom they assign an important role. Quite frequently, Catholics who leave the faith to join a sect will claim to have

²⁴² POPE FRANCIS, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, (Rome, Nov 24, 2013), # 31.

found a religion where they are respected, and in which they can actively participate.²⁴³

The Catholic Church need not be blind to this perception which indirectly points to the need for collaboration—a practice whereby all have a role and participate actively in whatever is going on. This is because all are stake holders through the sacrament of baptism.

3.2 The Role of Baptism

Baptism is the Christian rite of initiation which makes the initiate a member of Christ's faithful (people of God) who shares in the three-fold functions of Christ (Priest, Prophet and King).²⁴⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, states that “the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less ordered one to another, each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ.”²⁴⁵ The Sacrament of Baptism makes the person who receives it a *bona fide* member of the Church who is equal in dignity with every other member.²⁴⁶ Clement Onwunata compares baptism to the traditional Igbo naming ceremony when he states that: “Just as baptism helps to identify one in the life of Christ and his Church, so do giving names to kids in the (Igbo) traditional setup help to make them legitimate members of their clan.”²⁴⁷ Here one notices a very close relationship between Christian baptism and the Igbo naming ceremony in the sense that in both cases names are given to reflect the family and through the act, one becomes inseparable, ‘naturalised’ into the family as the case may be since the Church is also regarded as family.

²⁴³ LAKELAND, *The Liberation of the Laity*, p 86.

²⁴⁴ The Catechism of the Catholic Church CCC, # 1268.

²⁴⁵ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 10.

²⁴⁶ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, ## 31 & 32. (See also *Christifideles Laici*, # 15).

²⁴⁷ ONWUNATA, *Towards an Inculturated African model communal ecclesia*, p 406.

In other words, baptism gives a sense of belonging to every member of the faithful. In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, Pope John Paul II points out that “the laity, in particular, ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness of not only belonging to the Church but of being the Church...”²⁴⁸ A sense of belonging implies that all believers are stakeholders who are working together for the good of the Church. Kathleen Cahalan states that “Christians share in Christ’s priesthood through living a life of worship, adoration, and sacrifice; in his call as prophet in giving witness to neighbour love, mercy and justice; and in the kingly role through service and stewardship of God’s community and creation.”²⁴⁹ In other words, the anointing with Chrism which every Christian received during baptism is the sign of the common priesthood of the faithful. Through baptism all have rights and responsibilities within the Church, which is our common family. It is through baptism that all the faithful become “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a consecrated nation.”²⁵⁰ The sacrament of baptism makes an individual a full member of the Church of Christ and empowers the person to participate in the mission of the Church. Richard Gaillardetz expresses it this way: “the source of our empowerment in the Church is baptism/confirmation. The basic manifestation of this power is the life of Christian discipleship and the exercise of the many charisms of the baptised.”²⁵¹ Through baptism we are all formed in the likeness of Christ; “for in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”²⁵² Since all members (the clergy and the laity) are baptised into one body, they (the clergy and

²⁴⁸ POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Christifideles Laici*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation 30th Dec. 1988. (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988), # 9. Citing Pope Pius XII.

²⁴⁹ KATHLEEN CAHALAN, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2010), p 25.

²⁵⁰ “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into a marvelous light” (1Pt 2:9).

²⁵¹ RICHARD GAILLARDETZ, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A People Called and Sent*, (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2010), p 135.

²⁵² 1 Cor. 12:13. “All of us, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, have been baptized in one Spirit to form one body and all of us have been given to drink from one Spirit.”

laity) are all called to “a direct evangelization of the world that is exercised independently of the hierarchical apostolate.”²⁵³

Church documents attest to the importance of baptism. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that, “in virtue of their rebirth in Christ, there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality and dignity of all members with regard to dignity and the activity whereby all cooperate in the building up of the body of Christ in accord with each one’s contribution and function.”²⁵⁴ *Lumen Gentium* offers the same message in a variety of ways: that all the baptized share “in the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the Church and the world.”²⁵⁵ It goes on to say that all have an active part to play in the life and activity of the Church, and that Christ the great prophet fulfils his prophetic office not only through the hierarchy but also through the laity.²⁵⁶ “From the fact of their union with Christ the head flows the layman’s right and duty to be apostles. Inserted as they are in the mystical body of Christ by baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation, it is by the Lord himself that they are assigned to the apostolate.”²⁵⁷ Baptism therefore, empowers and assigns roles to every member of Christ’s faithful. Lakeland is of the same view when he writes that “the laity needed to get beyond a passive understanding of their role in the Church... because they have been baptized into an apostolic Church, a Church which is sent, and a Church with a mission.”²⁵⁸ For Lakeland, the Church belongs to all the faithful. He specified that the mission or mandate given to the Church by Christ is to evangelize and in this work of evangelization every member of the Church is called upon to participate; no one is exempt. One can see that baptism offers the faithful the right and freedom to perform

²⁵³ LAKELAND, *The Liberation of the laity*, p 53.

²⁵⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church, # 872.

²⁵⁵ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 31.

²⁵⁶ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, ## 31-35.

²⁵⁷ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 3.

²⁵⁸ Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity: The Search of an Accountable Church*. (New York: Continuum, 2002), 28.

various functions for the enhancement of the mission of the Church. Some of these functions are: lector, acolyte, judicial vicar, pastoral council, auditor etc. Vatican II clearly gives all members of Christ's faithful a share in this mission. The layperson as well as the pastor is an apostle, each in his/her own way. This is because by virtue of baptism all the faithful share in the three-fold functions of Christ,²⁵⁹ the functions of priest, prophet and king. Rademacher echoes this sentiment: "It is sufficient to note that all disciples ordained or not, are called to heal, to teach, to reconcile, to visit the sick, to feed the hungry... All these functions are part of the baptismal vocation to discipleship."²⁶⁰ Therefore, the call to discipleship is to be exercised in all spheres of life: in the family, hospital, school, prison, office, etc. Consequently, "the prevalent idea that the duty of the ordinary Christian is merely to remain passive and be fed is a direct negation of the spirit of the New Testament teaching."²⁶¹

At baptism, the Spirit endows each member of the Church with different charisms. These charisms are to be used for witnessing and for the good of the whole community.

3.3 Charisms in the Church

A charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit to individuals for the service of the community; it is to be directed towards the needs of the community. God endows his faithful with various charisms for this mission. "The Church is constituted through charism, gifts of the Spirit."²⁶² Some of these charisms are the gifts of leadership, teaching, healing, generosity, compassion, wisdom as well as other gifts. These charisms are "God-given energy and direction for relationship, communion and mission."²⁶³ The combination of these various charisms brings the

²⁵⁹ Vatican II *Lumen Gentium* #31.

²⁶⁰ RADEMACHER, *Lay Ministry*, p 173.

²⁶¹ GENNER E. E, *The Church in the New Testament*, (London: Charles Kelly 1914), p 64.

²⁶² CAHALAN, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p 61.

²⁶³ CAHALAN, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p 45.

Church together. The decree on the apostolate of the laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, states that there is “in the Church a diversity of ministries but a unity of mission.”²⁶⁴ This implies that distinct roles are assigned to the priests and the laity, but they together are geared towards the same goal. It is not about illuminating differences but the way these differences are valued. The document shows that the diversity of ministries, functions or charisms in the Church allows for the full and active participation of all members and enhances the mission of the Church. In other words, charisms are gifts for service, and the good of the community and are not meant for private use or self- improvement. It is in line with this that Cahalan writes: “Charisms, then are a divine and unifying reality. Through the exercise of many charisms, the various “parts” contribute to the whole, because the body cannot function well or optimally without each person actualizing the gifts they have to share.”²⁶⁵ Cahalan implies that each member of the community needs to be given the opportunity to bring forward their gifts and use their initiative. Lakeland supports this view that each member of the faithful needs to be given the opportunity to bring out his or her gift and use his or her initiative. According to him, “the lay person will not only practice obedience but also cultivate a spirit of initiative... (and) must also deepen faith through serious reflection, the opposite of passivity. It is not enough to rely on pastors’ directions.”²⁶⁶

Uzukwu thinks in the same line when he states that “no member of the Church-family has an origin different from other members, though each has his or her particular gifts. There is no question of any member being superior to any other member.”²⁶⁷

In receiving these charisms, “there arises for each of the faithful the right and duty of exercising them in the Church and in the world for the good of men and the development of the

²⁶⁴ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 2.

²⁶⁵ CAHALAN, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p 33.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁶⁷ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 112.

Church...”²⁶⁸ In other words, the gifts are given for ministry in the Church. Ministry is a function entrusted to the Church by Christ. It is pertinent to point out that “all Christians are called to ministry in the broadest sense of Christian service, and some are called to ministry in a particular sense, notably ordained ministry.”²⁶⁹ “Ministerial priesthood renders its sacred ministers servants of Christ and of the Church by means of authoritative proclamation of the word of God, the administration of the sacraments and the pastoral direction of the faithful.”²⁷⁰ Vatican II specifies that “through sacred ordination and mission which they receive from the bishops, priests are promoted to the service of Christ...and are given a share in his ministry...”²⁷¹ As for the laity, “they are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and the kingly office of Christ; they have therefore... their own assignment in the mission of the whole people of God... their apostolate is exercised when they work at the evangelization and sanctification of men; it is exercised too when they endeavour to have the gospel spirit permeate and improve the temporal order.”²⁷² Richard McBrien goes further to explain that “there are ministries more directly related to the needs and habitual activities of the church, for example, catechists, lectors etc. there is ordained ministry, whose base is sacramental, for example, diaconate, presbyterate, and episcopate.”²⁷³

These gifts are given to each person according to the person’s ability. As Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, a bishop in the early Church, writes in his catechetical instructions:

²⁶⁸ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 3.

²⁶⁹ CAHALAN, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p 52.

²⁷⁰ ROBI TAILLE, L, “Collaboration and Cooperation between the Clergy and the Laity in the Parish and Chancery, in *Periodica* 89 (2000), p 607.

²⁷¹ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests Presbyterorum Ordinis*, # 1.

²⁷² VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 2.

²⁷³ RICHARD MCBRIEN, *Ministry: A Theological Pastoral Handbook* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), p 9.

The Spirit makes one man a teacher of divine truth, inspires another to prophesy, gives another the power of casting out devils, and enables another to interpret Holy Scripture. The Spirit strengthens one man's self-control, shows another how to help the poor, teaches another to fast and lead a life of asceticism, makes another oblivious of the needs of the body, trains another for martyrdom. His action is different to different people, but the Spirit himself is always the same. In each person, Scripture says, the Spirit reveals his presence in a particular way for the common good.²⁷⁴

Each of these gifts is essential and intended for a particular purpose by the Spirit, which is for the good of the community. To ignore or deny the importance of any of the gifts, regardless of the person who has them, portends no good for the community. Therefore, the gifts are to be harmonized and channelled towards a common goal. This suggests that “the role of the pastor and the role of the lay person are meant to be mutually reinforcing, which by no means obliterates the distinctiveness of each role.”²⁷⁵ Their tasks must complement each other.

The specific aim for this working together, this interdependence, this shared life, is the common good. Rademacher observes that “the whole image speaks of interdependence, reciprocity, mutuality, shared life...and a differentiation of function. The main purpose of this image is to teach the Christian that they have their ministries in the gift of the Spirit,”²⁷⁶ and “offices for the renewal and building up of the Church...”²⁷⁷ These charisms are granted to both the clergy and the laity as members of Christ's faithful and they enable each of them to play their part in the mission of the Church. Bringing gifts together enhances the mission of the Church. According to Sofield, “they (the clergy) are to recognize and acknowledge and value the gifts of

²⁷⁴ A Catechetical Instruction by Saint Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, (Cat. 16, De Spiritu Santo 1, 11-12. 16: PG 33, 931-935. 939-942).

²⁷⁵ PETER CASARELLA, “Disciples in the midst of the world: Collaboration of the lay faithful in the sacred ministry of their pastors,” in *Called to holiness and communion*, p 239.

²⁷⁶ RADEMACHER, *Lay Ministry: A Theological, Spiritual and Pastoral Handbook*, p 172.

²⁷⁷ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 12.

the laity, support the use of these gifts in ministries outside the Church, help to develop the gifts and involve the laity much more intentionally and virtually in the mission of the Church....”²⁷⁸

The recognition and acknowledgement of the diverse gifts of the laity help to illustrate the richness and beauty of communion. Therefore, the gifts need to be identified, acknowledged and nurtured. Loughlan argues:

When gifts are not identified, and acknowledged, typically one of two things happen: the gifts languish from neglect, or people experience low self-esteem, feeling that their gifts are nothing special. If people offer and their gifts are not accepted, hurt and anger are often the result. The leader’s role is, therefore, to be especially sensitive to gifts and to ways of engaging them for the building of the kingdom.²⁷⁹

Leaders need to handle these gifts with care to avoid stifling them. They need to emulate the example of the leaders of the early Church. Priests as leaders must be aware that “leaders gain power by empowering others.”²⁸⁰ Donal Door maintains that “for leadership to be fully authentic, the leader must be ready to work with others and recognise their wisdom and inspiration in order to achieve a common vision for the good of the community.”²⁸¹ This statement implies togetherness (*njikoka*), one of the values inherent in Igbo culture, and a value which is very relevant to collaboration.

Maurice L. Monette observes that “difference does not destroy communion. On the contrary, the difference is what makes communion possible. Priests and lay persons share the

²⁷⁸ SOFIELD LOUGHLAN S. T. & DONALD H. KUHN, *Collaborative Leader: Listening to the Wisdom of God’s People*, (Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1995), p 107.

²⁷⁹ LOUGHLAN SOFIELD, S. J. & DONALD H. KUHN, *The Collaborative Leader: Listening to the Wisdom of God’s People*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1995), P 112.

²⁸⁰ RICHARD OSMER, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, p 198.

²⁸¹ DONAL DORR, *Spirituality of Leadership: Inspiration, Empowerment, Intuition and Discernment*, (Dublin: Columba Press, 2006), P 10.

common ground of human dignity celebrated in Baptism, but our callings are different.”²⁸² We are essential parts of the body of Christ. We need to respect our various gifts and bring them together for a common purpose. "The role of the priest...is the integration and coordination of all the charisms in a way that serves the unity of the Church.”²⁸³ When individuals’ unique gifts and talents are not respected, and mutual collaboration seems to be lacking in the Church, people feel that their presence and contribution are not valued. As a result, some people drift away from the Church and sometimes towards other groups.

In Paul’s letters, he often involved other people who offered their gifts for collaboration in the ministry: “Priscilla and Aquila” (Rm. 16:3), “Apollos” (1Cor. 3:9), “Andronicus and Junias” (Rm 16:7), “Phoebe” (Rm 16:1-2), “Epaphroditus” (Phil 2:25), “Euodia and Syntyche” (Phil 4:2-3), and “Epaphras” (Col 1:7). These are only a few examples of collaboration in ministry and include both Jewish and Gentile Christians, and both men and women. They were all united in the common task. Paul drew their diverse talents together for active ministry (1Cor.12:7-10). By working in harmony with these people, he taught them that each person’s contribution or role is needed to accomplish the work. In Paul’s vision, “charisma is not restricted to a select few, but, ‘to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit’ (1Cor. 12:7). Nor is it reserved for a particular set of clearly defined gifts; and word or act which mediates grace to the believing community...”²⁸⁴

Reflecting on Paul’s model of ministry, Patrick Chibuko writes that “the Lord’s mission is never a one-man squad, hence the import of collaborative ministry where each person has

²⁸² MAURICE L MONETTE, OMI. *Partners in Ministry*, (Kansas City USA: Sheed & Ward, 1988), p 27.

²⁸³ AVERY. DULLES, *Models of the Church expanded edition*, (Garden City: Image Books 1983), p 166.

²⁸⁴ CHRIS A. OBI, “Christian Levite: Appreciating the Role of Lay Catechists in Ministry,” in *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation*. Ignatius Obinwa (ed.), (Onitsha: Africana First Publishers, 2006), p 276.

something reasonable and meaningful to contribute.”²⁸⁵ The Igbo people have a proverb that supports this point: *Bunu Bunu Ibu Anyi Danda*²⁸⁶ (meaning that many hands achieve big success).²⁸⁷ The ant called the *danda* does not perform any task singly but only in a group. Similarly, Ndigbo do not rely on one person to do everything but always work co-operatively. Vatican II expresses this collaboration in yet another way: “lay people, sharing in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, play their part in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and the world.”²⁸⁸ The practice of uniting these charisms is always symbiotic as members contribute their talents and at the same time receive something from others by doing so; in this way, our love for God and human beings continues to increase. One can take the construction of a house as an example. In such an endeavour, the various professions, the architect, the engineer, the bricklayer, the carpenter, etc. each complement the other, and at the end, a house is built. Paul stresses this diversity of gifts and its importance in his letter to the Ephesians:

But to each of us, divine grace is given according to the measure of Christ’s gifts... As for his gifts, to some, he gave to be apostles, to others prophets, or even evangelists, or pastors and teachers. So, he prepared those who belong to him for the ministry, in order to build up the Body of Christ, until we are all united in the same faith and knowledge of the Son of God. Thus, we shall become the perfect man, upon reaching the maturity and sharing the fullness of Christ.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁵ PATRICK C. CHIBUKO, “Living Liturgy for the Family of God on Mission in Nnewi Diocese,” in *Synod Acta, First Nnewi Catholic Diocesan Synod 3-10 April 2005*. (Nnewi: KathCom Publishers, 2006), p 135.

²⁸⁶ *Danda* is a co-operative worker, for what one *danda* cannot do, many *danda* working together can. (Romanus Ohuche, 1991 Ahiajoku Lecture. <http://ahiajoku.idbonet.com/1991/>). (Accessed May 27, 2016).

²⁸⁷ *Danda* is a species of ant that normally travels in groups. The ants fend for themselves by collectively dragging their food into their habitat.

²⁸⁸ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 2.

²⁸⁹ Eph. 4:7, 11-13.

We share this fullness of Christ when we bring our charisms together for ministry, and by doing so, we enable the ministry of the Church to flourish.

Thomas O'Meara sees ministry as "the public activity of a baptised follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to proclaim, serve and realize the kingdom of God."²⁹⁰ The Apostle Peter also writes "each one of you has received a special grace, so, like good stewards responsible for all these different graces of God, put it at the service of others. If anyone is a speaker, let it be the words of God, if anyone serves, let it be as in strength granted by God; so, that in everything God may receive the glory, through Jesus Christ."²⁹¹ Using these various charisms (which are the manifestation of the Spirit) for the realization of the kingdom and not for personal gratification is at the heart of collaboration. Vatican II puts it in another way "for the exercise of the apostolate he gives the faithful special gifts besides allotting them to each one as he wills so that each and all, putting at the service of others the grace received may be as good stewards of God's varied gifts, for the building up of the whole body in charity."²⁹² Clearly, every member has an essential role to play in an environment where there are plurality and diversity, yet at the same time, unity and equality.

Ebuziem describes the various gifts as a "diversity of ministries [in which] there is an organic unity which is analogous to one body with several parts."²⁹³ However, the experience of some lay people has led them to think that either they are not part of the organic unity (the Church) or that they are not relevant to the Church as far as the pastoral aspects of the mission of

²⁹⁰ THOMAS F. O'MEARA, O.P., *Theology of Ministry, Revised Edition*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), p 150.

²⁹¹ 1Peter, 4:10-11.

²⁹² VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 3.

²⁹³ EBUZIEM, *Doing Ministry in Igbo context*, p 69.

the Church are concerned. Kathleen Cahalan observes that “clearly, many people have gifts that are not recognized or cannot flourish in their community precisely because of control or oppression by others.”²⁹⁴ Every member’s contribution is necessary for the growth of the Church. What matters is that one’s talent is used effectively. Regardless of where one finds oneself within the Church, the primary preoccupation should be to fulfil the common task enthusiastically.

We need to see that differences and circumstances in life are God-given opportunities for us to use our talents for building up the Church. It is apparent that participation in a joint task brings people into fellowship among themselves. Thomas Manjaly suggests that “while the functional differences reflect the richness of gifts and healthy pluralism, the underlying unity is a reflection of its transcendent source. The involvement of various members is a manifestation of the responsibility which every member has for the other”²⁹⁵ As members of one body, we are responsible for and to one another. We are all members of the one body of Christ baptized into one faith and we all have a common mission.

3.4 One Faith, One Mission

The blessing given to all members of the body of Christ during baptism ²⁹⁶shows that the baptismal priesthood exists in every member of the Church before that member ever contemplates becoming a member of the clergy or remaining a member of the lay faithful. We are all baptized in one faith with a common mission to spread the kingdom of God. To be a

²⁹⁴ CAHALAN, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p 37.

²⁹⁵ THOMAS MANJALY, *Collaborative Ministry: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Synergos in Paul*, (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2001), P 348.

²⁹⁶ In the rite of baptism, during the anointing with chrism, the celebrant says, “N..., God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has freed you from sin, given you a new birth by water and Holy Spirit, and welcomed you into his holy people. He now anoints you with the chrism of salvation. As Christ was anointed priest, prophet and king, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life.” (Pocket Ritual: Rite of Christian Initiation. Published by NBCLC, Bangalore, 1988), p 13.

vibrant, living Church, we need to work together and collaborate and recognize everyone's talents and gifts. Lay ecclesial ministry and the ministry of the ordained complement each other within the communion of the Church. They are not in competition. Vatican II teaches that "all Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of love, and by this holiness, a more human manner of life is also fostered in earthly society."²⁹⁷ Neither the clergy nor the laity performs activities outside the society, and these activities focus on the same goal—making disciples of all nations. Carrying out these ministries is needed if the Church is to be fully alive in its communion and mission. The clergy and the laity share in the one ministry of Christ and so exercise their universal priesthood by their baptism and confirmation. Lakeland contends that the activity of the laity is not an extension of the hierarchy but instead the individual member of the Church has a direct mandate from God.²⁹⁸ He notes that "while the ordained priesthood has particular responsibilities not shared with the laity pertaining to the celebration of the sacraments other than Baptism and Eucharist; all other aspects of the priesthood are shared by clergy and laity."²⁹⁹ The clergy seem to have taken this command from Christ to be exclusive to them thereby limiting the ministry of the laity. This practice can be viewed as a deprivation or limitation of the rights of the laity. Lakeland states that "in many ways, the promise of Vatican II has been unfulfilled, none more than the issue of co-responsibility about which Cardinal Suenens wrote so presciently..."³⁰⁰ Pope John Paul II exhorts Pastors to "acknowledge and foster the ministries, the offices and roles of the lay faithful that find their foundation in the Sacraments of baptism, and confirmation..."³⁰¹ Recognizing and encouraging the ministry, offices and functions of the laity is necessary for collaboration, and

²⁹⁷ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 40.

²⁹⁸ LAKELAND, *Catholicism at Crossroads*, p 126.

²⁹⁹ LAKELAND PAUL, *Liberation of the Laity*, p55.

³⁰⁰ LAKELAND PAUL, *Ibid.*, p 188.

³⁰¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Christifideles Laici*, # 23.

will inspire the laity to contribute more to the Church's mission. The mission of the Church calls for a cordial relationship and collaboration among all the faithful (clergy and laity). When there is a cordial relationship between the clergy and the laity, the various gifts of both the clergy and the laity will definitely enrich the Church and enhance the Church's mission. The laity, therefore, should be encouraged and empowered to use their gifts and to carry out ministries and fulfil their roles in the mission of the Church. This implies that the task of the Church is a collective task and so the Church needs to review her present practice to reflect this common mission—togetherness in common task (*Njikoka*). The Church leadership should, therefore, not neglect any member in this common mission.

Some theologians like Edward Schillebeeckx have drawn the attention of the Church hierarchy to the need for a revised Church order to reflect Jesus' instructions regarding servant leadership. In servant leadership, the leader sees herself as one who serves instead of the one who should be served. Schillebeeckx laments that "The hierarchy has succeeded in stratifying the faithful into casts—the clergy (those who lead) and the laity (those who are led)."³⁰² This stratification has succeeded in making the laity see themselves as mere participants in the affairs of the clergy in carrying out the mission of the Church. Kenan Osborne describes the situation as the deposition and reposition³⁰³ of the laity. He uses this description because the original position which the laity occupied has been usurped by the clergy thus relegating the laity to the background.

Ebuziem recommends Church communion with full lay and clerical cooperation and participation. For him, the mission of the Church should never be a "one person" affair but the

³⁰² SCHILLEBEECKX, *The Church with Human Face*, p 21.

³⁰³ KENAN OSBORNE, *MINISTRY: Lay Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church. Its History and Theology, its History and Theology*, (New York: Paulist Press 1993), P 310.

affair of all the members. Uzukwu supports this view of clergy-laity collaboration and contends that “no member of the Church-family has an origin different from other members, though each has his or her particular gifts. There is no question of any member being superior to any other member.”³⁰⁴ The mission of the Church is therefore neither reserved to a few nor limited to one group in the Church. As baptized members of the Church, we all have an equal share in the one faith and the one mission of the Church which implies togetherness in this common task (*Njikoka*).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to conduct a literature review out of which I developed a theoretical framework from the teachings of Vatican II and views of some theologians on clergy-laity collaboration. Together these theoretical ideas by echoing unity in different ways point to collaboration and as such help me develop a concept of “solidarity in common task.” As we saw, the clergy and the laity constitute the Church. Both share one faith and are incorporated into Christ through baptism. Baptism is the common denominator of all Christians. Our differences must not cause us to forget our common heritage. Therefore, to achieve its mission of bringing the light of the gospel to the ends of the earth, the Church must involve all its members. In the absence of collaboration, one wonders whether the clergy can perform its function creditably without the laity and vice versa. This serves as the rationale for the solidarity in common task.

In the next chapter, we shall consider the benefits and challenges of clergy-laity collaboration from an ethnocultural perspective of leadership

³⁰⁴ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 112.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Collaboration: Through an Ethno-Cultural view of Leadership in Igboland

This chapter will look briefly at leadership in general, and various styles of leadership with a view to identifying the type that best supports collaboration. It will also examine leadership and authority in Igbo culture including decision-making, and power and gender relations. Religious leadership in Igboland will be described briefly before delving into the effects of colonization on religious leadership in Igboland. The chapter will describe leadership and authority in Igbo culture using theological and ethical lenses. The leadership structure of Nnewi diocese will also be described. Finally, we will examine the quality of leadership that the clergy demonstrate to the laity in the diocese. We shall look at the role of dialogue as an ingredient of collaboration, the advantages of collaboration, and the cultural values that challenge collaboration and those that support it.

Collaboration involves people working together and inevitably at times someone assumes the leadership. There can be a collaborative project where no one is appointed as a leader but as the demands and specific tasks emerge, different people assume leadership with the support of the group. This is how presiders were chosen in the first Christian communities. The twelve Apostles called the community together to choose people from within the group to perform particular tasks.³⁰⁵ Asking for the affirmation of the people during the ordination ceremony is a

³⁰⁵ “When the number of Christians was increasing and there was complaint regarding equitable distribution of needs, the twelve summoned the whole body of disciples together and all took part in choosing the seven deacons” (Acts 6:1ff).

small remnant of what is left of that experience. Leadership is, therefore, important as far as collaboration is concerned as well as in the organizing of the Church.

4.1 Leadership

The concept of leadership in Igboland cannot be easily understood without a brief discussion of the general concept of leadership today as it obtains in the modern world. The word leadership is an abstract noun that is derived from the noun leader, meaning to lead, guide or direct. Peter Northouse defines leadership as “a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.”³⁰⁶ A leader is, therefore, someone who leads guides or directs another person or group of individuals. She is someone recognized by a group, organization or community to direct its affairs. According to Kathleen Cahalan, a leader is someone who influences others to carry out a common purpose or someone who has been called upon to give vision to a collective effort.³⁰⁷ From Northouse’s perspective, leadership is a transformational event in which the leader affects and is affected by followers. Leadership does not operate in only one direction but instead is interactive. It involves influencing a group of individuals who have a common purpose. Leaders need followers and followers need leaders.³⁰⁸ If there are no followers, there will be no leaders, and if there are no leaders, there will be no followers.

4.1.1 Leadership Styles

There are a variety of leadership styles which include autocratic or authoritarian leadership, transformational leadership, democratic leadership, ethical leadership, servant

³⁰⁶ PETER G. NORTHOUSE, *Leadership: Theory and Practice (third edition)*, (Los Angeles: Sage Publications Inc., 2010), p 3.

³⁰⁷ CAHALAN, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p 49.

³⁰⁸ PETER G. NORTHOUSE *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, p 3.

leadership, and many others. It is beyond the scope of this work to consider all leadership styles. However, I will give a brief definition of some of the leadership styles which are relevant to this discussion. The important question to keep in mind for this research is, which vision of leadership will bring about effective clergy-laity collaboration in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi?

Autocratic leadership, also known as authoritarian leadership, is a leadership style “characterized by individual control over all decisions and little input from group members. Autocratic leaders typically make choices based on their ideas and judgments and rarely accept advice from followers. Autocratic leadership involves absolute, authoritarian control over a group.”³⁰⁹ It is a style of leadership exercised by an individual or a select few.

Transformational leadership refers to “the leader moving the follower beyond immediate self-interests through idealized influence (charisma), inspiration, intellectual stimulation, or individualized consideration. It elevates the follower’s level of maturity and ideals as well as concerns for achievement, self-actualization, and the well-being of others....”³¹⁰ A transformational leadership style pays attention to the development of followers through motivating, empowering and encouraging the followers to transcend their self-interest for the sake of others. Transformational leadership “engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the followers. This type of leader is attentive to the needs and motives of the followers and tries to help the followers reach their fullest potential,”³¹¹ with the end goal of developing followers into leaders.³¹² In this style

³⁰⁹ KENDRA CHERRY, “Autocratic Leadership: Characteristics, Pros, Cons” Updated June 22, – Verywell <https://www.verywell.com/> (Accessed August 24th, 2016).

³¹⁰ BERNARD M. BASS, *Two Decades of Research and Development in Transformational Leadership*, (Center for Leadership Studies, State University of New York, Binghamton, USA) *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 1999, 8 (1), P 11. (Accessed on Friday 26th August 2016).

³¹¹ NORTHOUSE, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, p 172.

³¹² Transformational leadership www.langston.edu/sites/default/files/basic-content.../ Accessed September 16th, 2006).

of leadership, the primary aims of the leader are the goals of the organization and the personal growth of the members. However, Dirk Van Dierendonck is critical of this style of leadership. According to Dierendonck, “there is an obvious risk of manipulation to achieve organizational goals, or to meet the leader’s personal goals.”³¹³ Next, we consider democratic leadership which appears to be more inclusive.

A democratic leadership style gives people the opportunity to take part in decision making and the freedom to take initiative. Under this type of leadership, issues are discussed by members and the leader, and decisions are made after deliberation on the ideas put forward by members.³¹⁴ However, sometimes this style of leadership does not allow for acting quickly when there is an urgent need. By the time that the members meet to make a decision, it might be too late to make the best decision.³¹⁵ Nevertheless, one of the advantages of this style of leadership is that it does not give any member the opportunity to manipulate other members or to treat them as his/her subjects.

Another leadership style is that of ethical leadership. According to Brown, Trevino, and Harrison, ethical leadership is “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication reinforcement and decision making.”³¹⁶ It comes down to influencing oneself and others to do the right thing.³¹⁷ Here, the emphasis is more on normative

³¹³ DIRK VAN DIERENDONEK, *Article from Journal of Management* Vol.37 No. 4, July 2011. P 1228.

³¹⁴ KENDRA CHERRY, “what is Democratic Leadership,” (Updated June 20, 2016).
<http://www.verywell.com> (Accessed 7th September 2016).

³¹⁵ KENDRA CHERRY, “what is Democratic Leadership,” (Updated June 20, 2016).
<http://www.verywell.com> (Accessed 7th September 2016).

³¹⁶ BROWN, TREVINO, and Harrison, *Ethical Leadership: A Social Learning Perspective for Construct Development and Testing Organizational behavior and Human Decision Processes*, (2005), p 120.

³¹⁷ KELLY MONAHAN (quoting Darcy 2010), *A Review of the Literature Concerning Ethical Leadership in Organizations* www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/elj/.../ELJ_Vol5No1_Monahan_pp56-66.pdf by K Monahan - 2012. (Accessed September 16th, 2016).

and directive behaviour: how things should be done given the norms of the organization. This type of leadership puts equal emphasis on the importance of direct involvement of employees, building trust and being ethical in one's own behaviour. The ethical leader promotes honesty and mirrors his or her actions with their values and beliefs.³¹⁸ In other words, the leader is expected to have good character and good values.

Another style of leadership is servant leadership in which the leader serves others for the benefit of others. Servant leadership operates in the context of community or at least common goals. According to Robert Greenleaf, servant leadership

begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve... The conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead... The best test, and difficult to administer is this: do those served grow in persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wise, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged of the society? Will they benefit, or at least not further be harmed?³¹⁹

Greenfield identifies the core characteristic of the servant leadership style as going beyond one's self. Servant leadership is person-oriented and encourages strong relationships and pays attention to the least in the group. The leader inspires others and motivates them by example. She inspires the members of the organization to understand that whatever the organization becomes results from the contribution from all the members. According to Catherine Self, "it has become a truism that Christian leadership must be none other than servant leadership."³²⁰ The servant

³¹⁸ KELLY MONAHAN, "A Review of the Literature Concerning Ethical Leadership in Organizations. www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/elj/.../ELJ_Vol5No1_Monahan_pp56-66.pdf. (quoting Yukl 2006).

³¹⁹ ROBERT GREENLEAF, *Servant Leadership: A Journey in to the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), p 7.

³²⁰ CATHERINE SELF, *The Leadership of Jesus: A Literature Review and Research Proposal*, (Regent University Virginia Beach VA, USA. May 2008), quoting Koenig, J. (2007). Hierarchy transfigured: Perspectives on leadership in the New Testament. *Word & World*, 13(1), p 29.

leader tries to remove inequality and social injustice where they exist.³²¹ The servant leader “values everyone’s involvement in community life because it is within a community that one fully experiences respect, trust and individual strength.”³²² This type of leadership offers to people what is due to them, giving them a sense of fulfilment.

Having looked at several leadership styles, there is no doubt that servant leadership encourages consultation, dialogue and sharing. It is the opposite of autocracy/authoritarianism, which denies the rights of others. A servant leader shows care and concern for one’s followers, empowering them and offering them the opportunity to grow. A servant leader makes every member of a group feel that she is a stakeholder in the group’s undertakings, which gives members a sense of belonging. When servant leadership is practised within the Catholic Church, each member of the Church will be encouraged to exercise his talent and use it for propagating the Church’s mission. It is against this background that Uzukwu suggests that if the Church is to be reconstructed in order to make it bear witness credibly to the kingdom on the African continent, it must be done in deep collaboration and not in splendid isolation.³²³ Uzukwu implies that Church leaders must see themselves as servants in whatever community they find themselves, working together with, and not separated from, the community they serve.

For the Church to move forward, the laity and clergy in the Church should embrace the servant leadership model of Jesus Christ who came to serve and not to be served. “The old idea of thinking of leaders as superior people at the top dominating inferior people at the bottom will

³²¹ NORTHOUSE, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, p 385.

³²² NORTHOUSE, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, p 385.

³²³ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 102.

change, and everyone will have to simultaneously lead and follow.”³²⁴ The leader must be conscious of the fact that the people surrounding him are leaders in other fields of life. Consequently, people should unite in solidarity to achieve a common goal for the common interest. The success or failure of leadership depends on the style the leader adopts.

We shall now examine leadership in Igbo culture to identify the extent to which Igbo leaders have practised collaboration.

4.1.2 Leadership and Authority in Igbo culture

Leadership in traditional Igbo communities was not hereditary, and the governance was democratic. The individual is always free to express his views and to make suggestions in the community gathering. This implies that decisions are made by consensus. As Victor Uchendu observes, “public matters are thrown open for discussion. Every villager who can contribute to the discussion is given a hearing.”³²⁵ In Igboland, the traditional method of conducting affairs was by open discussion. Similarly, Pantaleon Iroegbu writes that “the Igbo ohacritic setup had no overlords, rulers or absolute monarchs. There was a get-together in the decision of things that affected the community and its members. Things that concerned all were decided by all. This basic cultural datum makes leadership into a service, not a despotic domination.”³²⁶ Cyril Onwumechili agrees with Pantaleon stating that “the Igbo traditional government was participatory and extremely democratic. Every ‘grown up male’ could have and indeed has his say at the assemblies discussing the taking of decisions on matters of interest to the village or

³²⁴ MARGARET J WHEATLEY, “Good-bye Command and Control,” in *Leader to Leader Enduring Insights on Leadership* from the Drucker Foundations Award Winning Journal. Frances Hasselbein & Paul M Cohen (eds.), (San Francisco: Jossey Bass publishers, 1999), p 27.

³²⁵ VICTOR C. UCHENDU, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, (New York, Holt, Rinehart & Winston Inc., 1965), p 41.

³²⁶ PANTALEON O. IROEGBU, *Appropriate Ecclesiology: Through Narrative Theology to an African Church*, (Owerri: International Universities Press Ltd., 1996), p 93.

group of villages.”³²⁷ However, I disagree with the adverb ‘extremely’ with which Onwumechili described democracy in Igboland because the participation involved only the grown-up males. Instead, I would describe the government as a participatory democracy because of its “patriarchal” nature.

Oliver Onwubiko writes that “in traditional African life...leaderships are rarely done by one and the same person. They are done by individuals, who in the spirit of Ujamaa, must work in collaboration and in solidarity with the community.”³²⁸ However, this practice does not mean that the leader is not recognized or respected. The people generally choose Igbo leaders, and they earn the respect of the people who owe them genuine and total allegiance. According to Uchendu:

The Igbo leader ‘emerges’: he is not born or made. The Igbo saying that ‘everyone is a chief in his hut’...means that a dictatorial leader of the Igbo is inconceivable. A leader may be a dictator if he likes, but his leadership must be restricted to his household. A leader is supported by his followers as long as ‘he does not govern too much.’ To govern too much is to alienate them.³²⁹

The Igbo people owe allegiance to the leader as long as he does not dictate to them or else they will remind him that they are the people who put him in the leadership position. This is in keeping with the graphic Igbo proverb: “*Alusi kpakalia ike egosi ya osisi esi welu tua ya*” meaning, when a lesser deity overreaches the bounds of its power, its worshippers remind it that it is carved from mere wood that was once a tree. The Igbos abhor despotic and autocratic leaders. “Ndigbo respect and recognize their leaders, but they believe in participatory

³²⁷ CYRIL AGODI ONWUMECHILI, “Igbo Enwe Eze: The Igbos have no Kings,” Ahiajoku Lecture. <http://ahiajoku.igbonet.com/2000>. (Accessed 12th June 2015).

