

**MINISTRIES IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TODAY:
THE NIGERIAN SITUATION**

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A thesis submitted in total fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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June 1998

STATEMENT OF SOURCES

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

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ABSTRACT

AIMS

This thesis seeks to study ministry, as it is understood today in the light of the renewed ecclesiology of Vatican II, and to relate this study to the church situation in Nigeria. This thesis proposes to investigate the possible need for changes in the practices of ministries in the church in Nigeria.

The study aims to articulate a theology of ministry and to critically review the growth and development of ministries in the church from the beginnings of Christianity up to the mid-second century. It will also critically review the understanding of ministry in Vatican II and post-Vatican II documents, and describe and critically analyse the development of ministries in the Nigerian church before and after Vatican II. It will suggest a way forward in the broadening and diversifying of ministries in that country by suggesting ways in which the practice of ministry may be enhanced in the local churches in Nigeria. By local churches, this writer is referring particularly to small Catholic communities or rural out-stations of the church in Nigeria.

SCOPE

The study is undertaken in five chapters with an introduction and conclusion. Chapter One considers the theological understanding of ministry at the present time; it explains the meaning of ministry and differentiates it from other concepts such as lay apostolate and Catholic Action; it posits baptism as the foundation for ministry and outlines a theology of ministry. Chapter Two traces the origin of ministry in the New Testament and its evolution in the early church. The findings of Chapter Two will be applied in Chapters Four and Five that concentrate on the church in Nigeria.

Chapter Three focuses on the understanding of ministry at the Second Vatican Council and in post-conciliar documents. This chapter analyses and summarises the teachings in the documents concerning ministry, which will later be applied to the church in Nigeria. Chapter Four traces the development and organisation of ministry in Nigeria before and after Vatican II within the framework of chapters one to three. The chapter begins with a sketch history of the church in Nigeria and proceeds to highlight the present

organisation of ministry in Nigeria. Chapter Five proposes a broadening and diversifying of ministries in the church in Nigeria. It considers the significance of the local communities and how a broadening and diversification of ministries would help the progress and growth of these communities.

CONCLUSIONS

There has been a shift in the Catholic theology of ministry and the central idea in the theology of ministry is the church in which all members are participants in diverse ways in the various responsibilities of the community. The historical overview of the New Testament times highlighted the arrangement of ministries in the early church. Ministries existed according to the needs of the local community. The ministerial arrangement of the first century of the church was stifled by the emergence of the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons. Vatican II offered the basis of a renewal for the church in matters of ministries. The Council presented a renewed understanding of the church in terms of mystery, Body of Christ, sacrament, communion and, above all, people of God. This new understanding of the church demands a new approach to ministries in the church.

This study concludes that the communal dimension of the church stressed by the Council should prevail in Nigeria. The ordained ministry dominates in the church in Nigeria. In the local church situation, the catechist is looked upon as the spiritual leader of the community who collaborates with other members to meet the various needs of the community. These people are hardly literate, yet they provide the essential leadership that is needed for the community. But they are not able to lead the community in the Eucharist because they have not been given the power. From this we conclude that catechists should be empowered with ordination to the priesthood that will enable them more effectively to fulfil the pastoral responsibilities they already have. In the provision of a higher quality of ministry in rural churches, the ordination of catechists would play a big part. Other lay people should be allowed and encouraged to function as acolytes, lectors, eucharistic ministers and in other capacities in the local churches. The rapid growth of the church in Nigeria demands the emergence and encouragement of new ministries in parishes and out-stations to meet the needs of the people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I owe many people thanks for their contributions towards the successful completion of this work. First of all I thank my bishop Rev Dr. Joseph Ekuwem for allowing me the opportunity to continue my studies in Australia. I am grateful to the priests of my diocese of Uyo – Nigeria for keeping in touch with me especially Rev Dr. Sylvanus I. Udoidem who sent me some of the materials from Nigeria, and Rev Dr. Ernest P. Udoh a colleague who has kept my spirit high with words of encouragement. My fellow Nigerian priests here in Australia Frs. Michael Idobo and Marcellinus Uwandu have been wonderful companions and I thank them for their contributions towards the success of this work.

I appreciate the assistance of my supervisor Associate Professor Gideon Goosen who inspired me towards this study and has guided me throughout the period of study. I thank the School of Theology Mount Saint Mary Campus for the opportunity to do this study in Australian Catholic University. My deep appreciation to the Research Degrees Committee of the Australian Catholic University for the (ACUPA) award which assisted me in this study.

To the librarians of Brother D. M. Stewart library ACU and Veech Library of the Catholic Institute of Sydney I am deeply grateful for the assistance I received during the research period. I thank the priests and librarians of Columban Mission Institute North Turramurra for their assistance in this research particularly for making African Ecclesiastical Review and other mission journals available to me. My gratitude to Mr. Terry Hanley and Sr. Dr. Vivienne Keely for offering me invaluable advises and for taking time off their busy schedule to proof read this work. Special thanks to Dr. Samuel Adeloju who has been helpful with advises in pursuit of this work.

My profound gratitude to Fr. David Scott and the parishioners of St. Paul the Apostle Winston Hills for their support all along. I thank Deacon James and Mrs Patricia Phelan and family for their assistance. The support and encouragement of Frs. Alan Layt, Frank Garcia, Paul & Christine Williams, John & Mary MacNamara, Brian & Margery

Baker, Mrs Jan Flood, Kors & Margaret Van Eyk, Mr. Peter Murphy, Andrew & Claudia Scott, John and Bernadette Younis and other friends in Australia have kept me going especially in difficult times.

To my mother, brothers and sisters, and friends in Nigeria and overseas who have been sending me words of encouragement, a lot of thanks for your love and concern. It is wonderful that you are so near to me in a special way. God bless and reward you all.

Basil A. Ekot

June 1998.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	<i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i> (Vatican II's Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity)
AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
AFER	African Ecclesiastical Review
AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i> (Vatican II's Decree on Missionary Activity of the Church)
AP	<i>Ad Pascendum</i> (Paul VI, The Apostolic Letter Containing Norms for the Order of the Diaconate)
CCD	Confraternity of Christian Doctrine
CD	<i>Christus Dominus</i> (Vatican II's Decree on the office of the Bishop)
CL	<i>Christifideles Laici</i> (John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World)
DNT	Dictionary of the New Testament
EN	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> (Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World)
IC	<i>Immensae Caritatis</i> (S.C.D.W., Instruction on Facilitating Sacramental Eucharistic Communion in Particular Circumstances)
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> (Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)
MQ	<i>Ministeria Quaedam</i> (Paul VI, Apostolic Letter on First Tonsure, Minor Order and the Sub-diaconate)
NJBC	The New Jerome Biblical Commentary
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
PO	<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i> (Vatican II's Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests)
RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
WCC	World Council of Churches

INTRODUCTION

What ministry is and how it is understood and practised in the Catholic Church have become important and much discussed questions. This thesis seeks to study ministry, as it is understood today in the light of the renewed ecclesiology of Vatican II, and to relate this study to the church situation in Nigeria. This thesis proposes to investigate need for changes in the practices of ministries in the church in Nigeria.

By the beginning of the third millennium of the church's history, Nigeria will have participated in this history for some 120 years. While the Catholic Church in Nigeria is relatively young considering the overall history of the church, it is nevertheless a church that has grown and reached the stage of adulthood with the responsibility of making its own contribution to the life of the universal church.¹ Yet we feel that the contribution of the Catholic Church in Nigeria has not been as great as it should have been. This study has been devoted to ministry and ministries in the hope that it might indicate ways in which the Nigerian Catholic Church might become more dynamic and make a greater contribution to the society in which it finds itself.

Before Vatican II "ministry" had a narrow meaning almost exclusively confined to the activity of the ordained. Today we find Christians, especially in local churches, engaging in ministry, and ministries are no longer associated with the ordained. Today ministry is not just a matter of the ordained taking responsibility for all the activities of the church as was the case when the priesthood functioned in the period prior to Vatican II as a kind of "ministerial moloch" arrogating to itself all ministries within the church.² While the ordained ministry is significant for the church, it is not the only form of ministry. "If ministry is reduced solely to ordained ministry then there is a failure to recognise the presence of the Spirit in the Church; moreover, there is a failure to recognise that the whole church is ministerial."³ Thus, we have witnessed in the church

¹ John Onaiyekan, "The Catholic Church in Nigeria," *America* no. 154 (1986): 25.

² John Coleman, "The Future of Ministry," *America* March 28 (1981): 244.

³ Gerard Kelly, "Basic Christian Communities: A Study in the Church's Self-Understanding" (M.Th. diss., Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1985), 131.

since Vatican II an explosion and growth of new ministries, which have received the endorsement of the Magisterium. Pope Paul VI gave the formal approval to the development of ministries in the church:

A glance at the origins of the Church is very illuminating, and gives the benefit of an early experience in the matter of ministries . . . ministries, apparently new but closely tied up with the Church's living experience down the centuries - such as catechists, directors of prayer and chant, Christians devoted to the service of God's Word or to assisting their brethren in need, the heads of small communities, or other persons charged with the responsibility of apostolic movements - these ministries are valuable for the establishment, life, and growth of the Church, and for her capacity to influence her surroundings and to reach those who are remote from her.⁴

The recent Vatican Instruction of 15th August 1997 *On Certain Questions regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests*, opens with a statement that all members of the mystical Body are called to participate actively in the mission and edification of the people of God through the mystery of the church. The people of God participate in this call through the dynamic of an organic communion in accord with their diverse ministries and charisms.⁵ Here the Magisterium acknowledges the existence of ministries before proceeding to discuss the level of collaboration. In view of the above endorsement there are some ministries performed by lay people today such as: ministry to the sick, ministry to the unemployed, eucharistic ministry, pastoral associates, church wardens (ushers), youth ministry, directors of music and parish council ministry among others.

This study aims to articulate a theology of ministry and critically to review the growth and development of ministries in the church from the beginnings of Christianity up to the mid-second century. It will also critically review the understanding of ministry in Vatican II and post-Vatican II documents, and describe and critically analyse the development of ministries in the Nigerian church before and after Vatican II. It will suggest a way forward in the broadening and diversifying of ministries in that country by

⁴ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, (Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelisation in the modern world [hereafter *EN*]) (Homebush: St. Paul Publications, 1974), #73.

⁵ *Instruction on Certain Questions*, 5.

suggesting ways in which the practice of ministry may be enhanced in the local churches in Nigeria. By local churches, this writer is referring particularly to small Catholic communities or rural out-stations of the church in Nigeria.

There has been a flowering of ministries in many countries since Vatican II. We see in the local churches people involved in various ministries who need to be encouraged. But there is lack of clarity in the theology and practice of ministries. There are theologies of priesthood and of the laity today which need to be better harmonised. Ministries affect local churches and have become a burning issue. There is a call for greater participation of lay people in the ministries of the church. A reduction of the number of priests in some countries has brought some of the issues into sharper focus. But what should be of greater importance are the new post-Vatican II ways of thinking about the church. The emphasis has shifted from a purely hierarchical church to church as communion. In this perspective, we look closely at ministries in Nigeria. Since the writer's ministry is in Nigeria, the concentration is on that country in view of the need to enhance and diversify ministry in the church in Nigeria.

This study is based on the assumption that there is a correlation between ecclesiologies and ministries especially as they affect the local churches; that is, a certain theology of church leads to a certain way in which ministries are conceived and practised in the church. As theologies of church change over the centuries, the practice of ministries changes too, and the development of ministries can enhance the growth and progress of local churches.

This study is undertaken in five chapters with an introduction and conclusion. Chapter One considers the theological understanding of ministry at the present time; it explains the meaning of ministry and differentiates it from other concepts such as lay apostolate and Catholic Action; it posits baptism as the foundation for ministry and outlines a theology of ministry. This chapter takes on the task of defining ministry because prior to Vatican II ministry was conceived very narrowly in the Catholic Church. Therefore, it becomes necessary to bring out the current expanded notion of ministry to apply to this study.

Chapter Two traces the origin of ministry in the New Testament (hereafter NT) and its evolution in the early church. The structure of ministry in the first century of the

church's history is the major highlight. The role of the apostles, the seven, prophets, teachers, the elders and other ministries (particularly in the Pauline communities) are discussed. This chapter indicates how such terms as *episkopos*, *presbyteros*, *diakonia* later came to refer to bishop, priest and deacon as we have them in the church today. The findings of this chapter will be a reference point for Chapters Four and Five that concentrate on the church in Nigeria. This chapter is significant for this work because it provides a historical perspective on ministries, as the foundational structures and theology of ministry is developed.

Chapter Three focuses on the understanding of ministry at the Second Vatican Council and in post-conciliar documents. This chapter analyses and summarises the teachings in these documents concerning ministry, which will later be applied to the church in Nigeria. The chapter considers the development of liturgical ministries and ministries of "outreach." Councils before Vatican II did not have elaborated discussion on ministries hence the limitation on the theology of ministry. Vatican II broadened the understanding of ministries that will enable local churches such as Nigeria to experience growth and progress.

Chapter Four traces the development and organisation of ministry in Nigeria before and after Vatican II. The chapter begins with a historical sketch of the church in Nigeria and proceeds to highlight the present organisation of ministry in the church in Nigeria, prominent among which is the ministry of catechists. This chapter provides an insight into the practice of ministry in Nigeria. In view of the fact that the Nigerian church is focused upon in this study, it is important to reflect the historical background of the church in the country and to examine the ministries actually in practice in Nigeria.

Chapter Five proposes a broadening and diversifying of ministries in the church in Nigeria. It considers the significance of the local communities and how a broadening and diversification of ministries would help the progress and growth of these communities. Key issues such as the empowerment of catechists, participation of women in ministry, the formation of people for ministry and collaboration in ministry are addressed. It is expected that the recommendations of this chapter would improve the organisation of ministries in this country.

The method employed in this study is both critico-historical and theological. It

begins by analysing biblical and early Christian writings to re-construct a picture of ministries to the mid-second century. The historical data is then related to the issue of ministry in the contemporary Nigerian church. The chapters on the Nigerian Church provide the context on which the thesis is based. The contemporary Nigerian Catholic Church is first described and analysed to bring out the current situation of ministries. Analysis of texts is brought into dialogue with the praxis of the church in Nigeria. Magisterial statements are referred to at various points to state the official position of the Catholic Church. While the scope of the study is limited to the Catholic Church, there are abundant references to ecumenical issues as they affect ministries. The scope also limits the historical inquiry of the early Christian era to first and mid-second centuries, but occasional references are made to other eras prior to Vatican II. This study draws heavily on authors in Church History, Ecclesiology and Pastoral Ministry.

CHAPTER ONE

TOWARDS A FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF MINISTRY

The Catholic Church has always emphasised the preservation of its religious tradition both practically and doctrinally. Consequently, in some way, the idea of ministry as it is understood today in the church poses some challenges. Previously, and prior to Vatican II, the term “ministry” was associated with the Protestant churches and only considered from the perspective of the pastoral work of priests in the Catholic Church, referred to as pastoral ministry. Nevertheless, the word “ministry” is widespread in the Catholic Church today because more and more men and women are offering their services to the church to complement the work of those in the priesthood and religious life.¹ The first thing that strikes us about the word is its recent strong emergence in the Catholic Church. Yet the concept appears to some to be new, hence not many fully understand its meaning. The popular understanding was that all acceptable exercise of ministry within the Catholic Church belongs to, or derives from, official levels of the church.² However, before we proceed to consider the meaning of ministry, it is important to reflect on ecclesiology in which the issue of ministry is situated.

¹ Michael Glazier “Ministry,” in *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, eds. Michael Glazier and Monika K. Hellwig (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 1994), 573.

² Bernard Cooke, “Fullness of Orders”: Theological Reflections,” *The Jurist* 41 (1981): 405.

1.1 THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

From historical perspective, the study of ministry brings to light the fact that the church at all times has adjusted its structures and offices to enable it fit into the social environment it finds itself.³ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reflecting on the teaching of the Second Vatican Council describes the Church as a historical reality which also transcends history. “It is only with the eyes of faith that one can see her in her visible reality and at the same time in her spiritual reality as bearer of divine life.”⁴ The Catechism sees the church as the community of faith, hope, and charity established and sustained by Christ here on earth as a visible organisation through which he communicates truth and grace to all men. In addition, it is a “society structured with hierarchical organs and the mystical body of Christ; the visible society and spiritual community; the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches.”⁵ The church as seen from this perspective reflects the mystery aspect of it.

The church therefore is a mystery, but another aspect shows that it is human and temporal because humans lead it and its message is expressed in human terms. At the same time, the church is divine and eternal, since those who lead it do so in virtue of a divine commission. It is in this light that Karl Rahner sums up the definition of the church:

She is the Body of Christ, animated and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, she is the Communion of Saints; the grace of Christ, the Holy Ghost and the interior union of men with Christ as their head by an inner god-likeness and assimilation to Christ, all manifestly belong to the reality of the Church.⁶

Rahner’s definition of the church is broad and portrays significant development of ecclesiology. Ecclesiology, the theological study of the church, which deals with the mystery of the church alongside its structures and organisations, was not developed until the end of the Middle Ages. Before this time the church was described according to the perceptions of the different eras. For instance, in the earliest period, the church was seen in the life and faith not only of individual Christians but also of communities. The church was understood as Spirit-filled, and a reality to be lived and in which

³ Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, (New York: Image Books, 1987), 162.

⁴ See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #770

⁵ Ibid. #771.

⁶ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, trans. Karl-H. Kruger (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963), 2: 71.

people go to God. In the Patristic period and early Middle Ages the church was presented as the proclamation and the presence of the salvation brought by Jesus. Theologians of the period such as Thomas Aquinas developed the ecclesiology that placed Christ as the head and the church as the body of Christ. Ecclesiology was developed from a christological perspective. Today with the evolution of treatises on the church, we can see a deeper reflection of ecclesiology. The word *ecclesia* was gradually introduced into the Christian vocabulary to designate the community of the faithful of Christ.

The church is then a community of people holding the same beliefs and responding to the same directives. It is the community of believers. Its mission is to herald and proclaim the kingdom of God, since it fulfills the ancient prophecies concerning the reign of the Messiah. The church is “the Mystical Body of Christ, insofar as it unites all who are sanctified by the grace of Christ.”⁷ The members united and sanctified are for a purpose. According to Werner Löser: “The church is the communion of those who believe in the gospel, have been incorporated into the “body of Christ” by baptism, come together at the table of the Eucharist, and give expression to their faith in witness and service.”⁸

The issue of witness and service are important ecclesiological developments for the discussion on ministry. The fact remains that the church has a mission, which is essentially a spiritual activity, that is, the work of the Holy Spirit. With the sending of the Spirit, the church became a missionary church. The church is the agent of human salvation which continues to engage in dialogue with the world into which it is inserted. In other words, the church as a people of God must go out and be present to all people and to all nations. Vatican II introduced a renewed emphasis on the church as a people of God and clarifies the position of the laity in the church in relation to the clergy. Details of this we shall see in chapter three. Nevertheless, this concept of the church as a people of God permeates the heart of contemporary ecclesiology.

Thus, the approach to the discussion of ministry will be as indicated in the Introduction to this thesis, a response to the changing emphasis in ecclesiology. The church is constantly evolving, so too ecclesiology evolves. According to Hans Kung ecclesiology is always conditioned anew by history:

⁷ Jovian P. Lang, *Dictionary of the Liturgy*, (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 1989), 108.

⁸ Werner Löser, “Church” in *Handbook of Catholic Theology*, eds. Wolfgang Beinert and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 99.

Ecclesiology is a response and call to constantly changing historical situation The Church itself is necessarily subject to continual change and must constantly be undertaken anew.⁹

In view of this understanding, ministry today is considered from the renewed ecclesiology of Vatican II. Some practical questions are addressed such as, what is the responsibility of the bishops, priests and deacons, and what is their relationship with lay people? The status of the lay person in the church is examined in cognizance of the mission of the church, which is centred on the kingdom of God. Vatican I had defined the position of the pope in the church. It was appropriate that another council should complete the process by defining the position of the bishops, priests and lay people in view of their uniqueness in the ecclesial community. Thus, Vatican II's ecclesiology touches on the roles of the hierarchy, the priesthood, religious and the lay people. "The Church is, after all, a human organization, of a size and complexity which inevitably involves it in complicated decision-making processes and governmental practices."¹⁰

1.2 THE MEANING OF MINISTRY

There has recently been a considerable development in the Catholic theology of ministry; this has been a consequence of the renewed theology of the church that resulted from Vatican II. There is also a growing importance attached in recent times to the results of biblical and ecumenical scholarship.¹¹ Although the word is currently being applied to various activities of the ecclesial community, a good number of people either do not have a full understanding of the term or have applied in a very exclusive way. Therefore it becomes imperative to explain the terminology involved before we proceed with further discussion on ministry.

The need to clarify this term was expressed by Cardinal Basil Hume in his report to the Synod on the laity in 1987. In his opinion, there was need for a greater clarity in the use of the term "ministry" which he considered should be applied to the service of those who act in a specific way in the name of the church community and are

⁹ Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray and Rosaleen Ockendern, (London: Search Press, 1967), 13.

¹⁰ Clare Watkins, "The Church as a 'Special' Case: Comments from Ecclesiology Concerning the Management of the Church," *Modern Theology* 9 no.4 (1993): 369.

¹¹ cf. Hervé Legrand "Ministries: Main Lines of Research in Catholic Theology," *Pro Mundi Vita* 50 (1974): 7.

authorised by the bishop.¹² If the term “ministry” were used too loosely, it would lose its usefulness. Since we are focusing on ministries, it is worthwhile looking briefly at what differentiates ministry and ministries.

1.2.1 MINISTRY AND MINISTRIES

In the attempt to understand ministry, we notice the distinction most people make between “ministry” and “ministries.” From the second century, the definition of ministry and who should normally be engaged in ministry was progressively narrowed. Emphasis was that ministry at all levels could only be performed by ordained men. “In fact the term “ministry” gradually acquired connotations of power, influence, and authority in the Roman Catholic Church.”¹³ Since Vatican II, the original meaning and forms of ministry have been reclaimed especially for lay people, hence “ministries.” Thus we find this usage distinguishes the ordained from the non-ordained. However, what has to be noted is “ministry” is used in a generic way to designate qualities, which are common to all specific “ministries.”¹⁴ Therefore to talk about a particular ministry like ministry of transformation, is not to point to a specific task that deals with transformation. “It means that the concrete ministries of the church, whether priest or teacher or healer, will have as part of their focus the transformative process of human life.”¹⁵ This is why O’Meara sees the distinction between Ministry and ministries basically in legal decision and not in essential distinction in church service. “Lay minister” involves a linguistic contradiction in terms of action.¹⁶ Therefore, the meaning of the term “ministry” and “ministries” needs to be carefully clarified. The same applies to ministry and mission of the church.

1.2.2 MINISTRY AND MISSION

Most people have confused ministry with mission. Ministry presupposes mission. Mission refers to the sending of someone to do something in another situation. In the context of the church, the word mission has three applications. In the first place the term is used for the redemptive task of Jesus and of the church in the

¹² Basil Hume, “Church Ministries,” *Origins* 17, no. 21 (1987): 380.

¹³ Reynolds R. Ekstrom, *The New Concise Catholic Dictionary* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1995), 172-73.

¹⁴ John J. Shea, “Notes Toward A Theology of Ministry,” *Chicago Studies* 17, no. 3 (1978): 322.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Thomas F. O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 193.

world. Secondly, it refers to the official designation of people to carry the Word of God to other places. Thirdly, it applies to an intensified period of preaching and pastoral activity.¹⁷ Ministry on the other hand has to do with service within an established community. While mission is generally concerned with founding communities, ministry is concerned rather with their maintenance:

Mission is concerned, primarily with the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ to those who have not yet heard the message; ministry, in relation to mission, is concerned with those ecclesial services that enable this community, already constituted as the Body of the Lord, to minister to the needs of those who have yet to hear the Good News.¹⁸

O'Donnell supports this distinction pointing out that it would be helpful not to see ministry as mission and vice versa. The latter pertains to the essence of the church the former is one of the church's activities, though indispensable for mission.¹⁹

1.2.3 LAY APOSTOLATE/CATHOLIC ACTION

Ministry is often conceived of as belonging to the hierarchy and the hierarchy in turn shares its ministry with others in the church. This was the notion behind Lay Apostolate and Catholic Action. Lay Apostolate was considered by Pope Pius XII to mean the assumption by lay people of tasks deriving from the mission which Christ entrusted to His church. This apostolate always remains a lay apostolate and does not become a "hierarchical apostolate."²⁰ Catholic Action according to the pope always bears the character of an official apostolate of lay people. Cardinal Pizzardo elaborated on this understanding stating that lay apostolate implies the consigning of some duties to lay people by the hierarchy. It is the teaching of Pius XI in 1931 in his

¹⁷ See Modern Catholic Encyclopedia s. v. "Mission."

¹⁸ Agnes Cunningham, "Church People As Missionary: A Ministerial Church," *The Jurist* 39 (1979): 169.

¹⁹ Christopher O'Donnell, *Ecclesia: A Theological Encyclopedia of the Church* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 305.

²⁰ Address of Pope Pius XII on the opening of the Second World Congress for the Lay Apostolate, 5-13 October 1957. Cf. *Second World Congress for Lay Apostolate texts*, 3 vols. (1957): 1:20.

encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, that “Catholic Action,” was introduced, and in this teaching, the lay people were considered as participating in the apostolate of the church’s hierarchy. In other words, those who were not in the clerical state could only function by the delegation of the hierarchy:

The Hierarchy confers upon those organised lay people a form of command or mission, maps out for them a field of action more or less extensive, as well as the methods of organisation and action, controlling them directly or through reliable persons . . . with these characteristic marks of the supernatural, of dependence and of organisation defining it as “collaboration of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy.”²¹

Since Catholic Action was thus defined as the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy, a strong division was emphasised between clergy and lay people. The lay people are in the lower rank despite their vast majority in the church. Pope Pius X in 1906 referred to the lay people as the multitude who had the “one duty to allow themselves to be led and like a docile flock, to follow the pastors.”²² While a broad understanding of Catholic Action means any activity on the part of Catholic lay associations which has a primarily apostolic objective, the church had favoured the more restricted meaning of apostolic activity carried on by organisations of the laity to assist the hierarchy, at the special mandate of the hierarchy and in direct dependence on it.²³ Jeremiah Newman sums up the sentiments associated with Lay Apostolate/Catholic Action this way:

The lay apostolate is of service to the apostolate of the bishops, having no independent *raison d’être* of its own As regard the apostolate itself, the position might be summed up in philosophical language by saying that the notion is analogous, the apostolate of the bishops being the perfect and primarily type, that of the laity essentially subordinate.²⁴

²¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 50.

²² Cf. H. Richard McCord Jr., “Lay Ministry: Living Its Question,” *Origins* 19, no. 46 (1990): 759.

²³ Jeremiah Newman, *What is Catholic Action? An Introduction to the Lay Apostolate* (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, 1958), 37.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

It is important to note the prevailing thought at a certain period of the history of the church: the lay apostolate was considered to be dependent on and auxiliary to the priestly ministry.²⁵

This way of thinking was subject to review later in history, for, as the church continued to grow, there were further developments in ecclesiology. Some theologians had already started to voice their concern about the inferior role of lay people in the church. Cardinal Leon-Joseph Suenens asserts that great efforts were needed in order to make all Catholic energies converge and unite. He explained that an army is not composed of just artillerymen “it is necessary also to have parachute units, airmen and specialists in every arm. And combat unity cannot be achieved unless the whole army is put into action, on all sectors of the front.”²⁶

The basic question today is about the precise position of the lay members of the church. To know what is supposed to be the ministry of the church pre-occupies us here and we direct our attention towards the understanding of ministry today.

1.2.4 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF MINISTRY

As many have indicated, there is no clear-cut definition of ministry.²⁷ A definition, depending on how it is understood can limit or expand the meaning of the object defined. Many theologians have defined ministry according to their perception of the theology of ministry. For Elliott:

Ministry is used as a general term embracing all the various functions, and forms they assume, which according to the NT, Christians carry out primarily on behalf of the welfare of the Christian community and its individual members. Moreover, it is meant to designate functions performed by Christians primarily on behalf of other Christians.²⁸

In this view, ministry can only be exercised within the ecclesial community. In other words a concrete discussion of ministry cannot be isolated from ecclesiology. The church is the ground in which ministry grows. To talk about ministry in isolation from the church, is an exploration without a base. As Hume adds, there is need to keep

²⁵ Joseph Cardijn, *Laymen into Action* (Melbourne: Y. C. W., 1964), 40.

²⁶ See the preface to Jeremiah Newman, *What is Catholic Action*, vi.

²⁷ Richard P. McBrien, *Ministry: A Theological, Pastoral Handbook* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 7.

²⁸ John H. Elliott, “Ministry and Church Order in the NT: A Traditio-Historical Analysis (1 Pt. 5, 1-5 & Pls),” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (1970): 369.

before our eyes a vision and theology of the whole church so that our discussion on ministry will have the right context.²⁹ A sound theology of ministry presupposes a sound understanding of ecclesiology.

McBrien following Yves Congar offers some distinctions among the various forms of ministry. For him ministry is understood as, 1. General/universal ministry, that is any service rendered to another person or group of people who happen to be in need of that service. 2. General/specific ministry, which is any special service rendered by people specifically called to serve others. 3. Christian/universal ministry, is any general service rendered to others in Christ and because of Christ. 4. Christian/specific ministry is any general service rendered to others in Christ and for the fulfillment of the mission of the church. While his understanding of ministry goes beyond the scope of Christian ministry, he has however indicated that to be able to understand ministry, be it in its universal or specific meanings, we must see it always in relation to the nature of and mission of the church.³⁰

The 1982 Lima convention of the World Council of Churches (hereafter WCC) defines ministry as follows:

The word ministry in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the universal church. Ministry or ministries can also denote the particular institutional forms which this service may take.³¹

The document also makes reference to ordained ministry in which charisms are received and there is appointment by the church through the ordination rite of laying on of hands, as distinguished from ministry used in its broadest sense which applies to all the baptised.³² The reaction of some churches to the definition of ministry as given by the Lima convention is worth considering, as the churches do not seem to have a consensus on what should be the structure of ministry. Because of the scope of this work, it will be impossible to bring out the responses of all the churches, but we will try to cover a broad spectrum of opinions.

²⁹ Basil Hume, *Towards a Civilization of Love: Being Church in Today's World* (London: Hodder & Stroughton, 1995), 45.

³⁰ McBrien, *Ministry*, 11-14.

³¹ Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 21.

³² Ibid.

The Roman Catholic Church's response is positive to ministry because the presentation of ministry corresponds to the direction of the major lines of what "we recognise as the faith of the church through the ages."³³ The Roman Catholic Church's response stresses the special role of the ordained ministry comprising bishops, priests and deacons. Above all the issue of apostolic succession mentioned by the Lima documents is quite satisfactory to the Catholic position. The Church of England's response on this note corresponds to the Catholic position. There is a positive disposition to the Lima statement on ministry especially as it has to do with the threefold order of bishop, presbyter and deacon, and the continuity of the apostolic tradition.³⁴ The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria merely "received" the Lima document because for them, it does not express the full theological view of the Orthodox Church, although it contains elements in accordance with Orthodox teaching.³⁵

From the Protestant perspective, the issue of the priesthood in the context of the apostolic succession and sacramentality is contentious. The Church of the Brethren thinks the Lima text has not given a substantive consideration to the ministry of all God's people, and consequently questions the acceptance of the episcopal succession as a sign of the continuity and unity of the church. According to the Church of the Brethren:

Although the diverse patterns of ministry described in the New Testament relative to different times and places are acknowledged, this section of the text does not discuss patterns of ministry relative to change and changing circumstances. In this regard, more attention must be given to the ministry of *diakonia* as well as to ministry of *episkope* relative to the missionary call of the church in the world today.³⁶

The Churches of Christ in Australia are unanimous in their response to the Lima text that the central aspect of Christian teaching on ministry is "mutual ministry." Although there is recognition of a specialised ministry, they do not see it as exclusive ministry arguing that there are only differences of function, not differences in status. They reject ordination as creating a "clerical caste" with a status which differs from that of "lay

³³ Max Thurian, ed., *Churches respond to BEM: Official responses to the "Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry" text*, 6 vols. (Geneva: WCC, 1988), 6: 25.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 3: 52-55.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3: 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6: 111.

people.”³⁷ The Uniting Church in Australia while accepting the Lima text in respect of “ministry” in general terms, considers it inappropriate that the subsequent further discussion treats so fully the ordained ministry and so minimally the ministry of all members of Christ’s Church. This Church criticises the document for not sufficiently addressing the implications of the calling of the whole people of God.³⁸

Our review of the definition of ministry by the WCC examined the responses of two categories of churches, the episcopal churches and the congregational churches. What has come to light is that there is no agreement on what structure ministry should take. While most churches are in favour of threefold ministry of bishop, priest and deacon, with other ministries as an appendix, others are in support of the ministry that reflects the priesthood of the whole people of God. This tension between the ministerial and baptismal priesthood is felt within the Catholic Church today. Therefore it is pertinent to examine more closely the fundamental meaning of ministry.

Ministry is action, an intended action, not just accidental action but that which results from planning.³⁹ Through baptism, as we shall discuss shortly, Christians are brought into an active communion of service, not into a passive one. For Lawler, Christians are called and sent, not to chant a mantric “Lord, Lord,” but to do “the will of my Father” (Matt. 7:21; Luke 6:46) in service.⁴⁰

Reference to service here is reference to needs of the community. The actions which such words as teach, preach, prophecy, serve, heal, lead and others, designate actions in response to needs. Therefore ministry is essentially action in response to needs. That explains why it is not merely an action but a public action.⁴¹ On this note we favour the definition of ministry given by Thomas O’Meara because it broadens the horizon of ministry to embrace the different roles within the ecclesial community. Ministry is not just an activity of the ordained: it involves every baptised member of the Christian community. O’Meara’s definition is appealing because it brings out this broad concept of ministry, which will be applied in the discussions on the Nigerian situation in chapters four and five. “Christian ministry is the public activity of a baptised follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit’s charism and an individual personality

³⁷ Ibid., 2: 271.

³⁸ Ibid., 4: 160-61.

³⁹ Michael G. Lawler, *A Theology of Ministry* (Kansas: Sheed & Ward, 1990), 28.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 28-29.

⁴¹ Ibid.

on behalf of a Christian community to witness, to serve and realise the kingdom of God.”⁴² O’Meara arrives at this definition through his well articulated six characteristics of ministry:

Ministry is: (1) doing something; (2) for the advent of the kingdom; (3) in public; (4) on behalf of a Christian community; (5) which is a gift received in faith, baptism and ordination; and which is (6) an activity with its own limits and identity within a diversity of ministerial actions.⁴³

It is important to note that these six characteristics and subsequent definition of ministry by O’Meara give ministry a very wide range. In this definition, ministry is not limited to those who are ordained. Therefore it is not realistic to speak of ministry as if it denoted a particular ministry which contains or exhausts the fullness of ministry. All ministries exist for the community as service, *diakonia*, to build up the church. They are functional, and are concrete service to the community in the power and name of the Gospel.⁴⁴ Thus when O’Meara says ministry is doing something; it does not in the first place mean a status or a special position rather it is an activity which transcends all ethnic, religious and cultural boundaries and renders service. It is an action toward the “common good.” Schillebeeckx agrees with this, maintaining that, “ministry in the church is not a status or a state but a service, a function within the ‘community of God and therefore a gift of the Holy Spirit.’”⁴⁵

However not every action of the Christian could be classified as ministry. Not every noble movement or good deed is ministry. “When everything is ministry, nothing is ministry.”⁴⁶ Ministry is not just anything but specific activities recognised by the church, activities that disclose the presence of God in the human situation with the empowerment to actualise our lives in the mystery of God-in communion with God and one another.⁴⁷ Ministry brings to realisation the values of kingdom of God. There can be very good activities of Christians, yet they are not ministries:

⁴² Thomas O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 142.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁴⁴ John A. Coleman, “A Theology of Ministry,” *The Way* 25, no. 1 (1985): 10.

⁴⁵ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 37.

⁴⁶ O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 136.

⁴⁷ Joseph Bernardin, “In Service of One Another,” *Origins* 15, no. 9 (1985): 132.

Activities such as teaching French, being a book-keeper and farming are not Christian ministry. They are the vocations and professions of Christians and as such are good and holy. We cannot continue a universalist theology of ministry in which every legitimate and moral human enterprise is ministry.⁴⁸

When all is ministry, the term loses its meaning. All Christian ministry is oriented to the kingdom of God as its ultimate goal. Having defined ministry, it is helpful to explore more of the theological dimensions thereof.

1.3 TOWARDS A THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY

When we think of ministry, we are pondering how the ecclesial community should live today. In cognizance of this, a theology of ministry meditates on the kingdom of God with a focus on the Holy Spirit and a contemplative analysis of grace.⁴⁹ A fundamental theology of ministry revolves around the reign of God, and ministry is service to God's grace. Consequently, there will be a better understanding of ministry as it is rooted in that horizon of grace and enhances freedom to serve.⁵⁰ As Drilling points out:

Ministry is action on behalf of the world's conversion to truth and goodness. It includes cooperation with others sharing the goal in common and convinced that the goal and its achievement include a transcendental dimension . . . Communion is participation in a common life. Ministry's noble goal is to serve human communion with the divine community.⁵¹

Ministers are instruments of the gracious invitation of the triune God to every human person, individually and in the human communities to which each belongs, and also to enter into a mutual exchange of life and love with God.⁵² Ministry then becomes a matter of incorporation into a communal life with the divine Trinity and with fellow human beings who are baptised.⁵³ Thus a starting point of ministry is the Christian

⁴⁸ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 159.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵¹ Peter Drilling, *Trinity and Ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 3.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

community, and it flows from the community thereby nourishing and effecting growth in the community. In short, the community forms the basis for any evolution and development of ministry.

1.3.1 BAPTISM AS FOUNDATION

A theological understanding of ministry begins with baptism. Christians share in the unique ministry of Christ through baptismal priesthood, which gives the mandate for the exercise of ecclesial ministry, according to the gifts or charisms given by the Spirit.⁵⁴ Ministry as we saw above is basically the putting to use of divine gifts for the sake of the community. This service of the community is grounded in baptism. "A theology of ministry on behalf of the community begins with baptism. As sacramental initiation bestows new life and confirms faith, baptism also initiates a person into charism and evangelical action, into a community which is essentially ministerial."⁵⁵ The idea of baptism forming the bedrock for ministry can be regarded as a recent development in the church:

The baptised, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood . . . Therefore all disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God, should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.⁵⁶

Baptism is the foundational sacrament in the church which in pre-Vatican II theology often had an almost isolated status and was considered as the sacrament through which the effects of original sin were removed and one became a child of God. Today there is a broader understanding and appreciation of baptism. It is the beginning of an initiation process whereby one is brought into the numbers of a believing people. That is, one is initiated as a contributing member as one already empowered by the gifts of the Spirit, to help create, fashion and enrich the people of God.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid., 165.

⁵⁵ O'Meara, *Theology of ministry*, 141.

⁵⁶ *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church [hereafter *LG*]) Austin Flannery Gen. ed. *Vatican II: Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, New York: Costello, 1975), #10.

⁵⁷ Robert Kinast, "Who Is the Church? Who Are its Ministers?" *Pastoral Music* 5 (1981): 44.

1.3.2 CHARISM AND OFFICE

One significant characteristic of ministry is that it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Ministry is a gift of the Holy Spirit and the channel of this gift is baptism and confirmation. Ministry is viewed in line with talents, which are distributed to each and every member of the community. Talents are individual gifts from God for the sake of the growth and well being of the church.

Giftedness is the bedrock for ministry in the church. A person's call to ministry is a direct response to the gifts God has bestowed on the person, and ministry should flow from those gifts.⁵⁸ The words of Paul in 1 Cor.12 are relevant here. Paul sees the church as essentially pneumatic and charismatic:

There are many different gifts, but it is always the same Spirit; there are many different ways of serving, but it is always the same Lord. There are different forms of activity, but in everybody it is the same God who is at work in them all. The particular manifestation of the Spirit granted to each one is used for the general good . . . But at work in all these is one and the same Spirit, distributing them at will to each individual (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-11).

The above quotation shows how the word *charisma*, charism was introduced into theological terminology by Paul. The Pauline conception of *charisma* has a deeper meaning than the Greek root of *charis* which means gift in general. In the Pauline context, it means specifically a gift of the Holy Spirit that impels a believer to the service of the church.⁵⁹ There are two important characteristics of charism which reflect the true position of ministry. Firstly, it is a gift of the Spirit which is given freely to a person (1 Cor. 12:3), secondly, charism is "for the common good" (1 Cor. 12:7) "for the work of ministry, for the building up of the Body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12).⁶⁰

About Eph. 4: 12 John Collins says that the writer contributed the key word ministry/*diakonia* to the sentence for the precise purpose of emphasising the sacred and exclusive character of teachers' responsibility. For him then the author of Ephesians defines ministry as an office, and those called to it are the gift of Christ to

⁵⁸ Loughlan Sofield & Carroll Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry: Skills and Guidelines* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria, 1987), 16.

⁵⁹ Lawler, *A Theology of Ministry*, 31.

⁶⁰ Ibid. Lawler develops here the teaching of the Church which is based on the Pauline teaching that the acclamation of Jesus as Lord is through the Spirit.

the church. In other words, the fact that they possess gifts apt for ministry does not make them ministers until they are installed in the office of ministry.⁶¹ What is clear however, is that the Spirit leads to ministry. “The effect and gifts of new life in the Spirit are closely related to ministries. The Spirit does not effect an interior, mystical, homeostatic life in the community, and the community is not one of adorers or attendants waiting for an absent God.”⁶²

In Rom 6:23, “the charism of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ, our Lord.” O’Meara then says that charism joined God and Jesus Christ to Christian existence and so was the very way of living in the kingdom of God, in the Spirit of Jesus risen. Therefore, there are pneumatic gifts of many kinds only because there is this charismatic ground from which all flow.⁶³ Charisms are expressions of the Spirit-filled life of the ministerial community of the church. It follows that ministry is the proper and normal expression of charism in the life of the church. Ministry is the public and communally recognised form of charism.⁶⁴ Therefore, there is need for and impact of, charism even in an institutionalised church:

Ministerial role is the expression of charism. Not only such manifestly charismatic activities as prophecy are rooted in this empowering by the Spirit, but also regularised teaching and structured governing. This means that one cannot simply contrast “charism” and “institution” in the life of the Church. Institutions themselves are meant to be the organs through which the Spirit-animated community expresses its life, and whatever charisms are granted to individuals are given for the sake of the unity and vitality of the institutionalised church.⁶⁵

The above view reinforces the idea that ecclesial ministry is basically Jesus’ ministry of the kingdom. Charisms are associated with the regular ministerial life of the church because the work of Christ and that of the Spirit cannot be separated. While the Spirit

⁶¹ John N. Collins, *Are All Christians Ministers?* (Newtown: E. J. Dwyer; David Lovell, 1992), 115-19.

⁶² O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 62. He sees the Spirit’s intense coming as a sign that Jesus truly introduced, in the fullness of time, the reign of God. The gift of the Spirit is the love, mercy and future life which God makes available and real in Jesus.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁴ Robert Hannaford says that to speak of ministry in terms of charism helps to correct an impression which portrays ministry as the creation of the Church. Ministry is an action on behalf of the Church, and as such must be publicly recognised and endorsed, but it has its root in charism. cf. Christine Hall & Robert Hannaford eds., *Order & Ministry* (Leominster: Gracewing 1996), 51.

⁶⁵ Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacrament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 198.

comes as gift to individual Christians, he also comes, like the Son, as the manifestation of God's promise to reconcile all things to himself. In this sense the ministerial church is both 'in Christ' and 'in the Spirit.'⁶⁶

Charism is God's gift, the active presence of the kingdom of God which expresses itself in the individual. As O'Meara explains; the charismatic identity of any Christian does not differ from the psychological personality of the recipient of the gift of the Spirit rather it is the individual potentialities that will be activated. Therefore the Spirit will direct the actions of the personality which was already in the mind and plan of God.⁶⁷ In view of this, charism is diaconal, and is the source and foundation of every ministry whether it is part-time or full time:

There should be no successful ministry to grace which is purely institutional or where a Christian without vocation or gift has been officially but not spiritually established as public minister. Every vital ecclesiology draws its inspiration from the Spirit working in the world. Structure is the bridge from divine charism to real service.⁶⁸

Therefore with St Paul we become aware of the fact that "our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of the new covenant" (2 Cor. 3:5, 6). Thus we must have a fundamental understanding of ministry as that expression of God's continuing presence in the life of his people. In other words, ministry begins when there is that individual openness to God's saving power and purposes.⁶⁹

Another characteristic of ministry listed by O'Meara explains the purposes God has for distributing these spiritual gifts. Ministries are of numerous kinds - and it is good and necessary that they should be a plurality of ministries. This is an issue that will occupy our thought with particular reference to the church in Nigeria. The work of the Spirit cannot be locked into a few ministries; otherwise the mission of the church will not be fulfilled. The mission of the Gospel and the power of the Spirit are such that ministry must explode into diverse forms.⁷⁰ We note that the great variety of gifts is granted for some useful purpose which is identified as "service" exercised in favour of

⁶⁶ Hall & Hannaford eds. *Order & Ministry*, 52.

⁶⁷ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 67.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 67-68.

⁶⁹ William Borders, "You Are a Royal Priesthood," *Origins* 18, no. 11 (1988): 169.

⁷⁰ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 142.

the Lord's own body. Therefore the Spirit grants the gifts necessary for the health, strength and honour of the whole body.⁷¹

Thus, when baptismal initiation is viewed from this perspective, then ministry is seen in a new light, since ministry is conceived fundamentally as the exercise of the gifts one receives through the sealing of the Spirit, which is the basis from which particular forms of ministry are derived.⁷² Through baptism, by which the Christians participate in the priesthood of Christ, they become active members of the community. Hume sees baptism as lifting us to new heights, and makes people in a new and unique way partakers of the divine nature. Through this process we become brothers and sisters in Christ sharing his life.⁷³ The implication of this according to Hume is that all the baptised share that single life, the one vocation, the same mission and ministry which is Christ's. Individually and equally we are all called in baptism to share Christ's anointing as prophet, priest and king.⁷⁴

1.3.3 MINISTERIAL AND BAPTISMAL PRIESTHOODS

The universal priesthood of all through baptism is emphasised in Vatican II's *LG*. The Council not only emphasised the common priesthood of all Christians but also invited all the faithful to exercise it. This will be discussed in detail later in chapter three; it suffices for the moment to state that since Vatican II, a great deal of activity has proceeded in the name of ministry, as a result of this fundamental insight into initiation. Therefore it is true to say that Vatican II awakened in all Christians, particularly the lay people a new sense of their role in the church.

Before Vatican II the church had placed emphasis on the ordained priesthood, consequently the common priesthood of all was under-emphasised. Now there is a new appreciation of the importance of baptism. Baptism makes Christians - but baptism raises the issue of the ministry incumbent upon all the baptised.⁷⁵ As baptism and confirmation become an entrance into ministry, the emphasis on faith, baptism and charism are bringing about a change of emphasis from the sacral to action, thereby offering a priesthood which is universal and missionary:

⁷¹ Cunningham, "Church People As Missionary," 161.

⁷² Kinast, "Who Is the Church?" 44

⁷³ Hume, *Towards a Civilisation of Love*, 69.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 8.

By reason of their baptism Christians are in the Mystical Body and become by a common title members of Christ the priest; by the character that is graven upon their souls they are appointed to the worship of God, and therefore, according to their condition, share in the priesthood of Christ himself.⁷⁶

What Pope Pius XII said above was at the time considered a privilege. Nevertheless Coffey notes that the encyclical makes the unequivocally ecclesiological statement that by baptism the faithful are in the Mystical Body, and from it, he infers the Christological statement that by a common title they are members of Christ the priest.⁷⁷ Drilling sums up that a common consecration and a common function constitutes all the faithful in the priesthood of Christ. All the members of the church without any distinction are made holy to be like Christ - through the regeneration of baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁸

In 1928 in the encyclical *Miserentissimus Redemptor* Pope Pius XI stated that all the baptised were participants in the priesthood of Christ:

It is not only those whom . . . Jesus uses as ministers to offer the clean oblation to the divine Name . . . who enjoy participation in this mysterious priesthood and in its sanctifying and sacrificing function, but the whole Christian people named by right by the prince of the Apostles 'an elect race, a royal priesthood,' ought . . . to offer . . . and not in a way so different from every priest and pontiff 'taken from the people and constituted for the sake of the people in those things which pertain to God.'⁷⁹

The main issue here is the participation of all in the priesthood of Christ on the part of all the baptised. Baptism gives the impetus to all Christians to be active in the service of the community. Every Christian has a vocation to ministry, that is, the service of the kingdom of God. It is Christian discipleship; it is a service structure in which everyone has something to do. Therefore, "baptism is not an initiation into a frozen state of life; it implies discipleship and ministry."⁸⁰ As there is that awareness of the

⁷⁶ Pius XII *Mediator Dei* encyclical on Christian Worship cf. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 39 (hereafter *AAS*) (1947): 555.

⁷⁷ David Coffey "Common and the Ordained Priesthood," *Theological Studies* 58, no. 2 (1997): 212.

⁷⁸ Peter J. Drilling "Common and Ministerial Priesthood: *Lumen Gentium*, Article Ten," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 53 (1987): 87.

⁷⁹ cf. *AAS* 20 (1928): 171-172. Cited in Drilling "Common and Ministerial Priesthood," 87.

⁸⁰ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 183.

giftedness of all God's people, the explosion of ministries in the local churches cannot be restrained.

This understanding places baptism as the call to the life of a servant in the footsteps of Christ. Through his baptism, Christ was initiated into the ministry which culminated in the cross and resurrection. In other words, the baptism of Jesus was consecration to his vocation as the Messiah who was the servant of the Lord. "His baptism anticipated, so to speak, his entire life, from the moment of baptism right on to death."⁸¹ Similarly, through baptism, the Christian is incorporated by Christ and given the mandate to participate in Christ's ministry. Baptism means a consecration as members of the messianic people.⁸² By this act Christians no longer live for themselves but for Christ in obedient service:

To be baptised is to have a new Lord and to be in the service of Christ. But to serve the Lord is also to serve his church and to serve the world. To be baptised is to live in and for the church. By baptism we are incorporated into Christ, made members of the body of Christ. But the body of Christ is the church. The baptised person is no longer simply an individual person, but a member of the church.⁸³

The idea of incorporation into Christ is a major theme of the Pauline Letters, which remind Christians of their organic union with Christ in the one body, which is the church, and of which they are truly members, comparable to the limbs of a human body, in which direction depends on the head and whose vitality or life is derived from the same soul.⁸⁴

Baptism is thus seen as the sacrament which integrates all the members of Christ's body the Church. It becomes an "ordination" into the apostolic, charismatic and sacrificial ministry of the church. How this is understood will be seen in a subsequent chapter. This ordination of baptism is basic for the whole consideration on

⁸¹ See *ENCOUNTER* "Christ's Ministry Through His Whole Church and Its Ministers," cited in *Theological Foundations For Ministry* ed., Ray S. Anderson (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 432.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 433.

⁸⁴ This is how John Hardon clearly expresses the incorporation into Christ and the church through baptism. He alludes to the fact that the ecumenical movement finds its most solid doctrinal foundation in the concept. Catholics can now affirm with full security that they are closely joined "with those who are baptised and have the honor of the name Christian, yet do not profess the faith in its entirety." Why so? Because they are "marked by baptism and thereby joined to Christ." cf. John Hardon, *The Catholic Catechism: A Contemporary Catechism of the Teachings of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1975), 509.

ministry because subsequent ordination in the church comes after this fundamental ordination of baptism.⁸⁵ This fundamental ordination becomes important because with it, one is initiated as a contributing member and there is no room for passivity and isolation. According to Parent, nothing absolutely can be experienced, understood, or done that can be situated above or beside the baptismal priesthood. Therefore, in principle, the baptismal priesthood expresses the measure of Christian dignity and responsibility, “a measure that is, properly speaking, without measure.”⁸⁶ The baptismal condition constitutes an unsurpassable horizon of life, of intelligibility, and action:

Since nothing can be situated outside, beside, or above the baptismal priesthood, Christian individuals and communities thus find in baptism all that is necessary in order radically to refuse every form of clericalism, including certain views of what is called the “priesthood” of priests and bishops, views whose concrete result is to institute priests and bishops in a “super-Christian” state.⁸⁷

The unnecessary dichotomy that exists in the priestly community of God is portrayed here. When we bear in mind the fact that baptism is the foundation for whatever gift we have within the ecclesial community, then the idea of servanthood will be clear.

The function of the church is in baptism inserted into the functioning of the Body of Christ, into His servant ministry.⁸⁸ Jesus’ teaching made it clear that leadership is not to be exercised by “lording it over others.” People in authority are to be the servants of the community. Therefore, even as ministry includes the role of leadership, it does not take away the responsibility each member of the community has by virtue of his or her baptism. The rite of baptism is essentially a celebration of the candidate’s call or vocation to discipleship of Christ. What happens is that the candidates renounce the reign of Satan and publicly choose to take their stand with the reign of Christ. The anointing with oil makes them charismatic officers to carry out a mission under the impulse of the Spirit.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ cf. Anderson ed., *Theological Foundations For Ministry*, 435.

⁸⁶ Rémi Parent, *A Church of the Baptised: Overcoming the Tension between the Clergy and the Laity*, trans. Stephen W. Arnt, (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 77.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Thomas F. Torrance, *Royal Priesthood: A Theology of Ordained Ministry* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 34.

⁸⁹ William J. Rademacher, *Lay Ministry: A Theological Spiritual, & Pastoral Handbook* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 96.

Vatican II re-emphasised the understanding of Christ's ministry as priest, prophet and king, and these functions were applied to those anointed in baptism as Christians. The church is made up of members who pattern their lives upon the life and activity of Christ.⁹⁰ Thus by their insertion into Christ through baptism, the Christian people are enabled to create a new moment of goodness in the world in their persons.⁹¹ Drilling develops the three basic ways Christians respond to the ministry they receive with baptism. Communion is the first goal of ministry. This involves the priestly ministry of reconciliation, mediating communion with God that is, nurturing, healing and establishing of bonds of friendship. This priestly ministry is not limited to a few of the baptised, but in some way falls to the whole people of God.⁹² The second type is the prophetic ministry, which serves the dialogue between God and human persons. In this light, it is baptism that moves the whole people to this ministry. This embraces the basic duty of bearing witness to Christ through the Word. The whole process of evangelisation is enhanced. At the third stage is pastoral care that forms an essential aspect of ministry. This pastoral care is a continuation of the ministry of Christ in his role of Good Shepherd:

Pastoring includes not only guiding a diocese on the part of the bishop or a parish on the part of the appointed pastor. It also includes counselling the grief-stricken, visiting the sick in hospitals or at home, providing food, clothing and lodging for the indigent, teaching the illiterate to read. The baptised take up these ministries in the Spirit of Matthew 25, where Jesus commends those who respond to him with compassionate care for those beleaguered by life's many physical, emotional, and mental problems.⁹³

The emphasis placed on baptism as a foundation of ministry helps us to avoid using such terms as ordained and non-ordained in discussing ministry. If this term were to apply, then it would appear that the ministry of all the baptised is lay ministry while the ordained ministry stands out on its own. On this note Legrand emphasises that the dichotomy between priesthood and laity is no longer considered viable as a *guiding concept* for any thinking about ministry because it meets with too many scriptural,

⁹⁰ Drilling, *Trinity and Ministry*, 28-29.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 31.

dichotomy between priesthood and laity is no longer considered viable as a *guiding concept* for any thinking about ministry because it meets with too many scriptural, systematical and ecclesiological objections.⁹⁴ All Christian people whether ordained or not, have the mandate to implement the threefold role of Christ.⁹⁵ While the ordained have the obligation to carry out their duty within the ecclesial community, those who are not ordained are nevertheless not insignificant. There are unique responsibilities for each baptised member. For Bernier:

Baptism grounds our common priesthood. It enables us to see ministry as a sort of second stage, an aspect of service within, and either for or on behalf of the community. Thus baptism becomes an ordination into that apostolic, charismatic, and sacrificial body we call the church. However we interpret a subsequent ordained ministry, we should not lose sight of the once-for-all, life-long ordination of baptism, which provides our primary identification. Every ordained minister in the church, from pope to priest, remains a baptised person.⁹⁶

So baptism forms the foundation on which the theology of ministry is effectively articulated. What we consider next is a brief historical overview that leads to the eventual development of a theology of ministry.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY

In the Catholic Church since Vatican II the emphasis changed from an exclusive to a more inclusive notion of ministry. As we saw already, the ordained ministry was the only ministry recognised and charged with responsibility in the church. Yet through faith and baptism, all believers are called to participate actively in the mission of the church. This active participation in the life of the church implies ministry.

This more inclusive understanding of ministry is a reflection of an ecclesiology of communion. The ordained ministry does not exist above or outside this communion it is rather inside it. This brings us to a better appreciation of the theology of ministry.

⁹⁴ Legrand, "Ministries," 10.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 32-33.

⁹⁶ Paul Bernier, *Ministry in the Church: A Historical and Pastoral Approach* (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1992), 205.

If ecclesial office is to be seen in relation to Christ's threefold office, if it represents at various levels a participation in it, then preaching, teaching, sanctification, worship, and pastoral leadership are all of the essence of office. Therefore it will lead to confusion when one aspect of Christ's office is singled out when defining one or other of the ministries.⁹⁷ This was the main stress of the Reformers.

1.4.1 THE REFORMERS' CONTENTION

The church, by the sixteenth-century, had to face the protests of the Reformers prominent among whom were Martin Luther and John Calvin. One of the issues they attacked that is relevant to our purpose, was that of the sacrament of orders. Martin Luther had argued that ordination was an invention of the church because there is no evidence for it in the NT. While he does not condemn ordination itself, he does not see it as the only ministry in the church:

Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian, be assured of this, that we are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. (For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called.).⁹⁸

This was a proclamation of the priesthood of all believers, which Calvin in a way supported. Calvin actually castigates the priests for taking over the responsibility entrusted to the whole church. Reflecting on 1 Peter 2: 9, he said it was sacrilegious for priests "to arrogate to themselves alone what is given to the whole church, and proudly to glory in a title of which they had robbed the faithful."⁹⁹ Above all Calvin criticised the Catholic priesthood for being associated with the sacrifice of Christ, because for him this was offered once and for all. Calvin, therefore, like Luther, did not stress the priesthood but the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as High Priest. He questioned the sacraments and emphasised the universal priesthood of all through baptism.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Daniel Donovan, *What are they Saying about the Ministerial Priesthood?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 11.

⁹⁸ Helmut T. Lehman, ed., *Luther's Works* 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 11: 116

⁹⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols. trans. Henry Beveridge, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans, reprint, 1981), 2: 641.

¹⁰⁰ Gideon Goosen, "A New Relationship between the Ministerial and Baptismal Priesthoods." *Compass: A Review of Topical Theology* 31, no. 2 (1997): 19.

Generally, the Reformers emphasised the priesthood of all believers and denied the sacramentality of holy orders. Furthermore their teaching stressed that there was no divinely instituted hierarchy. Besides, they argued that the powers of the ministry were merely a delegation of powers possessed by all Christians. The Catholic Church was not deaf to the Reformers criticisms. The Council of Trent reacted to the Protestant teachings in various ways.

1.4.2 THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

The Council of Trent (1545-63) sets down the teaching on the sacrament of holy orders that we still have in the church today. In the teaching of this council, holy orders is a sacrament, and it imprints an indelible character or seal signing the soul of the priest forever. Trent holds that the priesthood is a divine institution "The ministry of so sacred a priesthood is a divine arrangement, and it was therefore fitting that in the perfectly ordered disposition of the Church there be several different grades of ministers to insure that the ministry be exercised more worthily and with greater reverence."¹⁰¹

If anyone says that there is not in the New Testament a visible and external priesthood, or that there is no power of consecrating and offering the true body and blood of the Lord and of forgiving and retaining sins, but only the office and bare ministry of preaching the Gospel; or that those who do not preach are not priests at all, let him be anathema.¹⁰²

Apart from joining the sacrifice to priesthood, the Council emphasised the indelible character imprinted on the soul of the priest. "If anyone says that by sacred ordination the Holy Ghost is not imparted . . . or that by it a character is not imprinted, or that he who has once been a priest can again become a layman, let him be anathema."¹⁰³ This of course was the medieval, ontologizing approach to the priestly ministry, which stressed *being* in the state of the priesthood, rather than *doing* the ministry.¹⁰⁴ This

¹⁰¹ *The Church Teaches: Documents of the Church in English Translation*, trans. John F. Clarkson et al., (St Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1960), 329-330.

¹⁰² Cf. H. J. Schroeder, *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Co., 1941), 162-163.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁰⁴ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 74.

theology of orders of Trent in a way widened the gap between the ordained clergy and the non-ordained laity.

Trent clearly presented some aspects of Catholic doctrine and strove to address and correct what were believed to be the excesses of the Reformers. But the council did not attempt to give a complete and systematic treatment of the sacrament of orders. Burrows argues that the council was concerned about two points regarding orders; the powers conferred and the permanent character impressed by the sacrament. And this has made Trent's theology one-sided.¹⁰⁵

Goosen shares the view of Burrows on the one-sided theology of Trent:

The old view focussed on ecclesiastical priesthood and blurred the unique priesthood of Jesus Christ based on the New Testament. It said little or nothing of the baptismal, (universal or common), scriptural-based priesthood of all the baptised. The fact of ordination provided the dividing line in the church, much the same way as being "European" (as opposed to non-European) did in the colonial era, or the different "estates" at the time of the French Revolution.¹⁰⁶

Lawler supports this view and states that the theology and practice of ordained priesthood in the Western church was not supported in all respects by the theology and practice of the NT and the apostolic church.¹⁰⁷ Lawler attributes this development to the polemical circumstances of the time, which led the council of Trent to respond generally in a one-sided cultic way. This way ignored the valid, and NT-rooted, non-cultic aspects of ministry in the Christian churches.¹⁰⁸ So there has been a narrowing of the concept of ministry with the council of Trent. What developed was an understanding of ministry as exclusively priestly and cultic, and ministry became the activity of the priest and other members of the community were excluded.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ William R. Burrows, *New Ministries: The Global Context* (Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1980), 78.

¹⁰⁶ Goosen, "A New Relationship" 17-18.

¹⁰⁷ Lawler, *A Theology of Ministry*, 78.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁰⁹ Burrows sees the Council of Trent as applying the principle of "reductionism" whereby the "sacrament of order" has been identified with one of its elements that is, priesthood. Lawler views this as a diminution, not only of ministry, but also of priesthood. cf. Burrows *New Ministries*, 78; Lawler, *A Theology of Ministry*, 80.

1.4.3 VATICAN COUNCILS I AND II

When Vatican I (1869-70) was held, it was expected that there would be some adjustments to the teachings of Trent. But Vatican I maintained the *status quo* and went a little further than Trent by stressing the authority of the papacy and its powers:

Wherefore we teach and declare that, by divine ordinance, the Roman church possesses a pre-eminence of ordinary power over every other church, and that this jurisdictional power of the Roman pontiff is both episcopal and immediate . . . So, then if anyone says that the Roman pontiff has merely an office of supervision and guidance, and not the full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole church, and this not only in matters of faith and morals, but also in those which concern the discipline and government of the church . . . or that he has only the principal part, but not the absolute fullness, of this supreme power; or that this power of his is not ordinary and immediate both over all and each of the churches and over all and each of the pastors and faithful: let him be anathema.¹¹⁰

Vatican I addressed the issue of jurisdiction by the clergy and the concept of ministry “from above.” The ecclesiastical pyramid was firmly in place, with the pope at the top. In this arrangement, the mission of the church, through the laws of jurisdiction, flowed from the top to the lowest levels.¹¹¹

Vatican II (elaborate discussion in chapter three) ushered in a new era of Church history and a renewed consideration was given to the theology of ministry. The very prayer of Pope John XXIII at the opening of the council, called on the Holy Spirit to renew the wonders of Pentecost. This was a pointer to the anticipated renewal for the different aspects of the church. As it turn out, Vatican II reacted against a long narrowing process that had affected ministries in the church:

It did so, first by recalling the rich, biblical teaching of *diakonia*. Returning to this NT teaching on ministry opened the door to new approaches to ministry. . . the council recovered the Pauline teaching on charisms given by the Spirit to all the baptised. This return to baptism and the Spirit’s gifts opened the way to recognise a wider spectrum of ministries emerging “from below.”¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Norman P. Tanner ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 2: 813-15.

¹¹¹ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 77.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 78.

What this implies is that ministry is no longer viewed narrowly. The understanding of ministry was broadened to include all baptised members of the church. It is worthy of note that this renewed theology of ministry does not discard the role of the ordained ministry rather it has placed this ministry on a horizontal platform alongside other ministries which are not less important in the ecclesial community. The problem is not with the ordained priesthood, which is proper to the church and is an essential function, but it is having a correct image of the priest.¹¹³ The new image that is best suited to the church is that of the 'People of God' which is essentially a community of grace in faith and hope composed of the baptised.¹¹⁴ This in effect will bring out a more functional concept of priesthood, which avoids a 'metaphysical clericalism,' where an ontological quality raises priest or bishop above the faithful.¹¹⁵

1.4.4 CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY

At this stage, there is need to highlight the conceptual framework of ministries especially as it affects the ordained and the non-ordained in the ecclesial community. This becomes necessary in view of the many questions asked today regarding the identity and role of the ordained alongside other members of the community. The church has acknowledged the existence of such questions particularly after Vatican II's teaching on the common priesthood of the faithful (cf. *LG* #10):

That, however, gives rise, as by a swing of the pendulum, to certain questions which seem to obscure the position of the priestly ministry in the church and which deeply trouble the minds of some priests and the faithful. Many activities which in the past were reserved to priests - for instance, catechetical work, administrative activity in the communities, and even liturgical activities - are today quite frequently carried out by lay people, while on the other hand many priests, involve themselves in the condition of life of lay persons. Hence a number of questions are being asked: Does the priestly ministry have any specific nature? Is this ministry necessary? Is the priesthood incapable of being lost? What does being a priest mean today?¹¹⁶

¹¹³ See Piet Fransen, "The Priest Today," in *Rethinking the Priesthood*, ed., Fernando V. Joannes, trans. Elizabeth L-Dolan (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1970), 6.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 8-9.

¹¹⁶ The Synodal Document on *the Ministerial Priesthood*, November 1971, St. Paul editions, #4.

The 1971 Synod of bishops while considering these and other such questions developed some insights into the meaning of the ministerial priesthood in contrast to the common priesthood of the faithful. The Synod re-appraised the identity and role of the priest today having recourse to *LG* and *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (hereafter *PO*). The Synod concluded that the priestly ministry reaches its summit in the celebration of the Eucharist. This is a reiteration of the notion that only a priest is able to act in the person of Christ in presiding over and effecting the sacrificial banquet wherein the people of God are associated with Christ's offering:

The priest is a sign of the divine anticipatory plan proclaimed and effective today in the church. He makes Christ, the Savior of all men, sacramentally present among his brothers and sisters, in both their personal and social lives If the church lacks the presence and activity of the ministry which is received by laying on of hands with prayer, she cannot have full certainty of her fidelity and of her visible continuity.¹¹⁷

The issue at stake is not the lack of the ministry of priests because they will always be there even if the number has reduced now, but the need for a re-orientation so that the identity and the role of this ministry will continue to have significance and not subjected to challenge in the church today. But the idea stated in the 1971 Synod document reflects the stipulation of the council of Trent regarding the status of priests. The step will finally open the door to a systematic understanding of active evangelical living on the part of baptised Catholics who are neither clergy nor religious, without diminishing the significance of the ordained ministry.¹¹⁸ So this renewed understanding of ministry is in line with Drilling's trinitarian perspective:

On the basis of a trinitarian theology of ministry, including the aspect of the divine missions in the world, there is no place, doctrinally, theologically, psychologically, or sociologically for any gap between the ordained and the rest of the baptised. Rather there ought to be a collaborative attitude characterising the relationships of the ordained with the rest of the baptised people. For every baptised person is an equal member of the ecclesial community, with differing charisms for service, but all striving for the same goal of communion and

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Drilling, *Trinity and Ministry*, 51.

conversation. A theology of ministry based on the trinitarian missions call for collaboration.¹¹⁹

One other factor that has reshaped the concept of ministry today is a better appreciation of the call to a life of holiness. Prior to Vatican II, holiness was associated above all with priests and religious. Those who were not priests and religious were recognised to be concerned with secular things which included sex, money and politics. The word “laity” was applied to the mass of believers who are not among the sacral elite and was understood to mean those who are profane, outside the center of interest.¹²⁰ However chapter five of *LG* is dedicated to the universal call to holiness:

For he sent the holy Spirit to all to move them interiorly to love God with their whole heart . . . The followers of Christ, called by God not for what they had done but by his design and grace, and justified in the Lord Jesus, have been made sons and daughters of God by the baptism of faith and partakers of the divine nature, and so are truly sanctified. They must therefore hold on to and perfect in their lives that holiness which they have received from God.¹²¹

From this universal participation in holiness, a fundamental theology of ministry can be derived. As Kelly explains: “all in the church are called to holiness; the whole community is involved in building up the *ecclesia*. Different members of the community have different functions to perform according to their capacity and gifts.”¹²²

On the whole, there has been a shift in the Catholic theology of ministry and the central image of a theology of ministry is the church in which all members are participants in diverse ways. As a result, it has become necessary greatly to rethink and to restructure ministry so that it will enhance service to God and to the world.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹²⁰ O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 164.

¹²¹ See *LG*, #40

¹²² Kelly, “Basic Christian Communities” 131-132.

1.5. SUMMARY

The task in this chapter has been to elaborate the meaning of ministry especially in its contemporary understanding in the Catholic Church. Prior to Vatican II the term ministry was mostly used within Protestant circles and applied only to the activities of the ordained in the Catholic Church. Today there has been a considerable development in the Catholic theology of ministry. This is due to a renewal in ecclesiology which has led to a deeper and broader understanding of ministry.

Hence ministry is distinguished from lay apostolate or Catholic Action, the theology of which was based on the sharing of the ministry of the hierarchy with lay people. Ministry is conceived essentially as the public activities of baptised members in response to the needs of the community. Baptism is the foundation of every ministry. Through baptism, the Spirit of God is received and this Spirit gives baptised individual members the charisms to function in various capacities. In this way, the entire people of God share in the priesthood of Christ as king, priests and prophets.

Therefore a theology of ministry involves the sharing of the entire baptised people of God in the priesthood of Christ. By virtue of baptism, ministry is no longer seen as belonging exclusively to the ordained. The key figures of the Protestant Reformation, Luther and Calvin emphasised the priesthood of all believers and denied the sacramentality of holy orders. Their argument centred on ministry as a delegation of powers possessed by all Christians. The Council of Trent concerned itself only with the ministry of the ordained. With Vatican I, the church went further by stressing the authority and powers of papacy.

However, with Vatican II, a new era in the history of ministry was ushered in and a new consideration was given to the theology of ministry. A significant aspect of this is an emphasis on the participation of all baptised in the priesthood of Christ. Another is the emphasis on the charisms given to all those who are baptised. In addition the universal call to holiness provides a fitting background for a broader understanding of ministry. Current biblical and ecumenical scholarship has awakened the need to reconsider the evolution of ministries. We shall be investigating ministries in some local churches in Nigeria using the early church as a model. So we turn to ministry in the earliest decades of the church.

CHAPTER TWO

AN OVERVIEW OF MINISTRIES FROM THE BEGINNINGS TO MID - SECOND CENTURY

The first question that comes to mind when considering the title of this chapter, is why limit the overview of ministries to the period from the beginnings to mid-second century? My response would be that this period provides a unique insight into ministries therefore it is ideal to serve as a paradigm in understanding the process of development of ministries in the church in Nigeria. A picture of ministries in the earliest period of the church will help us to focus on ministries today particularly as they affect the local churches in Nigeria. The communities of this early period paved the way and provide a model for all communities which call themselves Christian.¹

Although the importance of this early period is acknowledged, the data on ministries provided is limited. Elliott states that, “despite some modest progress toward a new consensus on ministry and order in the NT, some crucial information remains yet outstanding.”² He further highlights the incompleteness of our knowledge that “aside from the few suggestions of ‘tables of qualifications and duties of church officers,’ primarily in the Pastorals, our understanding of the forms in which ministerial tradition might have been transmitted and preserved is minimal.”³

¹ Francis J. Moloney, *Disciples & Prophets: A Biblical Model for the Religious Life* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1980), 77.

² Elliott, “Ministry and Church Order in the NT,” 368.

³ Ibid.

2.1 EARLY CHRISTIANS IN THEIR SURROUNDINGS

Given these limitations and as a step towards understanding ministries in the church today, we begin by looking at earliest Christianity which was a movement within Judaism that experienced its basic period of growth in the Greco-Roman world. From this perspective, we intend to look at the background of the Christian movement from the period when the books of the NT were being composed.⁴ The NT writings must be understood historically, that is, in relation to a development, which emerges into clearer light in the time of Clement of Rome or Ignatius of Antioch.⁵

2.1.1 INTERACTION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

One of the features of the environment of early Christianity was the organisation of the city. The characteristic Greek type of city, the polis, was a community of relatively small size with temples to the traditional Greek gods and an open-air agora for public business.⁶ It was administered with some degree of autonomy by magistrates and a council, either recruited from a hereditary oligarchical elite or chosen through democratic election by the citizens who owned property.⁷ The early church was familiar with this style of administration and also with the government of the Roman conquerors.⁸ These conquerors brought their own language, dress, lifestyle, religion, government, and taxation systems, and proceeded to impose them on the local population. Alongside the Roman administration, Greek traditions continued to be influential in various other ways.⁹

Another area of influence on the early Christians was the interaction with already established groups such as the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees coupled with the administration of the chief priests and the rulers. This interaction brought Jesus and his disciples into first hand contact with the establishment of the day. The Essenes, too, who were much more organised internally than others and formed a very tightly structured community at Qumran, were part of the surrounding environment.¹⁰

The implications of these structures for the organisation of ministries emerged in the latter half of the first century. As will be reflected later on, in the Pastoral letters, ministry is

⁴ John Stambaugh and David Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians* (London: SPCK, 1986), 11.

⁵ Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1958), 312.

⁶ Stambaugh and Balch, *The Social World*, 14.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Robert Grant, *Early Christianity and Society* (London: Collins, 1977), 13.

⁹ Carolyn Osiek, *What are they Saying about the Social Setting of the New Testament?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 12-13.

¹⁰ James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1990), 104.

regularised, implying that there are requirements for the chief officers, now called bishops, presbyters and deacons.¹¹ It is also obvious that the development of the episcopate, meant that hierarchical and even imperial ideas were reinforced.¹² Thus the first communities also sought to understand and articulate their own place in, and relation to, secular authority.¹³

2.1.2 HOUSEHOLD FORMATION

The eventual development of ministries was influenced by the 'household' arrangement. As we will discuss below, the lives of the early Christians were basically shaped by the household formation. This could be described as the 'community' ecclesiology. One issue that is particularly noteworthy in the Pauline writings is the internal ordering of the Christian groups in each city. Paul's letters to his communities reveal that these groups enjoyed an unusual degree of intimacy, a high level of interaction among members and a strong sense of internal cohesion and of distinction both from outsiders and from "the world."¹⁴

Hospitality was a common practice of the household. As people like Paul embarked on their missionary journeys, they received hospitality from families who eventually became converts to the Christian faith. In some circumstances this act of conversion affected the entire household. The dependents of the household included not only the owner's servants but labourers hired on a daily basis (Mt. 20.1), and tenants installed on the property under the supervision of the central household to which the produce of their labour went (Mt 21:33-41).¹⁵

In the NT times the household formation transcended all political boundaries. In as much as they enabled people to cater for the needs of dependents, there was an explosion of such groupings. The household members' loyalty to the interest of the household was very strong.¹⁶ This provides some explanation of the solidarity that existed among Christians later in their life even in the face of persecution. Among other benefits of the household was the security it offered members.

¹¹ Ibid., 41.

¹² Ibid., 42.

¹³ Donald Cameron, "Authority in the Church in the New Testament Period," *Churchman* 95, no. 1 (1981): 23.

¹⁴ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 74.

¹⁵ E. A. Judge, *The Social Pattern of The Christian Groups in the First Century* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1960), 30-31.

¹⁶ Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 69.

The household expressed its solidarity in a common religion. The household formation readily admitted converts into its fold as the church continued to grow in whatever locality. As the church community grew, the household character was still retained with a broader constituency than it had originally.¹⁷ This is one aspect of the early church life that was particularly evident in the Pauline communities.¹⁸

2.1.3 SOCIAL INTERACTION

The early Christian church was also familiar with the different levels of associations in their environment. A few details will emerge when we come to consider 'fellowship' as one of the evolving ecclesiologies of the early church. The common practice was that the aristocrats in Greek society helped each other in a way that was mutually rewarding. Friends received hospitality on their journeys and in turn exchanged gifts with their hosts. People from the same area were able to rally together. The poorer ones looked up to the richer ones for sustenance and means of livelihood. The same was true in the Roman tradition. Reciprocal ties of friendship were developed.¹⁹ Hebrew practice also exhibits this act of giving help to the poor, and the disposition of the giver was not very different from what obtained in the Greco-Roman societies for reciprocity. It is probable that as some of these prominent people of the society were converted to the Christian faith, they continued in some way, their previous conduct.

Despite the various influences from the Greco-Roman world, the early Christians were unique. Though their religious experience was situated within this socio-historical milieu, they considered themselves as transcending that society. They were in the world, yet not of the world. This argument was buttressed by their great expectation of the *parousia*. In view of their unique faith there developed among them certain distinctive characteristics.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ See further discussion on Pauline Community Church Structure cf. section 2.5.

¹⁹ Stambaugh and Balch, *The Social World*, 63.

2.2 EMERGENCE OF BASIC ECCLESIOLOGIES

As we have just seen, Christianity had contact with all the forms of religions that were in existence in the Greco-Roman world. Brox sees these contacts as contributing to the development of the theology, structures and self-understanding of the early church.²⁰ The basic influence of the early Christians was not entirely external. The principal impulse was surely internal, namely, the experience of faith in Jesus Christ. This faith did not remain an isolated experience but influenced the whole life of believers; it brought about not merely occasional contacts among them but a fellowship embracing the whole of their common life.²¹ This faith in Jesus was realised within an organised framework of ministry. Ministry existed for the sake of the community. The community was the foundational ecclesiology of the early church.

2.2.1 THE COMMUNITY-*ekklesia*

Among the many terms employed by the first Christians to describe themselves, the most popular one was '*ekklesia*'²² (cf 1Cor.15: 9; Gal 1:13). The word may well reflect the first exodus, in which Israel came into being, for in Deut. 23:2 the LXX rendered *qahal*, "assembly," by *ekklesia* to describe Israel in the desert as "the church of the Lord."²³

The early Christian community considered itself to be the new community of Jesus the Messiah. They are now the new Israel. The first Christians therefore saw themselves as the congregation of God, consequently as heirs of Israel to whom the promises of the Scriptures applied. This was the claim of the church in the early stage to be the new Israel, and the image of the new people of God became widespread and distinctive. The recourse to the Old Testament (hereafter OT) as a basis for this image could be traced to the Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians:

Let us come before him, then, in sanctity of soul, lifting pure and undefiled hands to him, loving our gentle and merciful Father who has made us his

²⁰ Norbert Brox, *A History of the Early Church* (London: SCM Press, 1994), 15.

²¹ Adolf Schlatter, *The Church in the New Testament Period* (London: SPCK, 1961), 25.

²² *ekklesia* in the Greek usage refers to assembly, and in the beginnings of christian usage referred to local assemblies of christians. The Greek adjective *kuriakos* "belonging to the Lord", gives *ekklesia* the meaning from which the word 'church' is derived. The Hellenistic Jews are probably the first to apply the term to the church, preferring it to synagogue because the latter was acquiring a more restricted sense, and perhaps because there is some similarity of sound between *ekklesia* and Hebrew *qahal*. cf. *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, Ferguson E.ed., (New York: Garland, 1990), 207; K. L. Schmidt in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, (hereafter TDNT) Abr. ed. in 1 vol., s. v. "*ekklesia*."

²³ *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, (hereafter NJBC) 1990 ed. s. v. "Early Church."

chosen portion . . . His people Jacob became the portion of the Lord; Israel was the allotment of His inheritance (Deut. 32:8-9). And in another place it is written, "Behold, the Lord takes to Himself a nation from the midst of nations, as a man takes the first-fruits of his threshold floor, and from that nation shall come forth the Holy of Holies".²⁴

The church was perceived this way. However, Schweizer says that it is not known how soon the church began to assume terms relating to its own special character. But even at a later stage these terms could still indicate that the primitive church, in clear contrast to other organisations of the time, still regarded itself as Israel, never as a religious association that might become a separate group alongside others.²⁵ For Schnackenburg there should be caution when inference is drawn from an identity of terms to an identity of content. The primitive church when it spoke of "the Church of God" gave the OT *qahal Yahweh* a new content.²⁶ What can be concluded however is that the first Christians were Jews, and held this fact as a part of their conscious conviction.²⁷ Their faith did not isolate them from their Jewish religious background rather they viewed themselves as the fulfilment of the promise to Israel. Hence, from the very beginning, a connection with the history of Israel belongs to the concept of the church.²⁸

2.2.2 THE ESCHATOLOGICAL PEOPLE OF GOD

The early Christians understood themselves to be an eschatological community. The coming of the Messiah was anticipated as something imminent. It could be in this context that we are able to situate the reference the early Christians made to themselves as "the saints."²⁹ The way this term is understood is traced to the Lukan source of Acts 9:13, 32, 41; 26:10. Outside this there is no certainty how the reference to 'saints' was arrived at. It appears that just like the *ekklesia*, this term could be traced back to the early days of the initial community in Jerusalem. Israel was called "holy" in the OT because God had chosen it as His possession through the covenant of Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19: 5-6). The connection is with the self-consciousness of Christians of the post-resurrection era, who basically understood themselves as the true

²⁴ Clement of Rome, cited in Thomas Halton, *The Church* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1985), 63.

²⁵ Eduard Schweizer, *Church Order in the New Testament*, trans. Frank Clarke (London: SCM Press, 1961), 35.

²⁶ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Church in the New Testament*, trans. W. H. O'Hara (New York: Crossroad, 1965), 59.

²⁷ Hans Conzelmann, *History of Primitive Christianity*, trans. John E. Steely (London: Darton Longman and Todd, 1973), 37.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

²⁹ Schnackenburg, *The Church*, 57.

Israel, the eschatological people of God.³⁰ It means that such self-consciousness would be inconceivable had Jesus not previously appeared with the claim of gathering Israel in view of the approaching reign of God.³¹

2.2.3 CHARISMATIC COMMUNITY

The appearance of Jesus to the first Christians especially to the apostles was a turning point in their lives of faith. The imparting of the Spirit by Jesus to them was a source of inspiration and revitalization. What they received was something that bonded them organically, that is, the Spirit of the risen Christ. St. Paul's use of the word "in the Spirit" (Rom. 8:9) is understood from this perspective. The community will grow steadily as the believers adhere to Christ "in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:20ff).

The Spirit gave impetus to the first Christians. The church became essentially pneumatic and charismatic because of the presence of the Spirit in the church and the lavishing of his gifts on the members of the church. Pentecost was a decisive event in the life of the early Christians. It was an occasion for experiencing the gift of the risen Christ - the Spirit being granted to them in so singular and outstanding measure. It is in this light that we understand Schillebeeckx's expression that the experience of the historical Jesus was not the direct foundation of their faith, their church or their mission instead it was baptism in the Spirit, baptism in the name of Jesus.³² The Spirit was the moving force '*Pneuma*'³³ of the early church community, God's gift to the eschatological community.

One contribution of the Spirit in the life of the early church was the giving of charisms. The foundation of the charismatic experience was the Pentecost event. The outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost day was the accomplishment of the promise made by Jesus to his disciples to send them "power from on high" (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8). Pentecost being a decisive event in the life of the infant church was the formal inauguration of the church. Before Pentecost the disciples were socially withdrawn. Then the Spirit filled each and effected a remarkable transformation of them.

³⁰ Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community*, trans. John P. Galvin (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 77.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Church with a Human Face*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad 1985), 34.

³³ *Pneuma* is from Greek meaning wind, breath. In Hellenistic thought and biblical tradition it took on many nuances. In the LXX, *pneuma* is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *ruah* which means, "wind," "air," "breath of God" (Gen. 3:8). cf *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* 2 vols. ed. Angelo Di Berardino (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 1992), 2: 699.

This outpouring of the Spirit and his gifts gave rise to the missionary activity of the first Christian community. Gifts such as prophecy, visions, and healings, but above all the self-assurance and power to preach movingly about Christ were widespread within the community. This proclamation was the announcing and manifestation of the salvation offered by Christ. So, word and sign constitute a potent reality capable of effecting the very salvation that they proclaim.³⁴ As Schillebeeckx states:

‘The power of the Spirit,’ the keyword of the Pneumatic Christ movement, was the basic conviction of this generation of Christians. Every member of the community had *de facto* authority in the community on the basis of his or her own inspiration by the Spirit—even at that time the leading authority in the Christian churches was institutionalised, on the basis of the baptism of the Spirit and the Pneumatic phenomena which followed from that and led to the formation of communities.³⁵

One major consequence of the presence of the Spirit in the church was the harmony and fellowship experienced by the first followers of Christ. This brings us to *koinonia*.³⁶

2.2.4 FELLOWSHIP-*koinonia*

One of the striking characteristics of the early church was Christians’ love and concern for one another. The fellowship that was practiced strengthened the group. The basis of the church’s existence was faith in the Lord Jesus, and this faith offered the members a fellowship embracing the whole of their common life. Luke’s account of the life of the early church is remarkable: the first Christians remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers (Acts 2:42). This description places the church at a level where there is an agreement of minds in faith, a sharing in the Eucharist and in prayer. Le Guillou sees this *koinonia* thus:

So the church can be described as the fellowship in the Spirit which is manifested sacramentally. It is the temple of the Spirit, an organic whole constituted by spiritual bonds (faith, hope, charity) and the bonds of visible structures (profession of faith, the sacramental economy, the pastoral ministry)

³⁴ Mark Allan Powell, *What are they Saying about Acts?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 54.

³⁵ Schillebeeckx, *The Church*, 37.

³⁶ *koinonia* is from the root *koinonos* which means “fellow,” “participant.” Therefore *Koinonia* means “participation,” “impartation,” or “fellowship.” It is a favorite term in 1 John for the living bond that unites Christians. In Acts 2:42 *koinonia* denotes, not the Christian society nor its community of goods, but the family fellowship established and expressed in the church’s life. cf. F. Hauck, in *TDNT*, s. v. “*Koinonia*”

and which is continually developing and moving towards its eschatological completion.³⁷

The fellowship of the early Christians expressed the unity that characterised the church. No member was isolated the individual members were not lost, never alone and never separated in the group. Because of their oneness, they pooled their resources, and had all things in common, sharing their material possessions with one another (Acts 4: 34-37). The basic expression of this existence was “together.”

It must be stated from the outset that while this was a positive value in the early church, it began to suffer diminution. The *koinonia* (sharing), which was the basis of their union was overshadowed by class disparity. The rich shared with the rich, while the poor remained at their mercy, even in the context of eucharistic meals. This was one of the problems that faced the Corinthian Church which Paul had to address (cf. 1 Cor. 11: 17-34).

Nevertheless, fellowship offered the members the opportunity to come together in fellow members' houses to celebrate. It was an opportunity too for well-to-do members to show their generosity to the group. These associations were for the most part dependent on the patronage of men or women guardians who offered material support. This is the case in the NT with people like Stephanas (1 Cor. 16.15-18) and Phoebe, *diakonos* and *prostatis* of the community (Rom 16. 1-12).³⁸

The highlight was the community of goods in the primitive church, which seems to have been an expression of Christians' sharing a common life in Christ. The “breaking of bread” was a central activity whenever they gathered in a house for celebration. Willy Rordorf analysing the *Didache* gives an appreciation of the celebration of the Eucharist in the early church.³⁹ The issue of the community celebration of the Eucharist will occupy us in chapter five but the presidency at the Eucharist will be considered later in this chapter. The “house churches” made this Christian value realised in a homely way. And as the church continued to expand, more people made their houses available for the Christian celebration.

³⁷ Marie-Joseph Le Guillou, in *Sacramentum Mundi*, 1968 ed. s. v. “Church”

³⁸ Schillebeeckx, *The Church*, 49.

³⁹ See Willy Rordorf, *The Eucharist of the Early Christians*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell, (New York: Pueblo, 1978), 1-13.

The Christian community at this stage was growing steadily as new members were added to the fold through the ritual of baptism. The church spread to many other places but was still in fellowship with the mother church at Jerusalem. The spiritual bond was not severed. This was the unity of the early communities despite their diversity:

There prevailed . . . everywhere in the Christian communities a new life, full of promise. Despite all local differences, what is common to them stands out clearly: faith in Jesus the Messiah and Lord, baptism and Eucharist, apostolic preaching and instruction, high regard for brotherly love, and eschatological expectation.⁴⁰

Even with the internal cohesion of the life of the early church, there was a gradual movement toward institutionalisation. Questions of order and organisation were coming into prominence. We must now give some attention to this matter.

2.3 MINISTRIES OF THE APOSTOLIC PERIOD

The issue of ministries and organisation in the early church is not a simple one to describe. The NT gives us only a partial outline of the church's ministry in the first century, and the task of filling in the details of the picture is conjectural.⁴¹ However, the early church as we saw above was conceived and born within a particular social and religious context. The church in its infancy continued to live in the established Jewish forms where such offices as rabbis and elders of the community were functioning. The nearest parallel to the relationship between Jesus and his disciples was that of the rabbi and his pupils.⁴² This is borne out by the fact that Jesus was widely known as a teacher, one who had disciples (Mk. 9.5, 17, 35, 51 etc.).⁴³

There were no common forms of church organisation in the early church. Dunn sees any concept or pattern of ministry as deriving from Jesus alone, since it cannot be derived from the disciples or the twelve around Jesus:

And if we choose to speak of the disciples of Jesus as the 'church' then we should recognise the character of church denoted - namely, a group or groups

⁴⁰ Schnackenburg, *The Church*, 21.

⁴¹ Richardson, *Theology of the New Testament*, 333.

⁴² Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 104.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

of disciples gathered round Jesus with each individually and together directly dependent on Jesus alone for all ministry and teaching.⁴⁴

The Gospels do not give any detailed information on the earliest church government. We have to rely on the description Luke gives in Acts. This seems to be a major source highlighting what structures were operational in the immediate era after Jesus and beyond. Yet it does not give a complete picture of events. The author (Luke) chose for his subject only what served his purpose, which was to show that the tidings of the kingdom, though first addressed to the Jews, were in accordance with God's will to be delivered to the Gentiles.⁴⁵

The early Christian church had to break new ground. Despite the apparent continuity of the old order in the new Christian way, there arose certain tasks within the new community which needed to be undertaken. Consequently, the early church had to find its own way in establishing official leaders to guide worship and other activities.⁴⁶ Bultmann explains the situation from the perspective that no human society can have permanence in history without regulations. Therefore it becomes self-explanatory that regulations gradually developed in the primitive Christian congregations - both for the constitution of the local congregations and for their relation to each other and to the totality of the church.⁴⁷ The need to organise the growing Christian church gave rise to what are considered ministries of the period.

2.3.1 THE TWELVE AND THE APOSTLES

There are indications that in the apostolic period the immediate administration of the early Christian church rested on the "Twelve." The first ministry that comes to mind is that of the apostles, and life in the Jerusalem Church centred on them. The 'Twelve' assumed immediate leadership of the community.⁴⁸ But there is an issue that needs to be clarified before we proceed, and that is in what is denoted by the terms "twelve" and "apostles".

A clear distinction of the terms becomes necessary especially as the term apostle was not used exclusively of the Twelve. Reference is made to other apostles, with St. Paul as a clear example. The Twelve were a unique group selected by Jesus himself from among the

⁴⁴ Ibid., 106.

⁴⁵ Karl Baus "The Primitive Church at Jerusalem," in *Handbook of Church History*, 10 vols. eds. Hubert Jedin and John Dolan (London: Burns and Oates, 1965), 1: 74.

⁴⁶ Wilhelm C. Linss, "Ministry in the New Testament: "In the Beginning . . .," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 17, no. 1 (1990): 6.

⁴⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 2 vols. trans. Kendrick Grobel (London: SCM Press, 1955), 2: 95.

⁴⁸ Baus, "The Primitive Church at Jerusalem," 78.

disciples. In the Gospels they are referred to as twelve apostles or disciples (Mt 10:2). The Twelve were called to be the companions of Jesus, and later were sent out to preach and cast out devils (Mk 3:14-15). In this way their mission was modelled on that of Jesus himself: "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you" (Jn 20:21).

The group of twelve had to be maintained despite the defection of Judas. Matthias replaced Judas (Acts 1), because the Twelve were the official representatives of the new Israel, who will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mtt. 19:28; Lk. 22:29f.). This was the symbolic function they had to perform, to stand for the twelve tribes to be gathered into the kingdom at the end.⁴⁹ Schweizer thinks that probably they were not even leaders of the church. He argues that later it will appear that they were also not apostles in the sense of Jewish plenipotentiaries. Therefore, their importance for the primitive church lies in the fact that they were chosen by Jesus as representatives of Israel of the last days, and will one day play an essential part in God's kingdom.⁵⁰

The Twelve having had the privilege of being called and selected by Jesus were now "sent." The idea of sending introduces apostleship. There is a clear indication of sending in John 13:16 where the meaning is the "one sent" *apostolos*.⁵¹ Therefore, to be an apostle means to be a messenger of Jesus. A further qualification is to have seen Jesus and to have been sent by him (Rom 1:1). This is how Paul gives a clear picture of who was an apostle, a ministry to which he himself laid claim. In the Pauline letters, apostolate is primarily a vocation given by God through the risen Lord to those who proclaim the Gospel. Not all who proclaim the Gospel are apostles, but an apostle is one who has been "sent", *apostellein*, and commissioned by God.⁵² Paul applied the term "apostle" to himself. He frequently introduced himself to his readers as "apostle of Jesus Christ" or by similar ascription (1 Cor.1:1; 2 Cor.1:1; Eph.1:1; Col.1:1; 1Tim.1:1; 2Tim.1:1; Tit.1:1).⁵³ But it is doubtful whether he applied it to others except in the sense that having been 'sent,' he could in turn send others.

⁴⁹ Patrick T.R. Gray, "Ministry in the New Testament and the Early Church," *Consensus* 12, nos. 1-2 (1986): 55.

⁵⁰ Schweizer, *Church Order*, 48.

⁵¹ *apostolos* is Greek (from *apostello*: "to send, to appoint"): "Someone sent," an emissary, a delegated official entrusted with a mission - not simply a person who propagates a doctrine or devotes himself to a cause. *Apostolos* can refer to the commissioned representative of a congregation, as in 2 Cor. 8:23 or Phil. 2:25 (*Epaphroditus*). It also denotes bearers of the NT message, first the twelve (Acts 1:26) sent out by Jesus himself (cf. Mt.10:2; Mk.6:30), with Peter their head and Jerusalem their centre (Acts 8:1); then the first Christian missionaries, as in Acts 14:4,14 (Paul and Barnabas), Gal.1:19 (James), Rom.16:7 (Junias and Andronicus). cf. Xavier Leon-Dufour, *Dictionary of the New Testament*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 99; K. H. Rengstorff, in *TDNT*, s. v. "*apostolos*"

⁵² Robert M. Grant, ed. *The Apostolic Fathers*, 6 vols. (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1964), 1: 150.

⁵³ cf. Gerald F. Hawthorne et al., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 48.

What is clear is that the apostles must have been numerous since the creed refers to “all the apostles” (1 Cor. 15: 7) and Paul can refer to “the rest of the apostles” (1 Cor. 9: 5).⁵⁴

The apostle is properly an apostle of Jesus Christ, and this larger group shares with the twelve the common basis of a meeting with the risen Lord and commissioning by him personally. Hence Apollos and Timothy are not called apostles, but Paul’s apostleship is accepted at Jerusalem (Acts 15; Gal. 2:9; cf. 1 Cor. 15:8ff.). Apostles, then, are not officials of the church but officers of Christ for its upbuilding, and in this sense they are comparable to the OT prophets (Eph. 2:20; 3:5). “In the church” in 1 Cor. 12:28 refers to the whole body whose head is Christ (cf. Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:11), not to the local congregation.⁵⁵

Schelkle argues that, if individual offices in the church are to be described, the apostolate must certainly be mentioned first.⁵⁶ However, nothing tangible is told about their activity. From Acts 6:1ff, we gather that their task was that of proclamation and teaching. But this is a later construction.⁵⁷ They are the witnesses of the Exalted one, living signs of the coming kingdom, and so, as a matter of course, the church takes special notice of what they say; but it may well be that only Peter, probably supported by one or two others, undertook the direction of affairs.⁵⁸

The twelve apostles occupied the centre of authority for the church from the beginning, and in the mother Church of Jerusalem, the supreme ecclesiastical authority was in their hands. But we are faced with difficulties trying to understand the extent of their authority at this time. In Acts 15, the first council of Jerusalem (AD 50) was presided over by James the brother of the Lord. Peter is just referred to as having been present with some elders. Dunn maintains that it was not until about AD 44 that a firm and final pattern of leadership took shape and authority became institutionalised in the Jerusalem church. The key figure here was James the brother of the Lord. How he emerged among the Jerusalem leadership cannot be explained. By the time Paul went to Jerusalem for his second visit about AD 46, he was already the most prominent of the three ‘pillar apostles’ (Gal. 2:9).⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ K. H. Rengstorff, in *TDNT*, s. v. “*apostolos*.”

⁵⁶ Karl Hermann Schelkle, *Theology of the New Testament*, 4 vols. trans. William A. Jurgens (Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press, 1978), 4: 61.

⁵⁷ Conzelmann, *History of Primitive Christianity*, 55.

⁵⁸ Schweizer, *Church Order*, 48-49.

⁵⁹ Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 109.

Perhaps, an indication of the functions of the apostles is the view that they were wandering charismatics. According to Theissen, those decisive figures in early Christianity were travelling apostles, prophets and disciples who moved from place to place.⁶⁰ Yet from the administrative perspective indicated in Acts 1:12ff, the twelve apostles directed the affairs of the early community. They were at the centre of the fellowship. This was the exercise of their ministry, because through them the mission of Christ continued in preaching, teaching and healing (Acts 4:33, 5:12). The emerging community laid certain administrative responsibilities also on the twelve, such as the administration of charity and *diakonia* (Acts 6:1ff).⁶¹

The role of the apostles in the early church could be described as a combination of various responsibilities. Primarily they have the duty of witnessing to Christ and with their preaching were able to convert others to the faith. In addition they helped to resolve problems facing the early Christians. The ministry of the apostles was prominent at this time, yet the apostles recognised the fact that they could not do everything by themselves.

2.3.2 THE MINISTRY OF THE "SEVEN"

In Acts 6, Luke shows how the twelve apostles shared their responsibilities with other persons. The church at this time was still trying to grapple with its internal organisation. And as would be expected in any human association, there were complaints from some quarters of the early church community. The apostles who received the complaints from the Hellenists over the neglect of their widows in the daily distribution of goods acted promptly to rectify the situation.

They oversaw the selection of 'seven good men' (cf. Acts 6:1-6), who would be responsible for the distribution of material help among Hellenists. The apostles then appointed these men by the laying on of hands on them. The laying of hands adds another dimension to their position in the future. The twelve refused to get involved in the administration of material goods in order to keep to their symbolic role for all Israel. Thus the appointment of the seven was to give the Hellenists their own administrators.⁶² These seven are not to be considered deacons; their function would be closer to that of the later presbyter-bishops.⁶³

⁶⁰ Gerd Theissen, *The First Followers of Jesus*, (London, SCM, Press, 1978), 8.

⁶¹ Parackel K. Mathew, "Church Government in the New Testament," *Communio Viatorum*, 24, no. 3 (1981): 169.

⁶² Brown et al., in *NJBC*, s. v. "Early Church."

⁶³ *Ibid.*

The seven were generally regarded as officials for the daily administration of material goods. In other words, a new ministry was now in place - the ministry of tables, which would leave the apostles free to concentrate on the ministry of the word. With Brown we note that the seven are not deacons responsible to the apostles as Luke presents them to be. They are called to "service" *diakonia*.⁶⁴ The seven were selected to help with "the daily distribution," because the twelve considered it inappropriate for them to neglect the word of God "so as to give out food" (Acts 6:1-2). However the presumption here will be that they were being entrusted with the care of the poor, especially since it was "widows" who were being overlooked. But there are significant counter-indications to this interpretation. The seven seem to have been a group of men who were gifted in missionary preaching and actually were involved in missionary endeavours.⁶⁵

The spiritual gifts they had would not allow them to be confined just to distributing food. Stephen and Philip devoted their services to mission, and Philip in particular is referred to as an evangelist (Acts 21:8). Philip did everything the apostles did; and that the seven were in a sense 'new apostles,' though the Jerusalem community retained some oversight over their activity (Acts 8:14).⁶⁶

As varied, as are the opinions on the role of the seven in the early church administration, so also were their activities. What could have been is that they exercised their ministry outside Jerusalem:

Because of the persecutions they finally fled to Samaria and further north, to Syria. On the way these fugitives (especially under the leadership of Philip) founded many communities. It is above all because of them that Christianity spread with such surprising speed throughout the whole of the ancient Near East.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *Diakonia* in the New Testament first means "waiting at table," "providing for physical sustenance," or "supervising meals" (Lk. 10:40; Acts 6:1). A wider meaning is "the discharge of a loving service." The *diakonia* of Stephanas is an example (1Cor.16:15). A more specific sense is "the discharge of certain obligations," e.g., by the apostles (Rom. 11:13; 2 Cor.4:1), evangelists (2Tim.4:5), or assistant such as Mark (2Tim.4:11). Another meaning is the collection (Rom.15:31, 2Cor.8:1ff.; cf. Acts 11:29-30) a reflection of true act of Christian love. cf. H. W. Beyer, in *TDNT*, s. v. "*Diakonia*."

⁶⁵ Patrick J. Dunn, *Priesthood* (New York: Alba House, 1990), 50.

⁶⁶ Schillebeeckx, *The Church*, 76.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

It is not certain that the 'elders' were a replacement for the seven, who like the apostles probably dispersed to various places.⁶⁸ The 'elders' were a unique class among ministries in the early church. We shall return to further discussion of the role of the elders, but for now it is useful to look at those ministries that were associated with the work of the apostles. These are the ministries of prophets and teachers.

2.3.3 PROPHETS AND TEACHERS

The ministries of prophets and teachers are referred to as associate ministries because unlike the apostles, the seven, and the elders, they were not strictly administrative ministries but arose from the charisms found in the early church. However all these ministries were inter-related. The activities of prophets and teachers with those of the apostles bring to focus the charismatic nature of the church.

The ministries of prophets and teachers were two most important intra-ecclesial ministries after the apostles in the Pauline churches.⁶⁹ It is in Paul's letter to the Corinthians that we come across prophets and teachers used in association with apostles. "And those whom God has appointed in the church are, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers . . . after them, miraculous powers, then gifts of healing, helpful acts, guidance, various kinds of tongues" (1 Cor. 12:28). Again in another text it is stated: "You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets . . . (Eph. 2:20).

Perhaps these prophets had not founded the communities themselves, but they were of great significance for their development.⁷⁰ The prophets are those who speak in the spirit, and were regarded as working through the spirit. Prophets alongside teachers were regular ministries in the Pauline churches (1Cor. 12:28). In oversimplified terms, the role of the prophet was to transmit new revelations to the church.⁷¹ The office of the prophet in this context was symbolic in the sense that he could lead the community through prophecy. The prophets admonish, console, encourage, and censure (cf. 1Cor. 14:3, 25) and could give oracles as in the OT. St. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to be zealous for prophesying (14:39) but not all were accepted as prophets (12:29).

⁶⁸ Gerd Theissen maintains that the seven along with the apostles were wandering charismatics. The fact that they were no longer in the Jerusalem church at a certain period of their history appears to be the justification for this assumption. Besides, the seven were scattered after the execution of Stephen. See *First Followers*, 9.

⁶⁹ Kenan B. Osborne, *Priesthood: A History of the Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 66.

⁷⁰ Schillebeeckx, *The Church*, 75.

⁷¹ Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 112.

The *Didache* also mentions the existence of prophets in the early church:

In regard to apostles and prophets, act according to the doctrine of the gospel. Let every apostle who comes to you be received as the Lord. Do not, however, allow him to stay more than one day, if it needs be, two. If he remains for three days, he is a false prophet . . . You shall not test or examine any prophet who speaks in a spirit . . . Not everyone, however, who speaks in a spirit is a prophet, unless he have the behaviour of the Lord. By his behaviour, then, the false prophet and the true prophet shall be known.⁷²

Instances of prophecy are recorded in *Acts* where the prophetic message is received: "I want Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). In Romans 12:6-8, Paul lists various spiritual gifts given to members of the church, first in the list is prophecy. The prophets received spiritual endowment that sets them apart. From Paul's concept of charismatic ministry, the prophets were recognised as such because they prophesied regularly. There is no suggestion in the Pauline letters that these were church offices.⁷³

The third in the hierarchy of those with spiritual endowments are the teachers. These were in various ways connected with the prophets but unlike the prophets, their concentration was on instruction or basic teaching of fundamental belief - catechesis (Gal. 6: 6). Teaching was also considered as a charism, a gift of the Lord, and therefore teachers were generally not appointed, as the seven had been. Teachers quite often were associated with definite communities. As we shall see in Chapter Four, there is a resemblance between the ministry of teachers to that of catechists in Nigeria and Africa generally as they emerge in the local communities and become the leaders and preachers of their respective station-churches. The existence of teachers, as well as prophets, is attested to in the *Didache*:

Again, every prophet who teaches the truth but fails to practice what he preaches is a false prophet. But every attested and genuine prophet who acts with a view to symbolising the mystery of the Church, and does not teach you to do all he does, must not be judged by you. His judgement rests with God.⁷⁴

⁷² *Didache* 11:3ff., cited in William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, 3 vols. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1970), 1: 3.

⁷³ Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 112.

⁷⁴ *Didache* 11: 10-11 cited in Joseph T. Lienhard, *Ministry*, (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1984), 34.

The importance of the ministries of prophets and teachers may be seen in the positive contribution they made to the growth of the early Christian communities. These special gifts of God were for a purpose: "That some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13). Despite the presence of these ministries mostly inspired by the Spirit, the church, even in its infancy, began to develop definite structures of administration. One example is the emergence of a certain class of presbyters (*presbyteroi*)⁷⁵ who were also known as 'elders' of the people.

2.3.4 THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS

In the order of the administration of the early church, the 'Elders' (presbyters) are in the third position after the apostles and the seven.⁷⁶ What the specific duty of the elders was is not clearly stated, and it is not clear how they came to the fore. Elders appear in *Acts* 11:30 where they are presented as recipients of the relief donation carried by Barnabas and Saul from the Church at Antioch. This presupposes that they were already in the Jerusalem Church. There is a mention of elders in *Acts* 15:2ff along with the apostles. If in *Acts* 11:30 and 21:18 they obviously represent the congregation like a synagogue council, in 15:2ff they function (with the apostles) more after the manner of the Sanhedrin.⁷⁷

The formation of a body of elders probably takes place as the apostles leave Jerusalem and James assumes the leadership. Its functions are patterned partly after the synagogue council and partly after the Sanhedrin . . . Paul for the most part refers to leaders of the churches in terms of function rather than office. He enjoins obedience to them but more because of their ministry than their status.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *Presbyteros*, comparative of *presbys*, means "older," or simply "old," with no negative connotations but rather a sense of venerability. It then comes into use for presidents, members of various guilds, committees etc., village officials, executive committees of priests, and senior groups of different types. Elsewhere the *presbyteroi* are the bearers of a tradition (Mt. 15:2), and a title is at issue when the reference is to members of governing bodies, as in the nation, the synagogue, or the church. See G. Bornkamm, in *TDNT*, s. v. "*presbyteros*."

⁷⁶ Baus also suggests that with these three office holders there was a division between the clergy and the laity right from the early church. This for him is so because of their consecration for specific tasks. See Jedin and Dolan eds., *Handbook of Church History*, 1: 80.

⁷⁷ Bornkamm, in *TDNT*, s. v. "*apostolos*."

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Their existence can only be understood from the Judeo-Christian community in which they were situated. The group of “elders” that emerged in the Jerusalem Church was modelled on that of the Jewish community in Palestine, and they were regarded, as a group set apart and divinely endowed for a spiritual task.⁷⁹ The group of elders in the Jewish context enforced the Torah and had the responsibility also of teaching and explaining the law in the communities. The fact that their religious and civil responsibilities were interwoven did not however offer them the right to liturgical functions. The responsibility for and arrangements for liturgical functions were exclusively those of the *archisynagogos* or ruler of the synagogue who was elected by the congregation.⁸⁰

Though the position of the *archisynagogos* was prominent, only the leading members of the Jewish community from among their own number chose him. It was not so much the choice of the whole congregation. The view portrays the elders in the historical and political life of ancient Israel as the senior men of the community, heads of the leading families within it, who as such exercised an authority that was informal, representative and collective.⁸¹

With regard to their function in the early church administration, it could be deduced that they were trustees and administrators of the Jerusalem community.⁸² It seems always to have been the case that in the early period, the individual community was not led by an individual leader but by a ‘college’, a group of responsible persons.⁸³ The situation was different in the Pauline communities.

2.4 THE PAULINE COMMUNITY CHURCH STRUCTURE

In the mission territories of Paul, things were organised differently. The Pauline Church communities were organized according to the indications that we find in his letters. We know that no group can persist for any appreciable time without developing “some patterns of leadership, some differentiation of roles among its members, some means of managing conflict, some ways of articulating shared values and norms, and some sanctions to assure acceptable levels of conformity to those norms.”⁸⁴ These considerations lead us to

⁷⁹ Dom Gregory Dix, “The Ministry in the Early Church,” in, *The Apostolic Ministry* ed. Kenneth E. Kirk (London: Hodder, 1946), 234.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ R. Alastair Campbell, *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 49.

⁸² Giuseppe d’Ercole, “The Presbyteral Colleges in the Early Church,” in *Historical Investigations, Concilium*, ed. Roger Aubert, (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), 17: 20.

⁸³ Norbert Brox, *A Concise History of the Early Church*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Continuum, 1995), 74.

⁸⁴ Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 111.

know what sorts of persons were able to issue commands or make recommendations that would ordinarily be accepted by members of the churches Paul and his associates had founded.

2.4.1 PAULINE ECCLESIOLOGY/ MINISTRY

Church organisation in Pauline communities is illuminated by Paul's ecclesiology, and this correlates with his idea of ministry. For Paul, the church is comparable to the human body which comprises different parts: "For as with the human body which is a unity although it has many parts - all the parts of the body, though many still making up one single body - so it is with Christ . . ." (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12ff). This is the Pauline *corpus* in which the emphasis was on charisms. Paul builds on the understanding that the church is like a body in which every member has something to contribute. This concept was elaborated for the church in Corinth, which at that time was torn by dissension and rivalry.

Hans Conzelmann's analysis of the Corinthian experience is helpful. For him, the leadership of the community is under the influence of the Spirit. This influence could not be realised primarily in the experience of ecstasy, otherwise no ordered common life at all can come into being.⁸⁵ Paul was quick to inform the Corinthians who had spiritual ecstasy that the Spirit creates order not confusion (cf. 1 Cor. 14:33, 40). Paul expands the understanding of the gifts of the Spirit by connecting them to the church: every gift is employed for the building-up of the community, every "ministry" is a gift of the Spirit:

Hence there are indeed special positions and commissions, but not clergy and laity. One can speak of a general priesthood in the communities, if one does not fill the "priestly" with cultic ideas but understands it in this simple sense: everything "that edifies" is ministry. Everyone performs his own contribution. The spirit does not do away with individuality.⁸⁶

In view of the individual contributions to the growth of the body, the letter to the Ephesians reiterates this connection between ministry and church. The various gifts that come from the Spirit are all for the sake of the body; they are diverse, and no particular function can claim precedence over others (Eph. 4:7-13).⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Conzelmann, *History of Primitive Christianity*, 106.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 40.

2.4.2 HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE AND DIVERSE MINISTRIES

The 'household' constituted the basis for Paul's church communities. Some of the meeting places in the very early stage were private houses, e.g., the houses of Crispus (Acts 18:8), Stephanas (1 Cor. 16:16-17) and Aquila and Prisca (1Cor.16:19). Paul always advised that these heads of the communities be respected. "We beseech you, brethren, to respect those who labour among you, lead you in the Lord and admonish you, to esteem them very highly in love because of their work" (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

Paul organised his churches in such a manner that he occupied a unique position. Paul saw himself both as their original apostolic authority and also as having the role of one who was the direct authority in an individual community on questions of preaching and discipline.⁸⁸ Thus he was able to give directives to the churches he founded, whether by letters which bore his authoritative teaching and instructions, or by his co-workers who represented him in these communities, or by his occasional visits to them.

Paul had others who worked in close collaboration with him. The fellow workers of Paul had also a certain degree of authority over the local communities and their local leaders. These were responsible representatives in his communities:

Paul does not call these representatives presbyters, but has a variety of terms for them, some interchangeable, some indicating differences. For example he calls the same people 'labourers', 'fellow workers' (1Cor.16.16), 'leaders' (1Thess.5.12; Rom.12.8), but on the other hand distinguishes between apostles, prophets and teachers (1Cor.12.28), who have different tasks. We do not find a single concept of ministry in Paul, but designation of tasks, positions and functions in the community.⁸⁹

There was also a wide variety of other regular but less well defined ministries within the Pauline churches. Paul mentions also miracle workers, healers, people who speak with tongues and interpreters, preachers, a wide range of services, administration, etc., (Rom.12:7-8; 16:1,3,9,21; 1Cor.12:28; 16:15-18; 2Cor.8:23; Col.1:7; 4:7; 1Thess.5:12f.).⁹⁰ There was overlapping of the various ministries and they were not easily distinguishable. Brox points out that the Pauline church organisation did not represent an enthusiastic chaos of charismatics, there were leaders and there was order in it. Paul's effort especially in solving conflicts was not in building up authority and ministry, but by describing the multiplicity of gifts and

⁸⁸ Brox, *A Concise History*, 75.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ See Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 112; Schillebeeckx, *The Church*, 60.

requiring that all should use their spiritual gifts for the edification of the church.⁹¹ “These ministries should not be thought of as established or official ministries, and they were certainly not ecclesiastical appointments or church offices. Indeed we are told specifically in the case of Stephanas and his household that ‘they took upon themselves their ministry to the saints’ (1Cor.16:15).”⁹²

What was common to the development of the different roles in the Pauline communities is *charismata*, that is gifts of God through the Spirit. The various lists of ministries show that there was great freedom in the organisation of the communities and also that spontaneously a degree of church order arose everywhere, however varied.⁹³ In other words, there was room for diversity. Nevertheless, Ephesians 4 suggests a tendency towards uniform and formalised ministries. Although, Ephesians is post-Pauline,⁹⁴ in effect there was the development of ministry of ‘overseer’ in the Pauline tradition. The overseer’s ministry became recognised by the church. That is, it will gradually become the custom for the few people who have long been carrying out this ministry to be the first who speak in the meeting for worship, bring forward proposals, or call to order.⁹⁵

Schillebeeckx sheds some light here. In Philippi, general Greek terms are used, *episkopoi*⁹⁶ in the sense of overseers, and their ‘helpers’. Thus, there is no dispute about the differences that could apply to the names especially when comparison is made between 1 Thess 5:12, 1 Cor. 12:28 and Phil. 1:1. Therefore it is impossible to describe precisely what all these ‘ministers’ do: they build on the foundation laid by Paul, each one according to his own gifts or talents. However, some are assigned a special place. In Pauline communities,

⁹¹ Brox, *A Concise History*, 75.

⁹² Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 112-113.

⁹³ Schillebeeckx, *The Church*, 61.

⁹⁴ Paul Kobelski argues for the Deutro-Pauline composition of this letter. The Deutro-Pauline author of Ephesians was thoroughly schooled in Pauline literature, he may have belonged to a Pauline school that was imbued with the thinking of Paul and was conversant with the liturgical, parenetic, and catechetical traditions that had developed in Pauline mission areas in the post-Pauline period. cf. Paul Kobelski in *NJBC*, s. v. “The Letter to the Ephesians.”; See also PHEME PERKINS, *Reading the New Testament*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 194-201.

⁹⁵ Schweizer, *Church Order*, 198.

⁹⁶ *Episkopos(-oi)* means “overseer,” “watcher,” and thus comes to be used for “protector,” “patron,” and for various offices involving oversight, but not of a religious nature. In the New Testament men are called *episkopoi*, and the word is not used for itinerant charismatics but only for leaders of settled congregations. For such leaders such words as *presbyteroi* or *episkopoi* and *diakonia* are applied. As may be seen from Acts 20:28 where Paul addresses Ephesian elders, there is at first no distinction between *presbyteroi* and *episkopoi*. All the *presbyteroi* here are *episkopoi*, their task is that of shepherding (cf. 1 Pt. 2:25; 5:2ff.). This is to be distinguished from *episkope* which in secular Greek means “visit” and also in LXX means “look,” “glance,” “care,” “protection,” “muster.” The true theological sense is when the term is used for “visitation.” See H. W. Beyer, in *TDNT*, s. v. “*Episkopos*.”

Timothy and Titus in particular are notable in this respect. Like Paul, these fellow workers of the apostle have authority over the community (1 Thess. 5:12).⁹⁷

That Philippians (1:1) is addressed to the *episkopoi* and *diakonoi*, Brown says is a proof that the title “supervisor” was already in use in AD 60; and 1 Cor. 12:28 lists “administrations” or governance (*kybernesis*) as a charism at Corinth. But our knowledge of local supervision during Paul’s lifetime is quite limited.⁹⁸ However, the exhortation given to these fellow workers who succeeded Paul in the authoritative leadership of the communities is what concerns us here. That they have the mandate to appoint *episcopoi* and *diakonoi* adds a new dimension to the organisation of ministry in the church. The Pastoral Epistles give further insight into this development.

2.4.3 PASTORAL LETTERS

The Pastoral Letters are 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.⁹⁹ These epistles particularly addressed the issue of the structure of the church in the early Christian communities. These letters to Timothy and Titus introduce the reader to a transitional period in the early church, there being a major transition from the apostolic age to a more functional organisation of the Christian communities.¹⁰⁰ Brown suggests that Paul was pre-occupied about what was to become of the Christians he was leaving behind. How were they to survive, especially since false teachers presented an enormous danger and could mislead them (Titus 1:10, 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:6; 4:3)?¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, the general purpose of the Pastorals was clear:

... to secure that the Pauline tradition should be maintained. He lived in a time when the Church was changing its character. It was no longer a free

⁹⁷ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 10-11.

⁹⁸ Raymond E. Brown, “*Episkope and Episkopos: The New Testament Evidence*,” *Theological Studies* 41, no. 2 (1980): 329.

⁹⁹ That Paul wrote these letters is a subject of dispute. Many scholars in the twentieth century have argued for the inauthenticity of the epistles attributed to Paul. Raymond Collins gives the suggestion that the three epistles are doubly pseudepigraphical when a deeper consideration is given to the fact that they share the form of the genuine Pauline letter: cf. Raymond F. Collins, *Letters that Paul did not write*, (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1988), 88-94. Raymond Brown agrees with the vast majority of scholars that Paul is already dead and that by writing in Paul’s name, the unknown author is assuming the mantle of Pauline authority in order to meet post-Pauline problems; cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Churches the Apostles left Behind*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 31.; These are letters of the Pauline corpus addressed to individuals. Like other NT literature written under Paul’s name, they employ the letter form to convey not just personal communications but primarily teachings and exhortation, some of them pre-formed traditions already in use in Pauline congregation. cf. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, s. v. “Pastoral Letters.”

¹⁰⁰ Helen Doohan, *Paul’s Vision of Church* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1989), 208.

¹⁰¹ Brown, *The Churches*, 31.

brotherhood, detached from worldly interests, but an organisation, which had to hold its own within the social structure of the day. It was largely composed of converts who had brought in with them the moral standards of paganism. It was affected by contemporary movements, and Christian ideas were being mingled with strange speculations which were often alien to the whole spirit of the Gospel.¹⁰²

Another reason such as the rapid expansion of the communities may have necessitated a more ordered structure in the communities founded by Paul. The letter to Timothy speaks of (bishops) *episkopoi* (1 Tim. 3:1-7) and outlines the qualities of one who aspires to this position. Judging from the qualifications for the post, the position assumed a level of paramount importance. To aspire then, to the office of bishop is to be desirous of acting benevolently for the welfare of others.¹⁰³ The passage also notes the appointment of deacons, and the functions of the deacon parallel those of the bishop except that the bishop must not be a recent convert; and must enjoy a good reputation with non-Christians.¹⁰⁴ The early Christian conception of itself as a 'household' makes the quality of the bishop as a good manager of his household imperative.

The precise role of the deacon is not easily determined. Some authors have argued that it could have been a reflection of "table waiters" of Acts 6 also engaged in preaching (Acts 7: 8:4-8, 26-40), above all they were to be believers in and doers of the word.¹⁰⁵ Others think that their duties were those of administration, and service may be deduced from the title, the qualities demanded, their relation to bishops, and the use of *diakonia* in the NT.¹⁰⁶ The ministry of deacon may have been open to women as well. As 1 Tim 3:11 inserts a reference to women into the qualifications for that office, the roles which women played in the early household churches of the Pauline mission may have been understood as diaconal.¹⁰⁷

The significant role of women in the early church is not disputed. Beginning with the ministry of Jesus, women were treated more inclusively and with more respect than was the case among the Jews. Jesus had women disciples who followed him, listen to his teaching and offered support (Lk 8:1-3, 23:49, Mk 15:40-41, Matt 27:55-56). The story of Mary and Martha (Lk 10:38-42) points to the fact that Jesus actually taught women.

¹⁰² E. F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1941), xxv.

¹⁰³ Kevin Giles, *Patterns of Ministry Among the First Christians*, (Melbourne: CollinsDove 1989), 39.

¹⁰⁴ Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters* (Cambridge: University Press 1966), 39-40.

¹⁰⁵ Robert A. Wild, in *NJBC*, s. v. "The Pastoral Letters."

¹⁰⁶ Beyer, in *TDNT*, s. v. "Diakonia."

¹⁰⁷ Perkins, *Reading the New Testament*, 289.

Mary is commended for choosing what was better. The discussion of Jesus with the Samaritan woman (John 4:4-42), and his appearance to Mary of Magdala after resurrection (Matt 28:10) portray the evangelical mission of women. In the former encounter, the Samaritan woman publicly proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah to her own people, and in the latter, Mary was told to take message of the resurrection to the apostles. Thus, some women became the first heralds of Jesus.

In the early church, women featured significantly exercising various ministries. Some were involved in the prophetic ministry (e. g., the four daughters of Philip who prophesied, Acts 21:9). Judging from the testimony of Acts 13 that prophets and teachers possibly presided at the Eucharist, it is arguable that since women constituted the ranks of prophets, they may have exercised this liturgical ministry. Some women were associated with Paul and were regarded as his fellow workers. They included Prisca, Eudia and Syntyche (Rom 16:3-12, Phil 4:2-3). Others were Priscilla, who offered to instruct Apollos in the faith, (Acts 18:26), and Pheobe, a deaconess at Cenchreae (Rom 16:1-2). However, the letter to Titus says nothing of women in the diaconal position, since no reference is made to deacons but only 'elders' (Titus 1: 5-6), and 'bishops' (Titus 1:7-11). In the letter to Titus (1:5, 7ff.), elders and bishops are thought of interchangeably. These were to become the managers of the household of God.

The understanding of the Pastoral Letters regarding offices in the early church is indicated by the terminology used. The existence of the *oikos ekklesia* or household-church prompted the emergence of *oikonomoi* "stewards," who were regarded as 'house managers.' What the house managers were responsible for was *episkope*, that is, oversight. How this term metamorphosed into bishop cannot be adequately explained, but it could be understood in line with the way the author(s) of the Pastoral Letters equate presbyters and *episcopoi* with Acts 20:17, 28, and with the collective meaning of "overseer" or "bishop."¹⁰⁸ It could have been that the old English of the Middle Ages shortened *episkopos* to "Piskop" which was pronounced "bishop."¹⁰⁹

The same could be said of deacons in 1st Timothy. Frequently in the NT, the Greek word *diakonos* bears the general sense of "servant" or "minister" but occasionally as here, it refers to a church office.¹¹⁰ On the whole, the Pastoral Letters highlight the evolution of a

¹⁰⁸ Wild, in *NJBC*, s. v. "The Pastoral Letters."

¹⁰⁹ Paul Rorem; "Mission and Ministry in the Early Church," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 17, no. 1 (1990): 16.

¹¹⁰ See Wild, in *NJBC*, s. v. "The Pastoral Letters."

certain category of people who now take control of certain distinctive functions in the community to give continuity to the Pauline tradition.

There was a duty of overseeing, supervising the communities, and this was entrusted to the Christian elders, *presbyteroi*, who at this stage had a pastoral supervising role that went beyond their Jewish counterparts and were given the title *episkopos*.¹¹¹ Thus in the Pastoral Letters, the *episkopos* is one of the presbyters, but evidently not all presbyters can be called *episkopos*.¹¹²

What can be concluded is, that in the Pastoral Letters, the church was beginning to experience a more structured existence. In the letters there emerged different responsibilities in the early Christian community. Ministry becomes more focused on particular persons who are ordained for the purposes of overseeing, teaching and serving.¹¹³ With this development, emphasis on Christians' charisms is downplayed, and the institutional administrative machinery is put in place with bishops, priests and deacons as principal officers.

2.5 POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH ORGANISATION

The Pastoral Letters responded to the question of what happens after the apostles died. The death of the apostles, towards the end of the first century, brought changes that created drastically new situations.¹¹⁴ What prevailed was no longer the free variety of Pauline times, when every Christian, as an instrument of the Spirit, had a function.¹¹⁵

Looking closely again at the NT, we notice the third letter of John highlights the struggle between the older itinerant ministry and the rising local leadership. Thus, if many of the Pauline churches had local leaders in the apostle's lifetime (some of whom at least had been appointed by him), the question of leadership in local churches became a major concern in the last third of the century, after the death of the great apostles in the 60s.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Brown, *The Churches*, 33.

¹¹² Schillebeeckx, *The Church*, 67.

¹¹³ Doohan, *Paul's Vision*, 214.

¹¹⁴ Howard Clarke Kee & Franklin W. Young, *The Living World of the New Testament* (London: Longman & Todd, 1960), 355.

¹¹⁵ Howard Clarke Kee et al., *Understanding the New Testament*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1973), 264.

¹¹⁶ Brown, "Episkope and Episkopos," 330-31.

2.5.1 AUTHORITY AND ORGANISED CHURCH STRUCTURE

The first reference to authority as residing in the bishop is the first letter of Clement of Rome. According to tradition, Clement who was the bishop of Rome and the second to succeed St. Peter,¹¹⁷ was concerned with the opposition of some Corinthian Christians to their presbyters. This letter serves to indicate that even at that stage there may have been a more far-reaching dispute in which the defenders of an older and freer order opposed the consolidation of the institutional Church.¹¹⁸ However, Clement based his argument on calling for respect for these elders, and submission to repentance on the ground that they (elders) had received their authority from the apostles who themselves were authorised by Christ:

The Apostles received the gospel for us from the Lord Jesus Christ; and Jesus Christ was sent by God. Christ, therefore, is from God, and the Apostles are from Christ. Both of these orderly arrangements, then, are of God's will. Receiving their instructions and being full of confidence . . . they went forth in the complete assurance of the Holy Spirit, preaching the good news . . . Through countryside and city they preached; and they appointed their earliest converts, testing them by the spirit, to be the bishops and deacons of future believers.¹¹⁹

It is clear that Clement uses the titles bishop and presbyter interchangeably; and deacons assumed the role of assistants to the presbyters. From the dating of this letter about AD 95, it would appear that the presbyters already saw themselves as the successors of the apostles. Consequently, from the perspective of Clement, the presbyteral office claimed authority over others in the ordering of the church.

The *Didache* provides further information on the development of ministry around this time. The apostles, prophets and teachers were itinerant, visiting communities; the *Didache* instructed that bishops and deacons be appointed to replace them, so that a more regulated and controllable structure would prevail.¹²⁰

Elect for yourselves, therefore, bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, humble men and not lovers of money, truthful and proven; for they also serve you in the ministry of the prophets and teachers. Do not, therefore, despise

¹¹⁷ Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, vol 1. trans. Kirsopp Lake (London: William Heinemann, 1926), 197.

¹¹⁸ Hans von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. J. A Baker (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969), 91.

¹¹⁹ 1 Clem. 42, Quoted in Jurgens, *The Early Fathers* 1: 10.

¹²⁰ cf. Brown et al., in *NJBC*, s. v. "Early Church."

them; for they are your honorable men, together with the prophets and teachers.¹²¹

In the area to which the *Didache* is referring, there are still prophets and teachers conducting the Eucharist. The later final redaction of the *Didache* allows the community to nominate *episkopoi* and deacons to preside at the Eucharist if no prophet is present. Thus, the earlier prophets and teachers were evidently the appropriate people to preside at the Eucharist.¹²² Here we are introduced into the debate concerning who presided at the Eucharist.

We have seen that the early church communities (especially Pauline) featured various ministries, and individuals had different functions to perform for the community. However, there is no mention of the presider at the Eucharist. The early church communities met in houses and the twelve could not have presided at all the eucharistic celebrations. The possibility is that the leader of each house meeting may have been appointed to preside.¹²³ *Acts* makes reference to prophets and teachers at the gathering for worship in Antioch (*Acts* 13: 1-2). It is presumed that they presided at the worship:

We can therefore conclude that Scripture observes a total silence concerning a sacerdotal office to which the presidency of the Eucharist is committed and that it prescribes nothing in this regard. On the other hand, we can suppose (we have noted three indications of probability in this sense) that those who presided over the Church (Apostles, prophets and teachers) probably presided at the Eucharist, although we cannot generalize this hypothesis as valid for the Church as a whole in New Testament times.¹²⁴

It is quite possible that different people presided over the Eucharist alongside other activities such as proclamation of the blessing and memorial prayer.¹²⁵ Some activities relating to the Eucharist is implied for the twelve disciples, as it is found in the words "Do this in commemoration of me" addressed to the twelve at the Last Supper (*Luke* 22:19).¹²⁶ But the NT never mentions any of them actually presiding at the Eucharist.¹²⁷ The role of the presider at the Eucharist became significant when the Christian ministry was understood as priesthood,

¹²¹ *Didache* # 15, Quoted in Jurgen, *The Early Fathers* 1: 4.

¹²² Schillebeeckx, *The Church*, 72.

¹²³ Ian Fraser, "Liberating Faith: Basic Christian Communities and the Eucharist," *Ecumenical Review* 44 (1992): 62.

¹²⁴ Hervé-Marie Legrand, "The Presidency of the Eucharist According to the Ancient Tradition," *Worship* 53, no. 5 (1979): 415-16.

¹²⁵ David Power, "Order," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, eds. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza & John P. Galvin, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1992), 619.

¹²⁶ Raymond E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1970), 40-41.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 41

and the Eucharist came to be understood as an unbloody sacrifice replacing the bloody sacrifices of the Temple.¹²⁸ The development of the Christian concept of “priest” and of “priest as the one who presided at Eucharist” was a gradual process in the early church.¹²⁹

The letter of Ignatius of Antioch brings out the role of the presider thus: “let that be considered a valid Eucharist which is celebrated by the bishop, or by the one whom he appoints” (Smyrnaeans 8:1). Thus it became the official duty of the bishop to preside at the Eucharist as the leader of the community. Others in the community could preside at the Eucharist with the bishop’s authorisation. Even here it is not known whether the person authorised was a presbyter or another Christian. “It is astonishing that the presbytery is not mentioned in this context when we recall how pleased he is to speak of it elsewhere.”¹³⁰ As the communities expanded later in the third century, there arose the necessity of having permanent representatives of the bishop in every community for this celebration. With this, a new model, an official ministry emerged. Ministry is liturgically and canonically institutionalised. The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (d. 235) witnesses to ordination for bishops, presbyters and deacons.¹³¹

The situation became such that presbyter-bishops and deacons took over the functions of the prophets and teachers. Yet the tone of the *Didache* is downright apologetic on behalf of these officials. It reflects the respect that some Christians still had for the older charismatic positions of prophet and teacher.¹³²

2.5.2 EMERGENCE OF THREEFOLD MINISTRY

In the letters of Ignatius (c. 110 A.D), such consideration for charism is clearly lacking. Instead we find a formalised monarchical *episkopos*. A typical example from his letter to the Smyrnaeans illustrates this:

Follow your bishop, every one of you, as obediently as Jesus Christ followed the Father. Obey your clergy too, as you would the Apostles; give your deacons the same reverence that you would to a command from God. Make sure that no step affecting the Church is ever taken by anyone without the bishop’s sanction. The sole Eucharist you should consider valid is one that is

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Richard T. Szafranski, “The One Who Presides at Eucharist,” *Worship* 63, no. 4 (1989): 309.

¹³⁰ Legrand, “The Presidency of the Eucharist,” 419.

¹³¹ Ibid., 309-310.

¹³² Kee & Young, *The Living World*, 362.

celebrated by the bishop himself, or by someone authorised by him. Where the bishop is to be seen, there let all his people be . . .¹³³

It is in this letter that we find for the first time the three-order structure of church government.¹³⁴ Ignatius supposes that each community ought to have a single leader with authority to demand acquiescence to his teaching. He sees the bishop as embodying the faith of the community, and as expressing the community's unity in the faith in his presidency at the common Eucharist.¹³⁵ What Ignatius did in reality was to claim divine authority for episcopal office with the presbyters and deacons as subordinates. For him, it was necessary to have these structures for the sake of unity and orthodoxy.¹³⁶

The monarchical episcopacy evident in Ignatius did not yet affect the whole Christian world. Ignatius addresses bishops by their names in only some churches, e.g., Damas in Magnesia, Polybius in Tralles, Polycarp in Smyrna, and Onesimus in Ephesus; in some other places like Rome or Philippi he does not mention the bishop. This is an indication that the monarchical episcopate did not yet exist everywhere.¹³⁷

However, in Ignatius we see a concerted effort to deal concretely with issues that were threatening the existence of the church. He was one person who would not want to see anything disrupting the unity of the church, which reflected Jesus Christ's unity with God's will. Hence, in the absence of the apostles who first received the message from Christ, there were now official successors of the apostles who also shared in the spirit of Christ working in them as bishops, presbyters and deacons. These in the mind of Ignatius were duly constituted officers, and the communities should approach them as legitimate officers for guidance.¹³⁸

The threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons was well on the way to recognition, and all functions of the ministry - preaching, teaching, administration, and conduct of worship - were being relegated to these officers in more and more churches as time passed. We can see, then, that a well-organised system of leadership was being developed, even though there was still no universally accepted rationale for its function and authority.¹³⁹

¹³³ Ignatius, "Letter to the Smyrnaeans" in *Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers*, trans. Maxwell Staniforth, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1968), 103.

¹³⁴ Mathew, "Church Government," 175.

¹³⁵ Gray, "Ministry," 60.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Kee and Young, *The Living World*, 363.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 365.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

This may perhaps explain the point raised by Gilles that there had never been any doubt that the church was apostolic - that is, founded on and guided by the apostles transmission of Jesus' Gospel: "the early church found its answer in the person of the bishop. The first bishops were elders picked by the Apostles and commissioned by them to continue the work of the Twelve The early Christians thus believed that apostolicity continued in the office of the bishop."¹⁴⁰

However the Shepherd of Hermas whose writings take us into the Roman Church in the mid-second century, bear witness to what could be called a charismatic order - but one in which elders have the general oversight of the church.¹⁴¹ Ministry in the Shepherd of Hermas is significantly that of unity in diversity, because the apostles, prophets and teachers with the bishops and deacons are ministering side by side in congregational meetings or house-churches.¹⁴²

2.5.3 EVALUATION OF THE PERIOD

As we look at ministries in the church during this period, we become aware that there was much overlap among ministries. The purpose of ministries in the church was for the growth and development of the church. Whatever offices existed were in accordance with the needs of particular churches. Above all, they were determined by the need to proclaim the good news in the most effective way.

It is inconceivable that only one type of ministry could be adequate for the growth and development of the church. But the Pastoral Letters and Ignatius' admonition seems to have had tremendous influence on the life of the church. The threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters, and deacons became the administrative arrangement within the ecclesial community from about the middle of the second century, and subsequently developed and reached its climax in the medieval period.

Not even the rupture created by the Protestant Reformation could completely overturn the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons. The Council of Trent in an effort to counter the Protestant Reformation re-affirmed the church as clearly and visibly hierarchical.

¹⁴⁰ Anthony E. Gilles, *The People of the Creed*, (Cincinnati: St Anthony Messenger Press, 1985), 8.

¹⁴¹ Giles, *Patterns of Ministry*, 93.

¹⁴² Ibid.

With eight Canons¹⁴³ and corresponding anathemas, the Council reaffirmed the prominence of bishops, priests and deacons as official ministers of the church.

The First Vatican Council which also upheld Papal supremacy endorsed the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons that prevailed in the Church since the second century. The desire of Pope John XXIII to renew the Church brought in the Second Vatican Council. In some of its deliberations and teachings the Council revisited the issue of ministry.

2.6 SUMMARY

Ministries in the Church are as old as the church itself. The church was born within the socio-cultural environment of the Greco-Roman world. The church in its infancy saw itself as an offshoot of Judaism and was very much influenced by the social and religious worldview of the milieu into which it was born.

The subsequent organisation of the church reflected this influence, as many structures were modelled on the structures of Greco-Roman society and Jewish religious practices. The emergence of basic ecclesiologies such as the “people of God”, “household of God,” “fellowship”, etc., reflected the communal style of life which was derived from the social environment.

The apostles were responsible for the initial administration of the church. As the number of Christians increased and as some internal conflicts occurred, there was need to have more people taking responsibilities for the good of the group. Hence the early church witnessed the appointment of the seven for special services. Alongside the apostles and the seven, there were prophets and teachers. There were also elders who enjoyed respectable position in the early church community.

With the passing of the apostles and the first generation of leaders, the overall leadership of the community probably rested on the elders who at this time were recognised as exercising official oversight (*episkope*). They became the authoritative successors of the apostles. The Pastoral Letters and the letters of Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch progressively mark the formalisation of the threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters and deacons in the church. The church which hitherto had flourished with charismatic gifts and spontaneous activities, was now officially and hierarchically organised.

¹⁴³ The 8 Canons of the Council of Trent on the Sacrament of Order; cf. *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, trans. J. Waterworth (London: Burns and Oates, 1848), 72-74.

The re-visiting of the structure of ministries in the church by Vatican II was a major development. It is this important development in the history of the church that will occupy our attention in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

MINISTRY IN THE CONCILIAR AND POST CONCILIAR DOCUMENTS

In the light of the theology of ministry considered in Chapter One and the historical overview of Chapter Two, we proceed in this chapter to look at the official teaching of the church regarding ministries. From the outset it is to be noted that Vatican II stresses the “priesthood of all Christians”, thereby extending the invitation to the faithful to exercise this common priesthood. More and more lay people are now involved in many activities of the church, which were previously reserved for priests. This is often explained as being a result of the ‘shortage of priests’. But, more significantly, there have been new ways of thinking about the church since Vatican II.¹

Lay people have come to a new awareness of their responsibility in the church thanks to the Council’s recognition of the share of all the baptised in the priestly, prophetic and kingly role of Christ. We will proceed to argue that the church today has a stronger sense of community - where responsibilities are to be shared for its growth and development. This is fundamental to our further argument that there is need for the implementation of the reforms of the Council as they affect ministries in most local churches in Nigeria. There is yet to be a full response to issues affecting ministries in Nigeria since the Second Vatican Council. One of the objectives of the Council, that is, pastoral renewal is yet to be realised in the local churches of Nigeria.

¹ John E. Linnan, “Ministry Since Vatican II: A Time of Change and Growth,” *New Theological Review* 3 (1990): 33.

3.1 RENEWED ECCLESIOLOGY OF VATICAN II

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) convened by Pope John XXIII marks a turning point in the life of the church. With the Council, there is the encouragement to foster a variety of ministries.² There is no doubt that the announcement of the Council by the pope on January 25, 1959 was like an unexpected bombshell. For some it was just a surprise, and for others, it was a welcome announcement since it seemed long overdue. Yet the Council was to re-awaken the church to many of its responsibilities. It became clear, that towards the end of 1959, the coming council had gripped the popular imagination, triggered wide-ranging discussion, and awakened hopes, in a way which indicated that powerful forces had been latent in Catholicism and were now ready to break out into the open.³

With the Council an event of incalculable importance has begun, and the church is awakening in people's souls.⁴ The church was truly awakening to the many issues that needed to be addressed. The intention of Pope John XXIII in convening the Council was to open the windows of the church to let in a gust of new life and new ideas. The adoption of the word *aggiornamento* (updating), as the council's watchword, was to bring the church of the twentieth century to face the issues of the twentieth century. The pope desired to accentuate the evangelical nature of the church and de-emphasise the exaggerated lines of its juridical, hierarchical nature.⁵

From the ecumenical perspective, one could find in the documents of the Council, a pattern, a shape, a wholeness of understanding which can help us not only in our view of unity, but in the presentation of the Christian faith in the contemporary world.⁶ Various other views on the contribution of the Council to ecumenism are positive, and Goosen referring to the decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* says: "It was one of the public aims of the Council to promote Christian unity (the other being to update

² Goosen, "A New Relationship," 17.

³ John C. Dwyer, *Church History: Twenty Centuries of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press 1985), 358.

⁴ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger quotes Romano Guardini to illustrate the significance of the Second Vatican Council. See "Notes and Comments: The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council," *Communio* 13, no. 3 (1986): 239.

⁵ John Powell, *The Mystery of the Church* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co, 1967), 5.

⁶ See Michael Ramsey on "The Significance of the Second Vatican Council," *Criterion* 18 (1979): 22.

the Church), so this document, although consisting of only twenty-four fairly brief paragraphs, is important in the overall impact of the Council.”⁷

The decree on ecumenism introduces a new phase in the way the Catholic Church relates with other Christian communities. Nevertheless, the Council’s Constitution on the church, *LG*, is its central pronouncement. A closer look at the addresses of John XXIII and later Paul VI at the opening and closing of the conciliar sessions reveals that attention has repeatedly been drawn to the Council’s principal purpose: to enable the church to come to an awareness of herself and her mission in the world. The Constitution on the church is the Council’s reply to this need.⁸

Other decrees such as *Gaudium et Spes*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and *Ad Gentes* (hereafter GS, AA and AG) provide the vehicles for the realisation of this awareness and renewal in the structures of the church. Renewal meant new energy for the apostolate, a new impulse to Christian living, new forms adapted to modern circumstances, the presentation of the Church’s teaching in more intelligible terms, more vigorous service to humanity.⁹

The Council came at a time when the church was due for “re-examination” and, in this respect, the Council aimed at the following: a deeper self-awareness of the church, internal renewal, the bringing together of all Christians in unity and dialoguing with contemporary society. The focus of this study is principally on how the reforms of the Council have affected the development of ministries in the church particularly in Nigeria.

Therefore the renewed ecclesiologies take cognizance of the images used in Vatican II which reflect most images with which the early church communities (Chapter Two) identified themselves, an example being that of the ‘people of God.’ The process of history and the eventual monarchical and strongly hierarchical ecclesiology of the medieval period quite overshadowed these earliest images of the church which Vatican II retrieved and re-emphasised.

⁷ Gideon Goosen, *Bringing Churches Together*, (Sydney: E. J. Dwyer, 1993), 35.

⁸ Austin Flannery ed., *Vatican II the Church Constitution* (Dublin: Scepter Books, 1967), 9.

⁹ Edward J. Gratsch, *Where Peter Is: A Survey of Ecclesiology* (New York: Alba House, 1975), 233.

It is in the context of renewed ecclesiologies that we must look at ministries in the church. This presupposes a redistribution of the diverse functions in the church community which hitherto had been concentrated in a few hands.

3.1.1 STRUCTURE OF MINISTRIES IN PRE-VATICAN II CHURCH

In pre-Vatican II ecclesiology, the church was structured pyramidically with the pope at the top, and with the bishops being more or less the delegates of the pope's jurisdiction. The bishops who had a share of the papal authority could delegate to others, that is the priests. The deacons at this time were located at the lower rungs with less authority. The laity were at the bottom of the church pyramid with no authority and no important role in the life of the church. They were considered the beneficiaries of the spiritual intercessions of the clergy. The way of thinking about the church before Vatican II was, on the whole, structural and institutional:

The image which most naturally suited this concept was that of pyramid, ascending from the broad base of non-ordained laity, through various layers of hierarchical structure, reaching its apex in the Pope from whom flowed downward all authority, teaching, ministry and mission.¹⁰

One of the important, long-term consequences of the reform movement initiated by Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) was the accentuation of the difference between clergy and lay people. There was also the influence of the Scholastic theologies of the 12th and 13th centuries, which built on the Platonic and neo-Platonic theory of the existence of hierarchy of beings. Therefore, as creation was thought to be through intermediaries, so was salvation through the mediation of higher beings.¹¹

The Platonic framework was applied to the role of lay people in the church. That means the salvation of the laity could come only through the priests who derived their authority from the bishops, and the bishops depended on the pope who was closest to God. This was not a surprising development, for as we noted already in

¹⁰Hume, *Towards a Civilization of Love*, 66.

¹¹See Edward P. Mahoney, "Neoplatonism, the Greek Commentators, and Renaissance Aristotelianism," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought* ed., Dominic J. O'Meara (New York: State University of New York Press, 1982), 173-177; Kuncheria Pathil ed., "Laity in the Church," *Jeevadhara*, 26, no. 154 (1996): 252.

Chapter Two, the social and cultural environment of the church affects its organisation. Thus, there developed the sharp dividing line between the clerics and lay people, which prevailed in the church prior to Vatican II. But Vatican II retrieved many of the images found in the NT, some of which we shall now proceed to explain.

3.1.2 CHURCH AS MYSTERY

Vatican II re-shaped ecclesiology in favour of the community as the historical milieu where the gifts of the Spirit are manifested in an always new, vital way.¹² The first element of the Council's ecclesiology is "mystery". The Council offers a deeper reflection on the mystery of the church in *LG*. The first chapter of the document sets forth the church as arising from the purpose of God the Father 'to call together those who believe in Christ in the holy church'; as the reign of Christ, God's Son, a reign or kingdom already present in the church in mystery; as indwelt and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.¹³ Thus the beginning and the continuous life of the church is in association with the inner life of the Blessed Trinity; and the church is seen as "a people made one in the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."¹⁴

The title "mystery" was applied to the church because it is an 'object of faith', and not simply a visible institution. The church is a mystery because it is part of God's hidden plan of salvation that was revealed in Jesus Christ. The Council understands the 'church as a Mystery' to mean that the church is a divine, transcendent, and salvific reality which is visibly present among men.¹⁵ This does not mean that the church is divorced from the reality of human existence. The mystery aspect of the church highlights the impossibility of full comprehension, yet the underlying factor is that there is a difference between the church and all merely human associations. The church is a mystery is not to be seen exclusively or even primarily as a juridical reality measured by standards derived from the social, political or cultural spheres.¹⁶ The church cannot be

¹² Christian Duquoc, "Vatican II and Crisis in Ministry," *Theology Digest* 30, no. 2 (1982): 113.

¹³ Christopher Butler, *The Theology of Vatican II* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1967), 56.

¹⁴ *LG*. #4.

¹⁵ Bonaventure Kloppenburg, *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Illinois: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), 14.

¹⁶ Kevin McNamara ed., *Vatican II: The Constitution on the Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1968), 76.

fully objectified because of our involvement in it. Thus the term 'mystery' as applied to the church signifies many things:

It implies that the Church is not fully intelligible to the finite mind of man, and that the reason for this lack of intelligibility is not the poverty but the richness of the Church itself. Like other supernatural mysteries, the Church is known by a kind of connaturality.¹⁷

The church is known by a kind of intersubjectivity. Therefore, the church pertains to the mystery of Christ; Christ is carrying out in the church his plan of redemption. He is dynamically at work in the church through his spirit.¹⁸ This explanation is understood here in the light of the various objections raised in the Council at different stages of the discussion of the title "mystery" in reference to the church. One such objection was that the church was not a mystery, since it was visible. Nevertheless, the biblical term of "mystery" sought to indicate the true nature of the church in all its contrasting facets, in an endeavour to compensate for the rather one-sided view of the church, which had prevailed since Trent.¹⁹

The true sense of the mystery is not simply that it is a matter beyond our understanding, but a vast sacred reality that has in fact been revealed to us. It is the mystery of Christ, the plan for all things that God designed from eternity to take effect 'in Christ.'²⁰

3.1.3 CHURCH AS SACRAMENT - THE BODY OF CHRIST

Many biblical images such as sheepfold, piece of land, temple, holy city and building of God, are used to describe the church.²¹ The church is also the Body of Christ. This is an important image, which Paul employs to describe the church. For Paul, the church is not just a body; it is the Body of Christ, indeed it is Christ. As all the members of the human body, though they are many, form one body, so also are the

¹⁷ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

¹⁹ Aloys Grillmeier, "The People of God," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, 5 vols. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 1: 138.

²⁰ Charles Hill, *Mystery of Life: A Theology of Church* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1990), 6. He reflects further the teaching of *LG* that the Church is the mystery of Christ in its ecclesial, community, historical and biblical dimensions.

²¹ cf. *LG*. #5 & 6.

faithful in Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12). The emphasis here is on the relationship of the members to each other and their unity in Christ:

By communicating His Spirit, Christ made his brothers and sisters, called together from all nations, mystically the components of His own Body. In that Body, the life of Christ is poured into the believers who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified.²²

With Vatican II, there was a shift of emphasis from thinking of the church as an institution to the church as mystery, spiritual reality, sacrament, which assumes particular forms in history. The Council's teaching is that through her relationship with Christ, the church is a kind of sacrament or a sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all humankind.²³ The church is a sacrament in Christ, since Christ himself is the fundamental or primary sacrament. Therefore the church becomes a sacrament by derivation; a sign and instrument of Christ; it is the sacrament of the glorified Lord and his Spirit.²⁴ This vision of the church as sacrament found expression in the following terms in the document *Ex Ecclesia Coetibus* of 1986:

The Church is the universal sacrament of salvation, she is the people of God who welcome the gift of salvation and at the same time it is the people of God who proclaim, announce and communicate the gift of salvation to people in every age. At one and the same time she is the "saved" community and the "saving" community.²⁵

The church as sacrament and mystery of Christ reflects the body, the church, in the entire life of Christ who is the sacrament of the world.

Through his Spirit, the world continues to have life and growth in salvation. Thus, the church is an actual event of grace when it appears most concretely in actions where there is a visible expression of people bound together in grace.²⁶ This is the sharing in

²² LG. #7.

²³ cf. LG. #1.

²⁴ Kloppenburg, *The Ecclesiology*, 23.

²⁵ See the 1986 Synod Consultation Document *Ex Ecclesia Coetibus* (Vocation and mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World Twenty Five years after the Second Vatican Council), (London: CTS, 1986), 14.

²⁶ Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 69.

the divine life of the people of God. The final purpose of human history is nothing less than sharing forever in the divine life.²⁷

3.1.4 CHURCH AS COMMUNION

The church has also to be considered in its innermost quality. The understanding of church as sacramental needs to be complemented. The church has also to be considered in its interpersonal character, and this is supplied by looking at the church as communion. Communion ecclesiology is central and fundamental to the documents of Vatican II. Through this model, we are able to re-emphasise the reality of the church as fellowship, *koinonia*, which prevailed at the beginning of the Christian era as we saw in Chapter Two.

Communion ecclesiology has some implications for our arguments. This will come out clearly when we look at ministries in the church in Nigeria in Chapter Five. The strong sense of community, which was greatly obscured in the medieval church, was re-emphasised with all members of the church identified as belonging to one organic entity. Vatican II's conception of the church is that of one body united in Christ and with a positive orientation towards people of other faiths. The church is not just an idea but a body, and the communal character of the church finds expression in the "We" oriented character.²⁸ Sensitive to this communal image a Christian does not say, "I am the Church", but rather "We are the Church." And "We" is not a group that isolates itself, but one that sees itself within the entire community of the members of Christ.²⁹

This conception of the church as a community becomes a source of strength for it. The church no longer considers itself with a sense of superiority. Ecumenism is encouraged. Communion becomes a central and powerful idea in the ecumenical quest of the late twentieth century.³⁰ For theologians like Dulles and Schillebeeckx the church is the effective sign, the sacrament, of mutual unity or *communio* of the whole of humankind, in and through her union with the living God. This communion is primarily interior, but it expresses itself by external bonds of creed, worship, and

²⁷ Gerald O'Collins, *Fundamental Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 115.

²⁸ Ratzinger, "Notes and Comments," 241.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Denis Edwards, *Called to be Church in Australia* (Homebush: St Paul, 1987), 84.

ecclesial fellowship.³¹ “Predictably, the churches are finding in *koinonia* not only an historical basis but an adequate ecclesiological principle for dealing with unity and diversity in church life today.”³²

In many places the church today is striving truly to be a sign and instrument of salvation.³³ Today we are emphasising what we have in common, our sharing of God’s life and the fact that we are brothers and sisters in having this gift of salvation that makes us co-heirs with Christ.³⁴ The idea of communion has been expressed in the following terms by the current Australian Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue on the theology of the church:

The reconciliation effected by Christ is realised by the work of the Spirit, who creates *koinonia* through the gospel proclaimed in word and sacrament. *Koinonia*, often translated as ‘communion’ or ‘fellowship’ (2 Cor. 13:14), usually signifies a relationship based on participation in a shared reality. . . Its basic verbal form means ‘to share’, ‘to participate’, ‘to have part in’, ‘to have something in common’, or ‘to act together.’³⁵

The reality of the church as communion is seen as the integrating aspect, and the central content, of the ‘mystery’, the divine plan for the salvation of humankind. The church as a communion is the new people, the messianic people, which has Christ as the head. For its heritage, it has the dignity and freedom of God’s children with the law of love just as Christ loved, and it sees the kingdom of God as its goal. Christ establishes this communion as a communion of life, love and truth.³⁶

In communion ecclesiology, reference is made to the common responsibility of all members, including lay people. But this point is most emphasised in *LG*’s chapter on the People of God where there was a shift of emphasis from hierarchy to people. A framework is provided for understanding the relationship of clergy, religious and lay people. In other words, the church is primarily the people of God, and the functions of

³¹ See Edward Schillebeeckx, *World and Church*, trans. N. D. Smith (London: Sheed & Ward, 1971), 91; Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 55.

³² Hill, *Mystery of Life*, 37.

³³ Goosen, *Bringing Churches*, 8-9.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ cf. *Communion and Mission*: “A Report from the Australian Lutheran - Roman Catholic Dialogue on Theology of Church,” (1995), 6.

³⁶ cf. *LG*, #9.

the hierarchy must be considered in this context. The members of the hierarchy are first and foremost members of the people of God.

3.1.5 CHURCH AS A PEOPLE OF GOD

Understanding the church as People of God is not simply seeing the faithful in contrast to the hierarchy, but taking a new look at the *whole* reality of the church. Debates during Vatican II eventually brought out the significance of the “People of God.”³⁷ In his comments on the *LG*, McBrien explains how it met with the initial opposition of the council fathers. Several bishops found the first draft ‘too juridical’ in tone and too little concerned with the church as mystery. Cardinal Montini (later Pope Paul VI) who emphasised the latter point found fault with the draft’s lack of structural coherence. Most bishops disagreed with the first draft because among other things:

It portrayed the laity too much as mere appendages of the hierarchy . . . was insufficiently sensitive to the legitimate role of the state alongside that of the Church . . . the absence of any genuine ecumenical dimension, and lack of attention to the works of Eastern fathers of the Church and to various biblical images of the Church, especially that of people of God.³⁸

In short the draft was criticised by Bishop Emile de Smedt of Bruges who challenged its ‘triumphalism’, ‘clericalism’, and ‘juridicalism’.³⁹ The notion of “people of God” serves to give a deeper understanding of the church. It expresses the love and mercy of God towards all people. It serves particularly to demonstrate the continuity and also the difference between the OT and NT, between the constitution of the covenant and the fulfilment of the promise.⁴⁰ The fundamental theological insight underlying the title is related to the person of Jesus: Jesus the Messiah makes us the people of God.⁴¹

Christ has made the new people a kingdom and priests to God the Father, though they differ from one another, the common priesthood of the faithful and the

³⁷ Grillmeier, “The People of God,” in *Commentary*, 1: 153.

³⁸ Richard McBrien, “The Church (*Lumen Gentium*),” in *Modern Catholicism, Vatican II and After* ed. Adrian Hastings (London: SPCK, 1991), 84-85.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ See Grillmeier, “The People of God,” in *Commentary*, 1: 153.

⁴¹ Daniel J. Harrington, “Why is the Church the People of God?” in *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda* eds., Lucien Richard et al (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987), 49.

ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated.⁴² In this model of ecclesiology, all people are allowed to exercise their God-given talents without unnecessary distinctions since all share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly life of Jesus Christ. The entire Christian community is designated as a “priestly people” (cf. 1 Pt. 2:9). They exercise their priesthood by offering themselves as living sacrifices to God; and exercise their prophetic role by giving witness through a life of faith, charity and praise.⁴³ Küng’s presentation of the church proposes four things that should characterise it:

- (a) All the faithful belong to the people of God; there must be no clericalization of the Church . . . (b) Everyone belongs to the people of God through God’s call: there must be no attempt to make the Church private and exclusive . . . (c) We all belong to the people of God through our human decision: there must be no hypostatisation of the Church . . . (d) The people of God is an historical people: there must be no idealisation of the Church.⁴⁴

The church is a community where all members belong, share and exercise their priestly functions without class distinctions. This is the rediscovery of the church as the people of God which has had tremendous consequences for transforming the whole church and its mission. The church in Nigeria has yet fully to actualise the reforms of Vatican II in relation to the effective participation of the lay people in the ministries of the church. This is of major importance for the church in the country especially now that there is a renewed consciousness of the role of the laity in the church. The bishops of Nigeria have not made any special effort to promote a further development of ministries. It has to be noted that if the church exists as agent of the kingdom, all the baptised are deacons, servants, and ministers of the kingdom.⁴⁵

Though the Council emphasised the church as the people of God, it had not lost sight of the hierarchy. It was simply reversing previous emphases by, to some extent, putting the latter after the former. The Council presented the hierarchy as

⁴² LG. #10

⁴³ Gratsch, *Where Peter Is*, 237-38.

⁴⁴ Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Search Press, 1968), 125-131.

⁴⁵ Patrick J. Brennan, *Re-Imagining the Parish* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 12.

existing for the nurturing and growth of the people of God.⁴⁶ There is no indication that the hierarchy should overshadow the rest of the people of God. The Council emphasises collegiality. Collegiality means pope and bishops *working together* in the leadership of the church.⁴⁷ Hopefully, in time this will help to remove the previous monarchical style of leadership, which inhibited *koinonia* and the flourishing of ministries.

The rediscovery of collegiality has been associated with a renewed appreciation of the conciliar nature of the church. The bishops are to be seen from a college or group and not merely as individuals. The bishop is not the bishop on his own, but only in the Catholic community of those who were bishops before him, are bishops with him, and will be bishops after him.⁴⁸ The collegiality of the bishops points to the fact that the universal church is a network of local churches.

Thus we see the emergence of the image of the church as a servant not a ruler. This service-oriented ecclesiology is fundamental for our understanding of the development of ministries in the conciliar and post-conciliar documents.

3.2 DEVELOPMENT OF MINISTRIES

The approach to ministries in the conciliar and post-conciliar documents of Vatican II is a consequence of the renewed church's understanding of itself. This ecclesial self-awareness stems from a broader understanding of the mission of the church as the task of the whole church rather than that of the hierarchy. The central thesis and teaching of Vatican II is not taking the hierarchy as the starting point. Everybody functions in the church whether in the hierarchy or not.⁴⁹

The participation of all in the priestly and prophetic ministry of Christ is highlighted (*LG*: 10-12). The common priesthood of all the faithful is emphasised. By their regeneration and anointing with the Holy Spirit, the baptised are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood.⁵⁰ Further in the document, it is pointed out that

⁴⁶ *LG*. #18.

⁴⁷ *LG*. #22.

⁴⁸ Ratzinger, "Notes and Comments," 246.

⁴⁹ Thomas Groome, "Signs of Hope: At the Grass Roots," *PACE* 12 (1981): 1.

⁵⁰ *LG*. #10.

the eternal high priest, in uniting lay people in an intimate way with his own life and mission, grants them a share in his priestly function of spiritual worship, so that God may be glorified and humanity saved.⁵¹

Jesus himself is the source of ministry. Analysing the christological basis of ministry, Osborne regards Vatican II's understanding of the threefold ministry of Jesus as teacher, priest and pastor as the foundation for every church ministry.⁵² Therefore the threefold ministry of Jesus affects the church at all levels of its ministry, episcopal, presbyteral, diaconal and lay. Since Jesus is teacher, sanctifier and leader, the whole church must reflect Jesus' work of teaching, sanctifying and leading.⁵³ The work of the Spirit in the church also pervades the various ministries. The Council underscores this point in its consideration of "charisms", the special gifts of grace in the church:

The charismata are not primarily extraordinarily but common; they are not of one kind, but manifold; they are not limited to a special group of persons, but are truly universal in the Church . . . they do not hover on the periphery of the Church but are eminently central and essential to it. In this sense one should speak of a charismatic structure of the Church which embraces and goes beyond the structure of its government.⁵⁴

The ecclesiological corollary according to McBrien is that the apostolate of lay people is a sharing in the saving mission of the church. Therefore through baptism and confirmation the Lord himself appoints all to this apostolate.⁵⁵ Baptised lay people *ipso facto* have something to contribute to the life and mission of the church.

Vatican II refers to the participation in the priestly role of Jesus Christ which every baptised person has by right. Thus reference to ministry in the church is to be understood as that priestly task and service which is primarily entrusted to the whole community of the baptised.⁵⁶ Thus we can speak of the call to the entire people of God to exercise prophetic ministry according to Vatican II. The basis of this prophetic

⁵¹ LG. #34.

⁵² Kenan B. Osborne, *Priesthood: A History of the Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 317.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 318-19.

⁵⁴ See Grillmeier, "The People of God," in *Commentary*, 1: 165; See also Hans Küng on "Charismatic Structure of the Church," *Concilium* 4 (1965): 23-33.

⁵⁵ Richard McBrien gives some ecclesiological corollaries to the document LG, cf. "The Church (*Lumen Gentium*)," in *Modern Catholicism*, 93; See also LG. #33 & 37.

⁵⁶ Borders, "Royal Priesthood," 169.

ministry is the gift of the Spirit to the holy people of God. As already noted, the role of the prophet in the early church was to speak for God, and reveal his messages. Therefore by sharing also in the prophetic office of Christ, the people of God exercise their prophetic role in bearing witness to the truth of Christ's revelation in their lives. As a prophetic people, they can give testimony to the faith by word and deed.

It is important to note that the council's stress on the wide variety of prophetic roles of the laity is to be recognised by pastors as one of their special responsibilities in the church. Christ has made all who are baptised and confirmed his witnesses, therefore they are to bear witness to him and give answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them. In addition, they are to offer the witness of a holy life.⁵⁷ Exercise of this prophetic role by all believers could become a significant means of strengthening ecumenical bonds.

3.2.1 LITURGICAL MINISTRIES

In the document *Ministeria Quaedam*, (hereafter MQ) we are able to trace the development of specific lay liturgical ministries. Pope Paul VI in 1972 declared that lectors and acolytes were to be official lay ministries. The pope stressed the lay character of these ministries. Formerly acolyte and lector were classified under minor orders alongside porter and exorcist. They were preparatory steps toward the sacred orders. In view of the fact that many functions which went with these two minor orders were in fact exercised by the laity, the pope declared: "It seems opportune . . . to reform this discipline and to adapt it to present-day needs, eliminating what is obsolete, retaining what is useful and determining what is necessary . . ."⁵⁸

Accordingly the ministries of lector and acolyte were no longer to be seen as "minor orders" or only as steps leading to ordination, and they were not reserved to clerics or connected with the clerical state. These two ministries are important for liturgical functions in the life of a Christian community. They are not a share in the

⁵⁷ cf. LG. #10 & 27.

⁵⁸ Paul VI, *Ministeria Quaedam*, (Apostolic Letter on First Tonsure, Minor Orders and the Subdiaconate) cf. Austin Flannery ed., *Vatican II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents* (Dublin: Costello, 1975), 427; AAS 64 (1972), 529-530.

priesthood of orders, but are exercised by lay people in virtue of their share in the priesthood of Christ through baptism.⁵⁹

These two offices are outside the sacrament of orders and have a canonical status and a rite of installation common to all parts of the Latin Church. They are not the only liturgical offices to which people can be named and into which they can be inducted by an official blessing.⁶⁰ In other words, it is at the disposition of the church to create other ministries. Pope Paul VI urged local bishops' conferences to approach the Holy See with such requests regarding their own ministerial needs. But in some local churches, as in Nigeria, this is yet to be given serious consideration.

It is evident, from the rites for the installation to the ministries of lector and acolyte that women are excluded, although women are permitted to read in the church. But it is questionable that lector and acolyte should be called 'lay ministries' when a certain group of the lay people is excluded from these ministries. If, as it is clearly stated, these are lay ministries, there is no justification for denying a group of lay people official recognition for roles which they fill in the church.

Whatever reasons could be offered for the non existence of these ministries in some local churches, they are not sustainable, because in *MQ*, it is categorically stated that these ministries exist in their own right, and should not at any time be considered as substitutes especially in areas where there are shortages of priests. In stating that regions could request other ministries as the need arises, Pope Paul paved the way for an enlargement of the role of lay people.⁶¹

The instruction *Immensae Caritatis*⁶² (hereafter IC) gives a further development to liturgical ministries specifying steps towards facilitating the distribution of the Eucharist. We shall consider this in detail later in Chapter Five but for now, we give a further reflection on the various ministries of Vatican II.

⁵⁹ David Power, *Gifts that Differ: Lay Ministries Established and Unestablished* (New York: Pueblo, 1980), 5.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶² *Immensae Caritatis* is the Instruction on Facilitating Sacramental Eucharistic Communion in Particular Circumstances, by the Congregation for the Discipline of Sacraments issued in January 1973, cf. Flannery ed., *Vatican II* (1975), 225.

3.2.2 VARIETIES OF MINISTRIES OF VATICAN II

The development of ministry other than liturgical ones is touched on in the Apostolic Exhortation, *EN*. Regarding non-ordained ministries the pope stated:

It is certain that, side-by-side with the ordained ministries, whereby certain people are appointed pastors and consecrate themselves in a special way to the service of the community, the Church recognises the place of non-ordained ministries which are able to offer a particular service to the Church.⁶³

With *EN*, the development of lay ministries received a stronger endorsement and encouragement from the church.⁶⁴ These ministries in the church are very valuable and have enabled the church to consolidate itself and to grow and spread. Some of these ministries highlighted in the document *EN* are as already indicated in the Introduction of this study.⁶⁵

The ministry of catechist in particular is given elaborate treatment in Vatican II's *AG*. To this we shall return in Chapter Four. However it suffices to note that while the documents *EN* and *AG* reflect the recognition the church gives to other ministries, it appears that the emphasis is on the lay ministries as distinct from ordained ministry.

Pope John Paul II is particularly pre-occupied with emphasising this difference between lay and ordained ministries as in *Christifideles Laici* (hereafter CL):

The various ministries, offices and roles that the lay faithful legitimately fulfil in the liturgy, in the transmission of faith, and in the pastoral structure of the Church, ought to be exercised in conformity to their specific lay vocation which is different from that of the sacred ministry.⁶⁶

⁶³ Paul VI, *EN* #73.

⁶⁴ Peter Lynch, "Educating for New Ministries," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 64, no. 1 (1987): 385.

⁶⁵ See the Introduction to this thesis, 2.

⁶⁶ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on Vocation and Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World), (Homebush: St. Paul Publications, 1989), 61.

3.2.3 ORDAINED AND NON-ORDAINED

The distinction between the ordained and non-ordained as expressed by Vatican II could be seen in the way the diaconate is developed as a ministry. *AP*, the Apostolic Letter containing norms for the order of diaconate, places the diaconate as an intermediary ministry between the laity and the ordained. In the opening sentence of *AP*, Pope Paul VI says: "For the nurturing and constant growth of people of God, Christ the Lord instituted in the Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the church."⁶⁷ Yet deacons are placed at the lower level of the ordained ministry, and with Vatican II, they receive the imposition of hands not for the priesthood, but for the ministry.⁶⁸

The Council's concept of the diaconate as imposition of hands for ministry brings in ambiguity regarding the diaconate. However, "the ministry of the deacon, which derives from his ordination, is not set over against the ministry of particular lay people, nor the efforts of all the baptised to live out their own baptism."⁶⁹

The fact remains that all ministries are derived from baptism, and baptism enables all Christians to share in the priesthood of Christ himself who came not to be served but to serve (cf. Mt. 20:28). The Council is however giving a clear indication that there are two categories of ministry in the church, that is the ordained and the non-ordained.

The discussion on the hierarchical structure of the church reflects the fact that varieties of offices were set up to ensure that the people of God would have pastors and would enjoy continual growth:

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 to salvation through their free, combined and well-ordered efforts in pursuit of a common goal.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ AAS. (1972), 534.

⁶⁸ LG. #26.

⁶⁹ Gerard Kelly and Richard Lennan, "The Diaconate: Possibilities and Challenges," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 74, no. 2 (1997): 137.

⁷⁰ LG. #18.

The justification the Council gives for having ordained ministers is so that the people of God will be nourished. While the Council stresses the importance of ordained ministers, it does not make allowance for domination; rather holy orders like other ministries in the church is a form of service to the community. The passage just cited above brings to light an understanding of the ordained ministry in which the emphasis has shifted from sacred power to service of the community.

In the documents of Vatican II the term “ministry” was reserved for the three offices of the ordained ministry, while “apostolate” was employed for the lay minister. Thus the distinction of terms “ministry” for ordained and “apostolate” for unordained was deliberately made to indicate the “essential difference” between the ordained and unordained ministries in the church.⁷¹ This has not been the case after the council:

Today official Church statements, liturgical rituals, theological discussions, religious education at all levels, and pastoral directives speak of ministry for both the ordained and the non-ordained. The term apostolate for lay ministry has not been carried through. The documents of Vatican II, however, teach that there is an essential difference between the ordained minister and the unordained minister; cf. LG 10. Nowhere do the documents attempts to give a theological description or definition of this essential difference . . .⁷²

Thus we understand the tone of *AA* in which the Council reiterated this point by referring to the apostolate of the lay people as significant in the church. This decree urged the assumption of greater responsibility, with autonomy of organisation, on the part of lay people. The decree is entirely devoted to explaining the apostolate as a lay vocation. It clarifies the basis for this apostolate, the aims, the field of action, forms and methods, orientation and instruments, the formation and training required, etc.⁷³ The Council recognised that “There are many persons who can hear the gospel and recognise Christ only through lay people who live near them.”⁷⁴

The ministry of the church flows from the participation in the activity of the mystical body designed to spread the kingdom of Christ, so that all people may have a

⁷¹ Osborne, *Priesthood*, 324.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *The Laity Today*, 64.

⁷⁴ *AA*. #13.

share in the saving redemption of Christ.⁷⁵ The foundation for this ministry is derived from the baptismal right of all. The consecration of the people into a kingly priesthood and a holy nation, as reflected in the words of St. Peter (1 Pet. 2:4-10), is to enable the people to discharge their unique responsibility in the church.

3.2.4 THE APOSTOLATE

The Council stresses the fact that all Christians share in this general apostolate, but in differing ways. Therefore the lay people do not derive their right and duty to the apostolate from the hierarchy, rather they have it through baptism and confirmation and the special gifts which they have been given by the Holy Spirit. This still needs to be stressed in the church because there are still situations where priests think they are everything, and others only have to be answerable to them. It is one of the issues the re-organisation of ministry in the church in Nigeria will be addressing in Chapter Five. The reforms of the Council are aiming at activities of the community being carried out by both the ordained and the non-ordained working together in harmony and mutual respect. There is no room for monopoly. This responsibility of being about the work of Christ's church is ours regardless of our state in life or the different roles we may actually exercise.⁷⁶ This call is addressed to each Christian:

We are all called to be co-creators with God, advancing the Lord's kingdom in our day. Every person's contribution is vitally needed so that together, in a rich diversity, we can build up the Christian community by enhancing the sacredness and growth of others.⁷⁷

The life of the church is not confined to clerical contributions, but all members of the church should be involved. Pastoral Theology therefore can no longer be limited to pastoral functions of the clergy.⁷⁸ This implies that the apostolate takes into account *all* members and *all* functions which in one way or another, contribute to the self-

⁷⁵ cf. AG. #3.

⁷⁶ See Bishop Howard Hubbard's discussion on "Vision for parish, Planning and Restructuring," *Origins* 25, no. 42 (1996): 728.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ Karl Rahner, "Preface to Pastoral Theology," *Concilium* 3, no. 1 (1965): 3.

realisation of the church.⁷⁹ As a consequence of this, there is need for collaborative ministry. The pastors of the church should be well aware of the fact that the duty of carrying out the salvific mission is not to be shouldered by them alone. On the contrary, there should be that understanding of their duty to shepherd the faithful and recognise their ministries and charisms, so that all according to their proper roles may co-operate in this common undertaking with one mind.⁸⁰

3.2.5 SPECIFIC ECCLESIAL MINISTRIES

The recognition given by the Council to the lay people in ecclesial services includes teaching of the church's doctrine, various tasks in liturgical celebrations and special services in the care of souls. "The laity have an active part to play in the apostolic life of the church, where they have to evangelise, catechise and care for those in need."⁸¹ It is interesting to see how important ministries of the church are evolved here; the ministry of evangelisation or ministry of the word, ministry of catechists or teaching ministry and ministry of charity. The Council has restored various ministries which were practised in the early church. Evangelising and catechising involve the missionary activity of the church. The decree *AG* builds on what is already stated in *LG*, that it is of the essence of the church of Christ to be missionary.

One of the strong emphases of the decree is that the whole people of God have a share in the missionary task. The Council strongly recommends the need for various forms of ministry for the implanting and growth of the Christian community. And once these forms of service have been called forth from the body of the faithful by the divine call of the Spirit, they are to be carefully fostered and nurtured by all.⁸²

The Council recognises the fact that evangelisation cannot progress without the co-operation of lay people. Lay people are needed to teach in schools, administer temporal affairs, collaborate in parochial and diocesan activity, establish and promote various forms of the apostolate so that those who are evangelised will be fully integrated into church and take up significant roles in the life of the church.⁸³ So lay

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *LG*, #30.

⁸¹ Kathleen Walsh, "The Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*)," in *Modern Catholicism*, 152.

⁸² *AG*, #15.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 41.

people have the apostolate of manifesting Christ's message by words and deeds and to communicate his grace to the world.⁸⁴

As sharers in the role of Christ as priest, prophet, and king, lay people exercise special ministries in the life and activity of the church. Their activity is so necessary within the church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is often unable to achieve its full effectiveness.⁸⁵ Thus, there is one People of God with many forms of service, but unity of purpose.⁸⁶ Lay people, like the clergy, are called to play a role in the mission of the church.

3.2.6 MUTUALITY IN MINISTRY

The roles of the lay people and clergy, complement one another and are not to be in competition. This is one issue to which many priests are yet to adjust, having been used to a 'do-it-alone' style. Yet the Council's stand on collaboration cannot be over-emphasised. The decree on the ministry and life of priests *PO*, states that priests in common with all who have been reborn in the font of Baptism, are brothers among brothers and sisters as members of the same body of Christ which all are commanded to build. Thus serious responsibility is laid on the clergy who are expected to be sincere in their appreciation and promotion of lay people's dignity and of the special role the lay people have to play in the Church's mission:

They should be willing to listen to lay people, give brotherly consideration to their wishes, and recognise their experience and competence in the different fields of human activity. In this way they will be able to recognise along with them the signs of the times.⁸⁷

The bishops too are encouraged to acknowledge and promote the active role of lay people. The decree on the pastoral office of Bishops, *Christus Dominus*, (hereafter CD) urges bishops in exercising this ministry, to ensure that the faithful are duly

⁸⁴ John B. Sheerin, *Commentary on the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1966), 41.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁸⁶ *AA.* #2.

⁸⁷ *PO.* #9.

involved in church affairs; they should recognise their right and duty to play their part in building up the mystical body of Christ.⁸⁸

The bishops have also the duty of promoting the holiness of their clergy, religious and lay people according to the vocation of each individual.⁸⁹ The idea of the Council is that the bishops should be committed to the welfare and effective participation of all the people of God in the church.

The issue of the relationship between priests and lay people occupied most of the deliberations of the 1987 Synod of bishops, and most bishops were quite vocal on this point. Archbishop Chiasson situates the relationship that should exist between the clergy and the laity in the context of *communio*. He stated in his address on that occasion that the dignity and the role of lay men and women should not be affirmed in opposition to or in competition with the clergy:

This people born of baptism include lay men and lay women as well as ordained ministers. This shared belonging to the family of God tears down the wall that separates the laity from the clergy. After that, the dichotomous language that describes lay people in terms of their lack of clerical status loses its usefulness.⁹⁰

Cardinal Mulala of Kinshasa agreed that priests share with lay people the condition of disciples, and priests work with lay people for the transformation and christianization of the world.⁹¹ Ecclesial ministries should develop in such a manner that the lay people become accustomed to working in the parish in close collaboration with priests, so that apostolic and missionary endeavours are carried out effectively.

The parish then becomes the basic community where various ministries are developed. The parish stands out as the community where people receive the formation, training, support and spiritual nourishment they need to fulfil this call to shared responsibility, this call to exercise the priestly ministry of Jesus in our world

⁸⁸ CD. #16.

⁸⁹ Ibid., #15.

⁹⁰ See Archbishop Donat Chiasson's speech "The People Born of Baptism," *Origins* 17, no. 22 (1987): 394.

⁹¹ See *Origins* Ibid., 400.

today.⁹² But in order for this to be realised, priests in parishes need to be personally committed to apostolic collaboration with lay people.

Ministries be they ordained or non-ordained, are for the growth and progress of the church. Dichotomy between certain ministries does not help progress and growth. A mutual appreciation for all forms of ministries and a coordination of them that leaves intact the particular qualities of each is required. This is needed to secure a spirit of unity, so that destructive rivalries may be avoided, common goals achieved, and a spirit of fraternal charity radiated by the whole apostolate. And this is certainly most appropriate in a church the nature of whose mission requires apostolic harmony and cooperation among clergy, religious, and lay people.⁹³

3.3 MINISTRIES IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

We have already seen the distinction between ministry and mission in Chapter One. This gives us a clear picture of what Vatican II refers to when discussing ministry. As it is well stated in *AG*, the church is by its nature oriented to mission, and from *LG* we note that this missionary mandate is fulfilled through the exercise of those various ministries instituted for service, as each member participates in the one priesthood of Christ.⁹⁴ “*Missio*, like *communio*, belongs to the nature of the Church; ministry is a function or activity of the Church. The Church is mandated to mission, as it is called to *koinonia*; the Church is graced by charisms which find expression in ministry.”⁹⁵

Vatican II places strong emphasis on lay people as being missionaries by baptism and so ministry is implied in this context. But ministry implied here is that lay people could be called in different ways to cooperate with the apostolate of the hierarchy. This is the emphasis of lay apostolate/Catholic Action as we saw in Chapter One. The idea of delegating certain sacred functions to the laity only in emergency

⁹² See Hubbard, “Vision for parish,” 728.

⁹³ Peter Foote et al., eds., *Laymen: Vatican II's Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, (Illinois: Catholic Action Federation, 1966), 50.

⁹⁴ Cunningham, “Church People As Missionary,” 169.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

situations or where there is shortage of sacred ministers⁹⁶ does not help the effective development of ministries. In other words lay people are incapacitated except when an opportunity offers itself. But lay people have some hope of functioning in certain situations. Therefore, despite all the odds, the integration of the lay person into the mission of the church is under way with the powerful support from certain areas of the church.⁹⁷

Whether they are appointed, delegated, or in their respective responsibilities, the lay people have featured in the exercise of ministries in the secular sphere. The Council emphasises more this aspect of lay ministry.

3.3.1 BASIC CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY

The call to lay people is to be, through the vigour of their Christian Spirit, a leaven in the world.⁹⁸ The German bishops' distinction, between direct service of the church *Amt*, and direct service of the world *Dienst* is useful. While the latter, as a more generic term applies to lay people, the former applies to the official ministry of the clergy. This implies the direct role of the ordained in the service of the church, and the lay people, while sharing also in the mission of the clergy, have primarily a role in the service of the world.⁹⁹ That is, the laity is to represent the church in word and action in the secular world.

The Council stresses the fact that the vocation of the laity includes making the church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances in the world where it is only through them that the church can make an impact. In his closing homily at the 1987 Synod of bishops, Pope John Paul II reiterated the Council's statement in LG, that the transformation of the world, of itself common to all the baptised, is brought about in a particular way by the lay faithful. The lay faithful, the Pope said, are flung out to the frontiers of history.¹⁰⁰ The purpose of this emphasis on the ministry of lay

⁹⁶ In LG. #35, the Council Fathers inspire the laity to be involved in the work of evangelising the world. Yet they could only attempt sacred function where sacred ministers are not enough or in a situation they are impeded from functioning.

⁹⁷ Leonard Doohan, *The Lay-Centred Church: Theology & Spirituality* (Minnesota: Winston Press, 1984), 47.

⁹⁸ AA. #2.

⁹⁹ Power, *Gifts that Differ*, 17.

¹⁰⁰ See *Origins* 17, no. 22 (1987): 391.

people *in the secular world* is to limit lay people to this secular arena and to buttress the specific difference between the cleric and the non-cleric:

It is generally on the basis of maintaining some "essential" difference vis-a-vis the sharing in the *tria munera* of Jesus by both baptised Christian and by ordained Christian that this secular stress has been developed, but it is an "essential difference" which uses hierarchical superiority as fundamental criterion, not Gospel discipleship as the fundamental criterion.¹⁰¹

What should have been stressed is that baptism empowers all the members of the church to be involved in the life of the church. But the basic principle seems to be that the ordained take responsibility for "the Church", while the non-ordained take responsibility for being "the Church" in "the world."¹⁰² The continuing resort to the distinction between the secular quality of the laity and the sacred ministry of the clergy is sometimes the ploy of clerical power. It is more fundamentally a concern that has to do with the definition of roles within the common mission of the church, which is seen from the perspective of the world to be redeemed and not only in the closet terms of self-contained fraternity of pious interest.¹⁰³ The lay people should not just be restricted to temporal affairs while neglecting the ministries of word, liturgy and community service. On the other hand, the Christian influence should be felt in the social, political, educational and cultural facets of life.¹⁰⁴

One insight of the Council is that lay people can be the bridge between the church and the world. In other words they become the presence of the church to the world. They have the pastoral mission of being active in the created world, as partners of God, in transforming this world into a better place where all people can live with justice, freedom and equality. Through this process, the world is prepared to receive the word of God.¹⁰⁵

In chapter three of *AA*, various fields of the apostolate of the laity are indicated: ministries relating to families, to young people, to social needs, to national

¹⁰¹ Osborne, *Ministry*, 563.

¹⁰² Richard Lennan, "The Church: 'The Place where the Spirit Flourishes'," in *The New Catechism: Analysis and Commentary* ed. Andrew Murray (Sydney: Catholic Institute of Sydney, 1994), 29.

¹⁰³ Power, *Gifts that Differ*, 61.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 23-26.

¹⁰⁵ cf. Leonard Doohan, "Contemporary theologies of the laity; an overview since Vatican II," *Communio* 7 (1980): 231; Pathil ed., "Laity," 260.

and international affairs. These ministries are in daily tasks, life-situations of marriage, society, and public life, as the lay person's normal way of self-realisation and perfection. Therefore each person is to be incarnated as a spiritual presence, create an atmosphere conducive to a God-directed life, extend Christ's love and peace to the world order.¹⁰⁶

3.3.2 FAMILY MINISTRY

The married state was made by God to be the foundation of human society. Thus the apostolate of married persons and of families becomes very significant for both the church and civil society.¹⁰⁷ The family in pre-technological and urban society has always been the centre not only of economic activities but also of educational, social, recreational and, above all, religious activities. These were always ways in which cohesion was consolidated in the family. But the progress of technology and urbanisation is clearly affecting the cohesion of the family. The Council therefore stresses the need for the family to be the principal school of social virtues which are necessary to every society. The parents as the first messengers of faith and important teachers of religion are reminded of their rights and duties to educate their children.¹⁰⁸

The family is fundamental to all social realities. Christian husbands and wives are co-operators with grace and witnesses of faith for each other, their children and others in the society. It is the greatest part of the apostolate of married partners to manifest and prove by their own way of life, the indissolubility and the sacredness of the marriage bond and also to defend the dignity and lawful autonomy of the family.¹⁰⁹

Pope John Paul II spells out clearly in *CL* that the family is the basic cell of society, and as it is the starting point for the role of the lay people in society, it behoves the lay faithful to become aware of its identity as the primary social nucleus, and its basic role in society, that the family might become always a more active and responsible place for proper growth and proper participation in social life.¹¹⁰ There is a reflection here of what he had said in an earlier document:

¹⁰⁶ Doohan "Contemporary Theologies," 232.

¹⁰⁷ *AA*. #11

¹⁰⁸ *Gravissimum Educationis*, #3.; *AA*. #11

¹⁰⁹ Sheerin, *Commentary*, 54.

¹¹⁰ John Paul II, *CL*, 108-9.

The family has vital and organic links with society, since it is its foundation and nourishes it continually through its role of service to life: it is from the family that citizens come to birth and it is within the family that they find the first school of social virtues that are the animating principle of the existence and development of society itself.¹¹¹

The apostolate of the family is paramount, and reaches far beyond the immediate circle of the family; for having received from God a decisive function in society, it will fulfil this mission by showing itself to be the domestic sanctuary of the church through the mutual affection of its members and the common prayer they offer to God.¹¹² Family ministry which becomes the channel for the church to reach out to society, finds concrete expression in the several forms of the apostolate which extend themselves to society at large. These include: adopting abandoned children, showing a loving welcome to strangers, helping with the running of schools, supporting adolescents with advice and help, and assisting engaged couples to make a better preparation for marriage. Other areas are, taking part in catechism teaching, supporting married people and families in a material or moral crisis, and, in the case of the aged, providing them not only with what is indispensable but also procuring for them a fair share of the fruits of economic progress.¹¹³

3.3.3 SERVICE IN SOCIETY

It is clear from the theology of ministry we explored in Chapter One that not every activity of the Christian could be regarded as ministry in the strict sense. However, Vatican II sees the secular character of lay people as enabling them to accomplish in a special way the salvific mission of the church in the world, giving them the possibility of bringing Christ into everyday life. In this view lay people, in

¹¹¹ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, (The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World), (Homebush: St. Paul Publication, 1982), 78-79.

¹¹² *AA.* #11

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

the exercise of their God-given talents, become the channel through which society is transformed. In discussing the transformation of society certain points have to be taken into account:

(1) Lay people make up the majority of the church. They have the richness of diversity of gifts, talents, formation, financial resources and commitment. (2) The Laity can perform key roles in the ministry of the church if given space to participate and opportunities to develop their leadership skills (3) The majority of lay people are women, who are central actors with life-giving roles. Their participation and empowerment will determine the nature of social change that occurs . . .¹¹⁴

It is important that, in the local churches, there should be a development of ministerial roles for lay people, to enable them to be involved more in social outreach. In this way the church will achieve more in evangelisation programs. Pope Paul VI in *EN* points to the fact that the field of evangelising activity for lay people is vast and complicated especially as it affects the world of politics, society, economics, culture, etc., as well as other human realities such as love, family and suffering.¹¹⁵ He stresses the fact that lay people should always be conscious of these Christian responsibilities that must be exercised to the full without neglecting them, as previously was the case. This is an effective way of realising in the world the salvation of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁶

GS reinforces the above view when it portrays the involvement of lay people as a significant and decisive moment in the church's relationship to the contemporary world.¹¹⁷ The secular quality of the ministry of lay people is explained in *LG*:

To be secular is the special characteristic of the laity . . . It is the special vocation of the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will . . . It is their special task to illuminate and order all temporal matters in which they are closely involved in such a way that these are always carried out and developed in Christ's way and to the praise of the creator and redeemer.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Omega Bula, "Transformation of Society by Laity Formation," *The Ecumenical Review* 45 (1993): 432.

¹¹⁵ *EN*. #70.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁷ cf. The 1986 Synod Consultation Document, 6.

¹¹⁸ *LG*.#31.

It could be said that the church speaks to, and acts upon, the world through her lay people. Without a dynamic laity conscious of its personal ministry to the world, the church, in effect, does not speak or act.¹¹⁹ In addition, it must be stressed that there is need for further development of the Council's idea of the mission and ministry of all the baptised in relation to specialised ecclesial ministry. The council clearly opened the discussion and certainly provided a major impetus to a deeper appreciation of the sacrament of baptism. Nonetheless, not all the implications have as yet been satisfactorily worked out, so that one might see clearly both the relationship and the distinction between baptism on the one hand and holy orders on the other.¹²⁰

In sum, it is noted that Vatican II has taken great steps in giving full consideration to the development and praxis of ministries. The previous disposition of the church has changed from a narrow and exclusive arrangement to a broad and inclusive approach to ministries.

3.4 SUMMARY

Vatican II's effort at renewal can be seen in the renewed understanding and presentation of Church. In its fundamental document, *LG*, the Council offered a presentation, in many respects new, of the church as mystery, Body of Christ, sacrament, communion, and people of God. This new understanding of the church makes appropriate a new way to approach ministries in the church.

With the emphasis now on the church as people of God, the previous medieval, pyramidal, hierarchical notion of the church is de-emphasised; and the active participation of all members in the life and growth of the church is stressed. Lay people are now to function in collaboration with priests. No more is a line of demarcation to be drawn between members of the ecclesial community. All members are expected to put to use their God-given talents in the community.

The Council stresses the active roles the laity have to play in the church community, and more so in the secular world. The family, evangelisation, catechising,

¹¹⁹ See 'The Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern', *Common weal* 105, no. 4 (1978) 108-110.

¹²⁰ Osborne, *Priesthood*, 341.

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teaching, administration, etc., become channels through which the lay people can reach out to the world. The Council urged bishops and priests to encourage, increase and support the apostolic activities of lay people.

It is yet to be seen to what extent the reforms and renewals of the Council have affected some local churches such as Nigeria. It is the church in Nigeria to which we now turn.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STRUCTURE OF MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH IN NIGERIA

So far we have examined fundamental issues regarding the theology of ministry and we have also traced the historical evolution of the concept of ministry. In addition we have consulted the official documents of the church in order to be able to provide us with further guidance. We now turn our attention to the situation of Nigeria to investigate the structure of ministries in that country. The conclusions of the first part of this study will help us to reflect on the current situation of ministries in the church in Nigeria. A brief historical background of the church in Nigeria will help our focus.

4.1 THE CHURCH IN NIGERIA – A BRIEF HISTORY

Ministries in the church in Nigeria began when the missionaries first arrived in the country to introduce the Catholic faith. It is generally taken that the history of the Catholic Church in Nigeria began in the nineteenth century when a group of priests arrived in Lagos. However, there are various indications that Nigeria had contact with Christian missionaries as early as the fifteenth century. The first Christian missionaries in Nigeria reached Benin in 1515.¹ The basis for this first missionary movement was European exploration and trade of the fifteenth century. A search for a sea route to the

¹ Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Nigeria* (London: Longman, 1983), 318.

East Indies and India facilitated the early contacts of European traders with the West Coast of Africa, including Nigeria.²

The Portuguese explorers were the first to make this journey to Nigeria. They established trading stations along the coasts; at first they traded in pepper, but this later gave way to the slave trade. During this time priests had accompanied the Portuguese explorers on a visit to the Oba of Benin, but their attempt at converting the Oba met with failure. But while the church could not be established in Benin it had a strong presence in the coastal town of Warri. A certain Sebastian who became Olu (chief) before 1597 facilitated the foundation of the church in Warri. He was a Christian of remarkable devotion and tenacity who persevered in his faith despite a chronic shortage of priests.³ Sebastian assumed the responsibility of instructing the people and arranged religious processions in the absence of priests.⁴

During the fifteenth century the Catholic Church could not thrive in Nigeria partly because of insufficient knowledge of the religion on the part of the people. Often the new religion conflicted with the traditional values of the people. Secondly, there were too few priests available for the work of evangelisation. It is therefore not surprising that the pioneer of Catholicism in Lagos was an outstanding lay evangelist called Antonio.⁵ It is uncertain when he arrived in Lagos, but his work was well established later in 1866 when Fr. Bouch visited the area. Antonio built a little church of bamboo, baptised infants, blessed marriages and prayed with the dying. He also settled disputes and became known as "Padre Antonio."⁶ Antonio's ministry is remarkable for this study as we note the role a lay person was playing at this early stage of the church in Nigeria. Antonio is an example of how ministries are not exclusively the responsibility of the ordained. He had been a member of a religious confraternity in Brazil, and had received some additional

² Akpenpuum Dzurgba, "A History of Christian Missions in Nigeria: A developmental Approach," *Asia Journal of Theology* 5, no. 1 (1991): 186.

³ Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, 318.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Antonio was born in São Thom  in about 1800. He was kidnapped at the age of ten, enslaved, and taken to Brazil, where he came into the hands of the Carmelites in Bahia and became a Catholic. Ibid., 320.

⁶ Ibid.

instruction in the faith. He acted as catechist, conducting services in the absence of a priest. When he arrived in Lagos he carried on with the same activity.⁷

4.1.1 THE CHURCH IN WESTERN NIGERIA

What is today known as the Catholic Church in Nigeria, traces its origin to the pioneering work of a missionary congregation Society of African Missions (SMA) founded in Lyons, France, on December 8 1856 by Bishop Melchoir de Marion Bresillac, who was an ardent missionary. The priests of this society entered Lagos through Sierra Leone in 1861.⁸ Fr. Francesco Borghero, an Italian, was one of the SMA priests to reach Lagos, and founded the mission there. However, when he arrived in Lagos there were already people who had embraced Catholicism in Brazil while in enslavement. With the sending of a priest to be stationed in Lagos, the Vicariate of the Bight of Benin was founded in Nigeria in 1870, with an initial Catholic community begun at Topo, a strip of land outside Lagos.⁹ In 1880 a station was established at Abeokuta with the help of the 'Brazilian' community there. The success of this station is attributed to a Fr. Conquard, who arrived in 1890 and worked there until his death in 1932.¹⁰

The references to Abeokuta and Topo are an indication of the expansion of the church to the outskirts of Lagos. The 1870s were the decade of SMA settlement in Nigeria. The arrival of the SMA priests in Lagos also marked the beginning of the church in Western Nigeria. From Lagos the missionaries extended their journeys through the surrounding towns of Ikorodu, Epe, Abeokuta and Badagry.

4.1.2 THE CHURCH IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

The first Christian missionary attempt to evangelize the northern part of Nigeria is said to be a Franciscan brother, Peter Farde, from Belgium. His journey in 1688 eventually landed him in Agadez north of Kano where he was captured and enslaved for two years by a Muslim master. However, he is said to have regained his freedom and

⁷ Patrick Grantly, *Mission to West Africa: The Story of the Society of African Missions (SMA) 1856-1907*, 2 vols. (Rome: S.M.A., 1991), 1:160.

⁸ C. A. Imokhai, "The Evolution of the Catholic Church in Nigeria," in *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, eds., A. O. Makozi and G. J. Afolabi Ojo (Lagos: Macmillan Nigeria, 1982), 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰ Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, 320.

converted his Muslim master and his household.¹¹ There was another move to Christianize the north by Fr. Carlo Maria di Genova and his companion Fr. Severino da Salista in 1710. It is most probable that they died the following year in the Kaduna region. It was 139 years before another Franciscan priest Fr. Philip of Segni settled in the northern town of Borno, ministering to a lonely Maltese family.¹² This is all that is known about Fr. Philip, and at this stage, the Franciscan missionary effort to penetrate the north was closed.

Later there was an attempt by the SMA Fathers to settle in other parts of Nigeria including the North. There was a move towards Lokoja on the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers. Fr. Carlo Zappa from Milan started the Lokoja mission and founded the Prefecture of Western Niger in 1886:

On reaching Lokoja, he built a house for the nuns and purchased thirty children at a cost of £310 (three hundred and ten pounds sterling). The purchase of these children, who were held as slaves, was quite controversial in the mission field. Fr. Zappa did not hide the fact that he purchased them from the slave dealers, but he trained them and liberated them afterwards.¹³

Isichei, however, argues that the settlement of the SMA Fathers in Lokoja met with little success. This lack of success was attributed partly to the entrenchment of Islam in the town, and partly because of the shortcomings of the priests.¹⁴ There is an element of truth in Isichei's suggestion about the entrenchment of Islam because during the foundation period of the church in Nigeria, Islam constituted a barrier to the penetration of missionaries into the northern part of Nigeria. It was not until the establishment of a mission at Shendam in 1907 that the church began to take root in the north. Growth was slow, and Catholic immigrants from the southeast and southwest constituted half of the Catholic community in the north by the middle of this century.¹⁵ Although these early efforts to Christianize Northern Nigeria were feeble and in the long run unrewarding,

¹¹ J. J. Onotu, "Milestone in the growth of the Catholic Church in Northern Nigeria," in *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, 56.

¹² *Ibid.*, 56-57.

¹³ Imokhai, *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹⁴ Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, 321.

¹⁵ Joseph Parkes, "The Church in Nigeria," *New Catholic World* 226 (1983): 231.

Christian missions did not withdraw attention from the territory.¹⁶ The missionaries diverted their attention from the North to further South, in the Western Igbo town of Asaba in 1888.¹⁷

4.1.3 THE CHURCH IN THE EASTERN NIGERIA

The first successful Catholic missionary work in Eastern Nigeria dates back to December 1885 when priests of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost arrived. Fr. Joseph Lutz travelled from the Vicariate of Gabon into the commercial town of Onitsha to begin the Holy Ghost mission in Eastern Nigeria. Before the arrival of Fr. Lutz, Onitsha was regarded as an outstation or quasi-parish of Gabon.¹⁸ Until his arrival in Onitsha Fr. Lutz was the superior of the Holy Ghost Congregation at Rio Ponge. He left Paris in the company of Father Horne and two religious brothers, Hermas and Jean-Gotto, who were formerly stationed at the Saint Coeur de Marie.¹⁹ Their journey finally brought them to the hinterland of Nigeria, and they became the first Catholic missionaries to settle in Igboland on the eastern side of the Niger.²⁰

The arrival of Fr. Shanahan at Onitsha in 1902 marked a new era of the missionary movement to Southeastern Nigeria with the involvement of Irish missionaries who thereafter replaced the French missionaries.²¹ This opened another phase of missionary movement with the involvement of Irish missionaries:

The French phase of Catholic evangelisation in the region ended with the elevation of the Prefecture of the Lower Niger to the status of a Vicariate, with the Irish Shanahan as the Vicar Apostolic. From 1920 when he was consecrated Bishop Eastern Nigeria became a province of the Irish Holy Ghost Fathers, and the Irish missionaries began to be recruited in large numbers. Bishop Shanahan also began to train his own priests and nuns locally and in Ireland.²²

¹⁶ E. A. Ayandele, *Nigerian Historical Studies*, (London: Frank Cass, 1979): 138.

¹⁷ Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, 321.

¹⁸ See Celestine A. Obi ed., *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria 1885-1985* (Onitsha: Africana-FEP, 1985), 9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, 12.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

²² Geoffrey I. Nwaka, "One Hundred Years of Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria: 1885-1985" *African Theological Journal* 17, no. 2 (1988): 133.

Bishop Shanahan stands out as the crucial figure in the growth of the church in southeastern Nigeria. However, before the arrival of Bishop Shanahan, Fr. Lutz the founder of the Lower Niger missions, had made his first visit to Calabar in 1894.

4.1.4 THE CHURCH IN SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA

Calabar was the first place in southeastern Nigeria that a Catholic priest visited. Because of its significant coastal position, there had been Europeans present in Calabar from as early as the fifteenth century. Fr. Lutz on arrival discovered that the whole town was under the control of the Presbyterian Church established there since 1846.²³ Because of various logistic problems encountered by the missionaries, Catholic missionary activity in Calabar did not begin until 1903:

Partly because of the then situation in France, which affected the personnel situation in the Congregation of the Holy Ghost, and for other reasons not unconnected with Lejeune's constant change of project, Catholic evangelisation of Calabar did not start until 1903. Indeed, when in early February 1903, Lejeune, accompanied by Father McDermott arrived in Calabar to understudy the possibility of a Mission establishment there, it was only at the continued invitation of Sir Ralph Moor, the High Commissioner and the incessant requests of many chiefs and the whites of Calabar.²⁴

The growth of the Calabar mission and its importance to the missionaries were both very great. The mission spread from Calabar to other parts of the region including Anua, Ifuho, Essene and Oron. Today, these places have blossomed with parishes and numerous out-stations. Calabar is an archdiocese and the headquarters of an ecclesiastical province which include the dioceses of Uyo, Ikot Ekpene, Port Harcourt and Ogoja.

The growth of the Calabar mission necessitated the deployment of more personnel to cater for it. Bishop Shanahan invited volunteers from Ireland, and some priests volunteered who had studied in Maynooth. However, there was need to maintain some

²³ Frederick C. Nnabuike, *The History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria: The Foundation Period 1885-1905* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1983): 199.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 200.

continuity in their apostolate, thus Monsignor Whitney founded the Saint Patrick's Missionary Society. In 1930 the first batch of the Saint Patrick's Fathers arrived in Calabar to begin their missionary work. In this batch were Frs. Michael Kilmartin, Hugh Colen, James Moynagh (later bishop of Calabar), Coran Ryan, Patrick Costelloe (later Superior General of the society) and Thomas McGettrick (the first Bishop of Ogoja and later of Abakiliki). ²⁵ The tremendous success the missionaries had despite all the difficulties they encountered was due to their zeal in spreading the gospel message, but even more to the diverse strategies that they employed in the evangelisation process.

4.2 THE MISSIONARY METHODS

The early missionaries to Nigeria were priests, religious men and women who were dedicated to the cause of winning souls for Christ. Going into an entirely new environment for this purpose was not an easy task. The initial motivation they had could have been killed as a result of the many difficulties they encountered yet they persevered and developed certain strategies for dealing with those problems. At this stage it becomes important to ask how the missionaries were able to organise the people for what today we call ministries in the church. In other words, what were the early ministries in the church in Nigeria at this time? We have seen above that both in Warri and in Lagos a few lay people functioned effectively in the church where priests were lacking. There is no doubt that their efforts helped the growth of the church in these local areas. Nevertheless, while Antonio of Lagos had his foundation from the Brazilian environment where he had been a slave, it becomes a puzzle how Sebastian of Warri was able to succeed. The only way we can surmise an answer is to consider the immediate strategy of the missionaries, which was evangelisation through schools. Some preparation for ministries was given in the schools.

²⁵ Obi, *A Hundred years of the Catholic Church*, 164.

4.2.1 SCHOOLS AS BASIS FOR MINISTRY

Evangelisation, through formal education, seems to have been the most favourable method, used by the missionaries, and it was very promising. The school provided a basis for the evangelisation of people and the development of ministry. As we shall see later, the emergence of catechists was a result of the education offered in church schools. The most powerful factor of change introduced by these early missionaries was Western education. In traditional society, the wealth and power that education could bring established education as a new element of social status.²⁶ The missionaries settled and lived among the people, learned their language and customs and founded schools. The most remarkable development of the Catholic Church in Nigeria was the parochial school system, which was inspired by Francis Libermann.²⁷

Fr. Francis Libermann was the founder of the congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary, which later merged with the Congregation of the Holy Ghost. After the merger, Libermann became the Superior General of the congregation and assumed responsibility for the various activities of the missions. Though he personally was never in any mission land, his ingenuity in organising and arranging the various missionary activities was reflected in the many positive results that were realised:

Although he had not for once gone outside Europe nor engaged in active mission work in the mission territories, Libermann spent his twelve years of superior-ship dealing with all the possible problems a missionary might encounter in his apostolic life. If he insisted particularly on the moral value of the missionary or on giving his novices a solid spiritual formation, he nevertheless did not neglect the practical aspect of these instructions in the mission country.²⁸

Libermann foresaw the importance of evangelisation through education, and always demanded that members of his Congregation establish schools to teach the people. As far as he was concerned, missionaries were obliged to aid the intellectual and social evolution of indigenous people through the schools.²⁹ Thus missionaries soon after arrival

²⁶ Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962): 132.

²⁷ Imokhai, "Catholic Church in Nigeria," in *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, 11.

²⁸ Nnabuike, *The History of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria*, 43.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

in Nigeria laid the foundations for formal education. Nursery schools, primary schools, catechetical centres and trade schools were the areas of immediate concentration.

The use of schools in evangelisation was the primary strategy in the era of the early missionaries to Nigeria because they believed that those who hold the schools hold the country, hold its religion, and equally hold the future.³⁰ Bishop Shanahan who founded many schools did so in the realisation that people needed as a preparation for the faith and as a safeguard for it after its reception, a new orientation of mind based on the acceptance of Christian standards of judgement. The missionaries hoped and expected that such a change could be effected only by formal education.³¹ In his memoirs, Bishop McGettrick testifies that "the schools provided the greatest contact with the people. The schools were really our catechumenates . . ." ³²

By 1909 and 1910, dynamic evangelisation in the form of catechetical instruction, visits to the sick and administration of the sacraments was going on, in all the mission stations. Apart from the 2,591 school children who frequented the catechism lessons, religious instructions were given morning and evening to the adults in all the seven main stations.³³

The above statement reflects the presence of schools in the Prefecture of Eastern Nigeria where many schools were established. Bishop Shanahan championed the establishment of schools in different places of the Prefecture. By 1906, the letter of Shanahan to Cardinal Gotti, the then Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, indicates that there were 2,270 pupils in schools in about 18 stations. By 1921 the Catholic Prefecture of Eastern Nigeria was sponsoring 533 schools with 772 teachers and 31,778 students.³⁴

Schools in the early history of the church in Nigeria are significant for our purpose because the schools became places of preparation for ministry. Towards the end of 1905, there were only 26 missionaries and this number was simply inadequate for the

³⁰ Cited in Nwaka, "One Hundred Years of Catholicism," 132.

³¹ Obi, *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church*, 125.

³² *Memoirs of Bishop Thomas McGettrick* (Sligo: Passprint, 1988), 136.

³³ Obi, *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church*, 143.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 124; See also the report of Joseph Parkes where he mentions the tremendous effort of Bishop Shanahan in "The Church in Nigeria," 231.

amount of work they had to do.³⁵ Thus the church trained those early converts and they became the teachers and catechists who later bore the message of Christianity to others. Obi attests to this when writing about Aguleri, at that time an outstation of Onitsha:

The Fathers concentrated so much attention on Aguleri and particularly on the king, and he was so well instructed in the Catholic Faith that he became a man of dynamic living faith and volunteered himself as the catechist in order to share his faith and conviction with his people.³⁶

There was an increasing need for the establishment of schools for the formation of catechists. The catechists assumed significant roles within the community. Their importance was noticeable in the fact that they alone had a sufficient knowledge of the English language to understand the missionaries and, at the same time, were familiar with the local dialects to act as interpreters for the missionaries.

According to Fr. Libermann's directives, the school system was organised into boarding, elementary and central schools. The elementary schools provided a place where people could learn the basic doctrines of the church. The boarding schools were available for those who preferred to leave home and spend time in learning. The central schools offered education in three parts. It was basically structured for those who showed the signs of being suitable for the priesthood. Others who could become teachers and catechists benefited from the education they obtained. There was also training for trades and agriculture. Religious instruction was compulsory for all. Religious instruction provided the foundation from which people might share their faith with others. The central school became significant because it provided opportunities for people to receive more advanced education, and those who showed signs of deep spiritual lives were encouraged towards the priesthood.

The idea of having more people to pass on the Good News motivated Bishop Shanahan to think positively of having indigenous priests. Accordingly, he established a seminary at Igbariam in 1924.³⁷ The training of young people for the work of the future was of course a preparation for ministries of the church. What Bishop Shanahan was

³⁵ Cf. Obi, *A Hundred Years of the Catholic Church* 121.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 143.

doing anticipated what Pope Pius XII would later emphasise on the role of an elite in evangelisation.³⁸

In the West, Fr. Carlo Zappa who later became the Prefect Apostolic of Western Nigeria is mostly remembered for the training of African catechists and the effort to establish an African clergy. He built a school for catechists at Ibusa, and as early as 1919, he had several candidates preparing for the priesthood. Thus, the first Nigerian priest to be ordained was Fr. Paul Emechete in 1921.³⁹

4.2.2 CHARITY IN MISSION

One of the features of missionary work was charitable activity. This was an important form of ministry in the early community of Christians. In Chapter Two we saw that one of the first major decisions to be taken by the apostles in the organisation of the early church was to arrange for effective charitable work. The complaints of the Hellenists prompted the appointment of the seven to look after the needy in their community. Charitable work is an essential ingredient for the building up of the community.

The early missionaries to Nigeria made effective use of this ministry of charity and it contributed to the success they experienced. There was real concern for the plight of poor people:

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Catholic missionaries on both sides of the Niger lived in grinding poverty, spending much of what little income they managed to obtain from Catholic charities in Europe on the poor . . . Father Piotin became the pioneer evangelist of the Afenmai, in 1901. He was known as 'the good white'. