1. INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian Church like other Churches is still in the process of reception of the dispositions of the Second Vatican Council and the 1983 Code of Canon Law. We have gotten the opportunity of the visit of the Holy Father in 1982 and 1998, the African Synod and for some local Synods, which continuously challenge us to self examination on our own identity, status and mission within the local Churches.

The issue of further studies or education for the diocesan priests which we intend to reflect upon is of great value for the improved pastoral works of the local Church. Nevertheless, we have witnessed unhealthy experiences from both the side of the priests and their respective Bishops in an effort to attend to this noble need of the local Church. Relationships and communion have been strained and often times the problems revolve around: lack of pragmatic personnel administrative policies in the local Churches; lack of enabling and receptive environment both at home and overseas; overwhelming experience of prolonged stay, presence of unproductive and under utilized academic degrees and distracted concentration on wealth.

All these challenge us to re-examine this issue in the light of Church legislation and concrete experiences of priests on further studies.

2. THE JURIDIC STATUS OF THE DIOCESAN PRIEST

The diocesan priest (just like all Christ’s faithful people), by virtue of baptism is incorporated into Christ and constituted member of the People of God (can 204, §1) and a person in the Church (can 96), who is in communion with the Church (cann 205; 96 & LG 13). Again apart from being fully initiated Christians (can 842, §2) and sharing in the common priesthood of all the baptized, the diocesan priests are also constituted sacred ministers in the Church (cann 1008; 207, §1) and ministers of apostolic mission. This status is effected by sacred ordination through the imposition of hands and prayers.

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1 Hilary O. Okeke, “Dynamics & Organs of Consultation in Diocesan Administration,” being a paper presented at the seminar organized by the Canon Law Society of Nigeria, p. 9.


3 Cf. LG 28

consecration which transforms the individual with the imprint of unrepeatable and indelible character (can 845, §1).

The juridic effect of ordination apart from the jurisdiction of teaching, sanctifying and ruling in the name and person of Christ (cann 129; 1012.; 1013; 1382), places one also in hierarchical communion.\(^5\) As such one so designated and chosen from among the People of God\(^6\) becomes a priest, consecrated and set apart to mediate between the people and God and to represent them before God.\(^7\) By this act he is also the ambassador of the divine redeemer\(^8\) and consecrated to the universal mission of the Church.\(^9\)

The Church’s legal tradition disposes that every cleric must be inscribed in that community or diocesan Church for whose services he was ordained. This is called incardination which comes with diaconate ordination for diocesan priests (can 266, §1). Incardination is a juridical institution which gives the cleric a juridic title of rights and obligations in the local Church apart from that secured with baptism (can 96). Hence it is a means by which “a concrete pastoral relationship of service and discipline is established between the cleric and the Church….Therefore unattached or transient clerics are not admitted….”\(^10\)

This bond, therefore, is the basis of the needed relationship between the diocesan Bishop and the priests. The Bishop together with the diocesan clergy, form one single presbyterium and direct the pastoral activities of the diocese\(^11\). The priests should therefore esteem their Bishop as a father and be ready to assist him in authentic filial love and sincere dialogue. They should be ready in obedience to observe his ordinances, commands and assume functions assigned to them (cann 273; 212, §1; 274, §2) and ever disposed to offer their advice and counsel for the good of the particular Church (can 127, §3). On the other hand, the Bishop should see the priests as his sons, brothers and

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5 Cf. PO 7; Pastores Gregis 47.
6 Cf. PO 3.
8 Cf. Pius XI, Encyclical on the Catholic Priesthood, Ad Catholici Sacerdoti 20 December 1935, No 12; Pius XII, Encyclical on the sacred Liturgy, Mediator Dei, 1947, No 20; PO 1, 2, 28, 32; LG 10, 11, 21, 28; SC 7; CD 15.
9 Cf. PO 10; John Paul II, Encyclical on Permanent Validity of Church’s Missionary Activity, Redemptoris Missio, 7 December 1990, Nos 67-68; AG 39; Acts 1,8; Matt 28, 18-20; Mark 16, 15; Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Instruction on Sending Abroad and Sojourn of Diocesan Priests from Mission Territories, 1, 6; John Paul II, Post- Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the formation of Priests in the Present Circumstances, Pastores Dabo Vobis, 1992 No 58.
10 Joseph Martin De Agar, The Handbook of Canon Law, p. 56 ; Cf. also CD 28 ; Juan I. Arrieta, Governance Structures within the Catholic Church, cit., p. 203; see CIC/83, can 265: “accordingly acephalous or wandering clergy are in no way to be allowed”. In addition this incardination gives him right of maintenance (cf. can 281).
11 Cf. LG 28, PO 2; CD 30; SC 42; John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Pastores Gregis, February 2003, 6 & 47; Ecclesia Imago 206e; Congregation of Divine Worship & Discipline of Sacraments, Instruction, Redemptionis Sacramentum 29.
friends; show them love and solicitude in their situations (can 384). In addition he should be to them a teacher, a father, friend and brother.

To accomplish the demands of this relationship the magisterium called for the regime of consultative activity and shared responsibility between these sacred ministers (i.e. the Bishops and his priests), both in a plenary session of the diocesan priest-presbyterium or in the designated presbyteral organs of consultation (Episcopal Council, Presbyteral Council, College of Consultants, Meeting of Deans), and in the diocesan assembly (the Diocesan Synod, Diocesan Pastoral Council and Diocesan Commissions/Committees).

The focus of all Church’s apostolate and pastoral plans both at the universal and particular levels is towards the finality of the Catholic Church i.e. the salvation of souls (can 1752). The diocesan priests and the presbyterium evaluate their identity, mission and spirituality from this finality.

3. THE NECESSITY OF FURTHER STUDIES FOR THE DIOCESAN PRIESTS

Francis Bacon in his nobly acknowledged philosophical dictum declared that, “Knowledge is Power”. The Church found the value of education from the early pages of the book of Genesis, where the divine Master mandated and injected in every human person the inherent power and creative disposition to “fill the earth and conquer it” (Gen 1, 28). This need is unique for the priests as Prophet Malachi proclaimed: “The lips of a priest shall guard knowledge, and men shall seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts”. The same was the position of prophet Hosea:

Hear the word of Yahweh Israel! For Yahweh has an accusation to bring against the inhabitants of this land. There is neither truth nor goodness nor knowledge of God in the country only perjury, lies, murder, theft and adultery, with continual bloodshed. That is why the country is in mourning with all who live there wasting away; the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, even the fish are dying. But let no one apologize or accuse another, for it is you, priest, whom I single out! You stumble day and night and the prophets stumble with you, and you make your people fall. My people perish for want of knowledge, and because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as priests, and since you ignore the law of your God, I, too, will ignore your children.

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12 Cf. LG 28; CD 16; PO 7; cum cooperatione presbyterii-can 369 (see also can 756); John Paul II said, “If we are true brothers to our priests, we know their burdens and their needs… it is the solidarity of priests with their understanding and compassion, which helps us to perform” (Address to a group of Nigerian Bishops during Ad Limina Visit, in L’Osservatore romano, English edition, 5 October 1987, p. 18
13 Cf. Apostolorum Successores 75, p. 84; Pastores Gregis 21, p. 39; PO 7;
14 Cf PO 7; Karambai Sebastian, Structures of Decision Making in the Local Church, India, 1984, pp. 92-93.
15 Cf. LG 24; Ecclesia Imago 32.
17 Hos 4, 1-6; This message is more urgent when we place this message in the context of our nation, Nigeria where social, moral, economic and political lives have almost collapsed requiring the presence of prophetic ministry to be provided by men and women in the spiritual and apostolic ministry.
This position of the Scriptures found its basic expression also in the voice of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. Pope Leo XIII saw the need for the priests to be prepared for “higher mission” i.e. equipped with the capacity to be involved in discussions touching faith and morals.\(^\text{18}\) This position found its vivid expression in the decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* that “Secular culture and even sacred science are advancing at an unprecedented rate in our time. Priests are therefore urged to adequate and continuous perfection of their knowledge of things divine and human. In this way, they will prepare themselves to enter with greater advantage into dialogue with their contemporaries”.\(^\text{19}\) The legislator found the need and right for continued education of the clergy in these words:

*Clerics are to continue their sacred studies even after ordination to the priesthood.... Priests are to attend pastoral courses to be arranged for them after their ordination, in accordance with the provisions of particular law. At times determined by the same law, they are to attend other courses, theological meetings or conferences, which offer them an occasion to acquire further knowledge of the sacred sciences and of pastoral methods.*\(^\text{20}\)

This ongoing formation for priests have been variously acknowledged by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II in various places especially in his message to us Nigerian Priests in 1982 where he indicated that “learned priests are required in order to answer the needs of the Church and society.”\(^\text{21}\) His Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the formation of Priests in the Present day Circumstances, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* called for ongoing formation of priests in spiritual, intellectual and pastoral dimensions.\(^\text{22}\) And more recently he enjoined the Bishops of United States of America during their *ad limina* visit that, “concern for the future also demands (that) you spare no effort in ensuring a sound continuing education for the clergy, and in particular, to consider it an essential part of your governance to send young priests for advanced studies in the ecclesiastical sciences, especially theology and canon law.”\(^\text{23}\) The Missionary Dicastery also directed that since it his duty to educate people, the priest should be well educated in faith since without such a continued and sustained intellectual life one will be like an extinguished lamp.\(^\text{24}\)

From the scriptures, tradition and the magisterium we have seen the need and value in priests’ continued education. It is therefore noble and important for the diocesan

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\(^\text{18}\) Cf. Leo XIII, *Fin dal Principio*, 3-7

\(^\text{19}\) *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 19

\(^\text{20}\) CIC/1983, can 279, §§ 1 &2; see also right to Christian education up to all Christ’s faithful people (*Gravissimum Educationis* 2; can 217; Hilary O. Okeke, “Rights of Diocesan Priests in Nigeria,” cit., p. 11.

\(^\text{21}\) John Paul II, Address to Nigerian Priests and Seminarians


\(^\text{23}\) John Paul II, Address to Bishops’ Conference of United States during their *Ad Limina Apostolorum* visit, in *L’Osservatore Romano*, 48 (1 December 2004), p. 5.

priests to desire for further studies. But this desire should operate within the purpose for such adventure.

4. THE PURPOSE OF FURTHER STUDIES IN THE CHURCH

Further education, far from being an absolute right of the diocesan priest or entirely for his personal benefit, is predicated and limited by divine law, church legislations, papal dispositions and the finality of the Church which is salvation of souls (can 1752)\textsuperscript{25}. The legislator provides a constitutional principle on the regulation of exercise of rights for the purpose of common good (can 223, §2).\textsuperscript{26} Hence the Missionary Decastery instructed: “In the mission territories one needs to be particularly attentive during the seminarian’s formation not to allow an attitude that clamours for the supposed right to pursue further studies after ordination nor that the bishop has the obligation to send him abroad”.\textsuperscript{27}

Fundamentally, therefore, the purpose of further studies is not only to provide for diocesan needs and the various needs of the apostolate\textsuperscript{28} but also to ensure the full personal development of the individual. The diocesan needs, the Instruction continued include: “teaching roles at the major and minor seminaries, the permanent formation of clergy, curial officials and particular departments of the diocesan chancery, or even at a provincial or national level- in which case it would be in agreement with the Episcopal Conference,”\textsuperscript{29} and also for the Roman Curia (where the diocesan Bishops and major superiors are invited to be generous with the demand of personnel (clergy, religious and laity) for the Holy See (\textit{Pastor Bonus} 8, 9 & Art 9)\textsuperscript{30} and for missionary apostolate\textsuperscript{31}.

Furthermore, in the context of the individual development, the Congregation for the Clergy directed:

\textit{Such (ongoing) formation must cover and harmonize all the dimensions of the formation of priests. Thus, it must tend to help each priest achieve the development of a full human personality nurtured in the spirit of service to others, in whatever task he may receive; it

\begin{footnotes}
\item[25] Cf. Alaphridus Ottaviani who maintained that all power is limited by its purpose or finality (See \textit{Institutiones Iuris publici ecclesiastici}, Vatican City, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1947, p. 43).
\item[26] Note that the legislator provided in canon 18 that “Laws which prescribe a penalty, or restrict the free exercise of rights, or contain an exception to the law, are to be interpreted strictly”. Hence canon 381 paragraph one and canon 223 paragraph two should be interpreted strictly.
\item[27] Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples, \textit{Instruction on the Sending Abroad and Sojourn of Diocesan Priests from Mission Territories} 6, p. 6
\item[28] Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples, \textit{Instruction on the Sending Abroad and Sojourn of Diocesan Priests from Mission Territories}., 7 p. 7; Art 1, p. 11; See also Pastoral Guide for Diocesan Priests... p. 64 & John Paul II address to Nigerian Priests and Seminarians.
\item[29] Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples, \textit{Instruction on the Sending Abroad and Sojourn of Diocesan Priests from Mission Territories}, 7, p. 7; In their earlier letter tilted: Directives Regarding Scholarships for Priests, Seminarians and Men and Women Religious of the Mission Areas, the Missionary Decastery excluded those priests selected for teaching in the Major Seminaries from the measures provided in that letter of 10 January 1985.
\item[30] Cf. Jean-Baptiste Beyer, “The Roman Curia: Official Organism of the Pope at the Service of the Particular Churches,” cit., p. 402 show that the personnel to be trained for diplomatic services come from the particular Churches. See also James H. Provost, “\textit{Pastor Bonus}...” cit., p. 509.
\item[31] Cf. \textit{Instruction on the Sending Abroad and Sojourn of Diocesan Priests From Mission Territories}.
\end{footnotes}
will permit him to be intellectually prepared in the theological sciences as well as in the
human sciences in so far as they are linked with his ministry in order to pursue his
function as witness to the faith and with a greater effectiveness.\textsuperscript{32}

In summary, therefore, the purpose of further studies is tied to the finality of the
Church, the common good of the Church, the primary tasks and needs of the Particular
and Universal Churches and of course the benefit of the individual diocesan priest.

5. THE DETERMINATION OF AND CRITERIA FOR FURTHER STUDIES

The Fathers of Second Vatican Council and the legislator declare in unequivocal
terms that the diocesan Bishop has all the necessary power required for the governance of
the diocesan Church (cann 381, §1; 391, §1; 135; 129, §1). In the local Church, the
diocesan Bishop is uniquely constituted the minister of governance (can 375, §1) and
principal coordinator of the apostolic activities.\textsuperscript{33} On these bases, therefore, the
Magisterium is unequivocal in establishing that it belongs to the diocesan Bishop to
determine who actually goes for further studies and the requisites or criteria for the
choice. The decree \textit{Optatam totius} said: “It is the Bishop’s responsibility to send young
men of suitable character, virtue and ability to special institutes, faculties or universities,
so that the various needs of the apostolate may be met by priest trained to a higher
scientific standard in the sacred sciences and in other appropriate subjects.”\textsuperscript{34} Thus as the
Holy Father puts it: added:

\begin{quote}
When you are ordained and it is a question of going to universities or similar institutes
inside or outside Nigeria, this is an assignment to be given only to a certain number of
priests, according to diocesan needs and planning, for which the Bishops take ultimate
responsibility. Do nothing without your Bishop or worse still against him, especially on
this point. Priests who have already put themselves into such irregular positions can now
retrace their steps and find peace of conscience. In the same way, you will resist the
temptation to seek employment anywhere without or against your Bishop. We all share in
Christ’s one priesthood. Let us maintain its unity and love.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

Thus the considerations by the Bishop in consultation with his collaborators\textsuperscript{36}
should aim at healthy discernment of both the need of the diocese and suitability of the

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{32} Congregation for the Clergy, \textit{Directory on Ministry and Life of Priests}, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice
Vaticana, 1994, p.; See also the purpose of education which is “the formation of the whole person, so that
all may attain their eternal destiny and at the same time promote the common good of society.” (CIC/1983,
can 795)
\item \textsuperscript{33} \textit{Apostolorum Successores} 160, p. 178; see also \textit{Ecclesia Imago} 32, p. 21; LG 24.
\item \textsuperscript{34} \textit{Optatam totius} 18; CIC/1983, can 819: “In so far as the good of a diocese or religious institute or
indeed even of the universal Church requires it, young persons, clerics and members of institutes,
outstanding in character, intelligence and virtue, must be sent to ecclesiastical universities or faculties by
their diocesan Bishops or the Superiors of their institutes”.
\item \textsuperscript{35} John Paul II, Message to Nigerian Priests and Seminarians at Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu, 13
February 1982.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Some dioceses have Further Studies Commission while for some this is done by the College of
Consultors or the Presbyteral Council. But the vision of the Church is that the Bishop should consult in
\end{itemize}
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priest. The suitability is not based only on intellectual ability but also the necessary virtues for the ministry for which the individual was ordained. The Missionary Decastery instructed in this regard that: “The diocesan Bishop of Mission Countries, after having ascertained the actual diocesan deeds and sought the counsel of his collaborators, should choose the most able priest, after having asked his consent, to pursue further studies. He is to designate the field of study in which the priest must specialize, the faculty in which he must enroll and the date of his definitive return”.37

In our country Nigeria, the dioceses have their respective considerations. But to effectively discern and act properly, the Bishop should develop an objective criteria for the assessment of priests for this further studies so as to avoid the accusation from some priests that they are “using further studies as a favour or privilege granted to priests or as a reward for good behaviour or even a privilege reserved to the favoured few”38, or of sending priests out indiscriminately without an objective criteria and a focus on the need of the diocese and the apostolate. This need for objective criteria also touches the determination of what to study, where to go both local and abroad, the extent of studies that is whether one stops at masters/license or doctorate degrees and the duration of studies, the funding and importantly the fraternal and paternal link with diocesan priests on further education etc. There is also great need to expand the area of emphasis to touch secular disciplines for the purpose of meeting the challenges of our environment in the near future. This should form a very important element in the consideration of what to study.

6. WITNESSED PREDICAMENTS ON FURTHER STUDIES

We have experienced in the midst of immense flourishing indigenous vocations to the priesthood, a corresponding increase in the number of diocesan priests that go for further studies either within the country or outside. But we shall remain grateful to our families, communities and friends for the foundation and support to our vocations. We extend such appreciation for our local ordinaries for the permission to be out for the studies, the Missionary Decastery, and other local and foreign funding agencies that have sustained the local Church in trained personnel.

However, the stories surrounding further education have been that of mixed feelings. Thus, when you calculate the enormous number of Nigerian Priests in some places like USA, Germany, Austria (the countries notable for permanent stay of priests), Rome,
Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, Holland, Nigeria etc. and the percentage of their return back home to assume and help the local Church one need to stop and reflect. The situation of longer stay is now creeping into those priests who study in Rome, Belgium, and even in Nigeria etc. What then could be the reasons for the refusal to return back to our country prevalent among some of us? Let us attempt a presentation of list which you may add others.

- Problem with research that is, in relation to materials, language and the Professors especially those who are known to make life difficult for their students. However, some priests delay the progress of their research or display lack of seriousness or commitment to a fruitful and speedy research work.

- Problem with our families and the economic demands on the priests as new family breadwinners today. Our family situations, which are cultural, make multiple demands on the diocesan priests for assistance. This moves for extension of priest’s obligation to charity to his immediate and extended family. It shows itself in sponsorship for business, for trip overseas, for erection of building in the family etc. This is really burdensome and creates distracted attention in the life of the diocesan secular priests. This calls for healthy social security and maintenance policy for the diocesan priests.

- Problem with funding and the necessity to take up appointment or work in order to sustain the high standard of living and expensive education in some places. One may move to take loan to finish his studies with the desire to settle longer to raise money to pay such loans. This problem is also seen in the requirements of publication before one is awarded the doctorate degree. It demands money and time. Some in this context take to overstay as reason to accomplish this. Some are truly indigent that they cannot make it unless the work. Some are abandoned by their Bishops to struggle personally. This is a problem.

- Avowed interest in commerce and money since the environment offers better opportunity especially in the context of foreign exchange. This desire is seen not only in telling funny lies about the extreme poor situation of ones family or using the name of the diocese through the diocesan Bishop permission to raise some funds (the final destination of which is normally the individual’s personal account) but also, on the constant visit overseas during holidays for those who dared to return and have taken assignments at home (not for research mainly but monetary benefits). One Bishop observed in this regard thus: “the impression I get is that many of you came into the priesthood because it is the only avenue for you to travel to Europe or America. This view is supported by the fact that some who are doing nothing whatsoever with their much desired and acquired degrees harass me yearly for permission to travel to Europe for holidays. No wonder then that those who have not gone wish and insist they must study in Europe or America so that they may make contacts and open avenues for personal revenues. To study is not really their pre-occupation. This evaluation is very true of other priests in other dioceses...” 39

The Council Fathers decreed: “So they are not to regard an ecclesiastical office as a source of profit, and are not to spend the income accruing from it for increasing their own private fortunes. Hence priests,

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far from setting their hearts on riches, must always avoid all avarice and carefully refrain from all appearance of trafficking”.

- One prefers periodic home visitation rather than permanent return home with the impression that there is nothing to do at home especially in the midst of the so-called “vocation boom”. So often you will get these expressions “why are you going or rushing to go home?” “What are you going to do if you return?” Did you not see the experience of this or other person that returned where he was assigned for apostolate? They are good at creating offices that have no portfolios. The environment at home seems unreceptive. In addition to this is that, some priests at home have established their cathedra in many places and offices making it impossible to admit new intakes, innovations or any meaningful changes in such pastoral sectors. Some of them regret always when there are more ordinations or new priests returning home who may be more qualified to take up their positions. These attitudes on both sides tend to sustain the problem of return from further studies unabated.

- Overstay and loss of bearing from ones root and local Church where he is incardinated and brought up breed alienation. The joy of staying at home is lost to extraordinary effort to live like the westerners in all departments of life bereft of their roots. This is immaturity, which hinders the priest from experiencing a profound sense of belonging to or being identified with his society. Even in the midst of all material wealth (showing itself in houses, cars, business etc), academic degrees, revenue connections, inappropriate relationship with women etc still you witness “more regressive path of apathy toward ministry that smacks of passive aggression or that of antisocial recklessness with their ministry and life.” This leads to loss of vision of ones mission and that of the Church. For some with “Green Card”, “Carta Soggiorno” or “Citizenship”, the loss of ones roots and independence from the local ordinaries is declared. But to what extent does this alienation brings joy and happiness to the individual is our concern. Somebody said to me one day how he visited a priest who have been in USA for over twenty years and saw nothing that attracts anyone neither in his person nor in the house he apparently owns and lives in. With these numbers on years one wonders what the individual will contribute to his local Church on return especially when he will be nearing retiring age on return and worse still some die in foreign land.

- One may be annoyed either with the system who has failed to understand and consent to his agenda which in most cases is contrary to his mission or the fact that he was not earlier allowed to go for studies on time, or do the course or go to the place of his choice. The inability to receive the necessary documents (like Bishop’s authority letters, celebret etc) and financial support breeds greater annoyance not only to the diocesan Bishop, his collaborators but all persons of the local Church. In most cases he hides his identity and address at overseas, breaks communication with all and sneaks in, because he does not want to be seen by anybody nor his being around to be publicized.

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40 Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, Presbyterorum Ordinis, No 17; see also can. 286.
41 Cornelius U. Okeke, Expectations of Life as A Priest, cit., p. 247.
• As a follow up, some who are overstaying their study leave or are unwilling to go back home after studies are often recounting stories of woes, of victimizations or perceived injustice received on the part of their Bishops before they finally “escaped for “ studies: punitive transfers, lack of appreciation of sincere pastoral efforts etc. The desire to quickly complete study and return home is not awakened in them for fear of meeting the same or worse fate. Their success to secure an opportunity for further studies abroad has been taken as escapism and asking them to go back is like watering a dead stake. For some, resolution is, “unless that man (referring to their Bishop) dies or is retired, it is bye to their dioceses”. May be they are right in their perceived fear, may be they have also over reacted. But it is point for the individual Bishops to meditate upon. This paper cannot but advise them to make it green for them at home and they will not be out to the fields.

• The other problem is the scandalous waist of time and fund especially where the individual do no struggle for his sponsorship. The other is where one believes that the importance of his studies is simply to pass the periodic semester examination. He studies mainly for examination and wastes the rest of the period in moving from place to place or getting attached to a parish where in most case one receive embarrassing experience of modern dimension of slavery and neo-colonialism from those who are supposed to be our brothers in the same catholic Priesthood. One needs to recount experiences from our assistances during Christmas, Easter and Long vacation. Still other who have the charisma of discoveries spend the major part of his time in internet not in research mainly but in navigating, writing questionable letters and inmost cases getting information of places to write letters for apostolate in Europe and America with the normal response “we are sorry, we have no place”. The individual in most cases is caught up in this quagmire and could not finish the research which in most cases is hurriedly done wanting in depth and profundity and casting doubts on the supposed professional knowledge in the area of ones specialization and the expected contributions on return.

• The diocesan Bishop could tacit endorsement to this long stay not solely on the bases of reconciling the individual to the local Church but because the individual in question makes financial contribution to the Bishop, who stays in his place always while in trips overseas. The person believes this is the way through which the local Church can give him little peace to live his life as he has projected. Furthermore, experiences showed that the originators of this unhealthy attitude of not returning on schedule were among the group considered to be among the best. But it was all disappointment calling for serious review of the statutes and fidelity to its genuine implementation. This is equally unfortunate.

Finally, for us brethren, genuine and true some of the above reasons may be, there is still no place for self-deception and self contradiction, since things are not alright. Karl Rahner exhorted:

*We can “sugar over the devil himself” by the ingenuity with which we put a face of goodness on our wickedness, so as to deceive not only others but even ourselves. This ingenuity reaches to the very principles of moral judgment, which we either blissfully ignore altogether, or set aside in favour of more “enlightened” standards of conduct*
formulated by ourselves. A stage is quickly reached when our consciences devise a kind of personal alchemy by which sin and perverse behaviour are transformed into virtue and righteousness.\textsuperscript{42}

7. CONCLUSION: THE CHALLENGE OF DIOCESAN LEADERSHIP AND THE PRIESTS

It is a simple truth that no organization can function effectively without good leadership. In our context as already presented, the diocesan leadership rests squarely on the diocesan Bishop.\textsuperscript{43} It is his responsibility to coordinate and direct the affairs of this portion of the people of God (cann 394; 473, §§ 1 & 2) towards the finality of the Church—salvation of souls (can 1752). The way and manner he directs the affairs of the local Church remain desiderata to the amount of loyalty and cooperation he will get from both the faithful and especially his immediate cooperators—the diocesan clergy. On this note his exercise of authority as service becomes paramount.\textsuperscript{44} In addition to this his discerning charisma, discretion and prudence should be manifested in his personal knowledge of his priests, that is,

their character, their aptitudes, their aspirations, the dept of their spiritual life, their zeal, their ideals, their state of health, their financial situation, their families and everything which concerns them. And he should know them not just in groups...or through pastoral bodies, but also individually and, as far as possible, in their place of ministry. This is the purpose of his pastoral visits, when as much time as possible should be given to personal matters....\textsuperscript{45}

The fact that these sons (i.e. diocesan priests) of the Bishops are not returning early or not interested in returning or eager to move out, call for deeper self-examination on the part of the diocesan leadership. The legislator called the Bishop’s attention to solicitude to the welfare and predicaments of his priests in these words:

\textit{He is to have a special concern for the priests, to whom he is to listen as his helpers and counselors. He is to defend their rights and ensure that they fulfill the obligations proper to their state. He is to see that they have the means and the institutions needed for the

\textsuperscript{43} Cf. \textit{Apostolorum Successores} 160
\textsuperscript{44} See John Paul II, \textit{Sacra Disciplinae leges; Pastores Gregis} 42, 43 and \textit{Apostolorum Successores}, 2, 158
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Apostolorum Successores} 77, pp. 85-86.
development of their spiritual and intellectual life. He is to ensure that they are provided with adequate means of livelihood and social welfare, in accordance with the law.

As the numbers of the diocesan presbyterium are daily on increase, the Bishop is also daily challenged to discernment and attention to the growth of his priests. The talents which are gifts from God should be “identified, appreciated, willingly acknowledged (not grudgingly tolerated) and given every opportunity for constructive uses… for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.” The Bishop, in exercising his ministry should try to relate with his priests, not merely as a ruler towards his subjects, but rather as a father and a friend. He should devote himself wholeheartedly to creating a climate of affection and trust such that his priests may respond with a convinced, pleasing and firm obedience. The practice of obedience is strengthened rather than weakened if the Bishop, as far as possibly and without prejudice to justice and charity, explains to the interested parties the reasons for his decisions. He should show equal care and attention to every priest, because all of them, while their gifts will be many and varied, are engaged in the service of the Lord as members of a single prebyterate.

A healthy further studies policy (involving the presbyterium in its formulation), and fidelity to its implementation is a necessity now in our local Churches. This policy should endeavour to determine what to study and the extent the individual can contribute to the local Church. An earlier plan and information of what one will do before going or on return will enhance better diocesan personnel management. The collaborators in the ministry of diocesan Bishop should endeavour to give their sincere advice (can 127, §3) based on the above principles so that the Bishop will not make costly mistakes in handling any of his priests that later leave bitter and lasting effects. Finally we commend the efforts of our Bishops in this arduous task of their office because it is not always easy to manage the growing number of the diocesan priests.

In addition, there is also need to reconsider the former practice of referring and requesting recommendations from the formators in the Major seminary who actually know the capability of their students for quite a long period of time. This is indeed a

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46 CIC/1983, can 384; see also cann 281; 1274.
48 Apostolorum Successores p. 85; John Paul in other places still repeated: “Before being the superior and judge of your priests be their masters, fathers, friends, their good and kind brothers, always ready to understand, to sympathize and to help. In every possible way encourage your priests to be your personal friends and to be very open to you. This will not weaken the relation of juridical obedience; rather it will transform it into pastoral love so that they will obey more willingly, sincerely and securely” (Address to a group of Nigerian Bishops during Ad Limina Visit, in L’Osservatore romano, English edition, 5 October 1987, p. 19); “The Bishop will always strive to relate to his priests as a father and brother who loves them, listens to them, welcomes them, corrects them, supports them, seeks their cooperation and, as much as possible, is concerned for their human, spiritual, ministerial and financial well-being” (Pastores Gregis 47, p. 123); Cf. also LG 28; Ecclesia Imago 107,108 p. 55; Apostolorum Successores 75, p. 84; PO 10; Paul VI Encyclical Sacerdotalis Caelibatus, Nos 92, 93, 24 June 1962 in AAS, 59 (1967), pp. 693-694; CBCN, A Priest Forever, pp 13-14.: “Bishops to foster and encourage a spirit of unity and harmony between themselves and priests so that obedience is elicited and not only commanded”.

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healthy ancilla for the diocesan Bishops’ decisions for the priests among other considerations.

For us diocesan priests, the local Church has concern for us, and she waits for our prompt return to continue the mission of Christ the redeemer, which is “far from being completed”\(^{49}\). Our contribution is required in the area of both the society and the Church, in our seminaries, diocesan curia and parishes etc. It is only when we return that the new ones can make it for the same finality. In conclusion, brother priests, “fill your minds with whatever is truthful, holy, just, pure, lovely and noble. Be mindful of whatever deserves praise and admiration” (Phil 4, 8), and

If our life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all, or the spirit that we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy, then be united in your conviction and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind. That is the one thing which would make one completely happy. There must be no competition among you, no conceit, but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people’s interests instead. In your minds, you must be the same as Christ Jesus.\(^{50}\)

\(^{49\text{ Redemptoris Missio, No 1.}}\)

\(^{50\text{ Phil 2, 1-5.}}\)

\(^{51\text{ }}\)
Pope Francis has demanded obedience from priests in a Nigerian Diocese where the bishop has been unable to take up residence. Nigerian church leaders met Francis to discuss the situation of Bishop Peter Ebere Okpaleke, who was appointed bishop of Ahiara by then-Pope Benedict XVI in 2012, but has been rejected by the clergy because he is not from the diocese. Nigerian church leaders met Francis to discuss the situation of Bishop Peter Ebere Okpaleke, who was appointed bishop of Ahiara by then-Pope Benedict XVI in 2012, but has been rejected by the clergy because he is not from the diocese. Bart Geger, SJ

Who are Diocesan Priests? A Catholic bishop is the spiritual leader of Catholics living in a certain region, which is called a diocese. Michael Sheridan is the bishop of the Diocese of Colorado Springs. Charles Chaput is the archbishop in the Archdiocese of Denver. (The prefix arch designates a bishop or diocese with an especially large number of Catholics.) These priests usually work in the parishes of the diocese. They make promises of celibacy and respect to their bishop. The bishop can assign them anywhere in his diocese. Large dioceses usually have a special school (seminary) where priests are trained. All bishops are successors of the 12 Apostles, who were the first leaders of the early Church.