³²⁸ OLIVER A. ONWUBIKO, *The Church as the Family of God (Ujamaa)*, (Nsukka: Fulladu Publishing Company 1999), p 97.

³²⁹ UCHENDU, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, P 20.

democracy, where every person must be allowed to make a contribution.”³³⁰ The leader or ruler also sees himself not as an absolute monarch or a despot or a dictator but rather as a servant or leader of the community. Ikenga Ozigboh puts it this way: “Traditional Igbo holders of power were leaders rather than rulers. They exercised power on behalf of the community to which they were responsible and accountable.”³³¹ The Igbos “see their leader as ‘*onye isi*’ (the head), ‘*onye ndu*’ (the guide/leader) but they physically acknowledge no “kings” (*Igbo enwe eze*). For them, leadership is shared direction and responsibility which demands constant interaction and communication.”³³² No single person has sole responsibility and authority.

Similarly, Ebuziem observes that Igbo leaders are never monarchs or despots “but servant-leaders who coordinate the contributions and affairs of all *pro bono communi* (for the common good).”³³³ This is the reason why most people hold the view that traditional Igbo society is based on democratic principles as expressed in the common proverb *Igbo enwe eze* (the Igbos have no king). Uchendu asserts that leadership in Igbo land is “a government in which the principle of equality is respected; in which the use of force is minimal or absent; and in which there are leaders rather than rulers....”³³⁴ The practice of hierarchism, authoritarianism and classism which is often exhibited today as models of leadership in Churches in Igboland goes against this principle. The authoritarianism and classism in the Church in general prompted Avery Dulles to assert that “clericalism tends to reduce the laity to a condition of passivity and to make their apostolate a mere appendage of the apostolate of the hierarchy.”³³⁵ Sadly, Dulles’

³³⁰ EMMA OGU, “Ndigbo, their Culture, and Institutions,” *Ndigbo Journal* Vol.1, No 11, (Nov./Dec.,2008), p 33. (Also see Ebuziem, *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context*. P 136).

³³¹ IKENGA R. OZIGBOH, *Igbo Catholicism: The Onitsha Connection 1967-1984* (Onitsha: Africana Fep Publishers, 1985), p 119.

³³² OZIGBOH, *Igbo Catholicism*, p 124.

³³³ EBUZIEM, *Doing Ministry in Igbo Context*, p 192.

³³⁴ UCHENDU, *The Igbo of Southeast Nigeria*, p 46.

³³⁵ AVERY DULLES, *Models of the Church: Second Edition*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan 1988), p 43.

perception seems particularly evident in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi where the Church is seen as the priests' Church. This is not consistent with the democratic leadership structure of Igbo culture.

However, opinions vary regarding the ideals of traditional Igbo leadership. Axel Harneit-Siever holds this position and argues that:

Inner structures of pre-colonial Igbo structures were far from being egalitarian. Igbo society has its 'slaves (*ohu*) and cult-slaves (*osu*) on one hand, and it had leaders on the other. Depending on the sub-cultural area of Igboland we are talking about, there were lineage headships, influential age groups and powerful titled and secret societies... The majority of such leadership positions were held by men. However, there were also female assemblies and individual leaders, and female titles in some places, in what has been described as a 'dual-sex political system' with gendered complementary structures³³⁶

From Harneit-Siever's perspective, the leadership structure in the traditional Igbo traditional culture was not strictly democratic while his assessment recognizes that there were some leadership roles for women.

To understand fully leadership and authority in Igbo society, one has to go back to the smallest group, which is the family. The father is seen as the head and shield of the household. He takes direct charge and responsibility for whatever happens in his family and will not accept any interference from any quarter. Thus, he is "the *di bu uno*" which means the pillar that carries the household. The wife is the heart of the home, the pillar that provides emotional nurturing for the family. Conglomerations of families make up the *'Umunna'* (kindred). In

³³⁶ AXEL HARNEIT-SIEVER, "Igbo Traditional Rulers: Chieftaincy and the State in Southeastern Nigeria," in *Scholarly Articles in the Culture of Leadership in Igbo Traditional Society*. African Spectrum 33 (1998), 1:57-79. (Accessed Mon, 22 Aug 2016).

matters affecting the kindred every family is represented by adult males from each family.”³³⁷ The leadership of the kindred is vested in the eldest male in the kindred, who is called ‘*okpara*’. The *Okpara* is the custodian of the sacred object ‘*ofò*’ which symbolizes the legitimacy of his authority. It should be noted that a woman has no access to this symbol of authority (the *ofò*). As has been stated above, it is only meant for the eldest male in the family.³³⁸ This belies the notion that leadership in Igbo culture is entirely democratic since women are excluded from being custodians of the *ofò*, which is the symbol of authority.

The leader maintains his authority, power and status by his credibility, good judgment and excellent performance. The leader does not expose his kindred to ridicule by engaging in corruption, immorality or injustice.³³⁹ The kindred (*Umunna*) is a very powerful structure that is greater than but inclusive of the power of the individual. This belief informs the popular Igbo saying “*Umunna bu ike*” (power belongs to the kindred). “The Igbo concept of authority is, therefore, circular with the members of the household at the centre, who through common consent and by listening to the voices of surrounding ancestors come to certain decisions that will be binding on everybody.”³⁴⁰

A collection of kindreds, in turn, makes up a village. “Each town is made up of several villages. The town leadership consists of a council of elders selected from all the villages. In choosing representatives for the town leadership, each village tries to have at least one

³³⁷ EKWE NCHE ORGANIZATION/RESEARCH INSTITUTE, “Collective Leadership in Igbo Society” in *Leadership Series* www.ekwenche.org/fulltext.doc_leadership.htm. (Assessed October 4th 2016).

³³⁸ I do not know exactly why women have no access to the “*ofò*” symbol but from my knowledge of Igbo culture I would think that it is because women who are wives in a particular family came from another kindred and daughters born in the family are to be given out in marriage to another family in another kindred.

³³⁹ EKWE NCHE ORGANIZATION/RESEARCH INSTITUTE, “Collective Leadership in Igbo Society” in *Leadership Series*.

³⁴⁰ CHIKA J. UZOR, *Living between Two Worlds: Intrapersonal Conflicts Among Igbo Seminarians-An Inquiry*, (Bern, Germany: Peter Lang AG, European Academic Publishers, 2003), P 348.

representative from each kindred. These representatives exercise authority and leadership.”³⁴¹ They direct the discussions and summarize the decisions made in the assembly of all the village groups and carry out other social and political activities such as dispute resolution. The representatives are the custodians of the customs and the traditions of the people.

However, while society was more or less democratic in most of the Igbo states, Nwafor Orizu admits that most of the leaders were patriarchal and treated as divine.³⁴² According to Orizu, this was not only because the leader inherited the position from his father but also because he represented the ancestors. Orizu continues:

The authority of the chief executive (king/leader) was not based on written constitution nor the state militia. His was the function of a trusted patriarch-a father of the people who could secure the confidence of his children because he was divine and temporal as well; he was almighty because he could direct the opinion of the gods. When the signs and omens of tragedy pervaded the social atmosphere, he, the king (leader) could interfere with the spirit world through the priests and thus avert a pending catastrophe. Being the source of authority and the final court of justice, people invariably called him Igwe (heaven), just as the Chinese in the past conceived their emperor as the mandate of heaven.³⁴³

Ebuziem disagrees with Orizu stating that, in traditional Igbo communities, leadership was not hereditary and leaders were made and not born. “Some of the leadership characteristics or attributes for effective leadership in the traditional society include the ability to use proverbs and riddles and to speak in parables, the ability to recall and utilize historical facts and legends in

³⁴¹ EKWE NCHE ORGANIZATION/RESEARCH INSTITUTE, “Collective Leadership in Igbo Society” in *Leadership Series*.

³⁴² NWAFOR A. A ORIZU, *Without Bitterness: Western Nations in Post-War Africa*, (Nnewi: Horizontal Publishers, 1992), pp 125-6.

³⁴³ ORIZU, *Without Bitterness*, pp 125-6.

village discussions, and the cultivation of the qualities of honesty and integrity.”³⁴⁴ Orizu’s view must have been influenced by his experience in his hometown of Nnewi where kingship of the town is hereditary. In Nnewi town, at the death of the traditional ruler, the mantle of leadership automatically goes to his first son. But generally, in Igbo land, leadership was not hereditary. In any case, this method of traditional rulership was changed with the introduction of warrant chiefs.

4.1.3 Warrant Chiefs

The worldview of the Igbos was supplanted by the British imposition and installation of warrant chiefs.³⁴⁵ These warrant chiefs were appointed by the colonial administration to act as intermediaries between the government and the people. Warrant chiefs commanded respect not because the people loved them, but because they were the authority and the final arbiter since they had the support of the British colonial administration. They controlled everything virtually because they held power and used it to their advantage.³⁴⁶ According to George Dine, the warrant chief system “is an intelligent transfer of court of equity into the hands of a few indigenous leaders who helped the British to make laws after the British fashion for the traditional Igbo people.”³⁴⁷ The system was referred to as indirect rule. The British ruled the

³⁴⁴ EBUZIEM, *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context*, p 135. (Quoting B. O. Ukeje).

³⁴⁵ “The warrant chiefs are cronies hand-picked by the colonial district commissioner to represent the village in the court areas. They are those who impressed the district commissioner with their courage to come forward to meet the Europeans. They were given a cap of office and warrant of authority which was backed by the coercive force of the administration. But these warrant chiefs were not in any way representatives of the village-groups they were supposed to serve; most of them were men who had no status in the society.” (Uchendu, pp 46-47).

³⁴⁶ AXEL HARNEIT-SIEVER, *Igbo Traditional Rulers: Chieftaincy and the State in Southeastern Nigeria*, p 61. “The constitution of warrant chiefs (rulers) was brought about by British colonial rule and these leaders were ‘colonially backed usurpers of power’. They held power and used it for their own gain. He buttressed his point with an example of an Enugu ruler chief Onyeama, described as an “African god” by his grandson (Onyeama 1982). This chief controlled the flows of labor to the emerging coal mining industry and established himself as powerful ruler, combining wealth with terror and magical power over his people.”

³⁴⁷ GEORGE U. DINE, *Traditional Leadership as Service among the Igbo of Nigeria*, (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Lateranensis 1983), p 225.

people through the warrant chiefs whom they installed. Historically, this system of governance in which one person holds absolute authority over others was unknown in Igboland.

4.1.4 Power and gender relations

The Igbo society is patrilineal and male dominated. The family head, who is the eldest male in the family and the holder of *ofò* (the symbol of ancestral authority), is entitled to pour libations and to pray to the ancestors for protection and blessings for the whole family. He also channels the petitions of the family to the ancestors. He settles disputes among family members. However, his authority as the family head is limited to his family.

It is a commonly held belief that women will get married and so they have no inheritance from their father such as land or economic trees.³⁴⁸ However, women still constitute a formidable force in Igboland. They are the *Umuada*³⁴⁹ and *Ndinyom*.³⁵⁰ Their decisions are influential and are very much respected. If they disagree with a decision taken by the men, there will be no peace in the community until the matter is settled in an acceptable fashion. Nwoga describes it as follows:

Whereas the men of the kindred appeared to take all the decision, there was *oha ndiom* (*Ndinyom*) that has to accept the decision otherwise they were not valid. If *oha ndiom* is provoked into a disagreement, then the community is not at peace till the matter is given a more acceptable turn... If there are problems in the family which the men folk are reluctant to solve or over which they are proving

³⁴⁸ Economic trees are fruit-bearing trees which serve commercial purposes such as palm trees, ukwa, ube, oranges, mangoes, etc.

³⁴⁹ Umuada are the daughters of the family or village who are married outside. They have a very powerful voice when it comes to things like settling disputes or something of the sort in their paternal family.

³⁵⁰ Ndinyom refers to the women who are married into the family or village as the case may be.

incapable, the daughters of the family the *umuada* come, and their decision is final.³⁵¹

Once a matter concerns the *umuada or ndinyom*, it is recognized as a serious issue.

Women also make their own laws which are binding to them (the women). The laws which they make deal with the sweeping of the shrines, clearing the market vicinities when they become overgrown with weeds, and also cleaning the streams and springs. Ilogu summarized these laws as follows: “Senior married women enforce their own laws about markets, their cleaning and the cleaning of the springs from where water is collected.”³⁵²

4.1.5 Decision-Making Processes in Igbo Culture

As I have stated, in this chapter previously, in pages 112 through 118, decision making in Igbo culture is not left in the hands of a single individual; instead, deliberations are carried out at the village or town meetings where everybody present has the right and freedom to express their view. When the matter has been thoroughly discussed, and a consensus reached, then it becomes the decision of the people. In a situation where no agreement is reached, the discussion will be postponed until another meeting.

When a decision affecting an Ibo community is to be made, several groups and organizations concern themselves with the issue and within each organization near unanimity must be reached before discussion can be closed. Participation is on such a broad scale that most traditional meetings have no chairman or central direction, take no votes, permit more than one person to speak at a time, have no agenda, and continue for long periods. A decision reached by one community that is not acceptable to

³⁵¹ DONATUS NWOGA “*Nka na Nzere: The Focus of Igbo Worldview*,” Ahiajoku Lecture 1984. <http://ahiajoku.igbonet.com/1984/> (Accessed 23rd May 2016).

³⁵² ILOGU, *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, p 15.

another organization can usually not be implemented.³⁵³

The above quote describes a typical village or town meeting in Igboland except that someone always presides and there is also an agenda. The author quoted had, it would seem, a somewhat limited understanding of the dynamics of Igbo community meetings. As others pointed out, “the village assembly was considered the Igbo man’s birthright and guarantee of his rights, his shield against oppression, the expression of his individualism and the means whereby the young and the progressive impressed their views upon the old and conservative”³⁵⁴ The traditional Igbo community is “a corporation in which the government is the concern of all.”³⁵⁵ This is the reason why every person at the assembly makes an effort to contribute to the discussion. However, it should be noted that the inclusive nature of decision making in Igbo culture is constrained by the non-participation of women in decision making and by the fact that some groups follow the tradition of inherited leadership.

4.1.6 Religion and Religious leadership in Igbo Culture

Igbo people are very religious, with religion occupying a central place in their life and activities. “Their religion is their existence, and their existence is their religion.”³⁵⁶ They see religion in everything around them because God created these things. They believe that “the world is inhabited by created beings both animate and inanimate, while the spirit world is the abode of the Creator, deities, disembodied and malignant spirits, and the ancestral spirits. Religion has a political significance since the traditional governing authority has a religious

³⁵³ UZOR, *Living Between Two Worlds*, p 186. (Uzor is quoting Parinder).

³⁵⁴ DINE. *Traditional Leadership as Service among the Igbo of Nigeria*, p 89.

³⁵⁵ ILOGU, *Christianity and Igbo Culture*, p 16.

³⁵⁶ ONWUEMERIE A. IKWUAGWU, *Initiation in African Traditional Religion: A systematic symbolic analysis with special reference to aspects of Igbo religion in Nigeria*, (GmbH Wurzburg, Echter Verlag, 2007), p 20.

foundation.”³⁵⁷ The Igbo people turn to religion for a solution to any problem that they face in life and seek out traditional religious leaders— priests and medicine men— in moments of crisis.

Chika Uzor observes that:

The Igbo rely on special kinds of *ogwu* to enhance their powers of achievement and success. People of different works of life like students, workers, managers and traders, etc., still resort to the use of *ogwu* in order to secure success at examinations, to earn promotion at work, to cover up some misdeeds at work, to win the attention of a cathected or loved one, to make or have successful business transactions, to get rich quickly etc. Many politicians, military officials, academic professionals, etc. make use of *ogwu* as well.³⁵⁸

This implies that there are not only socio-political leaders but also religious leaders who are involved in ritual matters.

In the traditional Igbo context, religious leaders serve as a link between the people on the one hand, and God, spirits and invisible things on the other. These religious leaders include family heads and priests/priestesses. The family head, by his position, is the link between the visible and invisible members of the family. These religious leaders discover and announce, “what customs and codes have been broken and what social, political and religious steps are to be taken to secure justice for god and man.”³⁵⁹ In other words, they intervene whenever approved social and religious customs are contravened. They prescribe the sacrifice of atonement and cleansing and the appropriate punishment for the offender.

Apart from the family head and the priest/priestess, there are also medicine men/women who serve the community in a time of sickness—both physical and spiritual. If an Igbo person

³⁵⁷ JOHN E. E. NJOKU, *The Igbos of Nigeria Ancient Rites, Changes and Survival*, (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1972), pp 18-19.

³⁵⁸ UZOR, *Living Between Two Worlds*, pp 220-221.

³⁵⁹ ILOGU, *Christianity and Ibo Culture*, p 16.

gets ill or suffers misfortune, it can be interpreted as a sign that the individual has offended the deity. It may also be assumed that either the person omitted a particular ritual or that the dead parent has not been appeased; or that some evil-minded individual must have caused the sickness. In these cases, the person has to employ the services of a medicine man/woman and make a sacrifice of atonement with objects prescribed by the medicine man/woman.

There are two categories of medicine men/women, namely diviners and healers (native doctors). The diviners determine the cause of the sickness or the misfortune while the healers prepare medicine for the cure. “Divination in the case of illness, nearly always, leads to finding what spirit had been wronged and what human relationship had been strained.”³⁶⁰ The diviner finds out the problem and the cause, the medicine man/woman prepares the medication, and the priest/priestess offers the sacrifice. The functions of the diviner, the medicine man/woman and the priest/priestess are interwoven, and they work cooperatively for the good of the community. None of them arrogates the whole function to themselves or sees the other’s role as inferior to theirs. Each of them knows and acknowledges that they need each other.

I am not suggesting that the traditional practices are the preferred way and that the evangelization of Igboland is negative. I am drawing attention to the complementary, or collaborative functioning operative in the different segments of cultural religious practices in Igboland before the coming of the missionaries. The depreciation of this traditional Igbo way of life shows the extent to which missionary activities have undermined most of these traditional religious practices. Today, anyone who visits the diviner and goes to the medicine man for traditional medicine or goes to the traditional religious priest for sacrifice is accused of idolatry. Yet, some of these practices are still very popular, given that a good number of people still

³⁶⁰ ILOGU, *Christianity and Ibo Culture*, p 53.

patronize these traditional practitioners. According to Metuh and Ejizu, “many (Igbo people) secretly consult diviners and offer sacrifices to appease them (deities). The remains of sacrifices found at road junctions in the villages and some urban areas attest to the fact...”³⁶¹

4.2 Differentiating Evangelization from Colonization

Before examining the effect of evangelization on Igbo culture, it is *ad rem* to distinguish between colonization and evangelization. The tension in current Igbo society points to the whole issue of the contextualization of theology, which is a critical issue in theology today. This study is highlighting my understanding of the tension, keeping in mind that I am undertaking this study as an Igbo priest. Bevans alluded to this when he said that “if theology is truly to take culture and cultural change seriously, it must be understood as being done most fully by the subjects and agents of culture and cultural change.”³⁶² Although this is a critical issue, it is not the focus of this thesis. Nevertheless, the thesis points to the need for further work to be done in this area.

Colonization is “the imposition of foreign rule by an external power which culminates in the control and exploitation of the conquered people.”³⁶³ It is “the domination of physical space, the reformation of the natives’ mind, and the integration of local economics histories into the western perspectives.”³⁶⁴ One of the effects of colonization is that the lifestyles and modes of thinking of dominant nations are imposed on dominated nations.

³⁶¹ Metuh & Ejizu, *Hundred Years of Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria*, p 183.

³⁶² STEPHEN B. BEVANS, *Models of Contextual Theology*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002), p 18.

³⁶³ ETIM E. OKON, “Christian Missions and Colonial Rule in Africa: Objective and Contemporary Analysis,” in *European Scientific Journal* June 2014 edition vol.10, No.17 ISSN: 1857 – 7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857- 7431). <http://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/viewFile/3557/3397>. (Accessed May 1st 2017).

³⁶⁴ UZOR, *Living Between Two Worlds*, p 242.

Evangelization is “a confident proclamation of the basic message of God’s offer of salvation through Jesus Christ.”³⁶⁵ Through evangelization, the Church draws people to herself not by threats and condemnation but by persuasion. Missionaries are evangelizers. It is the duty of evangelizers to preserve everything good that is to be found in human cultures and religions. According to Vatican II, “whatever good that is in the minds and hearts of people, whatever good lies latent in the religious practices and cultures of diverse peoples, is not only saved from destruction but also healed, ennobled, and perfected unto the glory of God.”³⁶⁶ Cultural values that are in harmony with the gospel are to be retained and those that are not are to be rejected or transformed. The missionaries to Igboland seem not to have realized this because, apparently, they did not see much good in any of the cultural practices of the Igbo people.

In Igboland, missionaries were aided by colonial power. According to Etim Okon, the colonial government needed missionaries as civilizing agents and offered them grants-in-aid and protection. However, the two allies disagreed about attitudes towards pagan cultures, the goals of education and the future of the colonies. The colonial government aimed to use the traditional order as a basis for administrative structuring while the missions wanted to pull down the existing cultural structure.³⁶⁷ “Considering the circumstances, it was completely impossible for missionaries to have resources independent of the colonial powers to carry out their work. Colonial influence greatly facilitated the work of missionaries, and by collaborating with the colonialists, Christian missionaries were collaborators in killing self-esteem in [the] African”³⁶⁸ In this way, evangelization seemed to become the handmaid of colonialism, because the

³⁶⁵ AVERY DULLES, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), p 3.

³⁶⁶ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 17; *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*, # 58.

³⁶⁷ ETIM OKON, “Christian Missions and Colonial Rule in Africa: Objective and Contemporary Analysis,” in *European Scientific Journal* June 2014 edition vol.10, No.17 ISSN: 1857 – 7881 (Print) e - ISSN 1857- 7431 <http://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/viewFile/3557/3397>. (Accessed May 1st 2017).

³⁶⁸ OKON, in *European Scientific Journal* (Assessed May 1st, 2017).

missionaries misunderstood the Igbo culture and condemned certain traditional practices, thus consciously or unconsciously, becoming agents of cultural disruption and change in Igboland.

4.2.1 The Effects of Missionary Activities on Igbo Culture

Before discussing the effect of missionary activities on Igbo culture, one must admit that the missionary activities in Igboland are a mixed blessing. It has both positive and negative effects on both the people and the culture. We shall look briefly at the negative and positive implications.

We have already described aspects of the nature of leadership in Igbo culture before the advent of colonialism. As noted previously, the traditional religion laid established behavioural rules in Igboland. While the Europeans brought many positive things to Igboland, the fact remains that the imposition of European culture on the Igbo people affected their worldview significantly, and had a devastating effect on the people, disrupting the whole fabric of their lives, as well as the meanings they gave to their world, which made life worth living for them. Although, cultural values like taking the *Ozo* title might seem hierarchical, that did not prevent people from claiming their rights and making contributions during community meetings. Notably, being a titled person did not guarantee that one's opinion would be preferred to a wiser contribution of a non-titled person. There are also instances "where women's decision as *Umuada* (daughters of the lineage) on issues affecting the community or individual, were always final."³⁶⁹ Everybody's opinion was recognized and considered. The decline of some aspects of the original traditional form of religion in favour of the hierarchical, autocratic or despotic form

³⁶⁹ ROSE UCHEM, *Overcoming Women's Subordination: An Igbo African and Christian Perspective: Envisioning an Inclusive Theology with Reference to Women*, (Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd., 2001), p 42.

resulted from its contact with European culture. Vatican II encourages dialogue between Christianity and cultures and teaches missionaries to ponder the following:

What is to be done to prevent increased exchanges between cultures (which ought to lead to genuine and fruitful dialogue between groups and nations) from disturbing the life of communities, overthrowing traditional wisdom, and endangering the character proper to each people? How can the dynamism and expansion of the new culture be fostered without losing living fidelity to the heritage of tradition?³⁷⁰

The council fathers advocate for cultural development through dialogue rather than cultural extinction.

Through its schools, churches, press and audio-visual media, the European colonization disseminated new attitudes that were contrary to Igbo cultural practices. Through attendance at the schools, the people were distanced from the farms and from helping on the farms. Also, the minds of the pupils were biased against Igbo culture and society, but were opened to the Christian tradition. The school trained young men who went to the cities in search of jobs sometimes leaving their aged parents uncared for. Through the Church, the people were taught that the traditional practices were pagan worship and devil-oriented. Chika Uzor describes it thus:

The introduction of western education sensitively disrupted the traditional distribution of labour. Children spent the time for farm work mostly at school. Farm work came increasingly to be replaced by white collar jobs. Moreover, with their newly acquired status and stock of knowledge the youth developed a contemptuous attitude towards their largely illiterate elders, the local and traditional authorities and institutions.³⁷¹

³⁷⁰ VATICAN II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*, # 56.

³⁷¹ UZOR, *Living Between Two Worlds*, p 326.

Through charitable works, the missionaries enticed the Igbo into abandoning their traditional belief system while embracing a new religion. The traditional religious belief system was said to “lead consequently and ultimately to damnation, or at best; it was said to be a mark of primitiveness, backwardness and savagery. To become a Christian was to become modern, civilized and saved.”³⁷² Those who became Christians were prohibited from participating in traditional activities. This gradually affected the common life of the people and their collaborative spirit. Chinua Achebe described the situation aptly when he said:

[The white man] says that our customs are bad; and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.³⁷³

It is true that the Jesus of the gospel is for all nations but when the bearers of the gospel fail to recognize the good in a particular culture, the gospel will be a foreign religion to the culture. Stephen Bevans stated that “if a person approaches a culture or context openly, and is willing to learn the necessary language or languages, and is willing to read and appropriate social and anthropological literatures about a particular culture, he or she can understand much about what the particular culture is about.”³⁷⁴ The early missionaries to Igboland did not think this way. While some of the traditional Igbo practices are corrupt, there are some valuable practices that were rejected along with the less desirable ones because the missionaries did not understand the worldview of the Igbos, and they considered every traditional Igbo cultural practice as evil. We

³⁷² Uzor, *Living Between Two Worlds*, p 272.

³⁷³ CHINUA ACHEBE, *Things Fall Apart*, illustrated by Uche Okeke, (London, Heinemann: African Writers Series, 1983), p 124.

³⁷⁴ BEVANS, *Models of Contextual Theology*, p 19.

should remember that the Church is not tied exclusively to any particular culture and so “she can enter into communion with different forms of culture, thereby enriching both itself and the cultures themselves”.³⁷⁵

Igbo spiritual and religious values were relegated to the background by the missionaries. The cult of the ancestors and their veneration in libation of wine and sacrifice of food have been trivialized. The work of the diviners and healers has also been undermined. In fact, I would say that Igbo converts discarded some of their customs and traditions because of the missionary activities. Missionary activities disrupted the culturally unified and religiously integrated scheme of Igbo tradition, a tradition which admittedly had both strengths and weaknesses. Metuh stated that “many rites of passage like the traditional naming ceremony...clothing ceremonies...and many Igbo traditional festivals... are almost extinct.”³⁷⁶

Although the missionary activities dealt a devastating blow to the Igbo culture by undermining some of the cultural values, there are some cultural practices which still survive today such as divination, taking of title, initiation into a masquerade cult, oath taking and others referred to in Chapter One (p. 33-40). Metuh states that “some Christians still revere and fear the ancestors. Offerings are made to appease or win their blessings in times of crisis... The practices of divination and making charms are widespread”³⁷⁷ The persistence of these cultural practices is a sign that they are perceived as valuable and have important effects on the life of the people. The Church needs to make a further study of these aspects of the Igbo tradition and determine how to refine them so that they may contribute to the mission of the Church. The

³⁷⁵ VATICAN II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern (Gaudium et Spes)*, # 58.

³⁷⁶ IKENGA E METUH & CHRISTOPHER I. EJIZU, *Hundred Years of Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985 the Nnewi Story*, p183.

³⁷⁷ IKENGA E METUH & CHRISTOPHER I. EJIZU, *Hundred Years of Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985 the Nnewi Story*, p183.

Church has acknowledged some of the problems caused by the missionaries and has continued to challenge their missteps by emphasizing the inculturation of the gospel. We can affirm this by the reflection of Hinfelaar F. Hugo, one of the missionaries to Africa. He reflects that:

The more I was given the opportunity to study the past, the more I realized that we, missionaries of Europe, have not always followed St Elizabeth and John the Baptist. We did not allow ourselves to be moved by the presence of the embryonic Christ within the womb of people's cultures. We cut away age-old trees of custom without looking back at the fruits, we burnt the good seed of tradition with the chaff and at times threw away the Christic baby with the dirty water. But we had good intentions and did not always mean to destroy where we should have brought completion. We simply behave as Victorian children of Janesenistic times. And I think that a more genuine and better adapted evangelization is the debt owed by the Church to the people of Africa.³⁷⁸

Hugo humbly acknowledges their mistakes as missionaries although they were doing everything with good intentions.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the Church, through her evangelization, brought some very positive practices, and corrected some Igbo traditional and detrimental practices. An example is forbidding the killing of twins, which was previously practiced in Igboland. Schools were also built in almost every community, formal education was provided and the people were taught how to read and write. The health condition of the people and their standard of living were improved because the Church offered free medications and clothing to the people. The

³⁷⁸ HINFELAAR F. HUGO, "Evangelization and Inculturation," in *AFER (African Ecclesial Review)* 36, (1994)1, 2-18. Eldoret, (Cited by Chika Uzor, in *Living between Two Worlds*), p 327.

schools produced learned men and women who went on to work in large enterprises and organizations.

In summary, evangelization by the missionaries increased the negative effects of colonization. The missionary activities undermined some indigenous values such as community decision-making processes. The Church was also complicit in the repression of positive aspects of the culture. At the same time, the Church and evangelization by the Church also brought about some very positive results and corrected some traditional biases and detrimental practices.

Considering what we have discussed so far, one can say that the missionary activities affected various aspects of Igbo culture including the leadership structure. Having touched on some of the effects of missionary activities on Igbo culture, it would be useful to look at leadership from a theological and ethical perspective.

4.3 Leadership: Theological and Ethical Perspectives

4.3.1 Leadership from a Theological Perspective

The Bible is filled with examples of good leadership and theologians have also written extensively about leadership. Good leadership is demonstrated by the care and concern which the leader has for the followers. In Mk. 10:42-44, Jesus addressed the disciples thus: “you know that among the gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them. But this is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all; for the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”³⁷⁹ Here Jesus describes the concern of real

³⁷⁹ Mk.10: 42ff, Mt. 20:26ff.

leaders for the community; with these leaders, the good of the community is always front and centre.

Theologians affirm that leadership should be for the service of the community. Walter Kasper states that “the special task of ministerial (i.e. priests) service is to equip the other forms of service to serve; it serves the other services and helps thereby to build up the whole body of Christ. It is a spiritual, pastoral, service of the individual members of the Church and of the Church as a whole.”³⁸⁰ Kathleen Cahalan’s perspective resonates with that of Kasper. She writes that “leadership in Christian ministry is not a service rendered for self-advancement or to exercise power and authority over others but a service of offering one’s gifts for the sake of building up the community.”³⁸¹ Therefore, it is necessary that those being formed for Church leadership must learn thoroughly how to be “servants of society and not simply teachers or leaders.”³⁸² However, they do need to acquire leadership skills if they intend to be effective in their pastoral work. This acquisition of leadership skills through formation is expected to give leaders the potential to collaborate with the laity, who are also full members of the Church. Leaders in the Church should recognize that their vocation of serving the kingdom can be fulfilled through service to the community.

Uzukwu also stresses the importance of training leaders who are selfless and ready to collaborate with others. He writes that “if seminary formation lays less emphasis on subservience and stresses self-confidence, hard work, self-reliance, self-sacrifice, and uprightness, along with an intensive spirit of collaboration, the Church may provide servants and leaders who will

³⁸⁰ WALTER KASPER, *Leadership in the Church*, (Translated by Brain McNeil). (New York: A Herder & Herder Book. Crossroad Publishing Company 2002), pp 55-56.

³⁸¹ CAHALAN, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, p 56.

³⁸² UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 100.

participate with courage and dignity in the reconstruction of Africa.”³⁸³ Uprightness and selflessness are *sine qua non* for good leadership since the leader not only practices justice but is also ready to sacrifice oneself for the good of the people. She does not try to dominate others.

Uzukwu stated that “the 1994 Synod for Africa did not lose sight of the fact that the style of Church leadership in Africa is not only dominated by the clergy but is also clericalized.”³⁸⁴ Uzukwu maintained that the Fathers of this synod for Africa want future priests who will be faithful servants and animators of the Christian community. They want people who will be formed to work with and to recognize the laity as full members of the Church. According to Uzukwu, “it is because of a poor theology of baptism and a clericalized ministry that the laity has been denied their dignity in the Church.”³⁸⁵ In contrast with the lifestyle of the leaders of his time, Jesus lived a humble life of service and so introduced a revolution in the way ministry is perceived in the Church community. When the Church leadership decides to fully follow Christ’s path of humility and self-emptying (Phil 2:6-8), “it will be impossible for the Church to move from the language of service to that of domination, from the language of being slaves of all to the language and practice of rank and privilege.”³⁸⁶ Christ, the master, taught the language of love, compassion, service and identification with the people. He abhorred authoritarianism and domination, and this attitude alienated him from the ruling authority of his day. According to Walter Kasper, community leadership cannot be exercised in an autocratic manner.

It (community leadership) must collaborate with other ministries and with the entire community, and it is in this context that the term “cooperative pastoral care” has been coined. This corresponds to the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. He

³⁸³ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 101.

³⁸⁴ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 104.

³⁸⁵ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 105.

³⁸⁶ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 136.

behaves not as their Lord, but “as one who serves” (Lk.22: 25-27), and calls them “no longer servants, but friends” (Jn. 15:15). Leadership of a community makes demands on the office bearer himself before it makes any demands on others. The exercise of authority in the name of Jesus means exercising authority as Jesus did: “we do not lord it over your faith; we work with you for your joy.” (2Cor. 1:24)³⁸⁷

Jesus worked with the people and gave them freedom and preached a gospel of joy. “The Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor...to proclaim liberty to captives and to grant freedom to the oppressed...”³⁸⁸ He (Jesus) upbraided the Scribes and Pharisees who always exercised authority over the people and laid heavy burdens on the people.³⁸⁹ Church leaders must, therefore, follow the pattern of Jesus’ leadership which is service to all.

The theological aspect of leadership is also clearly demonstrated in St John’s gospel after Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. He asked: “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord and you are right, for that is what I am. So, if I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set an example for you, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.” (Jn. 13: 12-16). The Church leaders are not greater than the Master Jesus, so they must walk in his footsteps.

Considering leadership from Paul’s perspective, we can gain insight into what made Paul a great leader. Paul stresses that the people (the corporate body) takes precedence over the

³⁸⁷ Kaspers, *Leadership in the Church*, pp 66-67.

³⁸⁸ Lk. 4:18.

³⁸⁹ Mt 23: 2-4. “The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees sat on the seat of Moses. You shall do and observe what they say, but do not do as they do.... They tie up heavy burdens and load them on the shoulders of the people, but they do not even raise a finger to move them.”

individual. Similarly, the rights of the people being led (the corporate body), prevail over that of the leader (the individual). It is not what the leader knows or wants, but it is the community's interests (what is best for others) that should govern the leader's actions. Furthermore, the distinctiveness of the Christian ethic and of servant leadership is always to serve the least exalted members of the group. Paul insists that by loving and serving one another, the community will flourish. The leader is there for the followers, and the followers are there for the leader. It should be a symbiotic relationship.

Many leaders of the Church still believe that lay people must continue to be servants to the clergy. They (the laity) are to be seen but not heard, to follow but not lead. For those of us clergy who still believe that we are entitled to some special privileges because of the rung of the social ladder we occupy, Paul's model of leadership challenges us to abandon this way of thinking in order to build a community where every person is equal in dignity.

Paul encapsulates the whole message of collaborative partnership when he defines the Church and its charisms as the Body of Christ using the analogy of the biological body parts. Applying this Pauline text to the discussion on Church leadership, the Church is made up of both the leadership (the clergy) and the members of the lay faithful. The leadership (the clergy) cannot function without the lay faithful, and the lay faithful cannot function without the leadership. Both the clergy and the laity are two sides of the same coin, and if either side is removed, the coin loses its value and as a matter of fact ceases to be.

When the goal of leadership is service to the people and not the leader's self-aggrandizement, there will be progress and the whole community will be content and more complete. In the same way, when ministry in the Church is seen essentially as service to the members of the body of Christ and not as a conduit to rank and privilege, then there will be an

opportunity for all members of Christ's faithful to participate actively in the mission of the Church. In other words, collaboration between clergy and laity will be achieved.

The biblical image of servant leadership promotes setting aside the self-interest of leaders for the good of their followers. Pope John Paul II reminds us that "the life of Jesus has to be practical in the way of life for the sacred ministers; the way Christ related with the people, the way he felt for them, showing deep understanding and appreciation of their problems, listening to them, making dialogue with them easy and showing them that they really mean something."³⁹⁰ After all, it is the responsibility of Church leadership to create opportunities for individual members of the Church and for Church communities to offer their God-given talents for the enhancement of the mission of the Church. Priests should be evaluated by how well they have been able to do this.

From what has been said, we can conclude that leadership from a theological point of view is essentially service for others. It involves working with others to achieve a common goal. Let us now look at leadership from the ethical perspective.

4.3.2 Leadership from the Ethical Perspective

Leadership has ethical dimensions; it thus entails power relationships, which can bring about abuse of power, injustice, disrespect of persons, authoritarianism, and the suppression of the rights of others, or it can lead to the opposite, fostering respect, egalitarianism and so forth.

It is a fundamental belief of Igbo traditional leadership that practising the principle of justice is the basis for a smooth-running society. In Igboland, it is the belief that justice brings about peace because everybody is assured of their rights when justice reigns. The leader in the

³⁹⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor Hominis* Encyclical Letter 1979, # 12.

Igbo tradition is expected to respect the laws of the land including laws related to the veneration of the ancestors, terminating of human life (homicide), theft, honesty, moral probity and so forth. It is believed that the violation of these laws threatens the natural order and the very existence of the community. Nevertheless, some traditional leaders used their power as a means of controlling the people. An example of such abuse of authority is Enugu Warrant Chief Onyeama, who controlled the flows of labour to the emerging coal mining industry and established himself as powerful ruler, combining wealth with terror and magical power over his people.³⁹¹

At present, Church leadership in Igboland seems to be synonymous with authority over other members of the faithful. “Respect for hierarchy is seen as unconditional obedience to instructions and directives. This is comparable to the autocratic leadership style displayed by many African political leaders and some managers....”³⁹² When respect becomes synonymous with obedience to instructions and directives, the followers become sycophants, and the leaders are deceived because they will always be told what they want to hear. In addition, followers will not be living authentic lives; they will always demonstrate blind obedience and sycophancy in the presence of the leader. This seems to be the case in many dioceses in Igboland.

The authority of the African leader or the priest/priestess of African traditional religion is believed to have emanated from the spirit world. These leaders and traditional priests/priestesses exercise considerable power as a result of their perceived interaction with the sacred. They are accorded profound respect as sacred persons and regarded with awe and fear because of their intercourse with the spirit. Their authority is never resisted. By the same token, lay people may hesitate to resist the authority of priests who are autocratic. Gerrie Ter Haar expresses this notion

³⁹¹ AXEL HARNEIT-SIEVER, *Igbo Traditional Rulers: Chieftaincy and the State in Southeastern Nigeria*, p 61.

³⁹² ISAAC WANASIKA et al., “Managerial Leadership and Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa” in *Journal of World Business* 46 (2011), p 236.

when she states that “a religious leader not only commands some degree of secular influence but is also perceived as being endowed with power stemming directly from the spirit world.”³⁹³ Haar goes on to affirm that “all of Africa’s many forms of government were associated with relationships between individuals and social groups, usually expressed in a spirit idiom. Authority over the spirit world is thus translated into authority over people, making religion an outstanding means of instrumentalizing political power by dominating webs of relations over a wide area...”³⁹⁴ The king wields authority over his subjects and dictates what should be done by the subjects.

Authoritarian or patriarchal leadership is not the best form of leadership for the Church since it demands blind obedience on the part of the laity which leads to abuse of power by some members of the clergy. This blind obedience is what the African bishops and priests appear to crave, and it obscures their vision of servant leadership. Uzukwu writes that “African bishops and priests love the image of the priest as chief.”³⁹⁵ He cautions that “we must take care to underline that the image of the chief or community leader which will influence a truly Christian and truly African ministry in our Church is not the bastardization of the image of the chief by African dictators, nor the imported Roman and feudal autocracy which dominates the present ministerial practice of the Roman Catholic Church.”³⁹⁶

Other scholars do not share this interpretation. For example, Benezet Bujo has a different view of African leaders. He submits that the present authoritarianism was borrowed from Western modernity. According to Bujo, “it is a well-known fact that in many ethnic

³⁹³ ELLIS STEPHEN & GERRIE TER HAAR, *Worlds of Power. Political Thought and Political Practice in Africa*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p 88.

³⁹⁴ STEPHEN & TER HAAR, *Worlds of Power*, p 24.

³⁹⁵ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 130.

³⁹⁶ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 130.

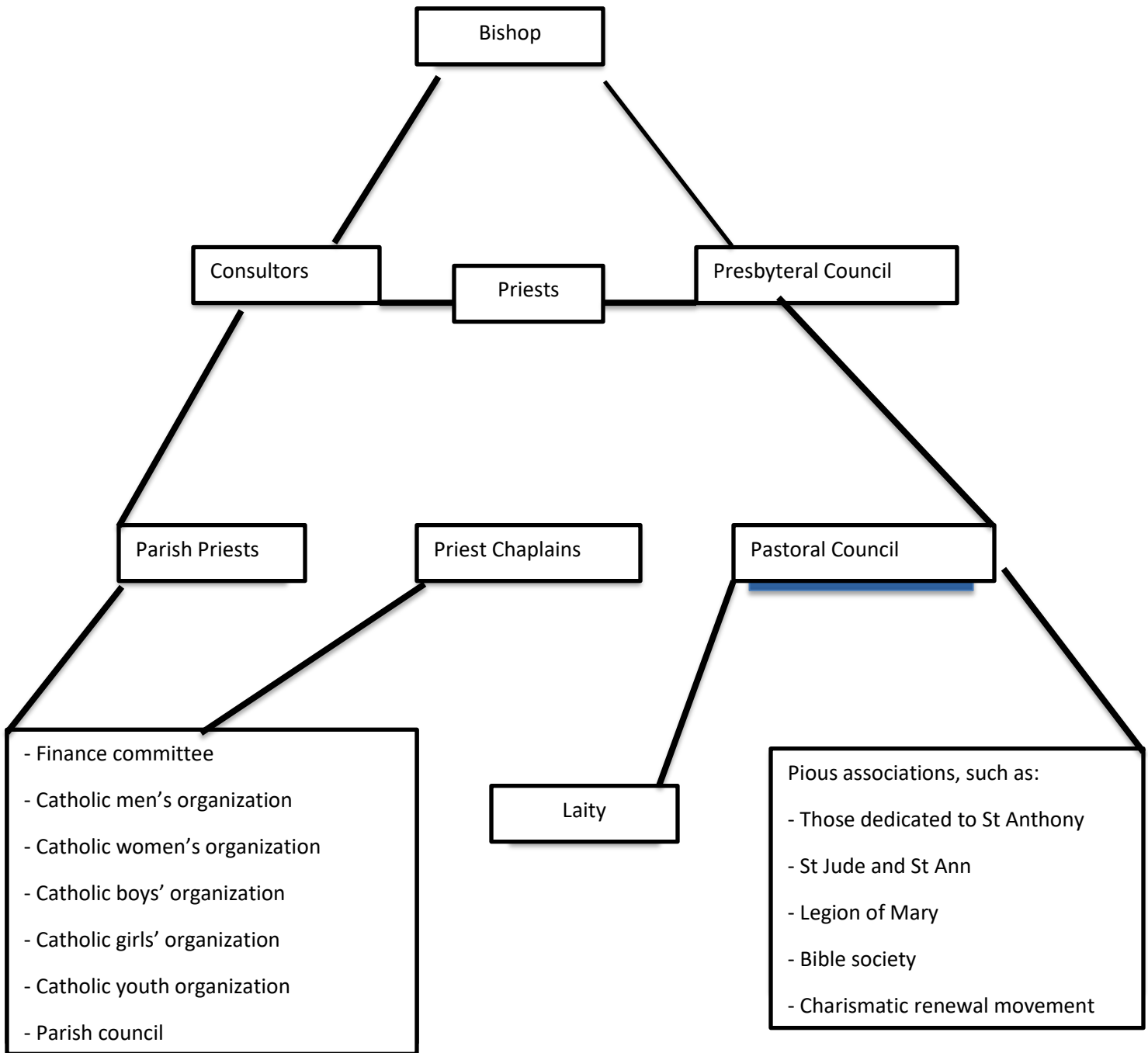
communities, the chief depended on the council of elders. In everything, he was not allowed just to follow his own will but had to pass on life from the ancestors to the living... If he disregarded the welfare of the community and thus suffocated life, the people could gather in the name of the ancestors and depose him as their chief.”³⁹⁷ Bujo urges African people to hold fast to their ancestral tradition and avoid abandoning it lightly in favour of Western modernity. In the same way, it would be good for the Church to go back to the structure where one person is not allowed to decide for all the other members.

As the previous discussion demonstrates, there appears to be conflicting positions about hierarchism in traditional African leadership. However, the preponderance of the evidence suggests that originally leadership was not autocratic and there was collaboration between the leader and the people. Although there is abuse of authority by some African leaders today, the leadership approach employed by the Igbos before the coming of the Europeans seems to have been more accommodating because there were more checks and balances. We are not suggesting that Igbo traditional religion was good and Christianity, as it was expressed in Nigeria, is bad. What we are implying is that the Church can learn something about collaboration from the style of leadership practiced in the traditional Igbo society.

Having assessed both the theological and ethical dimensions of leadership, we shall now focus our attention on the leadership structure in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi.

³⁹⁷ BENEZET BUJO, *The Ethical Dimension of Community. The African Model and Dialogue between North and South*, (Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa, 1998), p 20.

4.4 Leadership Structure in Nnewi Diocese



As illustrated in the above diagram, the leadership structure in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi is hierarchical. The organizational framework has the bishop at the top followed by the priests and then the laity. The diagram clearly shows that it is a pyramid. Within the leadership structure, there are councils, statutory bodies, religious associations, and committees. Each of the above groups has a priest chaplain appointed by the bishop. Just as the bishop is in charge of the diocese, the parish priests are in charge of their various parishes but they are subject to the authority of the bishop of the diocese.

In the parish, there is also the parish council, the local Church council and various pious societies listed in the diagram above but on the parish level. All these organizations and societies in the Parish are made up of members of the laity, and the parish priest supervises them, that is, they take their directions from their parish priest. As can be seen, the priests and the laity are connected in their various roles in running the diocese.

4.4.1 Advantages of Collaboration

A collaborative relationship between the clergy and the laity has many benefits. One of the advantages is that the laity will have a share in authority and responsibility for service and leadership. There will also be solidarity in the Church which will foster achievement. The laity will be empowered to exercise their rightful ministry in the Church, the right which they inherited by virtue of their baptism. Once they are accepted, respected and empowered, the laity will see themselves as close collaborators of the ordained, sharing in the ministry of Christ himself. This will make the laity more committed and effective, and provide a sense of identity and a feeling of recognition. Clergy-laity collaboration is a welcome development in the ministry of the Church because it brings the ministry of the Church closer to Jesus' vision of the reign of God. Collaboration strengthens the laity's sense of belonging and responsibility. When people

work together and become involved in projects, everybody has a sense of belonging. “Their zeal is encouraged, and they are more ready to unite their energies to the work of their pastors.”³⁹⁸

Undoubtedly, more hidden talents will be discovered among the people when collaboration is practised. Collaboration deepens the faith of both clergy and the laity because each gains from the gifts of the other. In collaboration, trust and respect are achieved, and people become accountable. Collaboration also leads to empowerment. Among the benefits of collaboration are the affirmation of the worth of others and an improved understanding of their perspective. Another advantage of collaboration is that the absence of the priest in the parish will not delay projects or progress in evangelization because the lay faithful have learned to take up various tasks, based on their ability and competence. Collaboration encourages the division of labour. It brings together different gifts and coordinates them in a way that facilitates the progress of the mission of the Church. It also encourages full participation in decision-making.

In fact, the Church can meet any challenges facing her only if the laity is given the enabling space to work collaboratively with the clergy in carrying out the ministry of the Church.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly states:

Lay people who possess the required qualities can be admitted permanently to the ministries of lector and acolyte. When the necessity of the Church warrants it and when ministers are lacking, lay persons, even if they are not lectors and acolytes, can also supply for certain of their offices, namely, to exercise the ministry of the word, to preside over liturgical prayers, to confer baptism, and to distribute Holy Communion in accord with the prescriptions of law.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 37.

³⁹⁹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, c.903. (also see Canon 230).

Although some aspects of the above cite are being practiced in Nnewi diocese, it would still seem the laity is not yet empowered to contribute significantly to collaborative ministry for the enhancement of the mission of the Church. If this were done, not only would the laity work enthusiastically in the parish, but the clergy might also be spared breakdown and burn out due to overwork. Perhaps the clergy will realize that shared responsibility brings about enhancement in the life and mission of the Church.

Gregory Aymond states that every Christian in whatever position one finds oneself is called to serve the Church. According to Aymond, “this call is rooted in a serious recognition of one’s baptismal vocation to carry on the mission of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰⁰ When this baptismal vocation is recognized and implemented, the Church is less clergy dependent and becomes a dynamic place where people act together, listen to each other, strengthen and empower each other, and offer their talents to enhance the mission of the Church. Dialogue is an essential part of any relationship, and it is important to understand its role in collaboration. This involves ongoing discussion among all the members of the faithful, or dialogue in other words.

4.4.2 Dialogue: an Essential Element of Collaboration

The importance of dialogue in collaboration cannot be overemphasized. Dialogue, as defined by Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus, is a “conversation between two or more people, an exchange of opinions; discussions.”⁴⁰¹ Based on this definition, dialogue implies talking and sharing ideas with people. Paulo Freire defines dialogue as “the task of responsible subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination.”⁴⁰² In a dialogical process, each person has

⁴⁰⁰ GREGORY AYMOND, “Forward” in reflections on renewal: lay ecclesial ministry and the Church. Donna M Eschenauer & Harold Daly Horell eds. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2011), xvi.

⁴⁰¹ Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus Second Edition Reprinted (London: Harper Collins Publishers & Times Books, 2001).

⁴⁰² PAULO FREIRE, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* trans. by M.B. Ramos, (New York: Continuum, 1990), p 78.

something to contribute, and no one's view is rejected out of hand. Olusola expresses this as follows: "when people engage in the sharing process called communication, each contributes something of himself/herself and the end product of this sharing process is the building of their community."⁴⁰³ In dialogue, one can listen, ask questions, and present one's ideas. But all this is done in such a way that, while holding one's position, one also allows others the space to keep theirs; one is profoundly open to hearing others' opinions without needing to oppose or assimilate them. Dialogue is a vital element in collaboration that enables collaborative ministry to thrive. It creates an atmosphere of safety and disposes dialogue partners to bring forward new ideas.

Dialogue requires a willingness to question one's self-understanding and an openness to understanding others. According to Paulo Freire "without dialogue, there is no communication, and without communication, there can be no true education because humans are essentially communicative creatures."⁴⁰⁴ With dialogue, the goal is to create an environment that builds trust and respect. Dialogue encourages communication, develops leadership, promotes taking initiative and gives a sense of belonging.

Both the priest and the laity need to engage in dialogue so that the mission of the parish will function unhindered. In my opinion, the priest needs to listen fraternally to other members of Christ's faithful, to consider their wishes and wisely foster their authentic charisms. At the same time, the lay faithful should engage the priest in meaningful dialogue rather than mere confrontation when issues are raised and views differ. This is because confrontation does not

⁴⁰³ EMMANUEL B. OLUSOLA, *Leadership and communication: Enhancing participation in small groups with particular focus on small Christian communities*. (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2013), p 6.

⁴⁰⁴ FREIRE, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* new revised edition, (London: Penguin, 1996), p 74.

solve any problems but dialogue does. In fact, the absence of genuine dialogue has done a lot of harm to the Church. With dialogue, the Church will surely enjoy the advantages of collaboration.

Conclusion

This chapter examines specific leadership styles and views on leadership from a theological and an ethical perspective. It also describes authority and leadership in Igbo culture, including the decision-making processes, exercise of power and gender relations. The chapter also looked at religious leadership and the effect of the missionary activities on Igbo culture. It goes on to describe the leadership structure in Nnewi diocese and the relationship that exists between the clergy and the laity in the diocese and its implications for clergy-laity collaboration. Finally, it describes the advantages of clergy-laity collaboration and also assesses the importance of dialogue as an essential ingredient for collaboration.

Having looked at the potential for greater clergy-laity collaboration in Nnewi diocese and different styles of leadership, it is clear that servant leadership is the style which Jesus our Master and Lord practiced. This type of leadership “influences the congregation to change in ways that more fully embody the servanthood of Christ.”⁴⁰⁵ The great apostle Paul also followed the same style of leadership. However, in Igboland, it appears that the bishops and the priests are often seen as “the Church” and the lay faithful are expected to listen and follow their instructions. Elochukwu Uzukwu describes the situation very aptly in a statement attributed to one of the Nigerian bishops. The bishop, while addressing seminarians said, “we are the Church, you are not the Church; the Church speaks, you listen; we talk, you do the listening; we give directives, you obey; you are there, we are here; we send you, you go.”⁴⁰⁶ This statement seems

⁴⁰⁵ OSMER, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, p 192.

⁴⁰⁶ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 121.

to capture the general perception the clergy have of the laity. This attitude is contrary to the idea of collaboration advocated by Vatican II when it outlines the role of all baptized people in the ministry of the Church.⁴⁰⁷ For Uzukwu, the theological implication is that the listening dimension, which the Church should foster in the relationship between the clergy and the lay members of the Church, is neglected. Because of the lack of collaboration stemming from the unwillingness of the clergy to listen, many parishes seem to make little progress pastorally. Seemingly, there is no balance in the system. According to Peter Senge, systems deal with the whole and the interrelationship rather than the parts.⁴⁰⁸ Because of the way some priests relate to them, it appears that the laity do not realize that they are a vital part of the Church; they need to be empowered to play their proper role by virtue of their baptism as expressed in the documents of Vatican II. The clergy, on the other hand, do not seem to see the laity as a vital part of the system. For the fullness of life in the Church, both clergy and lay people should see each other as essential parts of a whole. I agree strongly with Bolaji Idowu who holds that “the laity is a vital factor in the life of the Church.”⁴⁰⁹ Often the clergy seems to be unaware of this fact. The clergy and the laity need to recognize that the Church is not complete without both clergy and laity. Bearing this in mind, I believe it is essential to have a good relationship between the clergy and the laity.

⁴⁰⁷ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, #31 The laity are engaged in each and every work and business of the earth and in ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, constitute their very existence. There they are called by God that, being led by the spirit of the gospel, they may contribute to the sanctification of the world... Thus, especially by the witness of their life, resplendent in faith, hope, and charity they must manifest Christ to others.

⁴⁰⁸ PETER M. SENGE, CHARLOTTE ROBERTS, AND RICHARD B. ROSS, *The Fifth Discipline Field book: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*, (N.Y: Currency Doubleday, 1994), p 68.

⁴⁰⁹ BOLAJI IDOWU, *Towards an indigenous Church*, (London: SCM Press, 1973), p 51.

In order to test my hypothesis that collaboration between clergy and laity enhances the mission of the Church, it is pertinent to look at the research findings on clergy-laity collaboration in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi. I will do this in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

5 Data Analysis, Themes and Summary of Findings

In this chapter, I will expose and analyze the data that was collected. First, I will present twelve significant ideas relating to clergy-laity collaboration that emerged from the examination of the questionnaires, interviews and parish council meetings. I have grouped these ideas into three themes.

Secondly, I will offer a table that summarizes the findings giving a profile of the responses for ease in grasping the various voices in the study. This will provide a rich and yet more concise description of the data collected. It will also help to respond to Osmer's questions regarding what is actually going on in the Diocese of Nnewi regarding clergy-laity collaboration. It will also point towards why it may be happening.

Themes from the Questionnaires and Interviews

Here, I present the themes that I derived from the questionnaires and interviews and begin to analyze the findings. The following are the recurring points: Power and authority, Priests' Church (*uka fada*), Formation (Education and Enlightenment of the laity on their role, Training the clergy in leadership and administrative skills), Non-commitment on the part of the laity, Cordial relationship, Sense of belonging, Uniting gifts (working together), Resistance to change, Catechesis/Evangelization, Personal gratification/benefits, Accountability (financial matters), Fear of change. These points became apparent because of their repeated occurrence from the responses to the questionnaires and the interviews. They have been grouped into three major themes namely: challenges to collaboration, limitations to collaboration, and opportunities for collaboration.

5.1 Challenges to Collaboration

Challenges are difficulties that inhibit or make collaboration complicated or more of a struggle. They do not stop collaboration but inhibit it and therefore need to be worked on in order to improve clergy-laity collaboration. Among the points that fall under challenges are: *Uka fada* mentality, non-participation, resistance to change, personal gratification and lack of accountability.

5.1.1 *Uka Fada*—Priests' Church

Voices of the Clergy

From the time of the early missionaries, the Catholic Church was known throughout Igbo land as *Uka Fada* which means the priests' Church. This mentality, may be the reason why every Church activity in Igboland is left at the priest's discretion.

The impression that the Church is owned by the priest, which results in the laity leaving everything to the priest, was raised in many forms during the interviews. Out of the eight priests interviewed five of them raised the point that the laity always see the Church as the priests Church and that this affects clergy-laity collaboration. For example, a priest responding to interview question one, describing his experience of collaboration with the laity in his parish ministry lamented: "because of the trend or the attitude of *uka fada* the people find it difficult to perform certain works in the parish unless there are some economic benefits. They hardly put up appearance during parish activities. People should see the Church as part and parcel of their lives and not the fathers' Church"⁴¹⁰ In answering the same clergy interview question number one, another priest added "there are some responsibilities and duties which are supposed to be done

⁴¹⁰ Clergy Interview # 1 CI 2.

by the laity, but they do not do it thereby leaving everything to the priest because of the idea of *Uka fada*. For instance, when a project is to be carried out in the parish, the laity will feel unconcerned leaving the priest to do everything”⁴¹¹ Still on the same question another priest also noted: “they (the laity) do not fully understand their mission or role; they still see the Church or the mission of the Church as the work of the priest and that they are helping the priest to do certain things.”⁴¹² A priest, responding to clergy interview question number five which asks about the areas where the priest involves the laity in parish activities expressed the view that “the laity should be committed to the work of the Church and not just being there and asking what the priest wants them to do.”⁴¹³ One priest summarized the whole issue by stating that “the laity were not prepared from day one to be active participants in the Church’s ministry.”⁴¹⁴

The idea that the Church is seen as the priests’ Church was also raised in response to the clergy questionnaire. One priest responding to clergy questionnaire number two which asks the priests to describe their experience of working together with the laity, indicated: “the laity always looks up to me to give them direction before anything is done.”⁴¹⁵ In answer to the clergy questionnaire number five, another priest replied: “I have always tried to convince the laity that the Church does not belong to the clergy but rather to all the members of Christ’s faithful. Christ is the head; time has gone when the Church is known as *Uka Fada*.”⁴¹⁶

An event during the parish council meeting in parish B seems to reinforce the perception that the Church is the priests’ Church. At one point during the parish council meeting, the priest had to go for another function to come back later. He told the members to continue with the

⁴¹¹ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 3.

⁴¹² Clergy Interview # 1, CI 4.

⁴¹³ Clergy Interview # 5, CI 5.

⁴¹⁴ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 8.

⁴¹⁵ Clergy Questionnaire # 2, CQ 4.

⁴¹⁶ Clergy Questionnaire # 5, CQ 3.

meeting. The members, in the priest's absence, discussed the low likelihood of implementation of the impending parish project and decided that the implementation of the project should be postponed until the following year. However, when the priest came back, he insisted that the project would be implemented as previously planned. The priest said: "It is because some of you do not want the parish to progress and that is why you are postponing it. The project must have to go on as already scheduled, if possible we borrow money."⁴¹⁷

As seen from the responses to the questionnaire and the interview questions, this mentality that sees the Church as the Church of the clergy, the so-called *Uka Fada.*, especially in the diocese of Nnewi, is hardly a thing of the past.

Voices of the Laity

Six out of the sixteen lay people interviewed commented on the idea of seeing the Church as the priests' Church.⁴¹⁸ In response to the laity interview question number two, which asks them to describe their experiences regarding clergy-laity collaboration, one lay person described the situation as follows:

It depends on the priest in the parish to listen and take suggestions or not. The nature of our Church has been that of *uka fada.* As a result of this arrangement, many times some good suggestions on how things should be done for the Church to move forward will be over-ridden by the priest. Once he says that this is how it is to be done, no matter your good suggestion, it must have to be done the way he wants it. We have the impression that you do not

⁴¹⁷ Parish Council Meeting, PC 'B'.

⁴¹⁸ Laity interview # 2, LI 7, # 3, LI 4, LI 8, LI 10, # 4, LI 4, # 6, LI 9.

dispute with the priest and as such everybody sees
the loophole.⁴¹⁹

Five other respondents expressed this perception in their answers to some of the interview questions. For example, in the laity interview question number three which asks them to describe their experience in their relationship with their priests, one respondent stated:

“some priests are arrogant and do not respect or put the laity into consideration while others are humble, open to dialogue and very considerate of the laity. The arrogant ones will tell you to your face *imakwa na m bu fada* (do you not know that I am a priest,) which portrays the particular priest as infallible.”⁴²⁰ Another lay person in response to the same question number three noted: “because we have always been told that the Church is hierarchical and not democratic; the priests have been making maximum use of that. They do not realize that among their parishioners, certain people are knowledgeable and can contribute intelligently. Just because the person is a priest no matter the age, they will always tell you that the Church is hierarchical.”⁴²¹ Still on the same question, another person pointed out that “the decision of the parish priest is always final, he does not listen to us; he behaves as if he knows everything and can do everything.”⁴²² This reveals an important aspect of the Church organization. It would seem that the principle of subsidiarity—a kind of division of labour—is not being practised in this situation. Three other lay respondents made similar comments in response to the interview questions number four that asked about the extent to which they exercise their baptismal right in the ministry in the parish. One respondent added “I have offered some pieces of advice on certain occasions but, as I said earlier, our church is seen as the priest’s church and so the priest

⁴¹⁹ Laity interview # 2, LI 7.

⁴²⁰ Laity Interview # 3, LI 4.

⁴²¹ Laity Interview # 3, LI 8.

⁴²² Laity Interview # 3, LI 10.

sometimes takes or even ignores good suggestions”⁴²³ One of the respondents affirmed: “*Uka fada* has been there for a long time but people should realize that the Church is ours.”⁴²⁴ If the priests feel that they can do everything in the parish, then it will be difficult for them to have an honest discussion with parishioners. For a group of people to form a community, there must be effective communication among them.

5.1.2 Non-participation of the laity in parish activities

One of the greatest challenges in any organization or institution is apathy or indifference within sections or departments in the organization/institution. When a group feels or acts as though its activities are insignificant in the progress of the institution, that part of the institution will not function efficiently and this affects the whole institution. According to the data on non-participation of the laity in parish activities, it is noticed as one of the challenges to clergy laity collaboration in Nnewi diocese.

Voices of the Laity

This point reflected in some of the responses of the laity. Out of the thirty-two respondents to the laity questionnaires and interviews, eleven people (five in the questionnaire and six in the interviews) noted that the laity do not seem to commit themselves to the activities of the parish. One of them responding to the laity interview question number two, which asks them to describe their experiences regarding clergy-laity collaboration, stated: “when something like a seminar is organized for the laity, it is always sparsely attended...very few are interested in pastoral activities...most people are interested in ventures that have financial and pecuniary rewards. On Sunday mornings the church is filled with people but when something like laity

⁴²³ Laity Interview # 4, LI 4.

⁴²⁴ Laity Interview # 6, LI 9.

week or catechetical week is organized, only a few will attend”⁴²⁵ Others shared similar views.⁴²⁶

Another lay respondent responding to the questionnaire question number one lamented: “most members of the laity outside the parish council appear unwilling to contribute ideas, talents, etc. to the execution of parish projects or solutions to problems in the parish.”⁴²⁷ Other views expressed by other lay respondents in their reply to the questionnaire are as follows: “The primary challenge is the extremely low level of participation of parishioners in parish work. Most just turn up for masses and are not interested in contributing to get any other thing done.”⁴²⁸ There are other similar responses.⁴²⁹ However one of the lay respondents, in answer to laity questionnaire number three which asks them to identify the hindrances to clergy-laity collaboration in the parish, stated: “the priest does not consult us in doing certain things so many of us do not come out for parish activities.”⁴³⁰

Voices of the clergy

Regarding the non-participation of the laity, eight priests out of eighteen responding to both the questionnaire and interview questions noted the laity’s non-participation in the activities of the parish. One priest responding to the clergy questionnaire number three, which asked them to describe their experience of working with the laity in the parish, stated: “the laity is still very weak as far as taking decision on their own is concerned.”⁴³¹ Another priest responding to questionnaire number six, which seeks to know the hindrances to clergy-laity collaboration in

⁴²⁵ Laity Interview # 2, LI 8.

⁴²⁶ Laity Interview # 2, LI 9, LI 10, LI 16.

⁴²⁷ Laity Questionnaire # 1, LQ 13.

⁴²⁸ Laity Questionnaire # 5, LQ13.

⁴²⁹ Laity Questionnaire # 1, LQ 8, # 2, LQ 14, # 3, LQ 8, LQ 13, # 5, LQ 1, LQ 4, LQ 8, # 6, LQ 13.

⁴³⁰ Laity Questionnaire #3, LQ 1.

⁴³¹ Clergy Questionnaire # 3, CQ 4.

their parishes, said: “the laity is lukewarm and not interested, they often see the Church as that of the clergy.”⁴³² One other priest in his reply to the same question said: “it is hard to get the laity’s commitment in Church activities.”⁴³³

In the responses to the clergy interview, the seeming lack of dedication and participation on the part of the laity is also consistent. One priest in his answer to the clergy interview question number one which asks the priests to describe their experiences of collaboration with the laity in the parish responded: “there are some responsibilities and duties which are supposed to be done by the laity, but they do not do it thereby leaving everything to the priest.... For instance, when a project is to be done in the Church, the laity will feel unconcerned leaving the priest to do everything.”⁴³⁴ Other priest respondents made similar statements. One of them in answer to the same question replied: “because of the trend or the attitude of *uka fada* the people find it difficult to perform certain works in the parish...they (laity) hardly put up appearance in parish activities.”⁴³⁵ Still on the same laity interview question one, another priest added, “when I first came to this parish many people were withdrawn, they were not showing interest in parish activities. However, I try to encourage them and remind them that the mission of the Church is entrusted to all of us.”⁴³⁶ On the same question, another priest commented: “It is very difficult to do any work in the parish; every singular activity in the parish rests on your shoulder as the parish priest. For example, when we were looking for a chairperson for works, we went from house to house pleading with people, but no one was willing to take up that responsibility.”⁴³⁷ A priest responding to clergy interview question number two which seeks to know the benefits and

⁴³² Clergy Questionnaire # 6, CQ 1.

⁴³³ Clergy Questionnaire # 6, CQ 4, CQ 7 & CQ 8.

⁴³⁴ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 3.

⁴³⁵ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 2.

⁴³⁶ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 6.

⁴³⁷ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 2.

the hindrances to clergy-laity collaboration in the parish, also stated: “If the priests and the laity in this parish unite in the apostolate, the sky will be our limit as far as progress is concerned. But that is not the case; in this parish, the laity will just be by the side watching you do everything as if it does not concern them.”⁴³⁸ On question five, another priest noted: “they (laity) should also be committed to the work of the Church and not just be there and ask what the father wants them to do. They should reach out and be open to the priest and contribute for the Church to grow. They should not relax and say that the Church is *Uka Fada*.”⁴³⁹ As the above quotes indicate, the clergy’s concern about the non-participation of the laity was expressed in both the interviews and the questionnaires in a strong and consistent manner.

This was echoed by eight other responses.⁴⁴⁰ One respondent, for example, in answer to the clergy interview question one stated: “the laity always gave me the impression that I would have to do all the thinking, decisions and ordering the people and the parish activities. On their part, they have to do all the waiting, listening and acting on what I tell them.”⁴⁴¹ A lack of commitment is contrary to the spirit of collaboration. My observations during the parish council meetings in parishes where there were many latecomers and some people discussing their private affairs,⁴⁴² confirm the concern expressed by the clergy about the non-participation of the laity.

⁴³⁸ Clergy Interview # 2, CI 2.

⁴³⁹ Clergy Interview # 5, CI 5.

⁴⁴⁰ Clergy Interview # 2, CI 2, CI 3, # 3, CI 2, CI 3, CI 4, CI, 6, CI 7, CI, 8, # 5, CI 4.

⁴⁴¹ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 9.

⁴⁴² Parish Council Meeting, PC ‘A’ and PC ‘B’.

5.1.3 Resistance to Change

Every change opens up new alternatives to the status quo and also new opportunities for a significant number of people. Change sometimes represents a threat to established structures and privileges. In other words, change attracts both negative and positive reactions. Richard Osmer describes it aptly: “in the process of change, some people may feel they are losing a position of influence that has provided them with a great deal of personal meaning. Or they may feel they have lost the ability to choose, that change is being forced down their throats when they are happy with the way things are.”⁴⁴³ Change, therefore, requires us to be ready to face the future which may be different from the past. This fear of change applies to both the clergy and the laity.

Voices of the Laity

With respect to the laity, some respondents noted that many members of the laity fail to commit themselves actively to the mission of the Church, and are also afraid to speak up when things are not being done properly in the parish. Of the sixteen lay people interviewed, five pointed to the view mentioned above. One lay respondent replying to interview question number five stated: “because of the number of priests in this part of the world, their power, influence and authority even education and exposure, the laity are so intimidated that they are afraid to challenge the clergy when they should do so.”⁴⁴⁴ Another lay respondent in responding to the interview question number two which seeks to know their experiences regarding the relationship with their priests, attributes this attitude of the laity to the severe nature of some priests. The respondent stressed: “the lay faithful are afraid of the priest because of his strictness.”⁴⁴⁵ One

⁴⁴³ OSMER, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, p 204.

⁴⁴⁴ Laity Interview # 5, LI 1.

⁴⁴⁵ Laity Interview # 2, LI 14.

other lay respondent in answer to interview question number two said: “some priests are afraid of the gifts of other priests and some lay people and so out of jealousy condemn those people who have such gifts.”⁴⁴⁶ Another lay respondent reported that “the priests are afraid that the laity will overshadow them and make them redundant and their powers and authority watered down.”⁴⁴⁷ Other respondents gave similar views.⁴⁴⁸ It would seem that the laity also feel that clergy consider themselves superior to the laity: “This feeling of superiority is acted out unconsciously or secretly in the form of control, domination, and in worst cases exploitation and abuse of vulnerable others.”⁴⁴⁹

Voices of the Clergy

Out of the ten priests that responded to the questionnaire, two priest respondents acknowledged that priests may be afraid of being challenged by the laity hence the resistance to change. These two priests, in their reply to clergy questionnaire number six which inquires about the hindrances to clergy-laity collaboration in the parish, said: “the priests are afraid of being challenged and of losing their prominent status.”⁴⁵⁰ The fact remains that human beings abhor change because of the uncertainty of the outcome. Nevertheless, a good leader is never afraid of, or resistant to, positive change.

⁴⁴⁶ Laity Interview # 2, LI 5.

⁴⁴⁷ Laity Interview # 5, LI 1.

⁴⁴⁸ Laity Interview # 3 LI 15, # 5, LI 15.

⁴⁴⁹ LISA M CATALDO, “Being a Minister and Doing Ministry: A Psychological Approach,” in *Lay Ecclesial Ministry and the Church*. Donna M. Eschenauer & Harold Daly Horel, eds., (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2011), p 94.

⁴⁵⁰ Clergy Questionnaire # 6, CQ 2 & CQ 3.

5.1.4 Accountability—Finances

Voices of the Laity

This point is approached somewhat differently by the clergy and the laity. In the responses to the laity interview, seven out of sixteen respondents said that the clergy are overly focused on money, and are not being transparent in the way they handle the parish funds; sometimes spending the parish funds as their personal property.⁴⁵¹ One respondent to the laity interview question number two which asks them to describe their experiences of collaboration in the parish, stated: “the priests are monetizing virtually everything in the Church; thereby deviating from the original Catholic tradition that I used to know precisely, the salvation of souls as the primary focus... Yes, mere looking at it portrays my Church as a market and every good marketer among the clergy is considered as the best priest by the Church authority.”⁴⁵² Seemingly, this person believes that the problem goes beyond the parish into the structure of the diocesan Church.

This same lay respondent went on: “when the Mass is shortened to about forty minutes and then about two hours or more are used to raise funds inside the same Church, it gives the impression that money seems more important than the Mass. The priest who can raise the most money is seen as the best priest and is always put in a very buoyant parish.”⁴⁵³ Five other respondents to the same question two also commented on the constant demand for financial contributions and the lack of transparency regarding parish finances on the part of some priests. One of them said: “people do not like talking about financial contributions all the time; hardly a Sunday passes without second or third collection for this or for that; this causes the unpleasant

⁴⁵¹ Laity Interview # 2, LI 4, LI 5, LI 7, LI 9, LI 11, LI 15.

⁴⁵² Laity Interview # 2, LI 4.

⁴⁵³ Laity Interview # 2, LI 4.

relationship between the clergy and the laity. The people are tired of collections all the time.”⁴⁵⁴ Another person expressed the same view. Her comments are: “with continuous demand for financial contributions and donations especially with the creation of the new diocese, people are getting bored over constant second collections, donations etc. Now some people are reluctant to make financial contributions or donations in the parish.”⁴⁵⁵ The lack of financial accountability is also noted by the lay respondents. For example, in answer to the same question two, one person avowed: “the priest is not open and transparent; he manages the parish fund only by himself and refused to constitute works and finance committees. Many parishioners are not happy with him. Some parishioners especially the wealthy ones have started withholding their donations because we do not see the effect of our contributions”⁴⁵⁶ These comments seem to point towards a significant undercurrent of tension regarding financial matters. The perception seems to be that the accountability of some members of the clergy is in question here.

On the lack of transparency, another lay respondent, in answer to laity interview question number three, which asks them to describe their relationship with the priests and the areas they need to work on, stated: “Our parish priest is not transparent with the parish finances. There was a time that the finance council was introduced but some priests made the council irrelevant by refusing to be open with the finances of the parish. I was a member of this council but immediately I found out that the priest was not carrying us along, I tactfully withdrew my membership.”⁴⁵⁷ The same respondent made the following suggestion: “The Church authorities should create a system where the parish priest should be open about the finances of the Church. For now, it is simply a ‘one man show.’ Transparency in financial matters reduces or even

⁴⁵⁴ Laity Interview # 2, LI 5.

⁴⁵⁵ Laity Interview # 2, LI 9.

⁴⁵⁶ Laity Interview # 2, LI 5, LI 11.

⁴⁵⁷ Laity Interview # 3, LI 4.

eliminates gossips.”⁴⁵⁸ Still, another respondent in answer to question three commented on the impact generated by such behaviour regarding the handling of funds. According to him, “priests must be conscious that every aspect of their behaviour has some effects on the laity.... for instance, not being transparent in financial matters and embezzlement of parish money.”⁴⁵⁹ Three other respondents expressed similar views.⁴⁶⁰ All of the above responses from the laity seem to indicate that Church finances are a source of contention.

Voices of the Clergy

Out of the eighteen priests who responded to the questionnaires and interviews, nine of them (three from the questionnaire and six from the interview)⁴⁶¹ acknowledged that it is the laity that contribute the funds with which the parish functions. Three priests responded that they do involve the laity in raising money and in managing the parish finances.⁴⁶² One of them, in his reply to the clergy questionnaire number four which seeks to know which roles they would entrust to the laity in order to encourage them, said: “the laity participates in the financial management of the parish and the raising and management of the Church funds should be solely in the hands of the lay faithful with the priest to serve only as the supervisor.”⁴⁶³ Supporting this view, another priest in reply to the same question four, stated: “for the financial aspect, the laity can be good fundraisers, financial secretaries and treasurers depending on the need of the Church and the individual disposition of the laity in question.”⁴⁶⁴ Conversely, another priest in his response to clergy interview question number two stated: “the laity has to be aware that being

⁴⁵⁸ Laity Interview # 6, LI 4.

⁴⁵⁹ Laity Interview # 3, LI 5.

⁴⁶⁰ Laity Interview # 4, LI 4, LI 7, # 5, LI 7, LI 15, # 6, LI 4.

⁴⁶¹ Clergy Questionnaire # 3, CQ 6, CQ 7, #4, CQ 9; CI #2, CI 3, CI 5, #3, CI 4, #5, CI 3, CI 9.

⁴⁶² Clergy Questionnaire # 3, CQ 6, #4, CQ 7, CQ 9.

⁴⁶³ Clergy Questionnaire # 4, CQ 7.

⁴⁶⁴ Clergy Questionnaire # 4, CQ 9.

committed to Church activities does not necessarily mean that all should know how money is managed in the Church. Such people who would always want to know how money is managed are the category of people who always look for personal benefits before doing anything in the Church.”⁴⁶⁵ The clergy responses seem to indicate that there is some tension regarding finances for which they offer differing views.

5.1.5 Personal Gratification

Voices of the Clergy

Among the concerns that emerged in the study is the perception that the laity only become active participants if some personal benefits are attached to the activity. Four priests noted this in both the questionnaire and interview responses (two in the interviews and two in the questionnaires). One priest in answer to clergy interview question number three which seeks to know the challenges priests experience in their relations with the laity in the parish, puts it in this way: “some lay people will always like to disagree with everything the priest says especially if the ideas are not theirs. Personal interest most often contributes to the negative challenges... the person begins to ask the question what does he/she gain by wasting his/her time doing this or that for the parish.”⁴⁶⁶ Another priest, responding to clergy interview question number one which asks priests to describe their experience of collaboration, alleged that “because of the trend or the attitude of *uka fada* the people find it difficult to perform certain works in the parish unless there are some economic benefits.”⁴⁶⁷ Yet another priest offered this response: “it is hard to inculcate selflessness in service in the lay faithful. Often, when there are no material gains in the functions

⁴⁶⁵ Clergy Interview # 2, CI 3.

⁴⁶⁶ Clergy Interview # 3, CI 1.

⁴⁶⁷ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 2.

you will hardly get the lay faithful's commitments."⁴⁶⁸ Still one other priest in answer to clergy interview question two stated: "there are some lay people who would always rely on personal interest; most often they look at what they will gain if they engage in a particular parish activity."⁴⁶⁹ These perceptions of the clergy confirm the idea that some members of the laity do not involve themselves in parish activities except some benefits are attached to such activity.

Voices of the Laity

The perception of the clergy, regarding the motivation for collaboration, is also supported by five responses of some members of the laity, two in the interviews and three from the questionnaire.⁴⁷⁰ Notable among them is the answer to the laity interview question number two which asks them to describe their experiences and challenges regarding pastoral activities in the parish, "some members of the laity are not ready to come out and contribute (both ideas and funds) to support the parish activities. They are reluctant to do so unless there are some benefits attached to it."⁴⁷¹ Another lay person, responding to the same question number two expressed the same view. She stated: "everybody is just chasing money and very few people are interested in pastoral activities. Most members of the lay faithful are interested in ventures that have financial and pecuniary rewards."⁴⁷² One of the responses in the questionnaire question number three, which seeks to know the noticed hindrances to clergy-laity collaboration in the parish, stated: "many people do not involve themselves in the work done in the parish. Some of them even accuse us, who are always involved, of gaining something or else, we would not be so

⁴⁶⁸ Clergy Questionnaire # 6, CQ 7.

⁴⁶⁹ Clergy Questionnaire # 2, CQ 8.

⁴⁷⁰ Laity Questionnaire # 3, LQ 11, # 5, LQ 1, Laity Interview # 2, LI 9, LI 16.

⁴⁷¹ Laity Interview # 2, LI 9.

⁴⁷² Laity Interview # 2, LI 16.

committed.”⁴⁷³ From the foregoing, many of the clergy and some of the laity speak about a need for incentives for some of the laity to participate in church events. The incentive referred to here is not limited to economic benefits; it includes giving people a sense of belonging, recognizing and appreciating their gifts, respecting them, listening to them, and involving them in decision-making and other pastoral activities.

5.2 Limitations to Collaboration

Within the data gathered from the questionnaires and interviews there were issues raised that point toward matters that seem to limit collaboration between the clergy and the laity. These are identified as: power and authority, ongoing formation, and dialogue (absence of listening).

5.2.1 Power and Authority in Laity-Clergy Relations

Voices of the Laity

In various responses to the questionnaires as well as in the interviews, the issue of authority was raised as one of the things that limit clergy-laity collaboration. The responses suggest that the laity hold the view that the priest is always the master. In the laity questionnaire, ten people out of the sixteen affirmed that the authority rests with the priests.⁴⁷⁴ One lay respondent answering the laity questionnaire number one, which requires them to describe their experiences of collaboration in the parish, has it that: “the parish priest has the authority himself; his command is all, he does not seek the consent of the people under him; he is autocratic.”⁴⁷⁵ Another lay person in answer to question three, which asks to know the hindrances they notice regarding clergy-laity collaboration in the parish, added: “the parish priest does not allow some

⁴⁷³ Laity Questionnaire # 3, LQ 11.

⁴⁷⁴ Laity Questionnaire # 1, LQ 2, LQ 12, # 3, LQ 1, LQ 2, LQ 14, LQ 10, LQ 15, # 7, LQ 4, LQ 16.

⁴⁷⁵ Laity Questionnaire # 1, LQ 12.

members of the laity to come closer to him nor make out time to listen to their individual problems.”⁴⁷⁶ Still another respondent commented, “they are too autocratic they do not seek the advice of the lay people.”⁴⁷⁷ The clergy is the “sole administrator in all parish functions and activities.”⁴⁷⁸

Of the sixteen lay people interviewed, twelve stated that some priests seem to assume that their authority eliminates the need for consultation.⁴⁷⁹ In answer to laity interview question number three which requires them to describe their relationship with the priest in the parish and the areas of improvement, One respondent answered that the priests sometimes act arbitrarily. He stated:

Our assistant parish priest was to replace his parish priest who was going for studies. Immediately the priest saw himself as the priest in charge of the parish for that period; he altered many programs in the parish including the time for the harvest and bazaar. This event usually took place in the parish on the first Sunday of November every year, but the priest changed it arbitrarily to the 27th day of December. The parishioners requested for a change of date because 27th day of December is a day of another big event in the town which will no doubt mar the success of the harvest and bazaar. The priest stuck to his opinion and that year’s harvest and bazaar was a failure.⁴⁸⁰

Some other responses are: “our former parish priest was very authoritative and nothing seemed to be working in the parish during his tenure. He would always want us to do his wishes

⁴⁷⁶ Laity Questionnaire # 3 LQ 15.

⁴⁷⁷ Laity Questionnaire # 5 LQ 12.

⁴⁷⁸ Laity Questionnaire # 7, LQ 4.

⁴⁷⁹ Laity Interview # 2, LI 1, LI 2, LI 5, LI 6, LI 7, LI 8, LI 11, LI 14, # 3, LI 1, LI 4, LI 7, LI 8, LI 9, LI 10, LI 15, # 4, LI 4, LI 11, # 5, LI 1, LI 2, # 6, LI 4, LI 9, LI 11.

⁴⁸⁰ Laity Interview # 3, LI 13.

and the way he talked down on the parishioners is the reason why most of them do not like him.”⁴⁸¹ On the same question, another person responded thus:

the way some priests address the laity and the way they do certain things leave me to wonder if they have any regards for the laity. An example is when something was being discussed in the church council and someone got up and made some reasonable suggestions and contribution. The priest talked him down and asked ‘after all what do you know as a layman; are you a priest? At this everybody kept quiet, yet it was clear to all of us present that the person made a very useful contribution. We all felt bad.’⁴⁸²

Still on the same question number three, other lay respondents report that they are not consulted before things are done in the parish. These comments indicate that the laity often think that the clergy holds the power and authority in the parishes. They also indicate that some priests do not consult on matters where the laity have expertise. For instance, in replying to interview question number three, which asked them to describe their relationship with their priest, one person reported thus: “everything being done in the parish is at the whims and caprices of the priest.”⁴⁸³ Six other respondents, responding to laity interview question number two which requires them to describe their challenges in performing pastoral activities in the parish, made the following comments: “some priests claim to know everything thereby looking down on the laity;”⁴⁸⁴ “some priests are authoritarian and are hell bent that things must be done in the way they want it whether it is good or not good.”⁴⁸⁵ Another lay person stated that “some priests are unnecessarily autocratic and do or say things without consultation or dialogue.”⁴⁸⁶ Another respondent stated:

⁴⁸¹ Laity Interview #3, LI 11.

⁴⁸² Laity Interview # 3, LI 8.

⁴⁸³ Laity Interview # 3, LI 1.

⁴⁸⁴ Laity Interview # 2, LI 2.

⁴⁸⁵ Laity Interview # 2, LI 7, LI 8, LI 11 and LI 14.

⁴⁸⁶ Laity Interview # 2, LI 5.

“the priest would not waste his time at the parish council when he could take decisions unilaterally.”⁴⁸⁷ Another shuddered at the arrogant display of those priests who always come up with the question that is not a question “*imakwo na m bu fada,*” meaning, do you not know that I am a priest?⁴⁸⁸

One person wondered how collaboration could thrive in a situation where decisions are imposed on the parishioners.⁴⁸⁹ Another respondent noted: “our Church is still maturing and will get more matured when we develop the courage to say, ‘yes father’ whenever the priest gets it right, and ‘no father’ whenever the priest gets it wrong. But as it stands now, whosoever says ‘no father’ is judged as “of the devil or even a heretic.”⁴⁹⁰ The opinions voiced by the laity suggest that the priests wield a great deal of authority which is often expressed in absolute terms.

Voices of the Clergy

Out of the eight priests interviewed four members made reference to how the clergy actually see their role when they are relating to the laity. One of the priests, in his response to clergy interview question number one declared: “we make decisions during meetings, but I have the last say as the chief shepherd who guides them.”⁴⁹¹ Another priest responding to the same question expressed it as follows: “I have to do the thinking, decisions and the ordering of the laity and parish activities; while the laity have to do all the waiting, listening, and acting on the orders I issue to them. As the parish priest, I find myself assuming the role of directing everything and everybody”⁴⁹² The responses from some other priests seem to confirm these views: for example, one priest respondent said: “some lay people say that I use the church

⁴⁸⁷ Laity Interview # 2, LI 1, # 3, LI 4, LI 7, LI 8, LI 9, LI 10, LI 11, and LI 15.

⁴⁸⁸ Laity Interview # 3, LI 4.

⁴⁸⁹ Laity Interview # 4, LI 4, LI 11, # 5, LI 1, LI 2, # 6, LI 4, LI 9, LI 11.

⁴⁹⁰ This can be seen in the response given by LI 4 to question 4 in the laity interview.

⁴⁹¹ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 6.

⁴⁹² Clergy Interview # 1, CI 9.

property as if it belongs to me. But as far as I am concerned, I am the custodian of the Church property in this parish and I am accountable to the bishop and not to them (the laity).”⁴⁹³ Responding to questionnaire number two one priest stated: “the laity looks up to me to give direction in everything as the authority figure.”⁴⁹⁴ These perceptions imply that some of the priests view authority over as a key aspect in their role and many of the laity seem to experience it that the Church belongs only to a section of the members of the faithful i.e. the clergy and not the laity.

5.2.2 The Importance of Ongoing Formation

Lack of adequate formation no doubt limits clergy-laity collaboration. The importance of ongoing formation was consistent in the responses to the interviews and the questionnaires. The clergy and the laity agree that there is a need for ongoing formation for both the clergy and the laity so that each will understand both their rights and their responsibilities and what it means to collaborate in order to enhance the mission of the Church. This formation, which begins in the family, has to be provided on an ongoing basis for both the laity and the clergy.

Voices of the Clergy

Seven out of the ten priests that responded to the questionnaire agree that there should be continuing workshops and seminars on clergy-laity collaboration with the aim of educating the laity on their role in the mission of the Church. In responding to clergy questionnaire number five which asks about the effort being made by priests to educate the parishioners on the

⁴⁹³ Clergy Interview # 2, CI 1, # 3, CI 2.

⁴⁹⁴ Clergy Questionnaire # 2, CQ 4.

importance of clergy-laity collaboration, one of the priests stated: “I initiate workshops and seminars for them, mostly during the laity week.”⁴⁹⁵ Other five priests stated the same thing.⁴⁹⁶

The need for ongoing formation was frequently raised in answer to other interview questions. Of the eight priests interviewed, six acknowledged the need for ongoing formation of priests. One of the priests, in answer to the clergy interview question number four which asks to know how often priests have been involved in on going formation and the areas of formation that will be most useful, avowed that “formation on leadership skills will help the priest to recognize that leadership does not mean lording it over others but listening to them and accommodating them and also giving them the opportunity to exercise their baptismal rights.”⁴⁹⁷ Another priest recounted the various times he was involved in on-going formation and how helpful it has been for him.

I have been involved in quite a lot of them (on-going formation opportunities). Some of them include: on the collaboration between the clergy and the religious, collaboration among Christian Association of Nigeria, Catholic wing, on the collaboration among Spiritual Directors towards a more effective Discernment of Vocation, on the laity empowerment and priestly roles, etc. They were absolutely very helpful and encouraging for me. I recommend that priests as people who are in leadership positions should be constantly involved in on-going formation that is focused on the human person as a being in relation.⁴⁹⁸

Five other priests also expressed the same idea that ongoing formation of the clergy is important.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁵ Clergy Questionnaire # 5, CQ 1.

⁴⁹⁶ Clergy Questionnaire # 5, CQ 9, CQ 10, # 7, CQ1, CQ 5, CQ 7, & CQ 9.

⁴⁹⁷ Clergy Interview # 4, CI 3.

⁴⁹⁸ Clergy Interview # 3, CI 7.

⁴⁹⁹ Clergy Interview, # 3, CI 4, CI 6, CI 9, # 4, CI 2, CI 4, CI 6, CI 7, CI 9.

Three lay respondents replying to the laity interview question stressed the need for priests to update themselves theologically on the development of the Church's doctrines.⁵⁰⁰ Some of their comments highlighted this point. For example, one of the respondents, in answer to laity interview question number three, made the following observation: "There is a need for priests to update themselves regularly. Some priests do not update themselves theologically as regards development in Church's doctrines; consequently, they resort to force in place of knowledge and wisdom. They often resort also to dictatorial style of leadership."⁵⁰¹ Another lay respondent, in his answer to laity interview question number four, added: "I think that priests should be continually trained to be seasoned facilitators learning how to be brisk time managers in the time of liturgical celebrations and meetings; parish pastoral meeting or committee meetings. A lot of time is wasted in these regards."⁵⁰² Yet another person added: "from my experience, ongoing formation always keeps one abreast with the current situation and serves as a review what one had learnt earlier."⁵⁰³ The comments above demonstrate that there is a need for both theological formation and formation in leadership skills.

Voices of the Laity

The laity seem not to be aware of the need for on-going formation for themselves. Only seven out of the thirty two respondents pointed this out in their responses to both the laity questionnaire and the interview questions.⁵⁰⁴ One person in his answer to the laity questionnaire number seven which asks of what benefits could be derived from clergy-laity collaboration in the parish, put forward the view that "total formation that is, morally, socially, and otherwise of the

⁵⁰⁰ Laity Interview # 3, LI 7, # 4, LI 1, # 1, LI 16.

⁵⁰¹ Laity Interview # 3, LI 7.

⁵⁰² Laity Interview # 4, LI 1.

⁵⁰³ Laity Interview # 1, LI 16.

⁵⁰⁴ Laity Questionnaire # 7, LQ 4, LQ 6, Laity Interview # 1, LI 16, # 2, LI 8, # 3, LI 7, # 4, LI 1, # 6, LI 9.

laity especially the youth and adult population, is one of the benefits of proper clergy-laity collaboration.”⁵⁰⁵ Another respondent in answer to the same question number seven opined that “through collaboration, the members of the laity will learn from the priest and the priest will also learn from the members of the laity and this is an aspect of formation.”⁵⁰⁶ Still another person responded that “parishes need to send their parishioners for formation on an ongoing basis, and that, by doing so, a majority of the faithful will be aware of their role in the mission of the Church within a space of time.”⁵⁰⁷ In response to the interview question number two which seeks to know the experiences and challenges in the pursuit of pastoral activities in the parish, one respondent stated that the laity needs to be educated and enlightened so that they have adequate knowledge of the faith and what the Church teaches. According to her,

there is the need for an excellent reorientation regarding the teachings of the Church. Most members of the laity do not attend Sunday evening instructions. Lay people need to be educated and enlightened not only during the Sunday homily but at every other fora. In this way, they will be reminded that, without this formation, the society will have problems as will the Church which is a part of that society. Many lay people do not even know the doctrines of the Church because they do not attend training fora; therefore, every available opportunity has to be used to enlighten the laity on the teachings of the Church and to make known to them their rights and responsibilities in the Church.⁵⁰⁸

Two priests specified that, to achieve clergy-laity collaboration, emphasis must be put on the formation of the laity. One of them in answering the clergy interview question number three regarding the challenges experienced in collaboration put it succinctly: “lay people have to be

⁵⁰⁵ Laity Questionnaire # 7, LQ 6.

⁵⁰⁶ Laity Questionnaire # 7, LQ 4.

⁵⁰⁷ Laity Interview # 4, LI 16.

⁵⁰⁸ Laity Interview # 2, LI 8.

educated to understand their mission and role in the Church. They need more education to understand that they have a stake in the mission of the Church.”⁵⁰⁹ Another priest maintained that “the laity has to be formed as future helpers of the Church through their ministrations.”⁵¹⁰ The goal of this formation is to help the laity grow in faith and development in their Christian lives and to make them aware of their rights and duties as far as the faith and the Church’s mission is concerned.

5.2.3 Dialogue (Speaking and Listening)

A lack of real communication among the members of the Church community has a paralysing effect on the Church. As Anne Rowthorn states, “when the voice cannot be heard, it becomes mute: when insights go unnoticed, sight is lost; when loving hands reach out to give a gift that is not received, the hands—and the whole body—become paralysed.”⁵¹¹ This is what happens in the Church when the laity are not listened to, and their voices are not heard in matters which concern them. One significant and highly influential aspect of this communication deficiency seems to be clerics not listening to the voices of the laity.

Among the responses from the laity both in the questionnaires and during the interviews the feeling is expressed that most members of the clergy neither give the laity an opportunity to speak nor listen to their opinions of view. Listening is crucial in collaboration between people who want to work together; when one listens to the other with an unbiased mind, one understands the other better. Responses from lay respondents reveal that some priests do not consult with the laity even in matters which most affect lay people.

⁵⁰⁹ Clergy Interview # 3, CI 4, (also Laity Interview # 6, LI 8 & LI 9).

⁵¹⁰ Clergy Questionnaire # 4, CQ 9.

⁵¹¹ Rowthorn, *The Liberation of the Laity*, p 22.

Voices of the Laity

Regarding the challenges experienced in carrying out activities in the parish, ten out of the sixteen lay people interviewed responded that dialogue between priests and the laity is lacking.⁵¹² In response to laity interview question number two which asks of their experiences in their relationship with the priests in the parish, one respondent complained that there is no opportunity to dialogue with the priest. According to him, “many times, the priest rejects some good suggestions on how things should be done for the progress of the parish. Once he says that this is how it is to be done, it must be done the way he wants it no matter your good suggestion. Even when everybody sees the loophole in the priest’s decision, we have the impression that you do not dispute with the priest.”⁵¹³ Another lay respondent asked the following question:

how does the parish priest expect us to work together as members of one family where he does not create room for dialogue? Imagine, the other day we went to clarify an issue with him but he could not even give us audience. Collaboration cannot thrive in a situation where decisions are imposed on the parishioners.⁵¹⁴

These comments express the view of other lay respondents that dialogue is not the usual approach taken by some of the priests in their parishes.⁵¹⁵ Two other laypersons expressed the same in answer to the questionnaires. One of them, in his answer to the laity questionnaire number five which asks about the challenges experienced in carrying out activities in the parish, stated that “most members of the clergy do not seem to have a forum to seek the candid view of the laity. This promotes psychopants to always sing ‘yes father’ to everything the priest says or

⁵¹² Laity Interview # 2, LI 5, LI 6, LI 7, LI 11, # 3, LI 4, LI 7 #5, LI 2, LI 6, LI 11,

⁵¹³ Laity Interview # 2, LI 7.

⁵¹⁴ Laity Interview # 5, LI 2.

⁵¹⁵ Laity Interview # 2, LI 5, LI 6, & LI 11, #5, LI 2.

does”⁵¹⁶ Another person replying to the same question responded that “our priest does not take the time to sit down and discuss burning issues with the parishioners.”⁵¹⁷ The lay respondents convey the idea that there will be much progress in the parish if the priests take the time to listen to the laity’s sincere and honest suggestions on how to make things function well. The lay respondents seem to be calling for a change of heart in favour of greater dialogue and change in the structure of parish organizations which would offer consistent and clear channels for ongoing communication between clergy and laity.

However, two lay respondents confirm that “there are certainly some priests who are always open to dialogue, who seek out suggestions and even listen humbly and patiently to their parishioners in matters affecting them.”⁵¹⁸ An example of this manifested in the parish council meeting in parish C where the priest invited suggestions from the members regarding the donation to be given and the entertainment for the guests for an upcoming parish event. When the other members’ views differed from that of the priest, it was put to a vote, and the majority opinion was accepted.⁵¹⁹ Two lay respondents in reply to laity interview question number three which describes the relationship between the priests and the parishioners expressed: “if the laity were to be consulted in matters concerning them in our parish we will be encouraged to work in harmony with the priest and the parish will surely achieve much. It will be wonderful if everybody is offered the opportunity to contribute and dialogue together as members of one body.”⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁶ Laity Questionnaire, # 5, LQ 10.

⁵¹⁷ Laity Questionnaire, # 5, LQ 15.

⁵¹⁸ Laity Interview # 3, LI 4, LI 7.

⁵¹⁹ Parish Council Meeting, PC ‘C’. Appendix VIII.

⁵²⁰ Laity Interview # 5, LI 6 & LI 11.

Voice of the Priests

Out of the ten priests interviewed, two of them support the idea of dialoguing as a family and giving people the opportunity to contribute and dialogue together because it will enable them to bring together their various gifts for the progress of the parish.⁵²¹ One of the priests in his reply to clergy interview question number four stated that “leadership does not mean lording it over others but listening to them and accommodating them and also giving them the opportunity to exercise their baptismal rights.”⁵²² Another priest, while supporting the idea of listening, stated: “From experience... any priest that isolates the laity, irrespective of his smartness, impoverishes himself and sets himself many steps backwards. Any priest that ignores a healthy collaboration with the laity ironically sings his *nunc dimitis*.”⁵²³ This practice of listening and dialoguing could bring about greater active participation of all in the mission of the Church, and it speaks clearly to the organization of the parish. This was evident during one of the parish council meetings where every member was free to express their views.⁵²⁴ The joy and enthusiasm with which the members were contributing ideas was palpable.

It is significant to note that only two of the ten priests spoke of dialogue and the need for it. May be they feel that dialogue is not an important element for clergy-laity collaboration.

⁵²¹ Clergy Interview # 4, CI 3, # 2, CI 7.

⁵²² Clergy Interview # 4, CI 3.

⁵²³ Clergy Interview # 2, CI 7.

⁵²⁴ Parish Council Meeting, PC ‘C’.

5.3 Opportunities for Collaboration

Opportunities are those things or behaviours that motivate us and make us want to put in our best towards whatever we are involved in, so that there will be progress. Among the points that I identified from the data as opportunities for collaboration are: cordial relationship, working together, sense of belonging, and involvement in parish pastoral ministry.

5.3.1 Cordial Relationship

Voices of the Clergy

Cordial relationship between clergy and laity offers them the opportunity to work together for the enhancement of the mission of the Church. In their responses to both the questionnaire and the interviews, the clergy describe their relationship with the laity as cordial.⁵²⁵ Out of the eight priests interviewed, five affirm that the priests work in harmony with the laity and that this brings about progress. One of the priests, responding to clergy interview number one which asks for his experience of collaboration with the laity regarding Church ministry, described the relationship thus: “it is a family-oriented relationship, a wonderful experience. The laity are cooperating with me in everything we do in the parish but the only problem with them is that they do not fully understand their mission or role.”⁵²⁶ Supporting this view, another priest in answer to the same interview question stated: “there is no way the priest can work without the laity or the laity work without the priest. I think we realize this fact here in this parish and, so we collaborate and work together and make progress.”⁵²⁷

⁵²⁵ Clergy Questionnaire # 1, CQ 3, CQ 4, CQ 5, CQ 6, CQ7.

⁵²⁶ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 4 & CI 5 Laity Questionnaire # 1, LQ 4.

⁵²⁷ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 5.

Voices of the Laity

Among the sixteen lay people that responded to their laity questionnaire, seven of them affirmed that the relationship between the parishioners and their priest is cordial.⁵²⁸ For example, one lay person responding to questionnaire number one which asks of the kind of collaboration that exists between the parishioners and the priest said: “the relationship is that of a mutual collaboration.”⁵²⁹ Six others expressed the same view of cordiality in the relationship between the clergy and the laity in their parish.⁵³⁰ Also in the laity interview responses, eight out of the sixteen people stressed that the relationship between the clergy and the laity is cordial.⁵³¹ In his answer to question number two which asks to know their experience of collaboration in the parish, one of the lay respondents stated: “so far the relationship between us and most of the priests that worked in our parish has been very cordial except for one of them who wanted to prove to us that he knows more than every other person in the parish.”⁵³² Other respondents expressed the same view. As can be seen in the footnote, the term ‘cordial’ was used in all of these responses in regard to the relationship.⁵³³ In answer to question number three which asks them to describe the relationship between the priest and the parishioners, one person stated: “the relationship is cordial but there are some members of the laity who do not allow the priest to do his work; they would want to know everything the priest does. Are they priests? If they want to know everything the priest is doing, why can’t they go and become a priest?”⁵³⁴ One other person said: “the bishop is one of the clerics in the diocese, and he is cordial in his relationship with the

⁵²⁸ Laity Questionnaire # 1, LQ 2, LQ 4, LQ 5, LQ 7, LQ 9, LQ 14, LQ 15, # 3, LQ 10.

⁵²⁹ Laity Questionnaire # 1, LQ 9.

⁵³⁰ Laity Questionnaire # 1, LQ 2, LQ 4, LQ 5, LQ 7, LQ 14, LQ 15.

⁵³¹ Laity Interview # 2, LI 1, LI 2, LI 5, #3, LI 3, LI 6, LI 8, LI 12.

⁵³² Laity Interview # 2, LI 5.

⁵³³ Laity Questionnaire # 1, LQ 4, LQ 15, # 2, LQ 9 Laity Interview # 3, LI 3, LI 6, LI 8 & LI 12.

⁵³⁴ Laity Interview # 3, LI 12.

faithful.”⁵³⁵ I could also observe this cordial relationship in some of the parishes where I attended the parish council meetings. The members of the parish council in parish C were offered the opportunity to express their views on the points brought forward for discussion. The priest and the members of the parish council in this parish related in such a way that the members made useful contributions during the meetings. For example, when all did not agree with the priest on the amount of money to be given to an august visitor to the parish, this was put to a vote, and the majority opinion was accepted.⁵³⁶

However, different opinions about the relationship between the clergy and the laity in the parish were also expressed. In the laity questionnaire, five respondents indicated that the relationship is not cordial. One of them, in answer to laity questionnaire number two that asks about their experiences of clergy-laity collaboration specified: “in my parish there is no collaboration. The parish priest is the authority himself. His command is all; he does not seek the consent of the people under him.”⁵³⁷ One lay person, replying to the interview question number three which asks them to describe the type of relationship that exists between them and their parish priests, stated: “the relationship is both positive and negative (sweet and sour, pleasant and unpleasant); it is always cordial (pleasant) whenever we do not disagree with the priest’s opinion, but whenever someone raises an objection on the views of the priest, then it becomes unpleasant; he flays up in annoyance and tells us that he is here to lead us and not to be led by us.”⁵³⁸ The same description may apply to the action of the priest in parish council D, when a council member raised a caveat regarding visitors to the rectory at awkward hours, the priest

⁵³⁵ Laity Interview # 2, LI 3.

⁵³⁶ Parish Council Meeting, PC ‘C’. See Appendix VIII.

⁵³⁷ Laity Questionnaire # 2, LQ 12.

⁵³⁸ Laity Interview # 3, LI 10.

stood up and struck his fist on the table and asked “are you spying us, okay can you point the particular people who you usually see?”⁵³⁹

A lay respondent described another challenge in the relationship between clergy and laity as not being open to expert advice. In answer to laity interview question number two which asks for their experiences and challenges in pursuing pastoral activities in the parish, the lay respondent commented: “most priests are lopsided and refuse to open up for expertise advice. In the area of building where I measure, priests are not considerate of the fact that it is a community project and not their personal one. They wake up in the morning and alter the design and even neglect consulting expertise.”⁵⁴⁰ In response to the same question, regarding the challenges to laity clergy collaboration, another lay respondent enthused: “many priests claim to know everything and look down on the laity presuming that they have much to teach the laity and almost nothing to learn from the laity. Collaboration cannot thrive where there is no love and respect and in an atmosphere of mistrust and arrogance.”⁵⁴¹ The responses to the question regarding the nature of relationship between the clergy and the laity are mixed with cordiality and discord.

5.3.2 Working Together—a prerequisite for parish progress

“Just as the body is one organism composed of many parts—all crucial to its proper functioning—so the Church is a dynamic organism that functions best when all its parts are joined and well harmonized.”⁵⁴²

⁵³⁹ Parish Council Meeting, PC ‘D’. See Appendix VIII.

⁵⁴⁰ Laity Interview Question # 2, LI 1.

⁵⁴¹ Laity Interview Question # 2, LI 2.

⁵⁴² ROWTHORN, *The Liberation of the Laity*, p 113.

Voices of the Clergy

Priests agreed that diversity or pluralism could become a source of richness for the Church. Among the eight priests interviewed, six of them supported the idea that bringing gifts together will greatly benefit the parish and will facilitate the work of the Church. In his reply to clergy interview question number two which asks about the benefits the parish stands to gain through collaboration, one of the priests stated: “when the various talents of the members of the Church are brought together, the work of evangelization will be easier and faster and even to the grassroots. The stress undergone by the priest, as a result of doing everything will also be reduced.”⁵⁴³ Another priest responded: “collaboration with the laity regarding Church ministry is a way of bringing together different gifts of the faithful and in a way coordinating them to help move forward the mission of the Church.”⁵⁴⁴ One of the priests in answer to question one, which required him to describe his experience of collaboration with the laity, used the school where he is working as an example comparing it to bringing gifts together in the parish. He said:

the school makes progress because I and the principal and the members of the staff bring our gifts together. Being the manager, I and the principal and the members of the staff, we collaborate and work together and make progress. She does her own, and I do my own, and the members of the staff do their own. Not only that they bring their ideas and I bring my own, and we form a synergy....⁵⁴⁵

Another priest replying to the clergy questionnaire number one stated: “when the individual gifts of the laity are tapped, the parish will be lively and grows.”⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴³ Clergy Interview # 2, CI 1.

⁵⁴⁴ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 6.

⁵⁴⁵ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 5.

⁵⁴⁶ Clergy Questionnaire # 2, CQ 1.

Voices of the Laity

Out of sixteen people who responded to the laity questionnaire, nine acknowledged that the priest and the parishioners working together brings about progress.⁵⁴⁷ One of the respondents, for example replying to the laity questionnaire number one which asks about the type of clergy-laity collaboration they envision for their parishes, stated: I envision a mutual collaboration where the priest and the laity will work together because it will bring about much progress in the parish.”⁵⁴⁸ Another respondent in answer to question number two which asks to know the rate at which the laity participates in the mission of the Church in the parish, stated: the laity participates actively in various events in the parish, each in his or her own way working together with the priest and this helps the mission of the Church to flourish.”⁵⁴⁹ Of the sixteen people who responded to the laity questionnaires, eleven disclosed that clergy and laity working together brings about progress in the parish.⁵⁵⁰ One of them, replying to laity interview question number five which asks about the benefits to be envisaged from clergy-laity collaboration, stated:

when the clergy and laity work together, the benefits will be enormous; there will be progress in the parish... church attendance will increase because people will be enthusiastic to go and worship their God with their families. When the number of parishioners increases, there will also be a corresponding increase in the parish finances and this will enable the parish to embark on any financial project with ease.⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴⁷ Laity Questionnaire # 1, LQ 7, LQ 8, # 2, LQ 6, LQ 12, # 6, LQ 8, LQ 15, # 7, LQ 4, LQ 7, LQ 10, LQ 13, LQ 15.

⁵⁴⁸ Laity Questionnaire # 1, LQ 8.

⁵⁴⁹ Laity Questionnaire # 2, LQ 6.

⁵⁵⁰ Laity Interview # 5, LI 1, LI 3 LI 5, LI 7, LI 8, LI 9, LI 10, LI 11, LI 12, LI 13, LI 15.

⁵⁵¹ Laity Interview # 5, LI 5.

Another respondent, in answer to the same question, stated: “working together brings about progress in the parish and when this is the case, many things will follow such as, increase in members, more people coming out to donate when there is a fund raising, there will be love and peace between the priest and the parishioners because they are working with one heart and one mind.”⁵⁵² Another person noted that “if the priest and the laity work together, the parish will be growing from strength to strength, there will be joy in everybody’s face because parish activities will always be done with ease and people will be happy to donate.”⁵⁵³ Still another respondent said: “when the clergy and laity work together, the priest will bring out his best in the area he knows better and the laity will bring out their best in the areas they know better and the parish will flourish.”⁵⁵⁴ I also observed this collaboration during one of the parish council meetings in parish ‘C’ where the priest offered members, the opportunity to provide input. This resulted in one person bringing up an important issue that had been forgotten. The issue of the chairperson for the upcoming parish harvest and bazaar was omitted from the prepared agenda for the meeting, and one of the members had to call attention to that.⁵⁵⁵ Bringing gifts together is another way of saying that “unity is strength”. The failure to utilize these gifts may have contributed to mishandling of some areas of administration, such as finances by priests who may not have sufficient knowledge in these areas.

5.3.3 Belonging to the Family of God

“A sense of belonging is a human need, just like the need for food and shelter. Feeling that you belong is most important in seeing value in life.”⁵⁵⁶ The idea of the people of God puts

⁵⁵² Laity Interview # 5, LI 7.

⁵⁵³ Laity Interview # 5, LI10.

⁵⁵⁴ Laity Interview # 5, LI 12.

⁵⁵⁵ See Appendix VIII.

⁵⁵⁶ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/pieces-mind/2014> (Accessed Sept 27th, 2016).

emphasis on the community of believers rather than the hierarchical structure of the Church. When all the faithful see themselves as stakeholders it gives them a sense of belonging and of common interests and provides support and encouragement.

Responses from the questionnaires show that both the clergy and the laity recognize that giving each member a sense of belonging encourages vitality and growth as well as change and openness in the parish, and this, in turn, results in greater efficiency and productivity. Both the clergy and the laity observe that a sense of belonging leads to stronger commitment, and greater enthusiasm.

Voices of the Clergy

The importance of the laity having a sense of belonging in the family of God is conspicuously noted in both the clergy questionnaires and the interviews. Out of the ten priests that responded to the questionnaires, seven affirmed that a sense of belonging results in the acceptance of one another and brings about deeper commitment in the activities of the parish.⁵⁵⁷ In his answer to the clergy questionnaire number three which demands to know the type of activity in which the priest engages the laity in the parish, one of the priests put it thus: “the Church grants the laity the right to perform peculiar functions and I try to recognize and encourage them to do these functions. It makes them feel a sense of belonging.”⁵⁵⁸ Other priests attest to this view. For instance, one of the priests, in his answer to clergy questionnaire number two which asks of the benefits to be derived from clergy and laity working together, emphasized:

⁵⁵⁷ Clergy Questionnaire # 2, CQ 5, # 3, CQ 2, # 6, CQ 5, CQ 7, CQ 10, # 7, CQ 6.

⁵⁵⁸ Clergy Questionnaire #3, CQ 8.

“Working together gives the laity a sense of belonging and this enables people to display expertise, harmony, greater efficiency and this leads to more productivity.”⁵⁵⁹

In the clergy’s response to the interviews, four priests stressed the importance of sense of belonging. Responding to interview question number two which asks about what the parish stands to gain from clergy-laity collaboration, one priest pointed out: “giving the laity a sense of belonging will make the laity to work harder knowing that what they are doing is their own. It will also make the work of evangelization easier to penetrate to the grass roots, reduce the stress being undergone by the clergy, and make the relationship between the clergy and the laity stronger.”⁵⁶⁰ Expressing the same view, another priest in answer to the same question number two stated:

a sense of belonging, in the family of God, will propel the laity to bring out their God-given talents and charisms. It will make each person to enthusiastically perform whatever function that is assigned to him/her and as a result, it will make the ministry lively, enjoyable, and less cumbersome for one person.⁵⁶¹

The priest went on to say that a sense of belonging in the parish “makes them (laity) always eager to come to Church and to assist in the ministry knowing full well that they are part of the ministry and not spectators. It will facilitate the mission of the Church in terms of spreading the gospel.”⁵⁶² Another priest added: “feeling belonged gives every person the opportunity to contribute to the growth of the Church. No one sees him/herself as not being able to offer something. It makes it possible for them (laity) not just to want to do more but to bring out their

⁵⁵⁹ Clergy Questionnaire # 2, CQ 2.

⁵⁶⁰ Clergy Interview # 2, CI 1.

⁵⁶¹ Clergy Interview # 2, CI 4.

⁵⁶² Clergy Interview # 2, CI 4.

best.”⁵⁶³ Other views expressed by other priest respondents are: “a sense of belonging will encourage the laity to work hard together with their parish priests.”⁵⁶⁴ The fact that these priest respondents make a direct reference to the need for a sense of belonging underlines the importance that they see for this kind of engagement in the parish community.

Voices of the Laity

In the laity interview seven out of the sixteen people interviewed emphasized the importance of a sense of belonging.⁵⁶⁵ One of the respondents in answer to interview question number two stated: “the laity should be given a sense of belonging and be seen and treated as people who have dignity. Respecting people’s contributions, dialoguing with them, and treating them with dignity and respect gives them that sense of belonging.”⁵⁶⁶ Another person responding to the interview question number three enthused: “The priests hardly visit the homes of the parishioners except on sick calls. However, this our new parish priest has the habit of visiting parishioners in their homes unannounced especially those who are sick. This has not only endeared him to us but gives us a sense of belonging.”⁵⁶⁷ Responding to the laity questionnaire number seven which seeks to know the benefits to be derived from clergy-laity collaboration, another lay person enthused: “one of the benefits of clergy laity collaboration is having a sense of co-ownership, and this sense of co-ownership will not only make the laity more committed but also compel them to protect the interest of the parish because it concerns them.”⁵⁶⁸ The idea of having a sense of belonging was also evidenced in the parish council meeting in parish B (see appendix viii). When the priest left the council members to continue with the meeting while he

⁵⁶³ Clergy Interview # 2, LI 8.

⁵⁶⁴ Clergy Interview # 2, CI 9.

⁵⁶⁵ Laity Interview # 2, LI 4, LI 5, # 3, LI 2, LI 8, LI 10, # 5, LI 4, LI 11.

⁵⁶⁶ Laity Interview # 2 LI 5.

⁵⁶⁷ Laity Interview # 3, LI 2.

⁵⁶⁸ Laity Questionnaire # 7, LQ 13.

went to celebrate Mass, the members were more animated than when the priest was present. They decided that the existing washrooms were inadequate and that more washrooms need to be constructed. They also felt that the schedule for the commencement of the planned parish project was not feasible.⁵⁶⁹

From the responses we can conclude that having a sense of belonging encourages the laity and enhances clergy-laity collaboration.

5.3.4 Active Involvement in Parish Pastoral Ministries

Engagement in parish pastoral ministries is one of the recurring points in the responses to both the questionnaire and the interviews. Both the clergy and the laity indicate that catechesis is crucial for the effectiveness of the mission of the Church

Voices of the Clergy

In response to the clergy questionnaire, eight of the ten priests reported that they involve the laity in some pastoral activities in the parish such as Sunday evening instructions and in visiting the sick etc.⁵⁷⁰ In his response to the questionnaire number three which demands to know the type of collaborative activity in which the laity are engaged in the parish, one priest stated:

apart from the administration of the sacraments reserved for the priest, I share all other aspects of administration with the lay faithful. For instance, planning of the activities and execution of programmes in the parish. Some help in the teaching of catechism and other exercises done in the parish.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁹ Parish Council Meeting, PC 'B'.

⁵⁷⁰ Clergy Questionnaire # 3, CQ 1, CQ 2, CQ 3, CQ 5 CQ 6, CQ 9, # 4, CQ 4, CQ 7.

⁵⁷¹ Clergy Questionnaire # 3, CQ 7.

Other questionnaire responses that express the same view are as follows: “I engage the laity in teaching catechism, reaching out to lapsed members, visiting the sick and the aged and in leading many of the Church activities.”⁵⁷² “I involve them in taking care of the sick and the aged in their various homes and neighbourhood and to report to me when there is need.”⁵⁷³ Another priest said: “I engage the laity in the organization of the parish programmes.”⁵⁷⁴ Still another stated: “I send them for seminars in and outside the parish to introduce and stabilize (educate) them in particular areas of assignment for better results.”⁵⁷⁵ These appear to signal significant commitments on the part of these priests to promote pastoral ministries among parish life.

Other questionnaire responses also allude to the importance of catechesis. One priest said that he makes an effort to educate his parishioners on clergy-laity collaboration. In his response to clergy questionnaire number five which seeks to know the effort that the priest makes in educating the laity on the importance of clergy-laity collaboration he noted: “I make effort to educate the parishioners through catechesis, Sunday instructions, retreats, celebrating Masses at the zonal or grass-root levels. It is also done through homilies, burials, visiting the statutory bodies and religious society meetings and then the pastoral care of the sick.”⁵⁷⁶ This priest sees catechesis and the call to collaboration as something that permeates his whole pastoral attention. Another priest, in answer to the same question said: “I try to educate the parishioners that evangelization and administration of the parish is a collaborative work between the priest and the laity and not that of the priest alone.”⁵⁷⁷ Other respondents also expressed the same view.⁵⁷⁸ Another priest added: “There is a big chasm between the clergy and the laity, and if this gap is to

⁵⁷² Clergy Questionnaire # 3, CQ 3.

⁵⁷³ Clergy Questionnaire # 3, CQ 5.

⁵⁷⁴ Clergy Questionnaire # 3, CQ 3.

⁵⁷⁵ Clergy Questionnaire #5, CQ 9.

⁵⁷⁶ Clergy Questionnaire # 5, CQ 8.

⁵⁷⁷ Clergy Questionnaire # 5, CQ7.

⁵⁷⁸ Clergy Questionnaire # 3, CQ 1, # 4, CQ 4, # 5, CQ 6, # 7, CQ 8.

be bridged, there is a need for proper catechesis.”⁵⁷⁹ These responses have several implications. The first is that there are indeed priests who involve their parishioners in a variety of pastoral activities. Secondly, it seems that lay persons are responding to that invitation. And finally, there is a recognition of the need for ongoing catechesis, emphasizing once again the need for the formation of the laity.

In responses to the interview, six out of eight priests noted the importance of catechesis.⁵⁸⁰ In his response to the interview question number one describing his experience of collaboration with the laity regarding ministry, one priest stated:

when I first came to this parish, the laity were not showing interest in parish activities but through catechesis, I was able to convince them that the mission of the Church is entrusted to all of us. Now they are eager and zealous to participate and make positive contributions in the parish.⁵⁸¹

Another stated that “catechesis will invariably enable the laity to understand their work, and this will, in turn, make them active in the activities of the parish.”⁵⁸² Four other priest respondents responding to the interviews stressed the importance of involving the laity in the area of catechetical instructions and visiting the sick. In his reply to the interview question number five which seeks to know the areas where the priest involves the laity in the parish activities, one of the priests stated: “I involve the laity in Sunday evening instructions. They are also leaders of the various pious associations as presidents and chairpersons; I involve them in building structures in the Church and also allot some other functions to them to perform. They visit people in their homes and hospitals to preach the good news and share what they have with the poor in their

⁵⁷⁹ Clergy Questionnaire # 7, CQ 3.

⁵⁸⁰ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 7, # 3, CI 4, CI 6, # 5, CI 2, CI 5, CI 8, CI 9.

⁵⁸¹ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 7.

⁵⁸² Clergy Interview # 3, CI 4.

midst.”⁵⁸³ Another priest responding to question number three testified thus: “I involve the laity in the parish administration, in the area of reaching out through the Legion of Mary, where they go for hospital and home visitation and they come back to report to me.”⁵⁸⁴ One other priest responding to the same question five stated “I involve them in the pastoral care of the sick and the elderly, in JDPC (Justice, Development and Peace Committee), in resolving crisis in their wards and zones, in preparations for the bishop’s pastoral visits or other major parish events like parish feast day, in running parish school, and in visiting bereaved parishioners with me.”⁵⁸⁵ In addition to the above responses from the clergy, the members of the laity also shared their experiences in pastoral ministries in the parish.

Voices of the Laity

Seven lay respondents to the questionnaires and six in the interviews attest to their involvement in teaching catechism on Sunday evenings and visiting the sick in their various parishes. One of them, in response to the laity interview question number four which asks to know the areas they would want to use their gifts in the parish, expressed her view as follows:

one of my heartbeats was teaching catechism, but I noticed that catechism being taught to children is rote learning. They can answer, but they do not know what they are answering... If you ask him to explain, he does not know. However, I engaged myself in that area because of my profession; I haven’t got the time. I had wanted to make the knowledge of the catechism real to the children. That is one of my heartbeats but time factor has not allowed me to embark on that.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸³ Clergy Interview # 5, CI 2.

⁵⁸⁴ Clergy Interview # 5, CI 5, CI 8.

⁵⁸⁵ Clergy Interview # 5, CI 8.

⁵⁸⁶ Laity Interview # 4, LI 8.

Another person responding to the same question asserted: “I have been teaching catechism both on weekdays and on Sunday evenings. I also teach marriage course on Tuesdays.”⁵⁸⁷ One other lay respondent enthused: “the pastors need to work together with the laity in the proclamation of the gospel and catechetical instructions.”⁵⁸⁸ Other respondents expressed similar views saying that the laity’s involvement in various ministries carried out in the parish should be encouraged.⁵⁸⁹ These experiences in parish pastoral ministry demonstrate that laypeople are interested in parish ministry and some are already quite engaged.

Important Concerns raised by Individuals during the Interviews

Some issues were raised during the discussions which were not mentioned by many respondents, but which seem significant to the discussion about the enhancement of clergy-laity collaboration in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi. These points are listed below and will be made use of in my recommendations.

(a) “There needs to be a forum for periodical assessment of the clergy by the laity. At present, the clergy does not have a forum seeking the candid views of the laity and this encourages the sycophants always to respond “yes father” to every decision that the priest makes on any issue or to anything he says whether it is inappropriate or not.”⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁷ Laity Interview # 4, LI 15.

⁵⁸⁸ Laity Interview # 3, LI 16.

⁵⁸⁹ Laity Questionnaire # 2 LQ 7, # 4, LQ 2, LQ 4, LQ 5, LQ 6, LQ 8, # 6, LQ 3, LQ 4 (also Laity Interview # 2, LI 15, # 4, LI 12, LI 15, # 6, LI 3, LI 6, LI 12, LI 14, LI 15).

⁵⁹⁰ Laity Interview # 4, LI 4.

(b) “There is a need for long-term pastoral planning which is subject to both long term and short-term evaluation and appraisal. This pastoral plan should be developed by members of the parish pastoral council, the priest, other stakeholders and independent parishioners.”⁵⁹¹

(c) “Each parish needs to seek out the poor and indigent members of the parish and help them out. This action would have an effect not only on the beneficiary and the neighbours, but it would also be an effective way of living and preaching the gospel. We must remember that people want to know how much we practice the teaching of Jesus regarding the care of the poor and the needy in the world.”⁵⁹²

(d) “There is a need to form small Christian communities (comprising about five to ten families) who come together to pray, discuss the scripture, share their problems and experiences, and help each other. This is one of the ways parishes develop and grow, and it would no doubt enhance collaboration in the parishes and the diocese.”⁵⁹³

(e) “The gap created between the clergy and the laity has to be bridged by putting less emphasis on hierarchy and the clericalization of the Church.”

These concerns which individuals raised during the interviews have been accounted for in the analysis above and will also find their places in the discussion.

5.4 Table Summary of Findings

Below is the summary of the findings from the survey prepared in a table form. This form of data reduction will also serve to lay another foundation for moving towards the third movement in Osmer’s Practical theological framework – correlation – what ought to be going on in clergy lay

⁵⁹¹ Laity Interview # 3, LI 1.

⁵⁹² Laity Interview # 6, LI 9.

⁵⁹³ Laity Interview # 6, LI9.

collaboration. This is to create a profile of the responses to each of the questions for easier understanding.

5.4.1 Questionnaires Group One: Clergy

<p>Q1. What is your experience of the clergy-laity collaboration in your parish?</p>	<p>Five priests stated that the collaboration between them and the laity is cordial. Three others declared that it is cordial but with some reservations.</p>
<p>Q2. How can you describe your experience of living and working together in a parish? What are the benefits of this communion?</p>	<p>Eight priests indicated that the laity do not participate actively in parish activities. Five priests agreed that working with the laity facilitates a good relationship and enthusiasm and growth in the parish. Three priests stated that the individual gifts of the laity are tapped and that this makes the work easier. Two priests said that one of the benefits of collaboration is that it makes for solidarity and unity in pastoral work and offers a sense of belonging.</p>
<p>Q3. What is your experience of working with the laity; in what kind of collaborative activity do you engage them?</p>	<p>Five priests said that they involve the laity in catechesis, evangelization, and day to day running of the parish, organization of parish programmes, visiting the sick and the aged, assisting with funerals, and leading other Church activities. Two priests added that they involve the laity in the financial administration of the parish. One priest stated that the laity need encouragement and tolerance because they are weak even in areas pertaining to them alone such as the statutory organizations where they are expected to showcase their skills.</p>
<p>Q4. What ministerial roles would you encourage the laity to play for the enhancement of the mission of the church in your parish?</p>	<p>Seven priests agreed that the laity should be involved in the following activities: teaching catechism and marriage courses, liturgical activities acting as altar servers, choristers and lay readers, keeping and maintaining order in the Church especially during mass, and leading religious societies and statutory bodies. Two priests added that raising and managing</p>

	Church funds should be solely in the hands of the lay faithful with the priest to serve only as an overseer. One priest added that the laity leads prayer ministry within the Church.
Q5. What efforts are you making to educate your parishioners on the importance of clergy-laity collaboration for the enhancement of the mission of the church?	Five priests said that they do this by organizing seminars and workshops which take place during 'laity week' and through catechesis during retreats, and Sunday evening instructions. Three priests added that they emphasize this during their homilies and other parish functions.
Q6. What are the benefits and hindrances to clergy-laity collaboration in your parish?	<p><u>Benefits:</u> Five priests maintain that collaboration makes the parish alive and fruitful, facilitates mutual understanding and instills a sense of responsibility in the parishioners. Three priests agreed that collaboration brings about deeper commitment on the part of the laity and inculcates a sense of belonging. Two priests said that collaboration allows for the division of labour and the workload is significantly reduced from the shoulders of the parish priest. Collaboration makes for progress generally since every parish work is given due attention.</p> <p><u>Hindrances:</u> Four priests reported that lay people were lukewarm and not interested in parish activities; that the laity often sees the Church as a clerical responsibility (<i>uka fada</i>). Two priests said that lay people are afraid because of their ignorance and lack of proper knowledge of Church teachings. One priest observed that traditional religious practice always rears its ugly head in the guise of culture and also Neopaganism. Another priest mentioned the lack of the spirit of selflessness of service in the lay people. One priest observed that when there is no material gain in any of the functions, there is an absence in the lay people's commitment. One priest noted that the priests are afraid of being challenged and afraid of losing their status, and the benefits which accrue to them from their excess authority and clericalism. Three Priests noted that some priests have a busy schedule and do</p>

	not have time to deal with the people.
Q7. Can you suggest some strategies which would encourage and ensure effective collaboration between the clergy and laity in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi?	Four priests said that the clergy should be open to collaboration, sharing duties with the laity, and instructing them through seminars and providing them with proper catechesis. Three priests stated that the laity needs proper formation. One priest suggested that a directorate of clergy/laity collaboration should be created. Another added that there should be less emphasis on hierarchy and that the gap between the clergy and the laity in the Church has to be bridged; he also suggested that there should be less emphasis on money in the Church. One priest stated that the priest must be pastorally available and approachable. There should be a division of labour according to one's area of expertise. Church employees need adequate remuneration and benefits, including pensions.

5.4.2. Questionnaires Group Two: Laity

Q1. In your parish pastoral activities, what kind of collaboration do you experience? What do you envision the ideal clergy-laity collaboration in your parish to be like?	In answering this question, out of the sixteen respondents, eight responded that there is a cordial relationship between the priests and the parishioners, while six people said that the relationship is not wonderful. Two chose to describe the ideal collaboration. One said that what he envisions is a very mutual collaboration whereby the laity and the clergy will see each other as one family and care for the needs of both, not the clergy caring for the laity and the laity not caring for the clergy or vice versa. The other person said that he envisions a situation where the priest and the members of the parish work as brothers and sisters. One person said that the priest is always the master.
Q2. What is the present status of the laity in your parish with regard to participation in the mission of the Church?	Nine people indicated that the laity participate actively and that the level is encouraging. Four people answered that participation is low.

<p>Q3. What hindrances have you noticed regarding clergy-laity collaboration in your parish?</p>	<p>Five people reported that the parish priest does not give them the opportunity to participate. Two people stated that the priest does not listen to their problems. One respondent indicated that the laity are not adequately motivated. One noted that there are a lot of protocols that have to be abolished in order to improve clergy-laity collaboration. One person indicated that there was a disproportionate clergy-laity ratio and a lack of knowledge of the pastoral rules by the laity. Another person mentioned the unwillingness of some members of the laity to serve. One other person talked about the authoritative attitude of the priests and the question of not being transparent in finances.</p> <p>Two people mentioned the fact that some lay people do not participate in parish activities expect some rewards are attached.</p>
<p>Q4. What areas would you as a lay person want to be more involved in the pastoral activities in the parish?</p>	<p>Out of the sixteen respondents six people indicated a desire to be more involved in teaching Church doctrine to others. Four people stated that they would like just to be lay members who are not involved in any particular activity. Two people specified that they would like to be involved in giving advice and financial contributions. One person stated that he would like to continue to be a member of the CCRN (Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria). Two people said that they would like to get more involved in missionary movements, reaching the poor, and the desolate, especially those who do not have the privilege of hearing the gospel. Another said that, in addition to supporting the building of the Church and parish projects, he would support other activities in the parish together with housing seminarians who are carrying out their pastoral duties.</p>
<p>Q5. What challenges have you experienced in carrying out your activities in the parish? How would you describe the challenges?</p>	<p>Out of the fifteen that responded, five people talked about financial constraints as the major challenge. Four people stated that the clergy is autocratic. One person responded that the challenges include non-constructive criticism and a lack of proper understanding. Another</p>

	referred to the inadequate number of qualified personnel, and the high cost of books and other teaching materials. Two persons stated that the low level of participation of the parishioners in parish work is one of the challenges, that there was a lack of cooperation and an unwillingness to participate. Two people reported that a lack of time was part of the challenge.
Q6. What are the areas where the laity could take up roles in parish activities?	Six people reported that they would like to help out financially and support parish projects. Five people responded that they were interested in being involved in catechesis. Three people indicated an interest in reading during the Mass, singing in the choir and participating in religious societies. One person reported that she is satisfied with the present role of the laity in the parish. Another person responded somewhat vaguely that the laity should be allowed to do things according to the rules and regulations.
Q7. What benefits do you think could be gained from clergy-laity collaboration in your parish? Where might the greatest challenges to such collaboration come from?	Six people expressed the view that active participation is one of the benefits. Four people indicated that the benefit is that the clergy and the laity will work together and there will be progress and development in the parish. Four people see having a sense of belonging as one of the benefits. Two people said that formation of both clergy and the laity is among the benefits. Two people said that collaboration challenges the sole-administration-ship of the clergy in all parish functions and activities.
Q8 What influences has the Igbo culture with regard to the way the clergy and the laity relate in your parish?	Four respondents indicated that Igbo culture has a positive influence on the clergy-laity relationship.

5.4.3 Interviews Group One: Clergy

<p>I.1. How would you describe your experience of collaboration with the laity regarding Church ministry?</p>	<p>Seven priest respondents stated that they relate well with the laity and that the ministry and mission of the Church are the responsibility of both the clergy and the laity. Three other priests responded that the contributions of the laity facilitate the ministry of the Church and bring about progress. One of them stated that his experience taught him that “there is no way the priest can work without the laity, just as the laity cannot work without the priest. The church can never be complete without the laity.”⁵⁹⁴</p>
<p>I.2. What are the benefits that your parish stand to gain through clergy-laity collaboration?</p>	<p>Five priests agreed that collaboration reduces the stress for priests who would otherwise have to do everything themselves. Five other priests reported that collaboration gives the members of the laity a sense of belonging. Among them, three indicated that collaboration makes the work of evangelization easier and faster, and also brings about a stronger relationship between the priest and the parishioners. Four others added that collaboration motivates the laity to readily bring forth their gifts for the enhancement of the ministry in the Church.</p>
<p>I.3. What challenges have you experienced in carrying out your activities in relation with the laity? How would you describe these challenges?</p>	<p>Four priests stated that some laity always consider self-interest before they engage in a particular activity. One of the priests said that some laypeople always disagree with the priest. Some of them want to take the place of the pastor and see themselves as equal to the pastor; they do not know their limitations or boundaries. Three priests mentioned the unwillingness of lay people to participate in the parish activities. Two of the priests called for the formation of the clergy in administration. One priest added that lay people have to be educated to understand their mission. Two priests responded that lay people view parish activities as belonging to the priest.</p>

⁵⁹⁴ Clergy Interview #1, LI 1.

<p>I.4. How often have you been involved in an on-going formation where the topic has been collaboration with the laity in church ministry? Was it helpful? What on-going formation would be most useful for you presently?</p>	<p>Eight priests responded that they have been involved in ongoing formation and agreed that ongoing formation on clergy-laity collaboration is essential.</p>
<p>I.5. What are the areas where you involve the laity in your parish activities? Why those areas?</p>	<p>Eight priests reported that they involve the laity in Sunday evening instructions, singing, doing readings, acting as ushers, and altar servers, and in bringing the gifts for the offertory. One priest added that he involves the laity in building structures in the Church. Another priest stated that he motivates the laity to visit people in their homes and hospitals to preach the good news and to share what they have with the poor in our midst. Two priests asserted that they chose those areas because the priest cannot be everywhere at once and, in some cases, the lay people know better than the priest when it comes to village politics and problems in the village. Another priest added that involving the laity also gives them the sense of belonging to a parish that is their own and not just the pastor's. This motivates them to bring forth their different gifts for the growth of the parish.</p>

5.4.4 Interviews Group Two: Laity

<p>I.1. What are your functions in the parish, a volunteer or otherwise?</p>	<p>Four people reported that they have no officially assigned work in the parish but that they work as volunteers. Four people are members of the parish council in their parishes. Two people are catechists. Three people are presidents of Church societies. Three others are members of the parish.</p>
<p>I.2. What are your experiences and challenges in pursuing pastoral activities in the parish?</p>	<p>Seven people reported that their experience is that of a cordial relationship. Four others indicated that collaboration could not thrive where there is no love and in an atmosphere of mistrust and of arrogance on the part of some priests who claim to know everything. One catechist mentioned that people sometimes</p>

	<p>look down on the catechist relative to the priest. Another catechist mentioned that the priest was negligent about the catechist's welfare. Three people reported a lack of opportunity to advise the administration, an absence of dialogue, and a failure to listen to honest suggestions for improvements in the parish. Four people raised the concern that some priests are autocratic; "the adherence to the notion of the priests' church <i>uka fada</i>, causes some priests to over-ride the laity's good suggestions. Once the priest says that this is how something is to be done, no matter how good your suggestion, it must be done the way he wants it." Five people lamented the lack of participation of the laity in parish activities. One criticized the reluctance of the laity to contribute to Church activities unless they received some personal benefits and also stated that the constant demand for donations and second collections, etc. is annoying to parishioners.</p>
<p>1.3. How would you describe your experiences with regard to the relationship between the priest and parishioners? In what areas do you think that they need to work together closely?</p>	<p>Eight people responded that the relationship is both pleasant and unpleasant. One of them said that some priests do not entertain any criticism. One described the relationship as that of a boss and an employee and also that of a father and a child and also said that because of the autocratic nature of some priests, the parishioners act as if everything is okay but discuss the priests among themselves when they are alone. One person added that because we have always been told that the Church is hierarchical and not democratic, some priests cling to that belief and see the laity as ignorant people whom they sometimes treat without respect. Another person said that some priests ignore vital suggestions brought up by the laity and take arbitrary decisions. Another pointed out that some priests waste people's time in Church talking about financial contributions all the time.</p>
<p>I.4. Given the opportunity to use your gifts and abilities with regard to church activities</p>	<p>Eight people mentioned that they are already involved in teaching catechism, reading during</p>

<p>in your parish, in what areas would you like to employ your gifts?</p>	<p>Masses and other liturgical services, altar serving, counselling and in giving advice where necessary when called upon to do so. Two people who are engineers are ready to offer expert advice on the construction going on in their parishes. Two legal practitioners said that they are already at the service of the diocese. Three respondents who are financially solvent answered that they channel their gifts towards training people in higher institutions and seminaries, and in putting smiles on the faces of the indigent ones by doing charitable works (putting food on their tables).</p>
<p>I.5. What benefits do you envisage that will accrue to the parish from clergy-laity collaboration?</p>	<p>Eight people noted these benefits: a sense of belonging, active participation, and progress of the parish in every aspect. Seven people also stated that collaboration would lead to people bringing their gifts together, the parish work will become easier, and there will be an increase in trust and harmony. Two people added that there would be a division of labour and, as a result, the priest will be relieved from excess stress and an excessive workload.</p>
<p>I.6. By virtue of our baptism both clergy and the laity have the right and duty to work for the enhancement of the mission of the Church. How have you been exercising this your baptismal rights with regard to the ministry of the Church in your parish?</p>	<p>Ten people responded that they have been doing this by teaching the catechism. One person said that he exercises this right by not keeping silent when he sees something that needs to be corrected. Another person replied that he has been exercising his baptismal rights by contributing financially to Church projects to the extent that he is able.</p>

Conclusion

Based on the findings presented above, the relationship that exists between the clergy and the laity in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi can legitimately be described as a cordial master-servant relationship. There appears to be a significant exhibition of authority and power by the clergy while lip service is often given to collaboration with the laity. Apparently, there is an absence of listening and open communication with the laity by the clergy. At the same time, the laity sometimes appears to be apathetic, and their lack of motivation seems to limit their active participation in the functions of the parish. There is also a call for greater transparency and accountability in the disbursement of the parish's financial resources. Addressing these concerns will result in more effective clergy-laity collaboration which will, in turn, enhance the mission of the Church.

CHAPTER SIX

6 Overall Discussions and Observation from the Study

I have presented the analysis of the data and will now move on to the discussion. Here I will present a discussion which engages key themes from the literature review and present the pertinent findings from the study. The reason for this is to offer a deeper theological understanding of the findings. I will look at the Church's tradition and the views of some theologians regarding clergy-laity collaboration. Engaging them in mutual conversation answers the third question in Osmer's hermeutical circle 'what ought to be going on'. This will help us to give a more informed and more adequate pastoral response.

According to Osmer, "correlational models portray the dialogue between theology and other fields as a relationship of mutual influence."⁵⁹⁵ Swinton and Mowat state that theology "necessarily tries to hold together and correlate at least three different perspectives—the situations, the Christian tradition, and another source of knowledge that is intended to enable deeper insight and understanding."⁵⁹⁶ This will "enlighten, broaden, deepen and if necessary challenge both ecclesial practice and theological understandings in the light of current practice."⁵⁹⁷

6.1 Relationship between the Clergy and the Laity

The Church's image as "the people of God", as found in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), supports collaboration and interdependence of all the groups in the Church. *Lumen Gentium* teaches that God allots his gifts as he wills "and also distributes special

⁵⁹⁵ OSMER, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, p 164.

⁵⁹⁶ SWINTON & MOWAT, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p 76.

⁵⁹⁷ SWINTON & MOWAT, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, p 82.

graces among the faithful of every rank and by these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church.”⁵⁹⁸

In my research findings, it was evident that the clergy and the laity in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi get along well with each other on some levels, but sometimes the relationship seems to be a more master-servant relationship. With a master-servant relationship, every initiative comes from the master and the servants only listen and carry out orders without questioning the master’s directives. Some responses that the relationship between some priests and their parishioners becomes unpleasant whenever they do not disagree with the priest’s opinion or raise an objection on the views of the priest,⁵⁹⁹ suggest that the laity must always conform to the will of the priest, which does not promote collaboration. It often appears that the laity are viewed as second class citizens in the Church. Ebuziem described this situation as “a clergy-dominated institution in which only the hierarchy decide everything and impose it on all else; an authoritarian aristocratic set-up where others become mere tutelage in a bureaucratic administrative network.”⁶⁰⁰ This would also seem to be the experience of other lay respondents.

Theologian Peter Casarella is critical of this kind of relationship, suggesting that “the laity can no longer be viewed as second-class citizens in the Church; the distinction between clergy and laity is cast in a new light..., they participate in the mission of the Church through their distinct apostolate.”⁶⁰¹ He continues by pointing out their shared commission: “Accordingly, the laity and the ordained priest are both called to holiness and to share in the one priesthood of

⁵⁹⁸ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 12.

⁵⁹⁹ Laity Interview Question # 3, LI 10.

⁶⁰⁰ PANTALEON IROEGBU, *Appropriate Ecclesiology: Through Narrative Theology to an African Church*, (Owerri: International Universities Press. 1996). P 100 (Cited in Cajetan Ebuziem, *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context: Towards an Emerging Model and Method for the Church in Africa*. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc. 2011), P 203.

⁶⁰¹ CASARELLA, *Disciples in the Midst of the World*, p 229.

Christ... Christ's priesthood cannot be divided into parts. No one is given just a part of the person. Christ encounters each one of us in the totality of his personhood. Lay people and clergy alike are called to partake wholly of the sacrificial love that pours out from Christ's priesthood."⁶⁰² Christ bequeaths his gift of the common priesthood to all members regardless of their strengths and weaknesses. This makes the Church whole.

Ebuziem emphasizes that the clergy and the laity "should work hand in glove in working for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth."⁶⁰³ He goes on to say that the common priesthood of believers is the basis of equality of all Christ's faithful. Lakeland also argues that the laity needs to be given the opportunity to exercise their baptismal rights by being encouraged to take the initiative and become active instead of passive in the ministry of the Church. He observes that the patterns of behaviour and the structures of the lay/clerical divide within the Church suggest that in fact the laity are systematically treated as if they are less talented and less valuable to the whole Church. Lakeland noted that "while the ordained priesthood has particular responsibilities not shared with the laity pertaining to the celebration of the sacraments other than baptism and Eucharist all other aspects of priesthood are shared by clergy and laity."⁶⁰⁴

A relationship of mutuality between the clergy and the laity remains the best way through which the Church could achieve her vision and mission. The priest's relationship with the parishioners no doubt shapes or determines the fruitfulness of the Church i.e. the extent to which the mission of the Church is realized. Similarly, when they are given the opportunity to exercise their rights, the laity are a very big asset in the realization of the mission of the Church. The clergy's relationship with the laity, therefore, needs to be structured in such a way that all should

⁶⁰² CASARELLA, *Disciples in the Midst of the World*, p 257.

⁶⁰³ EBUZIEM, *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context*, p 48.

⁶⁰⁴ LAKELAND, *Liberation of the Laity*, p 55.

be involved according to their abilities in whatever is being done in the parish. Lay people, for their part, should be prepared to cooperate with the clergy in every activity of the parish. The priest also needs to be open and willing to engage in respectful and appropriate relationships. Every person should be seen as capable of contributing something, and the laity should not be treated in the affairs of the parish as though they are incapable of contributing anything meaningful. The laity must be seen as sharing in some aspects of power and authority in the Church. As we saw earlier in this work (p 112), this can be borrowed from the Igbo style of leadership whereby public matters are thrown open for discussion, and every villager who can contribute to the discussion is given a hearing.⁶⁰⁵ In other words, “there was a get-together in the decision of things that affected the community and its members. Things that concerned all were decided by all. This basic cultural datum makes leadership into a service, not a despotic domination.”⁶⁰⁶

6.2 Power and Authority in Clergy-Laity Relations

Priests are ordained for service to the rest of the people of God to build up the body of Christ (the Church). Vatican II teaches that “the ministerial priest, by the sacred power that he has, forms and rules the priestly people.”⁶⁰⁷ This forming and ruling does not mean domination and oppression. Rather, it implies a filial attention and solicitude for the welfare of all Christ’s faithful and their growth as the People of God. “Pastors of the Church should minister to each other and to the rest of the faithful.”⁶⁰⁸ It is true that the council affirmed the clergy’s power regarding their role to lead the people of God, but this power is the power to serve. It is not the power or authority to lord it over other members of the faithful. Vatican II made it clear that

⁶⁰⁵ UCHENDU, *The Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria*, p 41.

⁶⁰⁶ IROEGBU, *Appropriate Ecclesiology*, p 93.

⁶⁰⁷ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 10.

⁶⁰⁸ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 32.

priests should realize that they are not destined for a life of power and honour, but are destined to be totally dedicated to the service of God and pastoral ministry.⁶⁰⁹ But often the way that the clergy wields power and authority in Igboland (Nnewi diocese) seems to suggest that the teaching of Vatican II expressed above is not practiced. One of the lay responses during the interview may help to illustrate this point. The respondent stated:

Our assistant parish priest was to replace his parish priest who was going for studies. Immediately the priest saw himself as the priest in charge of the parish for that period; he altered many programs in the parish including the time for the harvest and bazaar. This event usually took place in the parish on the first Sunday of November every year, but the priest changed it arbitrarily to the 27th day of December. The parishioners requested for a change of date because 27th day of December is a day of another big event in the town which will no doubt mar the success of the harvest and bazaar. The priest stuck to his opinion and that year's harvest and bazaar was a failure.⁶¹⁰

This is an example of wielding of power and of unwillingness to reason with others because of one's claim to power and authority. Another respondent said that it was made known to them that the parish council's role is advisory and that they are not to instruct the parish priest on what to do.⁶¹¹ These two examples suggest that power and authority are in the hands of the clergy. This has tended to result in a feeling of superiority and sometimes condescension on the part of some members of the clergy towards the lay faithful.

Evidently, in the Igbo Church, which includes Nnewi diocese, the clergy manage every activity of the Church in the parish even when they lack expertise in the area. When this becomes the norm, the laity see themselves as mere spectators while the priest sees himself as omnipotent

⁶⁰⁹ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Training of Priests Optatam Totius*, # 9.

⁶¹⁰ Laity Interview # 3, LI 13.

⁶¹¹ Laity Interview # 3, LI 9.

(“all powerful”) and omniscient (“all knowing”). If we desire clergy-laity collaboration in order to enhance the mission of the Church, the power and authority of the clergy must be reimagined.

Truly, priests are authority figures, “who are invested with a sacred power.”⁶¹² But what does this imply for clergy-laity collaboration? It entails that “the priests should ... preside over and serve their local community in such a way that it may deserve to be called by the name which is given to the unique People of God in its entirety, that is to say, the Church of God.”⁶¹³ This means that forming and ruling do not imply domination and oppression but leadership which is at the service of the whole. This type of authority does not compel instead, it serves others and recognizes their potential and encourages them to use that potential to build up the Church.

According to Theophilus Okere, some pastors can become arrogant, and treat the people of God not as fellow pilgrim Christians but as underlings because they are in a position of power.⁶¹⁴ As Okere notes, this behaviour is a far cry from what is expected of followers and imitators of Christ. Christ, the priest par excellence, gave us a model to follow. Jesus related well to people, gave them hope, did all he could to alleviate their sufferings, upheld justice, and did away with every kind of oppression. Jesus’ example affirms the laity’s expectations of the clergy and offers priests a better example than the sometimes willful and abusive exercise of power and authority on the part of the clergy.

⁶¹² VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 18.

⁶¹³ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 28.

⁶¹⁴ THEOPHILUS OKERE, “Church organization as the root cause of anti-clericalism” in *Collaborative ministry in the context of inculturation*, p 100.

Lakeland agrees that the laity is sometimes treated as children of the clergy.⁶¹⁵ For Lakeland, the common priesthood of all members of the faithful ought to be the propeller that drives the Church in her mission so that the Church will become a community of equal partners. However, what we often seem to have at present is a class-based society where the clergy enjoy power over the laity. This research affirms Uzuoku's statement that the clergy enjoy the privilege of authoritatively directing the docile lay faithful.⁶¹⁶ He maintains that "though each member of the faithful has his or her particular gifts. There is no question of any member being superior to any other member."⁶¹⁷ All of which goes to say that both the ordained and the lay faithful are called to collaborate in order to accomplish the mission of the Church. Instead of enhancing progress in the mission of the Church, the misuse of power and authority by the clergy inhibits it.

Commenting on authority in the Church, Avery Dulles says that what we have on the ground is a classified society where "the clergy became a class that possessed total authority in the Church, so that no multitude or combination of the laity could exert even a modicum of power against the clergy."⁶¹⁸ Dulles goes on to say that "the Church is not conceived as a democratic or representative society, but as one in which the fullness of power is concentrated in the hands of a ruling class that perpetuates itself by co-option."⁶¹⁹ Uzuoku agrees with Dulles in his reflection on the African Church. Referring to the present structure of the Church as 'feudalistic', he declares:

⁶¹⁵ PAUL LAKELAND, *Catholicism at Crossroads. How the laity can save the Church*, (N.Y: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007), p 107.

⁶¹⁶ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 120.

⁶¹⁷ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 112.

⁶¹⁸ AVERY DULLES, *Models of the Church* Complete and unabridged Edition, (Garden City, N.Y: Image Books 1978), p 169.

⁶¹⁹ AVERY DULLES, *Models of the Church: a critical assessment of the Church in all Aspects* Second Edition, (Island: Macmillan Ltd. Press, 1988), p 38.

Our bishops and priests have no evident interest in changing the status quo in this Church because they possess the authority to direct the lay faithful, who are led like a docile flock; while they, the privileged clergy are the beneficiaries...the bishop is the extension of the pope, the priests are an extension of the bishops, and the lay people are the commanded serfs in the feudalistic structure⁶²⁰

The laity behave as though they have no alternative, resigning themselves in faith and leaving the clergy to do as they wish since the Church is the priests' Church. This goes against the democratic principles of traditional Igbo leadership where the principle of equality is respected⁶²¹; as we have seen earlier. The feelings expressed by many of the lay respondents and the views of the authors quoted above clearly demonstrate that power and authority in the Church in Nnewi diocese remain with the clergy and so the Church is rightfully called '*uka fada*.'

6.2.1 Authority as Love and Service

Authority is neither autocratic nor despotic, nor is sacred power a divinely-sanctioned instrument for oppression. The Church emphasises that the priest is called to the service of the people of God and the sacred power bestowed on the priest is for nourishing the family of God; power for service; for building up the People of God.⁶²² Vatican II stated that: "that office, however, which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is, in the strictest sense of the term, a service, which is called very expressively in sacred scripture a *Diakonia* or ministry."⁶²³

The words of Peter Okafor confirm this idea:

⁶²⁰ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 120.

⁶²¹ UCHENDU, *The Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria*, p 46.

⁶²² VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 24; # 28.

⁶²³ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 24.

(T)he authority of office is a necessity. But its legitimacy depends on its subordination to moral authority and thus, its reconfiguration before the demands of the Gospel.... The understanding and exercise of the authority of the ordained ministry must be linked to fidelity to the Gospel and apostolic life on the part of officeholders or pastoral ministers of the Church.⁶²⁴

This means that priestly authority ought to be a symbol of love and service, gentleness and humility. The implication of all this for collaboration is clearly spelt out in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church:

The pastors, indeed, should recognize and promote the dignity and responsibility of the laity in the Church. They should willingly use their prudent advice and confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church, leaving them freedom and scope for acting, indeed, they should give them the courage to undertake works on their own initiative. They should with paternal love consider attentively in Christ initial moves, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity.⁶²⁵

While it is true that the pastor is the administrator of the goods of the Church⁶²⁶, this administration does not imply monopoly or dictatorship. In fact, lay members of the Church “lawfully take part in the administration of ecclesiastical goods”⁶²⁷ since the purpose of this administration is “the building up of the Church.”⁶²⁸ This shows clearly that the clergy should work collaboratively with the laity without exploitation or rancour. It calls for active service and a spirit of harmony and fraternity among the clergy and the laity.

⁶²⁴ PETER OKAFOR, “Authority as Service in the Nigerian-African Church: The Challenge of the Twofold Apostolic Heritage, *Ministerium*,” *Journal of Contextual Theology*, Vol 2 no. 1 (Nimo: Rex Charles & Patrick Ltd, 2016), p 48-49.

⁶²⁵ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 37.

⁶²⁶ Code of Canon Law, # 532.

⁶²⁷ Code of Canon Law, # 1282.

⁶²⁸ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 3.

6.2.2 Authority as Service in Traditional Igbo Culture

In contrast to the existing practice of exhibition of power and authority by some clergy and more in keeping with the Jesus of the gospels, religious leaders in the traditional Igbo context were intended to serve as a link between the people on the one hand, and God, spirits and invisible things on the other. Their authority was also for the service of the community. Iroegbu described this as follows: In Igbo culture, authority is "an instrument of service to the people and not for their domination. The leader is accountable both to the ancestors and to the people."⁶²⁹ These leaders, who include family heads, priests and medicine men, are at the service of the people. They do not deny people their rights or dictate to the people. The family head does everything in his power to provide for the family and to protect the family in times of danger. The medicine men/women serve the community in times of both physical and spiritual sickness. However, it is not as if the religious leaders in the traditional Igbo context do not at times exhibit power and authority; they do although it rarely happens except in extreme cases. Some of them in a very human fashion also use their authority over the people. Exhibition of power is noticed sometimes in the decision-making: "while women are expected to meet on their own, to discuss women's affairs, men discuss what affects the whole town both men and women."⁶³⁰ Even in the family, men sometimes carry out projects without informing their wives. Uchem explains further that "due to the fact that the man used to carry most of the financial responsibilities, he would

⁶²⁹ PANTALEON. IROEGBU, *Communism: towards Justice in Africa, Nigeria*, (Owerri: International Universities Press, 1996), p 25. (See also V. Nwosu, "The Growth of Catholic Church in Onitsha Ecclesiastic Province," in A.O Makozi and G.J. Afolabi Ojo (eds.), *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, Lagos: Academy Press 1982, p 25).

⁶³⁰ UCHEM, *Overcoming Women's Subordination*, p 91.

carry out projects without telling the woman or involving her in decision-making... The woman will just see it happening.”⁶³¹

The above quote notwithstanding, the Church in Nnewi diocese needs to see this Igbo idea of authority as service to the community as a rich value that needs to be practiced. It is true that the Church is hierarchical as some priests say but a question remains regarding the purpose of such hierarchy. Is the hierarchy intended for good order or is it intending autocracy or totalitarianism. Hierarchy is an expression of that truth that though we are many, we all form one body of Christ.⁶³² Thus, hierarchy is about the good ordering of things whose essence and end is collaboration and communion. Is this intended hierarchy misused?

The clergy, like Christ, should endeavour to use and share their authority among others for the good of the people they are called to lead and to serve. Their power is a strength of mission and should never be used as power over, but rather for empowering others. We need a change whereby authority and power will be exercised in the spirit of service and love following the model of Christ. Accomplishing the mission of the Church will be difficult if the clergy relies on the exercise of power and authority. Moreover, “anyone who supports bureaucratization and authoritarianism, distance instead of dialogue, confirms the opinion that the Church is not only losing the young and the working class but actually driving them out.”⁶³³ Instead of uniting people, unnecessary exercise of authority distances them and creates a gulf or chasm between them. It is anachronistic and diminishes people’s humanity and ingenuity.

⁶³¹ UCHEM, *Overcoming Women’s Subordination*, p 90.

⁶³² VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 32.

⁶³³ WALBERT BUHLMANN, *The Church of the Future*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books & St. Paul Publications, Slough 1986), p 164.

6.3 *Uka Fada*—The Priests’ Church

The Church envisaged by Vatican II as the people of God includes all the faithful (clergy and laity). The Church is neither the clergy alone nor the laity alone but both clergy and laity. Vatican II states that in the building up of the body of Christ, there remains, a true equality between all with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful.⁶³⁴ The Catechism of the Catholic Church provides further clarification on this point, stating that, “the whole community of believers is, as such priestly. The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through participation, each according to his vocation, in Christ’s mission as priest, prophet and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, the faithful are consecrated to be ...a holy priesthood.”⁶³⁵ The document goes further to explain that “while the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace—a life of faith, hope, and charity, a life according to the spirit—the ministerial priesthood is to serve the universal priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians.”⁶³⁶

The above clarification shows that by baptism, all the faithful—the laity as well as the clergy—are called to be active participants in the affairs of the Church. In other words, the people of God include all members of the faithful. The Church as the people of God is no longer seen as a pyramid with the clerical hierarchy at the top, but as a community in which every member has charisms of the Holy Spirit, and a ministry to carry out in the Church. It is not to be seen as the priests’ Church (*Uka Fada*).

⁶³⁴ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 32.

⁶³⁵ Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), # 1546.

⁶³⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), # 1547.

The name *Uka Fada*, as the Catholic Church is generally called in Igboland, applies both in name and in practice because the notion is that the priests own the Church and the other members are just passive observers who take direction from the priests when the priests deem that they require assistance. This view of the Church as the priests' Church is contrary to the teaching of the Council. As we saw in Chapter Four (pp 112-118), even in the traditional Igbo context, the leader does not own the community; the community belongs to all the people.⁶³⁷ Similarly, the parish does not belong to the priest; it is not his property but belongs to all the members of the parish.

The perception of the Church as the priests' Church may have influenced the priest who, in the clergy questionnaire, said that "the laity should be trained as 'future helpers' to the priests."⁶³⁸ His observation is that the Church belongs to the priest and the other members of the faithful are the priest's helpers. Without a doubt, this idea—that sees the laity as helping the clergy in the realisation of the mission of the Church—is a portrayal of ignorance of the Church's teaching, and is a manifestation or consequence of that mentality that sees the Church as the Church of the clergy, the so-called *Uka Fada*. This idea does not reflect the true vision of the Church.

At present, the laity apparently do not see themselves as having a stake in the affairs of the Church. Because they also see the Church as the priest's Church, many members of the laity seem to be indifferent to what is going on in the Church on the premise that it does not concern them. Even those who make an effort to become involved in parish activities are discouraged because their efforts seem not to be valued and their suggestions are often ignored. This can be seen in the data report in page 151 where the interviewee expressed his feeling that because the

⁶³⁷ Chapter four of this thesis, (p 112).

⁶³⁸ Clergy Questionnaire # 4, CQ 9.

Church has the nature of *uka fada*, the laity have the impression that you do not dispute with the priest and things are done in the way the priests want it whether it is good or not good.⁶³⁹ The priest wakes up one morning and changes a program that was in progress without consulting experts; the priests tend to work more with the person that agrees to follow their whims and caprices. With such people, the priests merely inform them, if at all, and carry on, doing whatever they wish to do.⁶⁴⁰ These expressions seem to confirm the perception of the Church as the priests' Church.

John Aniagwu described this idea of the priests' Church beautifully when he said that the Church in Nigeria is wrongly perceived as belonging to the priest and "all others, religious and laity, are merely seen and treated as tenants in the father's Church."⁶⁴¹ If this tradition is followed, then it contributes to the idea of the Church as the priest's Church. According to Bishop P. A. Kalilombe of Malawi, "the feeling that the priest and the missionaries own the Church must stop.... A new sense of responsibility should grow, where everybody feels that the life and work of the Church depend on him or her."⁶⁴² When everyone recognizes that he or she is vital for the progress of the Church and that the neglect of his/her responsibilities would result in the Church failing to carry out her duties, then everyone will be eager to collaborate because no one would like to be associated with the downfall of the Church.

Ukachukwu Manus suggests that in order to eliminate totally the remaining vestiges of the notion of *Uka fada* ascribed to the clergy,

⁶³⁹ Laity Interview # 2, LI 7.

⁶⁴⁰ Laity Interview # 2, LI 1.

⁶⁴¹ JOHN ANIAGWU, *Collaborative Ministry: Priests, Sisters and Brothers*, (Ibadan, Nigeria: Graphic and Graphics Ltd., 2001), p 2.

⁶⁴² BISHOP P. A. KALILOMBE of Malawi writing to his people, cited by Veronica Anisionwu, *The Role of the Laity in the Missionary Activities of the Church*, p 74-75.

the laity... must be fully educated to accept the reality that the Church is the people's business where the people of God recognise that they are no longer responsible only to the priest but to their own communities inclusive of the priest. The lay persons must, therefore, be given the opportunity to learn progressively that the Church is a communion whose life and radiance depend upon their active involvement.⁶⁴³

In a similar vein, Ebuziem stated that “even if the hierarchy (in Nigeria) were to commission and bless the laity for certain roles in the Church, many laity would hesitate to take up these responsibilities, either because it is new to them or mainly because they see these roles as belonging to the domain of the clergy.”⁶⁴⁴ Thus, there is a challenge posed by the fact that the laity are not willing or do not feel able to take their rightful place in the mission of the Church.

Ojemen agrees with the position that: “most members of Christ's faithful still consider the Church as an institution where clerics are both more visible but also often undertake most of initiatives and decisions almost singlehandedly. The role of the generality of the laity... is still considerably reduced to just that of listening and obeying directives....”⁶⁴⁵ Limiting the role of the laity to obedience and listening, and the unwillingness of the laity to take their rightful place, both contribute to the mistaken vision of the Church as *Uka Fada*.

The work that I have done has shown that the idea of the Church as “*Uka Fada*” (the priest's Church) has not only encouraged some members of the clergy to wield power and authority in an authoritarian manner but has also restricted some lay people from actively participating in parish activities. The responses (mostly from the laity) reported in the findings

⁶⁴³ UKACHUKWU MANUS, “The laity, An oft Neglected Body of Human Resource in the Church,” in *collaborative ministry in the Context of Inculturation*. Ignatius Obinwa (ed.), (Onitsha, Nigeria: Africana First Publishers Ltd., 2006), p 131.

⁶⁴⁴ EBUZIEM, *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context*, p 172.

⁶⁴⁵ COSMAS OJEMEN, “The imperative for effective collaborative ministry: A case study for the church in Nigeria,” in *Areopagus, Journal of Church and State Relations*. S. Eboh, (ed.), p 90, vol. 2, no. 1.

dispel the assumption that there is always a cordial relationship and full collaboration between the clergy and laity in Nnewi diocese. The idea of *Uka Fada* has been accepted as something normal, as a characteristic inherited for a very long time, which should not be changed. At least to some extent, people are oblivious to the fact that the mentality of *Uka Fada* is a hindrance to clergy-laity collaboration and relegates the laity to second-class or inferior positions in the Church. As we have seen, the notion that the Church belongs to the priest has done more harm than good to the mission of the Church, by highlighting the importance of the clergy and diminishing the role of the laity. This notion has limited the activities of the laity while increasing the arrogance of some members of the clergy. Since enhancing the mission of the Church is a right and a duty of all the faithful, to relegate the laity to the background and to neglect them in this mission is a denial of their right and duty. The faithful will, therefore, do well to see the Church as ‘our Church’. When the clergy and the laity see themselves as collaborators, then every member will begin to see the Church as “ours” instead of “the priests’ Church.” The recognition of the Church as “ours” will also reduce the excess exhibition of power and authority by the clergy.

6.4 Uniting people’s gifts/talents enhances the Mission of the Church

Recognizing the mutuality required for the diverse ministries in the Church, Vatican II states: “Priests should confidently entrust to the laity duties in the service of the Church, giving them freedom and opportunity for activity, and even inviting them when opportunity offers, to undertake projects on their own initiative.”⁶⁴⁶ This involves all the faithful working together in freedom. The great apostle Paul supports this practice of bringing gifts together.⁶⁴⁷ The early Church was, undeniably, a community of faith, of unity of heart and mind (Acts 4:32), a

⁶⁴⁶ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Ministry and life of Priests Presbyterorum Ordinis*, # 9.

⁶⁴⁷ The Spirit reveals his presence in each one with a gift that is also a service” (1Cor. 12:7).

community of mutual unselfish service. Vatican II teaches that priests are to recognize the charisms and roles of other members of the faithful for the realization of this common mission.⁶⁴⁸ This recognition of charisms and roles seems to be more evident in theory than in practice.

Since all are members of the body of Christ, all members contribute their share to the growth of that body and no person's contribution is insignificant. The Code of Canon #204 states that all Christ's faithful have the obligation and right to struggle so that the divine message of salvation may more and more reach all people of all times and all places.⁶⁴⁹ This statement refers to all the faithful and not just a selected part of the faithful; this suggests that the work or ministry must be cooperative. Everybody matters and everybody has something to contribute to the overall success of the Church. The first Christian gatherings show "a community with a strong sense of identity, responsible for one another and guided by the Gospel demands; they also promoted many ministries and celebrated a variety of gifts."⁶⁵⁰

Our study revealed that both the clergy and the laity agree that when the various talents of the members of the Church are brought together, the work of evangelization will be easier and faster. When the members of the faithful (clergy and laity) share their gifts, this serves the common good. The sharing of gifts for a common goal promotes creativity and the development of the Church.

We also learned from the study that by collaborating with the laity, the clergy is bound to be enriched by the varied gifts with which the laity is blessed. As experts in temporal affairs, the laity includes legal practitioners, engineers, medical personnel, politicians, educators, administrators, etc. Any clergy that not only welcomes but also encourages the laity to offer their

⁶⁴⁸ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 30.

⁶⁴⁹ Code of canon Law, # 204.

⁶⁵⁰ BAUSCH, *Ministry: Traditions, Tensions, Transitions*, p 110.

best efforts will inevitably be enriched in the measure of the riches of the laity. The fact remains that the clergy is only as rich, as wise, and as efficient as its laity.⁶⁵¹ Although there are different personalities in the parish, when they work together using their gifts, they become productive, wise and effective in carrying out the mission of the Church. While they perform different functions, each person shares in the common achievements of the Church. Recognizing, valuing, and uniting these gifts “bring about harmony, greater efficiency and productivity.”⁶⁵² The recognition and acknowledgement of the diverse gifts of the laity help to illustrate the richness and beauty of communion and clearly explains the concept of solidarity in common task (*Njikoka*). Uniting the different gifts of the faithful enhances the mission of the Church.

It is important that priests, in their leadership role, see the mission of the Church as a cooperative responsibility of the clergy and the laity and thus share functions accordingly. They can borrow this from the Igbo concept of household leadership. Igbo household leadership is circular in its structure, with the members of the family at the centre, and the head of the household, through communal consent, and by listening to the voices of the surrounding ancestors, comes to certain decisions that will be binding on everybody.⁶⁵³

This model of leadership supports the premise that we are all together striving towards a common goal.

6.5 Resistance to Change

The achievement of a common goal is constrained by resistance to change. Change is journeying into an unknown territory. It is abandoning the past to face the future. And unless one

⁶⁵¹ Clergy Interview # 2, CI 7.

⁶⁵² Clergy Questionnaire # 1, CQ 2.

⁶⁵³ UZOR, *Living Between Two Worlds*, p 348.

is willing to get lost, one can never find one's way.⁶⁵⁴ Change, therefore, elicits different reactions from different people; it elicits negative reactions from those whose positions and privileges are negatively affected and positive reactions from those who see a new opportunity to achieve different goals. People abhor change, especially when it means giving up their position of power or privilege. People could also be afraid of the potentially negative impact of the expected change or are unaware of the benefits of the expected change. Change sometimes calls accepted values into question, and this often results in resistance to any type of change.

Vatican II points out that “in our times, profound transformations are to be noticed in the structure and institutions of peoples,”⁶⁵⁵ and that “a change in attitudes and human structures frequently calls accepted values into question.”⁶⁵⁶ The Church maintains that “beneath all that changes, there is much that is unchanging, much that has its ultimate foundation in Christ, who is the same yesterday and today, and forever.”⁶⁵⁷ However, this study demonstrates that the change that the Church talks about with regard to clergy-laity collaboration may be a change in principle but not in practice because it appears that both the clergy and the laity are resistant to this change.

The study revealed in page 158 that the priests may be afraid of losing their powers and authority⁶⁵⁸ hence they are resistant to change. Apparently, because of the perceived threat of change, the priests become strict and refuse to be open to the laity. It is also said that in some cases, the lay faithful are afraid of the priests because of their strictness.⁶⁵⁹ This may be perceived as an intimidation strategy aimed at resisting change. We also learned in page 157

⁶⁵⁴ OSMER, *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, p 197.

⁶⁵⁵ VATICAN II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*, # 73.

⁶⁵⁶ VATICAN II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*, # 7.

⁶⁵⁷ VATICAN II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*, # 10.

⁶⁵⁸ Laity Interview # 1, LI 1.

⁶⁵⁹ Laity Interview # 2, LI 14.

that, because of the priests' power, influence and authority even education and exposure, the laity are so intimidated⁶⁶⁰ that they are afraid to advocate for change. Surprisingly, in the data in page 177, there was a lone voice whose perception went contrary to the desired change. He saw no reason for the change and offered the advice that the members of the laity must not interfere in the affairs of the priest. This view goes contrary to the desired change, which would result in the laity sharing in some aspects of the power and authority of the Church because they are members of the Church.

Theologians have commented on the resistance to change. Vincent Nwosu is of the opinion that fear on the part of the clergy results from the perception that "laymen might become too powerful in the Church, and become less subservient to Church authority."⁶⁶¹ According to Susan Wood, "lay and ordained ministry often feel threatened by each other in ways and for reasons that neither fully understand. While some members of the Church are attempting to reclaim the identity for the ordained based on hierarchical and juridical powers, others are rejecting the very notion of the distinctive ministry of the ordained."⁶⁶² Gregory Nnamani expresses the view that "a priesthood that hunts for privileges, immunities and luxury prefer to keep the laity at bay and uninformed...."⁶⁶³ These observations confirm the perception that the clergy regard the laity with suspicion and for this reason are resistant to change. The laity also seem to struggle to find their proper place within the ministry of the Church. The views expressed are contrary to the vision of both Vatican II and of the formative traditions of the Church. However, from all indications, both the clergy and the laity are responsible for resisting

⁶⁶⁰ Laity Interview # 5, LI 1.

⁶⁶¹ NWOSU, *The Laity and the Growth of Catholic Church in Nigeria*, p 95.

⁶⁶² SUSAN K WOOD (ed.), *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003), ix.

⁶⁶³ GREGORY AMULUCHE NNAMANI, "What is an Inculturating Church?" in *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation*. Ignatius Obinwa, ed. (Nigeria: Africana First Publishers Ltd. 2006), p 357.

change in the Church. It is important to note that “it can be futile to resist change but salutary to guide and manage it.”⁶⁶⁴

Fear of the impact of change has hindered clergy-laity collaboration by preventing dialogue between some priests and their parishioners. “Every change constitutes a threat to established social institutions and privileges; it whips off discordant and deviant behaviours and attitudes to established and old age norms and values.”⁶⁶⁵ Change is not always easy, and so people dread change because of the uncertainty that it generates. Fear of change presents an obstacle which keeps some members of the clergy from collaborating with the laity in fulfilling the mission of the Church. Fearing that they might lose their comfortable status and be challenged by an informed laity, the clergy may keep the laity perpetually ignorant of the Church’s vision regarding clergy-laity collaboration. Going by what we saw from the data some priests do not engage the laity in the activities of the Church, and they keep them uninformed about what goes on in the parish, and treat every action of the laity in the parish with suspicion.

According to Humphrey Anameje, the reason for the resistance to change is that on the one hand, “the Igbo laity are still hesitant and ill-prepared to take initiatives and accept responsibilities; on the other hand, the Igbo priests are generally scared and afraid that by sharing responsibility, the laity may expect to share power and authority in the Church.”⁶⁶⁶ Perhaps the clergy is afraid of exposing the laity to their responsibilities lest they rise up to claim their rights and duties. Then again, there is also a possibility that, since the clergy have grown comfortable with the command and control position, they may find it difficult to respect, trust, and share

⁶⁶⁴ OZIGBOH, *Igbo Catholicism: Onitsha Connection*, p 114.

⁶⁶⁵ UZOR, *Living Between Two Worlds*, p 250.

⁶⁶⁶ HUMPHREY ANAMEJE, *The Laity as Participants in the Mission of the Church: A Theological Reflection in the Light of the Ecclesiology of Vatican II with Particular Reference to the Church in Southeastern Nigeria*, (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven 2008), p 35. (quoting Ikenga R. Ozigboh, *Igbo Catholicism, Onitsha Connection* 1985), p 45.

power with the laity. This idea is echoed by Ikenga Ozigboh as quoted above by Anameje. Rose Uchem observed that when we consider that “anyone long accustomed to having privilege and advantage over others will not readily wake up to the cause of justice and be ready to give up some of his/her enjoyments and begin to share gains and burdens equally with the others, change seems remote.”⁶⁶⁷ However, whether the clergy or the laity finds collaboration a difficult endeavour or not, it is this practice that will enhance the mission of the Church.

Priests who still hold to Vatican I ecclesiology (that sees the bishops and priests as the Church and the lay people as passive participants) feel uneasy or threatened in a situation where the lay faithful are expressing their feelings. However, they are at ease with the quiet or passive and relatively uncritical lay people. Such priests do not accept that lay people read the Bible and share their inspirations with others. They prefer an authoritarian model of Church where the lay people are passive, and only the priest speaks.⁶⁶⁸

According to Camillilus Umoh, “it is possible that many members of the clergy and religious see collaborative ministry as a threat to their individual success. Success in this sense is not measured in terms of the gospel standards of following Jesus to the point of sacrificing one’s life but in terms of societal assessment.”⁶⁶⁹

The old vision of the Church as non-participatory, and the laity’s limited understanding of their proper role in the Church may have made many lay people complacent about their passivity and afraid to inquire about or challenge what they feel is not going well. It could, therefore, be argued that indifference and lack of trust in the clergy by lay people, and ignorance

⁶⁶⁷ Uchem, *Overcoming Women’s Subordination*, p 68.

⁶⁶⁸ EMMANUEL OLUSOLA, “Enhancing Participation in Small Christian Communities in Nigeria through Small Group Communication Strategies,” in *Pastoral Communication: Making Parish Communication Effective*. Egeri. I, (ed.), (Ibadan: St. Paul’s Publications, 2014), p 24.

⁶⁶⁹ CAMILLUS UMOH, “I planted, Apollos watered... 1 Cor.3:16: Rivalry in the Corinthian Mission, A Lesson for the Nigerian Church,” in *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation*, p 87.

of their responsibilities may underlie the fear of change on the part of the laity. This is obvious from the response of one of the lay respondents who feels that some lay people interfere in priests parish activities.⁶⁷⁰ But one may ask, have the laity no right to know about the priest's parish activities or the affairs of the parish? Similarly, because the majority of the laity is unfamiliar with Church documents supporting collaboration, and they lack experience of it, they are afraid of change. This is because an uninformed person is often unsure how to bring about the right situation.

Fear sometimes prevents the laity from collaborating with the clergy in the mission of the Church. As indicated earlier, the laity are afraid of the uncertainty change will bring; as a result, they prefer to continue with what they are familiar with. Furthermore, some members of the laity who may be willing to challenge the status quo are afraid that the Christian community may ostracize them or label them as troublemakers and non-conformists and no one would like to be labelled as such. Be that as it may, it is unfortunate that some members of the laity quarrel with those who speak out to challenge what they observe that is not working properly. Sometimes this is done through writing or verbal attacks, but however it is done, it constitutes an obstacle to clergy-laity collaboration. The faithful, therefore, needs to encourage each other and to be informed about what the Church expects of them.

From my perspective as a priest, I do not see anything wrong with the laity sharing in some aspects of the Church's power and authority. After all, they are authorities in their different spheres of life, including various areas where the clergy have no authority; they work for the benefit of the Church as lawyers, teachers, doctors, etc. If the clergy is afraid of sharing power and authority, presumably it is because they do not want to lose their privileges and their

⁶⁷⁰ Laity Interview # 3, LI 12.

comfortable mode of living. Knowledge and understanding can help to alleviate fear, and this can be achieved through ongoing formation, and through experiencing the value of collaboration.

Experience and ongoing education is the key. As I stated earlier in page 2 of this thesis, my own experience during this period of study gave me another view of ministry and of the value of collaboration between the clergy and the laity. This has actually given me a passion as it concerns this research project. This Canadian experience of clergy-laity collaboration, in Canadian Martyrs' parish in Ottawa, exposed me to another style of ministerial leadership. In addition, my exposure to a renewed study of theology in my courses and the work of reflective practice has led me to ask questions regarding the nature of ministry.

6.6 Belonging to the Family of God

The Church teaches that all believers are stakeholders in the mission of the Church. Vatican II, in *Lumen Gentium*, states that “the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less ordered one to another, each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ.”⁶⁷¹ A sense of belonging implies that all believers are stakeholders who are working together for the good of the Church. However, in the Church in Igboland of which Nnewi Diocese is a part, it appears that the clergy frequently monopolize authority and appropriate every right, with the result that the laity see themselves as outsiders in the family of God. Pope Francis observes that excessive clericalism is responsible for keeping the laity away from active involvement and decision-making in the Church.⁶⁷² When the laity is blocked from decision-making in the parish, the Church loses the expertise which they (laity) could have shared with the Church.

⁶⁷¹ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 10.

⁶⁷² POPE FRANCIS, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, (Rome 24th November 2013), # 102.

The findings from this study page 182-3 indicate that offering the laity the opportunity to experience a sense of belonging will promote clergy-laity collaboration for the enhancement of the mission of the Church in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi. It will make them eager to participate in parish activities and work with one mind and one heart.⁶⁷³ “If the faithful are involved in the decision making, and consulted in matters concerning them in the parish, not only that they would feel a sense of belonging but will also be encouraged to work hard together with their parish priest.”⁶⁷⁴ Having a sense of belonging, therefore, inspires people to do their best in whatever they are involved in. Offering the laity the opportunity to make use of their initiative in the parish makes them always eager to come to Church and to assist in the ministry knowing full well that they are part of the ministry and not spectators.⁶⁷⁵ One treasures what one owns and can go to any length to sustain and protect it. In the same way, if the laity sees the parish and its activities as belonging to them, they do everything they can to ensure that the parish progresses.

In addition, “a sense of belonging will bring about active participation of members ... total commitment and cooperation by the members of the laity.”⁶⁷⁶ It helps the laity to desire to put in their best in the parish life and also be readily available for any service in the parish.⁶⁷⁷ A sense of belonging makes the laity “feel honoured whenever they are involved in the activities of the parish and they are always ready to give their best.”⁶⁷⁸

Ebuziem uses the Igbo concept of *Umunna bu ike* to convey the Igbo idea of a sense of belonging. This feeling of belonging is demonstrated by each member of the community freely

⁶⁷³ Laity Interview # 5, LI 7.

⁶⁷⁴ Laity Interview # 5, LI 11.

⁶⁷⁵ Clergy Interview # 2, CI 4.

⁶⁷⁶ Laity Questionnaire # 7, LQ 4.

⁶⁷⁷ Clergy Questionnaire # 2, CQ 3.

⁶⁷⁸ Clergy Questionnaire # 3, CQ 1.

making their opinion known as stakeholders. This practice makes every member of the community feel that they are bona fide members of the community and not outsiders. This is exactly what collaboration entails. This is also an example of solidarity in common task (*Njikoka*). The African family, with its shared responsibility, offers the Church a model for giving people a sense of belonging.⁶⁷⁹

6.6.1 A Sense of Belonging in the African family

A sense of belonging is very well practised in the African family where each person is listened to and has the right to express himself; the ideal African family provides a model of shared responsibility. Everyone is valued and consulted when decisions concerning the family are made. When a task is to be performed, everyone takes part regardless of age, sex and status. This is because, having been born into the family, no one is considered inferior to any other member of the family. The implication is that success is everyone's success and failure is everyone's failure. This is exactly what baptism bestows on every member of the Church, as Clement Onwunata also pointed out.⁶⁸⁰

The benefits that the Church stands to derive from giving every member a sense of belonging can be communicated through the process of ongoing formation by both the clergy and the laity.

⁶⁷⁹ EMMA OGU, "Ndigbo, their Culture, and Institutions", *Ndigbo Journal* Vol.1, No 11, (Nov./Dec.,2008), p 33. (Also see Ebuziem, p 136).

⁶⁸⁰ ONWUNATA, *Towards an Inculturated African model communal ecclesia*, p 406.

6.7 Ongoing formation

Vatican II recommends a diversified and thorough formation that entails a well-rounded formation which is seen as the foundation and condition for every successful apostolate.⁶⁸¹ Continuing education is important in whatever occupation or endeavours one finds oneself. Both the clergy and the laity need ongoing formation if clergy-laity collaboration is to be achieved, this will ultimately enhance the mission of the Church. Vatican II emphasizes the formation of priests, “who will be able to present teaching on God, on man, on the world, in a way suited to our contemporaries... Furthermore, it is to be hoped that more of the laity will receive adequate theological formation and that some among them will dedicate themselves professionally to these studies, and contribute to their advancement.”⁶⁸² The formation process will be a constant reminder to both the clergy and the laity that the Church belongs to all members of Christ’s faithful and not to the clergy or laity alone. As a result of this formation, they will learn to work collaboratively.

According to Pope John Paul II, “they (priests) need to be educated to love the truth, to be loyal, to respect every person, to have a sense of justice, to be true to their word, to be genuinely compassionate, to be men of integrity and especially, to be balanced in judgment and behaviour.”⁶⁸³ The Pope’s view reflects what the laity hope for from their priests, and these virtues should be nurtured through the process of ongoing formation.

The clergy needs ongoing formation on collaboration with the laity on a more regular basis, and the formation should put more emphasis on the rights and duties of the laity. The laity

⁶⁸¹ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §§ 28 & 29.

⁶⁸² VATICAN II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*, # 62.

⁶⁸³ JOHN PAUL II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation: *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (March 15th, 1992), # 43.

also need to receive appropriate and comprehensive formation on a continuing basis. This formation will make them aware that the status quo is not what the Church intends for the laity.

The data findings and the current literature show that clergy needs ongoing formation on collaboration with the laity on a more regular basis because of the many excesses that have been observed in the behaviour of some priests. It should not be presumed that all priests are knowledgeable about clergy-laity collaboration as it pertains to the mission of the Church. Result from the study revealed that ongoing formation is necessary after ordination to keep priests up to date on the Church's teachings.⁶⁸⁴ In a working relationship, both parties need to be open to ongoing formation and lifelong learning. As we saw in the data reported in page 168, those in leadership positions need to involve themselves in on-going formation that focuses on the human person as a being in a relationship with others, all of whom have a variety of temperaments. Moreover, the formation would deal with the dynamics of conflict resolution and of working together as a sharing Church.⁶⁸⁵ Formation on these topics treats the human person holistically and, when this is done, collaboration between the clergy and the laity will be improved. Report from the data findings in page 169 also revealed that some priests initiate workshops and seminars for the laity of the parish, and sometimes send them on seminars outside the parish in order to be conversant with particular areas of assignment.⁶⁸⁶ These statements show that some priests understand the importance of ongoing formation; however, they talked only about the formation of the laity and were silent on the need for ongoing training for clergy.

The emphasis in the data finding in page 171 shows that parishes need to send their parishioners for formation on an ongoing basis, and that, by doing so, a majority of the faithful

⁶⁸⁴ Laity Interview # 3, LI 7.

⁶⁸⁵ Clergy Interview # 4, CI 7.

⁶⁸⁶ Clergy Questionnaire # 5, CQ 1 & CQ 9.

will be aware of their role in the mission of the Church within a space of time.⁶⁸⁷ According to Gabriel A. Ojo:

Both priests and laity must constantly be trained to become informed and skilled in this particular exercise. While priests are given their foundation courses in the seminaries on priest-laity collaboration, lay persons must avail themselves of participation in regular programmes such as seminars in order to learn more about the strategies and techniques of achieving effective priests-laity collaboration.⁶⁸⁸

The courses on collaboration taught in the seminary are not enough because it focuses more on theory than practice. It is only when the priest has acquired experience working with the laity in the parish that he will understand what collaboration entails. The ongoing formation would, therefore, serve as a constant reminder of the need for active participation by the laity. Ongoing formation will also help both the priests and the laity to update their thinking. The formation will be practice based learning, in other words reflective practice. It is not just theory based formation. This means that after the formation, the candidates will move into the parish to put into practice what they have learnt and then come back to share their experiences with one another. My own experience in ongoing formation helped to stimulate changes in my thinking regarding the collaboration between the clergy and the laity.

Paul Lakeland described the current status of the laity as an ‘oppressed condition’, of which the laity seem not to be aware.⁶⁸⁹ Looking at the issue from Lakeland’s perspective, one

⁶⁸⁷ Laity Interview # 6, LI 9.

⁶⁸⁸ GABRIEL A. OJO, *Catholic Laity in Nigeria: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow*, (Ibadan: Daily Graphics Nigeria Ltd., 2004), p 209.

⁶⁸⁹ LAKELAND, *The liberation of the Laity*, p 187.

immediately sees the need for formation of the laity regarding their rights and responsibilities. In a similar vein, Paschal Nwezapu expresses the view that:

If the laity are led to a deeper understanding, acceptance and appreciation of their duties and roles, we will most likely witness the emergence of a knowledgeable, empowered and a spirit-filled and mission-oriented laity that will be proud to proclaim their faith publicly and zealous to serve in the Church and to spread the Gospel everywhere (in their homes, in their neighbourhood, in their institutions, in their places of work and among their peers).⁶⁹⁰

The ongoing formation would also involve a joint workshop among the priests and the laity. It is only with ongoing formation in the form of seminars and workshops, together with catechesis, that the laity will be led to a deeper understanding, acceptance and appreciation of their roles and duties. In addition, ongoing formation will encourage the clergy to accept and appreciate the roles and duties of the laity in the Church. Fr. Benedict Etafo supports this position; he enthuses that “the Church would have a virile laity the more the laity realizes its vocation and mission.”⁶⁹¹

In order to improve the formation of the laity and non-clerical religious, the Catholic diocese of Nnewi recently established St. Paul School of Theology where lay men and women and religious brothers and nuns are offered a two-year theological course. The courses given include: Scripture, Canon Law, Ecclesiology, Missiology Church history, Spiritual Theology, etc.. The formators are priests, nuns and lay theologians. With this formation, I envisage that students will realize that the Church belongs to all the faithful and not just to the clergy. This knowledge will, in turn, expose them to the rights and duties of the laity. The benefit of ongoing

⁶⁹⁰ PASCHAL NWEZAPU, “Address to the Priests of Ibadan Archdiocese during the year for Priests,” p 20.

⁶⁹¹ BENEDICT ETAFO, *The Triplex Munera of the Laity in Praxis: A Canonical Perspective in Lay People in the Church and in the World*, Ben O. Etafo & Hilary O. Okeke (eds.), Nigeria Canon Law Series No. 1. (Published by Canon Law Society of Nigeria 1993), p 79.

formation was evident in the case of the lay person that gave an excellent reflection during the parish council meeting in parish 'C'.⁶⁹² This person was currently studying at St. Paul school of theology in the diocese. The formation offered in this theological school exposes the candidates to the teachings of the Church.

One of the benefits of ongoing formation is that it will encourage both the clergy and the laity to pool their resources (bringing together their individual gifts) for the enhancement of the mission of the Church. With the help of ongoing formation, each person will be able to identify parish activities in which they can participate and make a positive contribution.

The importance of formation of both clergy and laity with regard to collaboration cannot be overemphasized. Most members of the clergy and laity have a great deal to learn both in terms of working knowledge and skills for collaboration. Both the clergy and the laity may behave the way they do because of a lack of proper formation. The laity may distance themselves from their responsibilities either because they do not know what their responsibilities are or because they have not been trained adequately to carry them out. The priest may be autocratic or feel that he is superior to the laity because he is not aware of the Church's teaching regarding clergy-laity collaboration.

Most of the laity is unaware that there are Church documents that promote collaboration. Knowing that such teachings and documents exist, studying them, and putting what has been studied into practice, will give the laity the opportunity to adjust to a more collaborative relationship between the clergy and the laity. The Clergy may look down on lay people or discount their abilities because of their lack of theological knowledge. It is my perception that, the clergy may display arrogance because they often consider the laity as generally incompetent

⁶⁹² Parish Council Meeting, PC 'C'.

in Church matters since they do not have theological formation. If the clergy's concern is that the laity does not have adequate formation in theology, then such formation should be provided to them. The expression that knowledge is power applies here. Once the laity are better informed, they will no doubt be more active in exercising their rights and in carrying out their duties. As Peter Okafor suggests:

A theologically informed laity would lead to a laity aware of its rights and duties in the Church; a laity capable of trained reflections on the theological options behind the pastoral positions and decisions of the Church; a laity capable of articulating and making critical contributions to the life and growth of the Church from the layperson's perspective. The situation can lead to a healthy tension and necessary equilibrium in the Church. It can lead to a balancing of the relation between the hierarchy and the laity as it would also lead to the diffusion of the power which comes from knowledge.⁶⁹³

The formation proposed will be comprehensive. It will not only deal with the clergy-laity relationship but will also include administrative skills. This is because much still needs to be done regarding administrative collaboration between the laity and the clergy. Clement Onwunata laments that "lay people in the Church have not been as involved in the active administration of the Church as they should be, because authority and responsibility are still tight in the hands of the clergy, who have been directing the pace and determining the line of action for the laity."⁶⁹⁴ In my opinion, the problem of collaboration and ineffective administrative participation by the laity in the mission of the Church has not been adequately addressed, especially from the standpoint of pastoral administration, which touches on the lives of the clergy and the laity. According to Anthony Ekwunife, what is needed is an integrated formation, which takes account

⁶⁹³ PETER OKAFOR, "Authority as Service in the Nigerian-African Church: Challenge of the Twofold Apostolic Heritage," in *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology*, Vol. 17 (2005), p 121.

⁶⁹⁴ ONWUNATA, *Towards an Inculturated African Communal Model of Ecclesia*, P 9.

of resilient and relevant African traditional values for a wholesome formation of future Church leaders in Africa.⁶⁹⁵

Furthermore, some priests do not receive any formal administrative training during their initial formation in the seminary. When they find themselves in the parish, as parish priests or co-parish priests, they are faced with handling matters such as settling disputes, regulating parish activities, administering finances, etc. that call for some administrative skills. This, for the most part, puts them in an untenable situation where they fumble their way through things that they are convinced that they understand, even without formal training or experience, but which they do not address satisfactorily.

Training in collaboration is a necessary component of clergy and laity formation. Collaboration needs to be learned. The formation in the seminary often carries along with it the unpleasant attitudes of authoritarianism and clericalism. So much depends on the focus of the seminary formation. Seminary formation should teach future priests about team spirit, human relations skills like learning to listen actively, to facilitate conversations, etc. and should prepare them for collaborative ministry. Moreover, emphasis should be placed on an ecclesiology of communion rather than hierarchy. Similarly, a comparative study of the state of collaboration between priests and their parishioners needs to be done on an ongoing basis by the seminary formators. This will help to ensure the quality of their formation. Quality formation of the seminarians is *sine qua non* if clergy-laity collaboration is to be achieved. It is hoped that questioning our seminary formation paradigm will provide us with a significant opportunity to rethink who we are and what is needed today to be good leaders (priests). The entire formation

⁶⁹⁵ ANTHONY N.O. EKWUNIFE, *Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience*, (Enugu: Snaap Press, 1995), pp 58-81. (cited by Clement Onwunata, *Towards an Inculturated African Communal Model of Ecclesia*, P 101).

structure for both the clergy and the laity in the diocese needs to be seriously examined, in order for both the priests and the laity to know the laity's as well as the clergy's rights and duties in the Church. Formation needs to include some kind of reflective practice where there is an opportunity to learn from experience, self-reflection and from the impact from others.

6.8 Participation of the Laity in Parish Activities

The Church's teaching is replete with passages that emphasize that the activities of the Church are the responsibility of all the faithful. Vatican II teaches that the laity ought to provide helpful collaboration for every apostolic and missionary undertaking sponsored by their local parish.⁶⁹⁶ The laity must be ready to enthusiastically apply their talents to the work in the parish. This responsibility for active participation in parish activities is a function entrusted to the laity by God himself by virtue of baptism and confirmation. According to Pope Francis, "many lay people fear that they may be asked to undertake some apostolic work and they seek to avoid any responsibility that may take them away from their free time."⁶⁹⁷ Apparently, this is the case in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi where some members of the laity continues to be reluctant to participate in the parish ministry of the Church.

The unwillingness of the laity to participate in parish activities was reported often in the findings by both the priests and the laity. I could observe the frustration of the priest respondent who shared his experience regarding the lack of laity participation in his parish (page 155). "When we were searching for a person to be the chairman for works, we went from house to house pleading with people to accept the function, but no one was willing to take up that responsibility. In this parish, they will just be by the side watching you do everything as if it does

⁶⁹⁶ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 10.

⁶⁹⁷ POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, # 81.

not concern them.”⁶⁹⁸ I do not know why the laity are inactive, but they must have their reasons for not taking part in the work of the parish. One priest respondent stated that the unwillingness of lay people to collaborate with the clergy is the result of the laity’s perception of the hierarchical difference between the clergy and lay people.⁶⁹⁹ A similar experience to the one narrated above as found in page 150 is that “when a project is to be done in the Church, the laity will feel unconcerned leaving the priest to scout for the money in the Church.”⁷⁰⁰ This priest, however, did not acknowledge that the money he seeks does not fall from heaven but comes from some of these very lay people.

It is to be noted that people feel inspired and challenged to participate actively in parish activities when the priest is not dominating or self-serving, but instead, is facilitative, animating, unifying and inclusive. This was evident at the parish council meeting in parish ‘C’ where members of the council exhibited facilitative behaviour and made useful suggestions. When they could not agree on an issue, it was put to a vote and the majority opinion was accepted. Although this is not the only way to resolve an issue but it will help to make the members feel that their views are respected. Also, a parishioner who is an expert in the area was overseeing the renovation project in the parish.⁷⁰¹ It may be that these lay people were actively participating in the parish activities because the priest was community-oriented and open minded. My observations during the parish council meetings suggest that the laity participates actively and meaningfully in some parishes when the opportunity is offered to them. For example, in parish ‘C,’ the members of the harvest and bazaar committee participated actively when they were

⁶⁹⁸ Clergy Interview # 3, CI 2.

⁶⁹⁹ Clergy Interview # 3, CI 6.

⁷⁰⁰ Clergy Interview # 3, CI 3.

⁷⁰¹ Parish Council Meeting, ‘PC’ C.

given the opportunity to take initiative.⁷⁰² It could be that the laity are simply instructed on what to do and as a result they do not participate actively.

Theologians like Peter Casarella believe that the clergy and the laity cannot function well without each other so, there must be clergy-laity collaboration if the common goal of the Church is to be achieved. Casarella stated that “the lay apostolate complements that of the ordained and is just as essential to the mission of the Church as that of the clergy.”⁷⁰³ Rademacher echoes this sentiment: “It is sufficient to note that all disciples ordained or not, are called to heal, to teach, to reconcile, to visit the sick, to feed the hungry... All these functions are part of the baptismal vocation to discipleship.”⁷⁰⁴ Therefore, the call to discipleship is to be exercised in all spheres of life: in the family, hospital, school, prison, office, etc. Consequently, “the prevalent idea that the duty of the ordinary Christian is merely to remain passive and be fed is a direct negation of the spirit of the New Testament teaching.”⁷⁰⁵ Both the clergy and the laity are parts of the Church; neither alone is the whole Church. However, the laity seems not to be working in collaboration either because of marginalization or neglect by the clergy or because of sheer indifference on the part of the laity themselves. According to Ignatius Obinwa, “while some diocesan priests regard the diocesan Church as their personal property to the exclusion of the laity and religious, some religious and lay faithful exhibit no adequate interest in the affairs of the particular Church where they work and to which they belong.”⁷⁰⁶ It is important to note that “when lay people are kept in

⁷⁰² Parish Council Meeting, PC ‘C’ (See appendix VIII).

⁷⁰³ CASARELLA, “Disciples in the midst of the world,” p 230.

⁷⁰⁴ RADEMACHER, *Lay Ministry*, p 173.

⁷⁰⁵ GENNER E. E, *The Church in the New Testament*, (London: Charles Kelly 1914), p 64.

⁷⁰⁶ IGNATIUS OBINWA, “Biblical Perspective on Collaborative Ministry the Issue of a Model,” in *Collaborative Ministry in the Context of Inculturation*. Ignatius Obinwa (ed.), (Onitsha: Africana First Publishers Ltd., 2006), p 51.

tutelage and treated more or less as children, they become as indifferent to the Church's faith as her life."⁷⁰⁷

However, Ojemen observes that: "most members of Christ's faithful still consider the Church as an institution where clerics are both more visible but also often undertake most of initiatives and decisions almost singlehandedly. The role of the generality of the laity... is still considerably reduced to just that of listening and obeying directives..."⁷⁰⁸ Notwithstanding the views expressed above, it is likely that if the laity are encouraged and empowered to take up their rightful position, they will be inspired and disposed to participate actively in parish activities and will, in turn, collaborate in building a better Church community.

We learned from some priests responding to the interview questions that the laity are indifferent to the activities of the parish, and as a result it is very difficult to do any work in the parish. Every singular activity in the parish rests on the parish priest.⁷⁰⁹ It is possible that the alleged non-participation of the laity might be because they (the laity) are ignorant of their responsibility as a result of a lack of formation. Pope Francis is mindful of the fact that lack of formation has contributed to the laity's lack of awareness of their responsibilities, and thus he noted, "... in some cases, it is because lay persons have not been given the formation needed to take on important responsibilities. In others, it is because, in their particular Churches, room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making."⁷¹⁰ The Church documents, the theological discussion and my findings have consistently pointed to the lack of necessary formation, the exclusion of the laity

⁷⁰⁷ CONGAR, *Essential Writings*, p88.

⁷⁰⁸ COSMAS. A OJEMEN, "The imperative for effective collaborative ministry: A case study for the church in Nigeria," in *Areopagus, Journal of Church and State Relations*. S. Eboh (ed.), p90. vol. 2, no. 1.

⁷⁰⁹ CLERGY INTERVIEW #3, CI 2.

⁷¹⁰ POPE FRANCIS, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium* 2013, # 102.

from decision-making and the authoritarianism of the clergy as factors inhibiting clergy-laity collaboration. Many members of the faithful (both clergy and laity) but especially the laity are still unaware of the Church's teaching on clergy-laity collaboration.

In response to the research questions, lay people reported that they are not offered the opportunity to be fully involved in the activities of the Church in the parish. As a result, many members of the laity are discouraged from taking their responsibilities in the Church seriously. However, a priest can function well in a parish only when he recognizes and promotes the specific roles of the laity in the mission of the Church. "The priest, who hardly trusts his parishioners to be competent enough to undertake any substantial task on their own, rather generates in the people a sense of lack of confidence in themselves and their least desire to carry on any task."⁷¹¹ It should be noted that when the laity is offered the opportunity, they often perform their tasks very well. The tasks include financial and material for support the Church. Nevertheless, some priests sometimes exclude lay people in planning parish activities only to have the same priests turn around and accuse the lay people of non-participation.

It may be that some members of the clergy are also unaware of the rights and duties of the layperson. Some of those who are knowledgeable are not putting this knowledge into practice. Perhaps, if they do, they fear that they might lose the privileges and advantages, which the present ranking of clergy as superior to laity offers them. As things stand currently in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi, it is possible that many priests who notice the need for improvement in the clergy-laity collaboration regarding the mission of the Church are afraid to point it out because they anticipate a negative reaction from their fellow priests. Furthermore, the consistent

⁷¹¹ ONWUNATA, *Towards an Inculturated African communal Model Ecclesia*, p358. (Quoting L. Nwankwo, "Nigerian Priests and Catholic Charismatic Renewal of Nigeria," in *Inculturation of Church Authority in Igboland, Renewal of Priestly Life and Ministry: The Nigerian Experience*. A.N.O. Ekwunife et al (eds.), (Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 1995), pp 238-276.

practice and perception of the Church as the priest's Church may prevent both the clergy and the laity from recognizing the structural change needed to carry out the mission of the Church in Nnewi diocese.

Anne Rowthorn describes it aptly: "Part of the Church's condition is that it has been functioning without some parts for so long that most of its parts (members) have forgotten (if ever they knew) what the body could feel like if it were to function healthily, harmoniously, and to capacity."⁷¹² This calls for an urgent reaction so that the body will have all its members functioning to full capacity. It is the duty of Church leaders to see that no member of the faithful feels that they are outsiders in the Christian community. Yves Congar writes: "It is quite certain that, when lay people are kept in tutelage and treated more or less like children, they become as indifferent to the Church's faith as to her life."⁷¹³ If the laity are treated as though they have no stake in the mission of the Church, they will lose interest in the Church. Nobody will deny the fact that there are many apathetic members of the faithful, but there are also a large number of people who are willing to participate actively in the activities of the parish whose resources are left untapped by the priests probably because of fear of change.

6.9 Dialogue (Speaking and listening)

Vatican II states that priests "should be ready to listen to lay people, consider their wishes, and recognize their experience and competence in various areas of human activity."⁷¹⁴ It also teaches that "the clergy should with paternal love consider attentively in Christ initial moves, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity."⁷¹⁵ Moreover, Vatican II stresses that it is

⁷¹² ROWTHORN, *The Liberation of the Laity*, p 114.

⁷¹³ YVES CONGAR, *Essential Writings: Selected with an Introduction by Paul Lakeland*, p 88.

⁷¹⁴ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests Presbyterorum Ordinis*, # 9.

⁷¹⁵ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 37.

necessary for people to remember that no one is allowed to monopolize the Church's authority based on his personal opinions. They should always try to enlighten one another through honest discussion, preserving mutual charity and caring above all for the common good.⁷¹⁶ This implies that no one among the faithful has a monopoly on ideas and, as a result, there is a need to listen and to dialogue with one another for the common good. Vatican II goes further to describe the benefits that accrue from the dialogue between the clergy and the laity.

Many benefits for the Church are to be expected from this familiar relationship between the laity and the pastors. The sense of their own responsibility is strengthened in the laity; their zeal is encouraged, they are more ready to unite their energies to the work of their pastors. The later, helped by the experience of the laity, are in a position to judge more clearly and more appropriately in spiritual as well as in temporal matters. Strengthened by all her members, the Church can thus more effectively fulfil her mission for the life of the world.⁷¹⁷

Based on the data in pages 173-174, it is primarily only the laity who recognizes the importance of dialogue. Lay respondents claim that the clergy do not often listen to the laity. They (the clergy) “do not have a forum seeking the candid view of the laity and this promote sycophants always to sing 'yes father' to every issue”⁷¹⁸, and “the priest does not consult them in doing certain things.”⁷¹⁹ Two priests support the idea of the clergy dialoguing with their parishioners as a family and giving people the opportunity to contribute and converse with each other. They stated that listening and dialoguing with the parishioners not only enrich the priest, who acquires much information on what goes on in the parish, but also enable the laity to

⁷¹⁶ VATICAN II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*, # 43.

⁷¹⁷ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 37.

⁷¹⁸ Laity Questionnaire # 5, LQ 10.

⁷¹⁹ Laity Questionnaire # 3, LQ 1.

exercise their rights.⁷²⁰ Listening constitutes a significant aspect of pastoral work, and when listening fails to occur in a parish setting, a big gulf is created between the clergy and the laity.

Uzukwu emphasizes the importance of listening and dialogue between the priests and their parishioners. According to him, there is need to be a dialogue whereby the priests and their parishioners listen to one another.⁷²¹ It is through this communication, at all levels, which “in political terms may be called consultation, deliberation, or decentralization that the Church in Africa may be empowered to learn and carry out her vocation in the world of today.”⁷²² When someone is patiently listened to, both the listener and the person listened to will surely understand each other better. Loughlan Sofield asserts that “listening involves the suspension of one’s viewpoint to attempt to hear and understand another truly.”⁷²³ When the priest takes the time to listen and understand the parishioners, he encourages their active participation.

In Ebuziem’s opinion, consultation energizes collaboration while authoritarianism is antithetical to collaboration. No one would like to collaborate with an authority that is proven to dominate others by authoritarianism.⁷²⁴ When people are consulted, and issues are discussed with them, they feel valued and disposed to do their best, but when they feel that they are commanded or compelled, they withdraw. When one’s humanity is denied, the person feels excluded from the group to which they belong. It is proper, therefore, for the clergy to listen to the laity and dialogue with them in order to achieve collaboration between the clergy and the laity.

⁷²⁰ Clergy Interview #2, CI 7, # 4, CI 3.

⁷²¹ UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 121.

⁷²² UZUKWU, *The Listening Church*, p 151.

⁷²³ LOUGHLAN SOFIELD, SJ AND DONALD H. KUHN, *The Collaborative Leader: Listening to the Wisdom of God’s People*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1995), P 46.

⁷²⁴ EBUZIEM, *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context*, p 153. (Authoritarianism is antithetical to collaboration. If in any circumstance, it rears its ugly head in the Christian tradition, it will be inimical to the church’s effort at collaboration. Since accountability, says Lakeland, is the public face of responsibility and credibility, nobody would like to collaborate with an authority that is proven to dominate others by authoritarianism.)

The Church should be a Church that not only speaks but also listens and discusses issues with those affected by them. The absence of listening and dialoguing may have been a contributing factor to the apparent lack of accountability in the area of parish finances.

6.10 Accountability (Finances)

Accountability implies openness and trust in one another. A lack of accountability and transparency leads to poor performance in the administration of the parish. Vatican II stated that in order to be good leaders, priests need to cultivate such qualities as sincerity, transparency, strength and justice.⁷²⁵ The Council also calls on the faithful to administer to one another the various gifts that each has received; as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.⁷²⁶ In the gospel, Jesus praised the good steward for being honest and responsible.⁷²⁷ This servant was praised and rewarded because he was responsible, accountable and faithful. Similarly, all the faithful are called to be responsible and accountable in any function they perform in the parish.

The data reveals that the laity complain that some priests are reckless in the spending of the parish funds and failing to inform the parishioners about how the money was spent. They are of the opinion that “people will be more active and donate more only when they know how their money is being disbursed.”⁷²⁸ They advise that Church authorities should create a system where the parish priest is open about the finances of the Church because transparency in financial matters reduces or even eliminates gossip.⁷²⁹ However, this idea of the laity knowing how the parish money is managed was questioned by one priest who asked whether the management of

⁷²⁵ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests Presbyterorum Ordinis*, # 3.

⁷²⁶ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 13.

⁷²⁷ The one who received five talents came with another five talents, saying: Lord, you entrusted me with five talents, but see I have gained five more with them. The master answered: Very well, good and faithful servant, since you have been faithful in a few things, I will entrust you with much more. Come and share the joy of your master. Mt 25:2ff.

⁷²⁸ Laity Interview # 3, LI 2.

⁷²⁹ Laity Interview # 6, LI 4.

funds is the only parish activity to be involved in. He continued, stating that being committed in the mission of the Church does not necessarily mean that everyone needs to know how money is managed in the Church. He justified this view by adding that those that ask specific question about money matters are not even those that bring that money.⁷³⁰ However, those who contribute money and those who cannot contribute money but spend their time and use their talents to keep the parish running smoothly have the right to know how their money is managed. Being transparent and accountable will likely motivate them to donate more money the next time the priest asks for financial contributions. Even if those who ask to know how the parish fund is spent have not contributed anything, they too have the right to know because they are parishioners and the money belongs to the whole parish. The Church's money ought not to be used as though it were the private resource of the priest.

It should be noted that even when one is in charge of the parish fund, one needs to recognize that it belongs to the community and therefore be responsible and judicious in its use. It is necessary that priests be transparent in their handling of the parish finances in order to avoid suspicion. A lack of openness and transparency on the part of the Church leadership demoralizes people and sometimes deters them from contributing or donating money for the implementation of parish projects. A lack of transparency may also prevent people from participating in parish activities. Furthermore, accountability motivates people to commit their resources to Church projects, recognizing that the resources will be allocated correctly and will not be misappropriated.

⁷³⁰ Clergy Interview # 2, CI 3.

Cahalan holds that “administrators are granted the responsibility of overseeing all the goods of the community, but it is not their personal property.”⁷³¹ There is a need to be accountable; every member of the faithful (whether clergy or laity) has to be accountable. “Accountability ...is illustrated in our willingness to submit our actions to the judgement of others.”⁷³² If the clergy are open with the laity about how parish money is spent, it will limit suspicion about the management of the Church’s finances.

The laity and the clergy may have conflicting views about parish finances because each of them might be representing the position that benefits them or that is in their best interests. However, it is important to add that public funds such as that of a parish are never safe in the hands of just one person—be that person a priest, a layman, a saint or an angel. Nevertheless, the cure to the widespread lack of openness in financial matters among the clergy will be a finance committee that will meet and decide on every major expenditure or financial project to be embarked on, as well as agree on and put some checks and balances or at least put an upper limit on recurring spending that the clergy can initiate.

6.11 Pastoral Ministries in the Parish

The Church’s document, General Directory for Catechesis, GDC #219 describes catechesis as “a fundamental ecclesial service, indispensable for the growth of the Church.”⁷³³ Proper catechesis involves the whole person and thus promotes active participation in evangelization. This is one of the advantages of collaboration in the parish. Every Christian is therefore called by Christ to participate in the Church’s evangelical mission (which is also the

⁷³¹ CAHALAN, *Introducing the practice of Ministry*, p 62.

⁷³² PAUL LAKELAND, “Accountability, Credibility and Authority,” *New Theology Review* Vol. 19, No 1. (February 2006), p7.

⁷³³ Congregation for the Clergy, #2 General Directory for Catechesis, Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1997, # 219.

mission of Christ). Christians are initiated into this mission through baptism, in which they promise to take up the mission of Christ. Thus, active lay ministry is a divine mandate and not merely a human or ecclesiastical invention. It is the same source for all ministries in the Church. Vatican II also emphasizes that pastors know that the work of salvation is not their sole responsibility, but that they are also to recognize the laity's talents and contribution in this common task.⁷³⁴ This is what it means for clergy and laity to work together as servants of the community. When the priest involves the laity in areas where he knows that they are experts, he motivates them to collaborate and to realize that catechesis is an essential aspect of lay ministry.

Both the clergy and the laity emphasized the importance of catechesis. From the data it is stated that the priest cannot be everywhere at once. Also, in some cases, the laity are better informed than the priest about village politics, and they know how best to address local issues in order to resolve problems (see page 198). They are more knowledgeable than the priest in those specific areas.⁷³⁵ Some members of the laity in Nnewi diocese are involved in teaching catechism, visiting the sick in the hospital and their homes, teaching marriage courses, etc.⁷³⁶ Involvement in catechesis is also prominent in the responses to the laity questionnaire.⁷³⁷ This demonstrates that laypeople are interested in parish ministry and that proper catechesis leads to active participation in evangelization, energizing both the priests and the parishioners and bringing progress to the parish. This is one of the advantages of clergy-laity collaboration in the parish.

⁷³⁴ VATICAN II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, # 30.

⁷³⁵ Clergy Interview #5, CI 8. (the priest cannot be everywhere at the same time. In some cases, too, they know better than the priest when it comes to village politics and they know how best to address it so as to resolve any problem. They are more knowledgeable than the priest in such areas).

⁷³⁶ Laity Interview # 2, LI 15, # 3, LI 16, # 4, LI 8, LI 12, LI 15.

⁷³⁷ Laity Questionnaire # 4, LQ 4, LQ 5, LQ 6, # 6, LQ 3, LQ 4.

Both the priests and the laity must learn to cooperate in the critical ministry of catechesis in order to succeed as a community because no one person is omniscient. To be more efficient in the ministry and mission of the Church in Nnewi diocese, we need to be progressive and engage in collaborative efforts instead of maintaining the present hierarchical approach. Through catechesis, priests need to create a welcoming and supportive environment in which everyone is involved in parish activities, in other words togetherness in common task (*Njikoka*). This is in keeping with the example of Jesus who shared leadership with the twelve apostles.

6.12 Motivation for Collaboration

Vatican II encourages the faithful to engage in various aspects of life for the spread of the gospel without regard for their own interest and material advantages.⁷³⁸ However, it also recognizes the need “to foster among all the will to play a role in common undertakings. If all citizens are to feel inclined to take part in the activities ..., they must find motives which will attract others and dispose them to serve their fellow men.”⁷³⁹ These statements imply that the faithful should undertake tasks in the Church without regard to personal interest.

Based on the data collected, there are some indications that the laity only become active participants if some personal benefits are attached to the activity (see pages 162-163). These assertions come mostly from priests who claimed that the lay faithful find it difficult to perform certain works in the parish unless there are some economic benefits,⁷⁴⁰ and that one hardly gets the lay faithful’s commitments in parish functions unless there are material gains.⁷⁴¹ Some members of the laity might appreciate the benefit of recognition for something well done while

⁷³⁸ VATICAN II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*, # 75.

⁷³⁹ VATICAN II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes*, # 31.

⁷⁴⁰ Clergy Interview # 1, CI 2.

⁷⁴¹ Clergy Questionnaire # 6, CQ 7.

respecting the person's human dignity, and encouraging the person when they make an effort to advance the progress of the parish. This would support the person by giving a sense of belonging, offering the person the opportunity to use their initiative, and allowing the person to be involved in the appropriate decision-making process. These benefits are motivations in themselves. Both the priests and the laity need support and motivation. The priests are also motivated when the bishop appoints them to various committees where their expertise is recognized so the need for positive motivation on the part of the laity is understandable.

There is no doubt that clergy-laity collaboration will reduce the priest's level of stress. The laity will also work harder, taking ownership of their work. The work of evangelization will be facilitated, and it will filter down to the grassroots level. Grass-roots involvement can also inspire others to become more engaged in their ministries. The clergy-laity relationship will be stronger because nobody will suspect the other of misusing Church property. There will be a proper approach and constructive criticism.⁷⁴² These are motivations in their own right and they go a long way to promote clergy-laity collaboration.

Conclusion

This part of the thesis discusses the teachings of the Church, the views of some theologians regarding clergy-laity collaboration together with my research findings. In the process, I took into account the views of a number of other people. From what emerged in this study, it was clear that there were certain barriers and limitations to the practice of clergy-laity collaboration in Nnewi diocese. I think it will be helpful, for further work, to name some of these obstacles. I will then make some suggestions on the way forward for a reformed practice in order to optimize the collaboration between the clergy and the laity in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi.

⁷⁴² Clergy Interview # 2, CI 1.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7 Recommendations for Future Practices

From what emerged in this study, it was clear that there were certain barriers and limitations to the practice of clergy-laity collaboration in Nnewi diocese. I think it will be helpful, for further work, to name some of these obstacles. I will then make some suggestions on the way forward for a reformed practice in order to optimize the collaboration between the clergy and the laity in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi.

The research and analysis in this work focused on an ethnographic inquiry into clergy-laity collaboration for the enhancement of the mission of the Church in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi. This dissertation has attempted to examine the extent to which clergy-laity collaboration, as described in the documents of Vatican II, is being practised in Nnewi diocese. My findings show a gap between what the literature on collaboration recommends and what is practiced in Nnewi Diocese. The current practice in the diocese is characterized by limited collaboration, and therefore confirms the initial hypothesis that gave impetus to the dissertation. The recommendations which I have put forward in the course of the analysis should serve as a starting point on the *how might we respond* segment of Osmer's hermeneutic circle. It answers the question regarding the necessary steps to be taken to improve clergy-laity collaboration in Nnewi diocese. It also fulfills the research aim as indicated the introduction (p 3).

7.1 Renewed Vision in Nnewi Diocese

The Church is essentially a community sharing a common life gathered together by our faith in Jesus Christ. Whenever we gather for Mass, or for meetings, functions or for any of the sacraments, we are sharing the kingship of God with one another. In his letter to the people of

Corinth, Paul refers to the Church as a body with many parts where each part has an important function for the good of the body and no part is insignificant (1Cor. 12). “The whole image speaks of interdependence, reciprocity, mutuality, shared life and a differentiation of function. The whole image is to teach the Christians of Corinth that they have their ministries in the Church on the basis of their baptism and the gifts of the Spirit.”⁷⁴³ From our findings, Nnewi diocese has yet to fully embrace the collaborative image of the body that Paul paints. The leadership, which is clerical for the most part, seem to acknowledge this, but they also seem generally reluctant to combat the practices that are holding back the smooth flow of collaboration. As a result, the laity are frustrated, which they show sometimes by remaining bystanders, at other times by being a silent majority, and in other cases by serving as ‘yes father/my lord’ members of the diocese. That is why this thesis, coming as it does from a voice from within the Church leadership and clergy offers a chance to Nnewi Diocese to collectively rethink its stance on collaboration.

Vatican II affirms that the right and duty of the faithful to be apostles arises from their identification with Christ in his mystical body through Baptism and confirmation.⁷⁴⁴ By this, the Council emphasizes the ecclesiology of communion. This implies that all the faithful, both ordained and non-ordained, are agents of the mission of the Church throughout their lives. The mission of the Church will not be successful without a good relationship between the clergy and the laity. “Both the clergy and the laity should see themselves as brothers and sisters since all the faithful have right to the apostolate of the Church. Consequently, they should work as brothers with lay people in the Church and for the Church.”⁷⁴⁵ This teaching indicates that the Church is a

⁷⁴³ RADEMACHER, *Lay Ministry*, p 172.

⁷⁴⁴ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 3.

⁷⁴⁵ VATICAN II, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity Apostolicam Actuositatem*, # 25.

communion;⁷⁴⁶ “it is basically a fellowship or communion with God through Jesus and the Spirit that is shared among Christians.”⁷⁴⁷ “Communion ecclesiology focuses on relationships, whether among persons of the Trinity, among human beings and God, among the members of the Communion of Saints, among members of a parish.”⁷⁴⁸ The sacrament of baptism introduces us into communion with Christ and one another; thus, we form a community of love. An ecclesiology of communion is clearly brought out by Vatican II when it described the Church as the body of Christ and the people of God. Being the people of God and the body of Christ, we all share equal dignity and a common task. We affirm this during the penitential part of the Mass as we confess to one another and to God.⁷⁴⁹ Also during the offertory, we communally offer the sacrifice when the priest says, pray my brothers and sisters that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God...⁷⁵⁰ These words and actions in the celebration of the Eucharist are experiences of communion. Dennis Doyle expressed it thus:

Communion ecclesiology emphasizes the element of spiritual fellowship or communion between human beings and God in contrast to juridical approaches that over-emphasize the institutional and legal aspects of the Church. It places a high value on the need for visible unity as symbolically realized through shared participation in the Eucharist. It promotes a dynamic and healthy interplay between unity and diversity in the Church⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁶ “The Church in Christ is a sacrament of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race...” (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*), # 1.

⁷⁴⁷ DENNIS M. DOYLE, *Communion Ecclesiology*, (New York: Maryknoll, 2000), p 26.

⁷⁴⁸ DOYLE, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p 12.

⁷⁴⁹ At the beginning of the Mass during the penitential part, the priest invites all the members present to a collective confession of our faults and omissions to God and to one another.

⁷⁵⁰ During the offertory, the priest invites the people to pray for God’s acceptance of the collective offering of the people by saying: Pray my brothers and sisters that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty.

⁷⁵¹ Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p 13.

All members of Christ's faithful are called to this communion, each according to their gifts. This shared love was very conspicuous in Jesus' relations with his Father and his disciples. "As the Father has loved me so I have loved you..." Jn. 15:9. "I am in the Father and you are in me and I in you." Jn. 14:20 "Love which is the core of Christian revelation is generated through the intimate connection of Jesus with the Father and is sustained through the sending of the Holy Spirit; the growth of the Church is the spread of this divine love within Christian communities. To live in Christian community is to share in the life and love of the Three Persons in One God."⁷⁵² To be in communion, therefore, is to be in fellowship with God and other members of the faithful. Communion involves love, acceptance, forgiveness, complementarity, commitment and intimacy. No member usurps the role of another member but instead promotes it.

Since the role of priests within the Church does not replace but rather promotes the baptismal priesthood of the whole people of God, priests need to have a positive and helping relationship with the laity.⁷⁵³ Communion ecclesiology in Nnewi diocese is antithetical to the popular *uka fada* mentality, which is a strong contributing factor to the weak collaboration we currently see in the diocese. However, on the basis of the careful diagnosis and the findings in this dissertation, there may be a gradual but steady shift in attitude from *uka fada* (Priest's Church) to *uka anyi* (our Church). The fact that the thesis was able to elicit willingness and openness on the part of both the laity and the clergy, judging from the eagerness, confidence, and enthusiasm with which they participated in the interviews and questionnaire exercises, is a sign of growing interest in a partnership between the clergy and the laity.

In fact, "collaboration has been a feature of the Church from the very beginning. Jesus gave responsibilities to the apostles who participated in his mission. He also sent out

⁷⁵² Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology*, p 13.

⁷⁵³ POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, ## 15-17.

seventy-two disciples in pairs ahead of him to all the places he intended to visit. This shows a real sense of collaboration and sharing.”⁷⁵⁴ According to St. Clement, Pope and martyr, “Always it is the harmonious working together of its various parts that ensures the well-being of the whole. Take our own body as an example: the head is helpless without the feet, and the feet can do nothing without the heart. Even our least important members are useful and necessary to the whole body, and all work together for its well-being in harmonious subordination.”⁷⁵⁵

This dissertation began with the history of Nnewi diocese starting with the early missionary era, and looked at the participation of lay people at that time. The laity played a significant role in the spread of the faith by sharing with the clergy in teaching, and, at the same time, catechizing the people.⁷⁵⁶ In the research findings, however, it was discovered that there had been some setbacks since then in the collaboration between the clergy and the laity in the activities of the parish. To facilitate the mission of the Church, the clergy and the laity must try to surmount the challenges and obstacles that prevent them from collaborating with each other. This thesis calls on the Church in Nnewi to discover anew that missionary spirit that inspired the Nnewi Church of the missionary era in order that the present Church may be more inclusive, more participatory, and more collaborative. The Igbo principle of *Bunu-bunu, igwe bu ike*⁷⁵⁷ and *njikoka*⁷⁵⁸ (togetherness in common task) seem to have been followed by the lay faithful of the early era of the Church in Nnewi. The thesis maintains that this principle, synonymous with collaboration, is only dormant and needs only a slight nudge to be revived in Nnewi diocese.

⁷⁵⁴ ARCHBISHOP GREGORY AYMOND, “Forward,” in *Reflections on Renewal: Lay Ecclesial Ministry and the Church*, Donna M Eschenauer & Harold Daly Horell (eds.), vii.

⁷⁵⁵ CLEMENT, POPE and Martyr, *Letter to the Corinthians*, Ch.37:5.

⁷⁵⁶ This important role of the laity during the early missionary era is described earlier in this thesis on p 18.

⁷⁵⁷ *Igwe bu ike* literally means multitude is power.

⁷⁵⁸ *Njikoka* literally means togetherness in common task.

Hopefully this thesis will provide that needed nudge by making available its findings for the use of the diocese.

7.1.1 Bunu-bunu

One of the tasks ahead is to develop a model ecclesiology that corresponds with the vision of Vatican II. This model is known as *Bunu-bunu* in Igbo culture. As Nnewi diocese embraces the Church as the body of Christ, it echoes the Igbo saying of *Bunu-bunu ibu anyi danda*. This is an alternate model that can be taught, but more importantly, it needs to be experienced. This will enable the clergy and the laity to recognize that the Church is a communion where no member is an outsider and every member is responsible for and to other members.

Bunu-bunu is “unity in the common task” where every person in the group or community provides a helping hand, according to their ability, in order to achieve a common goal. When Igbo people say *Bunu-bunu*, it means that all hands must be on the deck; every person must be involved to get a common task performed with ease. This is a way of practising ecclesiology of communion. This practice needs to be employed in everything that should be done in the diocese. In this case, the priests and the parishioners have to work together to carry out any proposed project. *Bunu-bunu* involves acknowledging the different charisms and competencies of the members of Christ’s faithful. This implies that all the faithful need to work together as members of a family of the people of God. Among the faithful, there are those who are professionals in their respective fields who are willing to employ their special skills for the progress of the Church but are denied the opportunity to do so. There is a need for a true *koinonia* which is a symbiosis and a mutual exchange of various gifts for the enhancement of the Church’s mission. This idea of working together to achieve progress is expressed in Igbo

philosophies such as “*Njikoka*” (togetherness in common task), “*igwe bu ike*” (cooperation is strength or multitude is strength), and “*igwe amaka*” (cooperation is the best thing in society). The Igbos believe that if they join hands to undertake any venture, they will succeed, hence they say that “*ezuo ezuo tikpo mmuo, oda awa na afa*” (when all cooperate in demolishing a shrine of a guardian spirit, the spirit cannot bring havoc that would require the services of a diviner to be undone). Ndigbo also believe that *otu aka anaghi eke ngwugwu* which literally means that only one hand will be unable to wrap a parcel (a tree cannot make a forest). Okere aptly described this idea with an Igbo folklore *onye suwa achara, onye suwa, one akpola ibe ya ony ikoni. Eze sua achara ikpe ala.*⁷⁵⁹ This implies that everyone should be involved in order to achieve a common goal.

7.1.2 Joint Formation Session of Clergy and Laity

I also recommend a joint formation of clergy and laity in the diocese. There should be a joint formation session for both clergy and laity on collaboration apart from the formation that is done separately for each group. This could take the form of workshops held on an ongoing basis. This should be formation process that builds on mutual respect and the development of appropriate communication skills. It needs to go beyond didactic education. This formation will dispose both the priests themselves and the laity to see priests as co-workers, who also need to receive ongoing formation to deepen and improve their knowledge and skills.

If priests are to be leaders in communities, their formation must attend to the development of concrete leadership skills. On the other hand, if the lay people are to be aware of what is expected of them regarding the mission of the Church, close interaction with the clergy

⁷⁵⁹ THEOPHILUS OKERE, “Church organization as the root cause of anti-clericalism” in *Collaborative ministry in the context of inculturation*, Ignatius Obinwa (ed.), p 100.

must not be overlooked. "Laity-clergy collaborative formation involves both parties to learn how and when to collaborate and what kind of attitudinal changes would be required to do so on both sides."⁷⁶⁰

The formation programmes would do well to evaluate how well they are preparing the candidates for collaboration. Furthermore, the formation will underscore the importance of imbibing the characteristics of a servant leader which include valuing everyone's involvement in the community, respecting and trusting people, and giving to people what is due to them. It will remind priests that leadership is a shared responsibility as seen in the traditional Igbo style of leadership.

7.1.3 *Uka Anyi* (Our Church)

Among the recommendations is that the idea that the Church is the priest's Church has to be abandoned so that the Church in Nnewi will graduate from *Uka Fada* (Priests' Church) to *Uka Anyi* (Our Church). The Church's image as the people of God requires that all members be involved in the affairs of the Church, each according to his ability. This practice is evident in the traditional Igbo government, as described in chapter four page 112-118, where, instead of just being a spectator, every member of the community is empowered to contribute to the community gathering. At the same time, the importance of individual or personal autonomy must not be overlooked. The priests also need to be open and humble in order to create an enabling environment for collaborative ministry to flourish in the Church, and the laity need to be willing to be engaged. The idea that the priest owns the Church needs to be eradicated. It is worth noting that Christ's command to go and make disciples of all nations is not given exclusively to the

⁷⁶⁰ J. C. DABHI, "Laity-Clergy Collaboration" in *The Examiner*, Vol. 132, No 1, January 6, 2001. Pp 12-13.

clergy but to all the faithful. However, this command seems to have been appropriated by the clergy alone. It is necessary that both the priests and the laity recognize that the salvific mission of the Church toward the world, as Christ ordained it, is not to be carried out by the priests alone but by all the faithful. The Church belongs to all members of Christ's faithful who are, therefore, to contribute their gifts to the common mission of the Church, which is not exclusive to any particular member. Parishes will significantly improve their present conditions if they change from the old model of the priest's Church to the new paradigm of the people's Church.

7.1.4 Parish Councils

The parish council is one of the major expressions of collaboration at the parish level, and great care should be taken to make it an effective vehicle for achieving this desire for and growth in collaboration. Similarly, an authentic understanding of the difference between collaboration and delegation must be set forth and emphasized. Collaboration is not delegation, nor is it a mere consultation of others or seeking the opinion of others. I am saying this because sometimes committees are there only to fulfil canonical demand, or to meet a policy requirement, in which case one notices that they are assigned responsibility without authority along with a feeling of distrust and control. The priest may exercise an absolute authority and manipulate the committees to his desired end while seeming to consult. This is evident in the response of LI 4 regarding his withdrawal from the financial council. According to him, "I was a member of this council but immediately I found out that the priest was not carrying us along, I tactically withdrew my membership."⁷⁶¹

⁷⁶¹ Laity Interview #3, LI 4.

Although Canon Law states that parish councils have only consultative powers⁷⁶² I recommend that parish councils have a purposeful and effective voice rather than merely an advisory voice in the affairs and government of the diocese and the parishes especially in certain areas. Pope John Paul II seems to refer to this when he stated:

the relations between...pastors and the entire people of God...must all be characterized by communion. To this end the structures of participation envisioned by canon law...must be ever valued...The theology of spirituality of communion encourage a fruitful dialogue between pastors and faithful: on the one hand uniting them a priori in all that is essential and on the other leading them to pondered agreement in matters open to discussion.⁷⁶³

It is true that there is also a need for the good ordering of the Church for the clergy to maintain proper autonomy in particular areas but the laity needs to have a voice especially in matters where they have expertise and are highly implicated. According to Pope Francis, "it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would be simply passive recipients."⁷⁶⁴ Pope Benedict XVI is mindful of this when he stated that, "co-responsibility requires a change in mentality, particularly with regard to the role of the laity in the Church, who should be considered not as "collaborators" with the clergy, but as persons truly "co-responsible" for the being and activity of the Church. It is important, therefore, that a mature and committed laity be united, who are able to make their own specific contribution to the Church's mission."⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶² CODE OF CANON LAW, c 536. A pastoral council possesses consultative vote only and is governed by the norms established by the diocesan bishop.

⁷⁶³ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio Inuente*, 6 January 2001, in AAS, 93(2001), 298, English translations in *Origins*, 30 (2001), 503.

⁷⁶⁴ POPE FRANCIS *Evangelii Gaudium* #120.

⁷⁶⁵ POPE BENEDICT XVI, Castel Gandolfo, 10 August 2012. (Assessed 27th March, 2018).

Parish councils need to have active voices which contribute to the decision-making rather than passive voices; the issue is about how they are making decisions together, not simply who gets to speak or vote. One of the respondents reported that the bishop made it clear to them, during his pastoral visit, that they have only advisory power and that the priest is not obliged to accept their advice. Some priests arbitrarily rule on all decisions that affect the administration of the parish, irrespective of the majority opinion to the contrary, particularly during parish council meetings. There are also canonical conditions regarding parish councils that must be met here; under this system, the Parish Council cannot make major decisions and carry them out in the absence of the parish priest. This was evident in one of the council meetings that I attended. Ideally, the final decision would be the logical conclusion of the council's deliberations, in which the priest plays an important role on the issues discussed during the meeting, and not just a unilateral decision on the part of the priest. In the final analysis, this boils down to leadership skills. The type of leader one is determines how one handles such situations. Ultimately, it is not just about being a leader, but rather it is about being a different kind of leader.

7.1.5 Parish Forum

The parish is a community of partners working towards a common goal with the priest as the leader. Better communication is needed between laity and priests everywhere in the parish. They need to share their experiences, and their ideas for the development and progress of the parish. A meeting can be held annually to discuss the affairs of the parish such as ongoing parish projects, the up coming harvest and bazaar, the effectiveness of various committees etc. It is during such a forum that the assessment of the past can be done. Also, both the short term and long term plans together with the budget and expenditures will be presented and discussed. During this forum, various groups and committees will present their reports and accounts. The

parish will have the chance to recognize what has been done well as well as what can be improved. This is also among the important points suggested by the respondents as we saw in page 190. This forum also gives parishioners the opportunity to see themselves as partners who have assembled to discuss the progress of the parish. The parish forum will help priests to understand and accommodate the feelings of the laity by conversing with them to determine what could be done for the progress of the community or parish rather than ignoring the parishioners. Both the priest and the parishioners must see themselves as dialogue partners. "Dialogue is possible only when the other is regarded as a partner and not as an addressee."⁷⁶⁶ This will surely help to develop the relationship between the clergy and laity so that collaboration can grow.

Priests need to listen attentively to the issues raised by the laity and discuss these matters with them. To be able to do this, the priest has to be in close relationship with his parishioners and their existential experiences. He must also be a good listener. "A priest who, by mere pride or self-weakness, refuses to share the Church's responsibility and authority or even to criticism, will be a failure."⁷⁶⁷ Constructive criticism out of love for the Church is surely more helpful and more in keeping with the gospel than is indifference or apathy.

It should be noted that affirming the worth of others and understanding their point of view creates a healthy environment for working together. Differences in opinion need to be settled by dialogue rather than by authoritarian dictates. We need to respect and love those who think or act differently than we do. The more we understand their way of thinking, the more easily we will be able to listen to them and dialogue with them. As a result of this mutual listening, a relationship will be formed, and the parish will become a home and family for the parishioners, which will enhance whatever activity is undertaken by the parish.

⁷⁶⁶ JUSTIN S. UKPONG, *African Theologies Now: A profile*, (Nigeria: Eldoret Publication, 1984), p 32.

⁷⁶⁷ Onwunata, *Towards an Inculturated African Communal model of Ecclesia*, p 365.

7.1.6 Servant Leadership Model

There is a need to re-evaluate the shepherd-sheep model of the relationship between the clergy and the laity in which the sheep (laity) are seen as passive recipients of the Church's ministry. A more balanced understanding of this relationship needs time and opportunity to develop in order to base the pastoral practise of collaboration on authentic theological foundations. I recommend that the importance of being a servant leader be emphasized to the priests and that models and functions of leadership become a topic of formation and be a part of formative practice. Servant leadership, as we saw earlier in chapter four, page 110 of this thesis, is the type of leadership that serves the community instead of exhibiting power and authority. A servant leader tries to resolve the problems in the community. This type of leader encourages, motivates and empowers the community. Priests need to learn how to become servant leaders. The Church must see herself as a family discussing the affairs of the family together. Jesus' words to his disciples are appropriate here: "I do not call you servants any longer but friends because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father." Jn. 15: 15-17. The leadership of the Church, which is the body of Christ, ought to follow the same example that the master has set. The Church leadership needs to imitate Jesus who "threatened the social power structure of his society by removing the socially constructed boundaries and subverting their traditional wisdom."⁷⁶⁸ When this is done, the right style of leadership will emerge, one that is open to the demands of clergy-laity collaboration for the enhancement of the mission of the Church.

⁷⁶⁸ UCHEM, *Overcoming Women's Subordination*, p 200.

A good leader is one who leads by example, who loves the people and lives for the people. He must be open to others and have confident trust in others and must be passionate about including all the gifts of the people in building up the community. Good leaders always work in collaboration with those they lead for the good of all. I observed good leadership on the part of some of the priests during the parish council meetings. These priests were open to the ideas and the contributions of the parishioners during the discussions even when those ideas were contrary to their own ideas. They gave lay people the opportunity to make use of their skills in their areas of expertise. A “servant-leadership model of Church leadership could...easily emerge by transforming hierarchy into *Diakonia*—a ministry for and on behalf of the community.”⁷⁶⁹ This way of relating to parishioners encourages and empowers them, and makes them enthusiastic about the activities of the parish; it motivates them to want to do more and makes them feel that they belong, and are not strangers in the family of God.

7.1.7 Revitalization of Sunday Catechesis

The Sunday Evening programme,⁷⁷⁰ which has been the traditional forum for catechesis, needs to be revitalized in an appropriate form. This programme, which used to be a very important forum for ongoing ecclesiastical formation, has almost been abandoned. Presently it is attended by only a handful of older adults. Most priests do not show interest in this programme any longer. One respondent reported that people are no longer interested in the program and so only a few individuals attend regularly. In his letter to the priests of the diocese on Monday, February 6, 2017, the bishop of Nnewi diocese, commented: “I have observed that some of us are not interested in the Sunday Evening programme. It will be difficult to get the lay faithful

⁷⁶⁹ EBUZIEM, *Doing Ministry in the Igbo Context*, p 192.

⁷⁷⁰ The Sunday evening program is a two-hour catechesis that is held on Sundays in the Churches in Nnewi diocese. The faithful gather in the Church at 4: 00 p.m. and either the priest or the Catechist discusses with them the theme mapped out for that Sunday. The programme ends at 6: 00 p.m. with the benediction with the Blessed Sacrament.

interested when they see that many priests do not show any interest.”⁷⁷¹ Apart from this appeal, more has to be done to make sure that the programme is revitalized. If Sunday evening no longer works for the people, another time of their choice could be proposed, and through some common discussion of times and topics of real interest to laypersons, the enthusiasm for such a gathering may be restored. There is, therefore, a need to discuss this issue with the laity. Through some consultative processes more opportunities for sharing in formative experiences can be developed. Communication among people can grow and help make the ground more fertile for collaborative encounters.

7.1.8 Financial Contributions

The constant demands for financial contributions and the second collections on Sundays need to be reduced. The priests would do well to give the parishioners breathing space regarding requests for additional financial contributions. During Cathedraticum for instance, priests engage in unnecessary competition with each other, competing on the number of cows to present at the Cathedraticum event, at the expense of the parishioners. Each ward/zone is told the number of cows that is their share, and they have to levy themselves in order to meet their obligations. The people feel resentful, but no one wants to speak out lest one gets a bad name. The constant call for contributions and donations brings about “donor fatigue”. While parishioners may not complain openly, they do so among themselves. One respondent alluded to this during the interview when she said that people are tired of second collections and the constant demand for financial contributions. When people are engaged in the planning of projects in the parish, they gain a better understanding of the financial needs of the parish. Transparency, accountability and

⁷⁷¹ HILARY OKEKE, “Letter to the Priests of Nnewi Diocese in preparation for the Celebration of 15th Anniversary of the erection of the Diocese,” 10th February 2017.

participation are critical to the smooth running of financial operations and also to attract adequate support through contributions.

7.1.9 Transparency and Accountability

The importance of transparency and accountability, in whatever endeavour we find ourselves, cannot be over-emphasized. In any office in the parish, one needs to recognize that one is accountable to the parishioners and to the diocese. To ensure transparency in the administration of the parish finances, the diocese should train auditors to carry out quarterly audits of the parish finances. Parish priests should be mandated to present a comprehensive account of the parish income and expenditures for auditing; the assistant parish priest and the chairperson of the parish council should jointly sign this account. Ongoing auditing will no doubt minimise the reckless spending of the parish funds on the part of some priests and suspicion on the part of the laity. The need for accountability and responsibility must not be overlooked if clergy-laity collaboration is to be achieved in Nnewi diocese. The lack of openness and transparency demoralizes people and sometimes restrains them from contributing time and/or donating money to carry out parish projects. This lack of openness and transparency emanates from the present Church structure that allows a single individual to take arbitrary decisions on matters that impact a large group of people.

7.1.10 Integration of Igbo Cultural Community Practice

The Church has much to learn from the traditional Igbo model of collaboration where decision-making is not left in the hands of a single individual. The Igbo people, including those in Nnewi, are very conscious of community life in society. They practice collaboration in almost everything, even in eating and working. If one happens to meet someone or a group of people

eating, the person will immediately be invited to join in the meal. The same thing applies when one happens to meet an individual or a group of people performing some work; they do not need anyone to tell them to join in immediately. For them, “to exist is to live in the group, to see things with the group, to do things with the group....”⁷⁷² The community contributes to send a brilliant child (from the community) to the university. There is an attitude of ‘identification with’ others in the community in good times and in bad times; this is collaboration. According to A. Orobator, “in Igboland, life epitomizes a collaboration as people communally work together by sharing experiences and talents for the building up of a community.”⁷⁷³ For the Igbos, life is communion and cooperation and never a competition.

Some priests, as pointed out earlier, perceive clergy-laity collaboration as laity competing with priests. They fail to realize that this perception of the laity betrays a mentality that regards the laity as strangers and outsiders in the family of God. We cannot talk about the Church as the body of Christ when cooperation, mutual dialogue, respect and true love of God does not exist among the members of the Church. Nor can we talk about collaboration when the clergy fail to see the laity as collaborators but instead see them as competitors. “The idea of a solitary monarch, which evolved in medieval Europe and eventually migrated into Nigeria and Igboland in both religious and secular arenas, is a far cry from the partnership model and team ministry of early Jesus’ movement.”⁷⁷⁴ This monarchical structure treats the laity like children who are not yet mature enough to think for themselves. In Igboland, leadership by one man is not accepted, as it does not favour collaboration in the community. What counts in Igboland is solidarity or the unanimous decision-making that involves all its members from whom talents are tapped, and

⁷⁷² FRANCIS A. ARINZE, *Sacrifice in Igbo Religion*, (Ibadan: University Press, 1970), p 4.

⁷⁷³ AGBONKHIANMEGHE E. OROBATOR, *The Church as Family - African Ecclesiology in Its Social Context*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa, 2000), p 154.

⁷⁷⁴ UCHEM, *Overcoming Women’s Subordination*, p 176.

people are assigned to do things in areas where they are gifted for the welfare of the community.⁷⁷⁵ This has influenced the Igbos in the names they give to their children, such as, “*somadina*” (may I not live alone), “*onuoha*” (the people’s voice), “*ohakwuo*” (whatever the people approve), “*ohakwe*” (if the people agree), and so forth. These names imply collaborative ideologies and the Igbos live by them. The Church should see these Igbo ideologies as paradigms for collaborative ministry.

Although inculturation is not the focus of this thesis, it raises questions regarding the inculturation of the gospel which no doubt has and is having an impact on lay/clergy collaboration. I will highlight some benefits that can be gained from collaboration.

7.2 Benefits

There are many benefits which Nnewi diocese stands to derive from clergy-laity collaboration. Among the benefits are an active ministry, growth in spiritual and material resources, a division of labour, reduction of stress, unity of gifts, etc., all of which will contribute to the enhancement and the fulfilment of the mission of the Church in Nnewi Diocese.

Effective ministry/Growth

Growth is the key to everything we do. “Collaboration is inviting rather than controlling, and therefore it is an important condition of growth in Christian ministry.”⁷⁷⁶ Collaboration is an empowering tool to achieve success both for a leader and a follower. As an empowering tool, collaboration will enable both the clergy and the laity to be trustworthy stewards. A poor collaborative effort affects communal output. With collaboration, the community becomes vibrant since people will be eager to bring up their ideas. People enjoy it when their

⁷⁷⁵ ONWUNATA, *Towards an Inculturated African Communal model of Ecclesia*, pp 182-183.

⁷⁷⁶ BAUSCH, *Ministry: Traditions. Tensions. Transitions*, p 83.

contributions are asked for and implemented. Knowing that their contribution is made use of, offering them a sense of belonging, and making them feel valued, makes it possible for people to want to bring their best to parish ministry. The outcome is a parish brimming with life and with life-giving activities. A parish where there is collaboration between the clergy and the laity would soar to great heights, and the achievements with regard to the Church's mission will be inestimable. Not only will there be an increase in the number of parishioners, but also things will be done with much less difficulty because all will work together to see the mission accomplished. Furthermore, an increase in parishioners means an increase in parish finances and this will facilitate the execution of any projects embarked on by the parish.

Division of Labour

The division of labour is one of the outcomes of clergy-laity collaboration. The clergy tend to be overworked, not necessarily because the volume of work is overwhelming but because many priests try to do everything themselves. With collaboration, the laity participate actively, and the work is shared. With the division of labour, each person handles the area where they are experts, and this not only brings about efficiency but also facilitates the work. This results in a resounding positive effect on the Church's ministry. The division of labour offers people the opportunity to be creative in what they do, and is a tool for collaboration.

The division of labour also reduces stress for both the priest and the parishioners because of sharing and mutual support. The priest and the parishioners are present to each other psychologically, emotionally, and socially. However, when the priest decides to be all in all, little or no time is available for recreation or leisure activities; this leads to stress and burnout. In contrast, if there is a division of labour, priests and lay people will easily accomplish what would have been very difficult for one person to do alone.

Uniting gifts

The Church is a communion, and the beauty of communion is that different members of the Church do different work, but all are focused on a common goal—the spread of the kingdom of God. In fact, the beauty of parish life is that each parishioner in his or her own way contributes to the progress of the parish according to the person’s gifts and talents without diminishing the gifts and talents of others. “Collaboration is enhanced when the gifts of the entire people of God are identified and released in ministry and service in order to extend the reign of God.”⁷⁷⁷ Communities thrive when their insights and prospects are mutually brought together. This serves as a foundation for collaboration since it enables the community to journey together toward being a more effective evangelizing force.⁷⁷⁸ When this is the case, all members see themselves as stake holders and do their best to advance the progress of the Church’s mission in a mutual relationship. Priests do not simply have to relinquish their authority or decide everything being done in the parish. They need to engage in a mutual cordial relationship with the members of the laity. According to Rademacher, “shared ministry begins, not with a downward distribution of a pie of authority by ordained ministers, but with the recognition and celebration of the gifts of the baptized who share ‘all things in common’, including the ministry.”⁷⁷⁹ This leads us towards identifying with an ecclesiology of communion which Vatican II emphasizes as it also describes the Church as the People of God.⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁷ LOUGHLAN SOFIELD, & CARROLL JULIANO, *Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry*, (Indiana, USA: Ave Maria Press, 2000), p 44.

⁷⁷⁸ JANE E. REGAN, “Educating for an Adult Church,” in *Horizons & Hopes: The Future of Religious Education*, Thomas H. Groome & Harold Daly Horell eds. (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), p 47.

⁷⁷⁹ WILLIAM RADEMACHER, *Lay Ministry: A Theological, Spiritual, and Pastoral Handbook*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), p 170.

⁷⁸⁰ Ecclesiology of communion was discussed on Page 222-226.

Conclusion

This thesis has been able to explore, in diverse ways, the nature of collaboration between the laity and the clergy of Nnewi Diocese. Its findings reveal that a lot needs to happen both on the part of the clergy and the laity for a noticeable improvement to emerge in this area of Church life in Nnewi Diocese. In concluding this thesis, I will summarize how I see that we might achieve the needed shift towards greater collaboration between the clergy and the laity.

As we saw, the Igbo culture offers a variety of models of cooperation and collaboration most of which are still practiced. In order to improve collaboration in the Church there is a need to tap into such cultural models as *Bunu-bunu*, *Njikoka*, *igwebuike*, *igweamaka*, collegial village or *umunna* style meetings among others. These models are akin to a circular model of leadership. This approach flows from and fits into the ethnographic research model of taking the people's culture into consideration in order to understand and seek a solution to a problem.

One common theme in the thesis is the apparently entrenched mindset that makes the laity seem to be fixed in their complacency about their limited participation in the Church. The result is that a good number of the laity accept the notion of non-participation as the norm since "this is the way we have always done it". It is the position of this thesis that this is simply not a persuasive argument. Instead, the thesis argued for a paradigm shift from complacency to activity, from exclusion to inclusion, from the ministry as a one-man-show on the part of the priest to teamwork, from autocracy to democracy. By adopting the recommendations of this thesis, both the clergy and the laity have more opportunity to become aware of and follow the Church's teaching on clergy-laity collaboration. The expected outcome is their rejection of the current unsatisfactory practice.

The thesis clearly distanced itself from the not uncommon scenario in which the priests approach, or relate to, the laity with an attitude of superiority. As already indicated, this attitude prevents some priests from acknowledging the gifts or the abilities of the laity. It also borders on arrogance which, when combined with a sense of superiority, negatively affects the priests' relationship with the laity. In the long run, this prevents some priests from being open to learning from their lay companions in the common vineyard of partnership that both groups share in.

As members of Christ's faithful, the baptismal dignity of each member is crucial. The thesis finds that this baptismal dignity is either not properly taught or not taken seriously thereby hindering togetherness in common task (*Njikoka*). Since this is the theological framework on which clergy-laity collaboration rests, this thesis has identified steps to be taken in order to retrace and rediscover this fundamental identity which gives every member of the faithful a place in the Church family. From the standpoint of the thesis, the Church in Nnewi will no longer find itself hostage to an attitude which "faithfully upholds backward-looking, dust-covered traditions and thinks too little of projecting a forward-looking, creative, tradition..."⁷⁸¹ The thesis promotes a shift in thinking and praxis in order to recognize that innovation and change in Nnewi diocese's manner of achieving collaboration requires risk taking and attempting new things in spite of possible failure. Venturing is the first step to success.

A further fruit of the thesis is the re-emphasis on the ideal of belonging. Not to be counted or considered is to be excluded. When this happens, the laity become apathetic, lose interest or become lukewarm towards the Church. Their baptism ordinarily teaches them to see both where they belong and what belongs to them. And naturally once where you belong starts making you a stranger, a withdrawal of your appetite for contribution towards the growth of the

⁷⁸¹ BUHLMANN, *The Church of the Future*, p 163.

Church would usually be the result. As an alternative narrative, this thesis has been able to promote the need for an active implementation of clergy-laity collaboration in Nnewi diocese which would encourage and practice a mutual belonging.

The data also reveals that some of the priests and the laity have some blind spots regarding the collective responsibility which they share. This is very instructive. It was shown that some members of the clergy have an incomplete understanding of collaboration which denies the laity access to some activities which are their right and not a privilege. In addition, the data reveals that a segment of the laity also have the mistaken impression that to challenge or even ask a priest a clarifying question, or to inquire about details of parish life is either overstepping one's boundaries, asking too much or breaking the psalmist's biblical code of touch not my anointed.⁷⁸² As one of my aims for embarking on this project, I have sought to unmask these disabling prejudices in order for a deeper, more complete, more adequate, and complementary awareness to emerge on both sides. Of course, it is recognized that although we are equal in dignity as members of Christ's faithful, we have our individual and different charismatic gifts and roles to play in the enhancement of the mission of the Church. This somehow points to what seems to be a perpetual challenge of humanity—how to acknowledge and celebrate differences without placing them on a scale of 'better' or 'less than'.

It is worth noting that this project is not intended in any way to show that the laity does not work with the clergy or vice versa; instead, the attempt is to identify some of the factors that hinder clergy-laity collaboration, as Vatican II envisioned it, and then recommend enabling ways to remedy what is lacking. It is a fact that strongly became manifest in the fieldwork of the

⁷⁸² Talking about the touch not my anointed biblical code from Psalm 105.15, someone who out of fear rather than out of saying what he is not sure of might exclaim: "*alakokwana mu na Chukwu*" [literally meaning never get me entangled against God's wrath] as both a defense and excuse for not wanting to say more regarding what clearly is a case against an erring priest.

dissertation that, within the Church, there are ill feelings, in particular on the part of some lay people, who feel treated as strangers in the Lord's vineyard. However, while the collaboration of the clergy and the laity in Nnewi diocese is not optimal, there has been some improvement in recent years.

Nnewi diocese must be willing to stay on the path to richer clergy-laity collaboration which will bring about the enhancement of the mission of the Church, even if it involves risk. “A Church that will not risk a fall will never learn to walk.”⁷⁸³ I advocate a situation where Nnewi diocese offers formation in the servant leadership skills described extensively above, for a group of clergy and laity, who will in turn organize formation sessions to share this experience with others in groups and in parishes.

It is also my strong suggestion that Nnewi diocese form a committee tasked with the burden of studying the new approaches, outlined in this thesis, with a view to a proper, systematic, and well thought out implementation plan. This will have an impact on both lay and clergy formation. Clearly, this will greatly improve clergy-laity collaboration in the Catholic Church of Nnewi and by extension enhance the mission of the Church in the diocese, which is the goal of the bishop for the young diocese.

Nnewi diocese deserves and desires better clergy-laity collaboration for the enhancement of the mission of the Church. But since the desire, in and of itself, is not enough to guarantee what it deserves, my work hopes to offer the diocese a direction to develop a plan to move from desiring to realizing what it deserves. Motivated by my hope to see a deepening of clergy-laity collaboration in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi, I look forward to seeing the efforts of the diocese towards this goal inspired and strengthened by my findings.

⁷⁸³ OZIGBOH, *Igbo Catholicism: The Onitsha Connection*, p 72.

The exclusion of women in leadership and patriarchy, which is another aspect of clericalism in Roman Catholicism in Igboland of which Nnewi diocese is a representative type, are not included in this work. These aspects are for future research and could not be covered in this work.

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Appendix I



UNIVERSITÉ
SAINT-PAUL
UNIVERSITY

23-04-2015

dd-mm-yyyy

Bureau de la recherche et de la déontologie
Office of Research and Ethics

Certificat de déontologie Ethics Certificate**Comité de la déontologie Research Ethics Board****REB File Number 1360.12/14**

Principal Investigator / Thesis supervisor / Co-investigators / Student

Last name	Name	Affiliation	Role
Enemuo	Benedict	Faculty of Theology	PhD Student-PI
Martin	Miriam	Faculty of Human Sciences	Thesis supervisor
Type of project	Doctoral Thesis		
Title	An ethnographic study of Clergy-Laity Collaboration for the enhancement of the Mission of the Church in the Catholic Diocese of Newi Nigeria.		
Approval date	Expiry Date	Decision	
23-04-2015	22-04-2016	1 (Approved)	

Committee comments

The Research Ethics Board (REB) approved the project.

The researcher is invited to use the reference number 1360.12/14 when recruiting participants.

General guidelines

In accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement, the Saint Paul University Research Ethics Board has examined and approved the application for an ethics certificate for this project for the period indicated and subject to the conditions listed above.

The research protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB. This includes, among others, the extension of the research, additional recruitment for the inclusion of new participants, changes in location of the fieldwork, any stage where a research permit is required, such as work in schools. Minor administrative changes are allowed.

The REB must be notified of all changes or unanticipated circumstances that have a serious impact on the conduct of the research, that relate to the risk to participants and their safety.

Modifications to the project, information, consent and recruitment documentation must be submitted to the Office of Research and Ethics for approval by the REB.

The investigator must submit a report four weeks prior to the expiry date of the certificate stated above requesting an extension or that the file be closed.

Documents relating to publicity, recruitment and consent of participants should bear the file number of the certificate. They must also indicate the coordinates of the investigator should participants have questions related to the research project. In which case, the documents will refer to the Chair of the REB and provide the coordinates of the Office of Research and Ethics.

Signature



Louis Perron

Chair

Research Ethics Board

1/1

Appendix II

[CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF NNEWI]**Bishop's House**

046-666369 - Office
 08037179634 - Cell Phone
 E-mail: nnewicathdioc@yahoo.com
 hilaryokeke2002@yahoo.co.uk



P.M.B. 5099
 Nnewi, Anambra State,
 Nigeria.

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

Rev. Fr. Benedict Enemuo
 Ottawa – Canada

Dear Fr. Enemuo,

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

You have duly informed me of your plan to conduct ethnographic research on Clergy-Laity Collaboration for the enhancement of the Mission of the Church in Nnewi Diocese. I am happy with the topic of your research which I believe will be of immense help in getting both the clergy and lay faithful to understand that they are collaborators in the mission of the Church.

I hereby grant you the permission to conduct the research in the Catholic Diocese of Nnewi assuring you at the same time of the collaboration of the Clergy and Lay Faithful of the diocese in your research.

I pray for your success in the research and for the research to bear abundant fruit in the Church, not only in Nnewi Diocese but throughout the universal Church.

Given at the Bishop's House, Nnewi, this 27th day of February, 2015.

+ Hilary Paul Okeke

Most Rev. Hilary Paul Odili Okeke
 Bishop of Nnewi



Appendix III

Rev. Benedict

Thank you for choosing me as the third party that will conduct the fidelity check for the translated interviews. I am pleased and will be very much available to assist you in that capacity.

I wish you all the best in your academic pursuit.

Stay Blessed

Adibe Emeka C

University of Nigeria

Faculty of Law, Enugu Campus.

Enugu- Nigeria

Appendix IV

Clergy Questionnaire

- 1 What is your experience of clergy-laity collaboration in your parish?
- 2 How can you describe your experience of living and working together in a parish? What are the benefits of this communion?
- 3 What is your experience of working with the laity, what kind of collaborative activity do you engage in?
- 4 What ministerial roles would you encourage the laity to play for the enhancement of the mission of the Church in your parish?
- 5 What efforts are you making to educate your parishioners on the importance of clergy-laity collaboration for the enhancement of the mission of the Church?
- 6 What are the benefits and hindrances to clergy/laity collaboration in your parish?
- 7 Can you suggest some strategies which would encourage and ensure effective collaboration between the clergy and the laity in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi?

Appendix V

Clergy Interview

For the clergy

- 1 How would you describe your experience of collaboration with the laity regarding Church ministry?
- 2 What are the benefits that your parish stand to gain through clergy-laity collaboration?
- 3 What challenges have you experienced in carrying out your activities in relation with the laity? How would you describe these challenges?
- 4 How often have you been involved in on-going formation where the topic has been collaboration with the laity in church ministry? Was it helpful? What on-going formation would be most useful for you presently?
- 5 What are the areas where you involve the laity in your parish activities? Why those areas?

Appendix VI

Laity Questionnaire

1 In your parish pastoral activities, what kind of collaboration do you experience? What do you envision the ideal clergy-laity collaboration in your parish to be like?

2 What is the present status of the laity in your parish with regard to participation in the mission of the Church?

3 What hindrances have you noticed regarding clergy-laity collaboration in your parish?

4 What areas would you as a lay person want to be more involved in the pastoral activities in the parish?

5 What challenges have you experienced in carrying out your activities in the parish? How would you describe these challenges?

6 What are the areas where the laity could take up roles in parish activities?

7 What benefits do you think could be gained from clergy-laity collaboration in your parish? Where might the greatest challenges to such collaboration come from?

8 What influences has the Igbo culture with regard to the way the clergy and the laity relate in your parish?

Appendix VII

Laity Interview

- 1 What are your functions in the parish, a volunteer or otherwise?
- 2 What are your experiences and challenges in pursuing pastoral activities in the parish?
- 3 How would you describe your experiences with regard to relationship between the priest and parishioners? In what areas do you think that they need to work together closely?
- 4 Given the opportunity to use your gifts and abilities with regard to church activities in your parish, in what areas would you like to employ your gifts?
- 5 What benefits do you envisage that will accrue to the parish from clergy-laity collaboration?
- 6 By virtue of our baptism both clergy and the laity have the right and duty to work for the enhancement of the mission of the Church. How have you been exercising this your baptismal rights with regard to the ministry of the church in your parish?

Appendix VIII

Parish Council Meetings

Parish A

There was a meeting of a group of twenty (20) people scheduled to begin at 6.00 pm. It began instead at 6.45 pm with only five (5) people present. The parish priest introduced me to the members who were there and told them that I was attending the meeting as part of my study of clergy-laity collaboration in the Catholic diocese of Nnewi. As the meeting proceeded, eight (8) more members arrived at various intervals, bringing the number of attendees to thirteen (13). There was no agenda for this meeting because, according to the parish priest, it was an emergency meeting. The secretary had not yet arrived and another person was told to take notes on the proceedings, pending the arrival of the secretary. The parish priest read a short list of topics to be discussed. The topics included the upcoming profession of nuns which would take place in the parish, the funeral of the mother of an indigenous priest of the parish, the progress of ongoing work, and the reception for one of the newly ordained priests who had come to the parish as a deacon to do apostolic work. During the meeting, the vice chairman frequently sought clarification from the priest. (This suggested that there had been no prior discussion of the agenda among the vice chairman, the secretary and the parish priest). There was some discussion of the agenda items listed above, and the members were given the opportunity to provide input, but the parish priest made the final ruling. (I observed two members who did not seem interested in the topics being discussed as they were talking to each other quietly). When they were about to discuss the last item, the parish priest asked me to leave and I left as requested.

Parish B

The meeting was scheduled to begin at 5.30pm. However, only one person was there at that time although others arrived later. We waited for people to arrive and the meeting began at 6.00 pm. The parish priest introduced me and explained why I was attending the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how to upgrade the parish primary school to a high school. The parish priest asked members who were previously assigned various tasks to report back on their findings. Among the five people assigned to do this, only two people had completed their assignments while the other three said that they were still working on them. The parish priest reprimanded the three people and told them to make sure they completed their assignments because no matter how much they wanted to delay the project, it must begin in September. Nobody argued this position. The parish priest left the meeting at 6.30 pm to officiate at an evening mass. He asked the vice chairperson to chair the meeting in his absence.

During the priest's absence, the members of the council began to discuss the low likelihood that the project would be implemented in September since they had not yet done essential tasks such as hiring enough teachers in order to meet the requirements of the ministry of education. Another person raised the need to construct more toilet facilities because the existing ones were then serving the primary school and were not to be used by the high school students; moreover, it was noted that they were already almost over budget on this project. The members of the council decided that they should suggest to the priest when he came back from Mass that the initiation of the project be postponed until next year.

When the parish priest returned to the meeting after Mass, the vice chairperson reported the recommendations of the members regarding the project. The priest responded that the decision had already been made before he left the meeting and that it was out of order to revisit what they had already decided. He asked them "where were you when we were talking about it; were you sleeping?" "It is because some of you do not want the parish to progress and that is why you are postponing it. We must have to go on as scheduled if possible we borrow money." The other members did not speak. The meeting ended at 7.30 pm but before it ended, the priest asked if I had anything to say to them before I led them in the closing prayers. I thanked them for the opportunity given to me to take part in the meeting. I also encouraged them in their efforts to spend time serving others. I then said the closing prayers.

Parish C

This meeting was held on Saturday morning after mass. The parish priest led the opening prayers after which a spiritual reading was read by one of the members. There was a brief silence and then the priest asked whether anyone wished to share a brief reflection. A lady rose and gave a very nice reflection on love of neighbour.

The secretary then read out the agenda for the meeting and the priest asked if anyone had any additional items. One member suggested an additional item (the choice of chairperson for the up-coming parish bazaar). The priest thanked him for remembering this point and it was added to the agenda to be discussed.

The minutes of a previous meeting was read and approved. Matters arising from the minutes were addressed before proceeding to the main items on the agenda. The visit of the bishop for confirmation was discussed as well as the reception for this event, the donation to be given to the bishop, and the entertainment for the guests. The members made suggestions and when they could not agree on the amount of money to be given to the august visitor, it was put to a vote and the majority opinion was accepted. Next, the ongoing renovation of the parish hall was discussed and the member overseeing the

project presented an update on the progress to date. Some members asked questions related to his report and he answered the questions to the members' satisfaction.

The issue was raised of contributions levied to different zones for the ongoing project; the secretary identified the zones whose contributions were still outstanding and the zonal leaders were asked to provide an explanation for this. Some names were suggested as possible chairpersons for the bazaar, and a committee of four people was set up to visit these people to see if any of them could be the bazaar chairperson. The concluding prayer was said by the parish priest at 10.00am.

Parish D

The meeting began at 6.30 pm on Tuesday evening. Attendance at the meeting was very encouraging as there were sixteen people, including the representatives of the statutory bodies and zonal representatives. The priest introduced me and outlined my objective and then each person introduced himself. The meeting was held in the parish hall. The opening prayer was said by the assistant parish priest and a spiritual reading was taken from Mk. 10:28-30 and read by one of the members. The parish priest gave a brief reflection after the reading to the effect that sacrifice made for the progress of the parish will not go unrewarded. The agenda of the meeting was then read after which printed minutes were distributed to members who were given a few minutes to go through them to suggest corrections and ask for clarification.

Matters arising from the minutes were dealt with before addressing the items on the agenda. I was very much impressed with the discussion because the laity were given the opportunity to make useful contributions to the discussion.

When it came to AOB (any other business), one person put forward the suggestion that places for convenience (washrooms) were overdue in the parish because some sections of the compound smelled bad as a result of the children urinating indiscriminately. The parish priest over ruled this suggestion saying that it was not yet a priority. The vice chairman also wanted clarification regarding the event that had taken place in the Church recently (the consecration of the legion of Mary members). The parish priest took time to explain the different types of honour and adoration (latria, dulia and hyper dulia). Then another person raised a point regarding visitors going to the rectory at awkward hours. At this point, the parish priest stood up and struck his fist on the table and asked at the top of his voice "what is all this?" "Can't we have our privacy?" "So you are spying us?" "Okay can you point out the particular people whom you normally see?" This silenced the whole assembly including the person who had raised the point. After some time, the vice chairman stood up in order to reduce the tension and said that priests see a lot of parishioners for various reasons and so they should not be misunderstood.

The priest asked if there were any other points and none were raised. Then he asked that someone should move for the adjournment of the meeting and a lady moved for adjournment seconded by a male member. The priest thanked them for their contributions at the end of the meeting and said the concluding prayers after which we had refreshments.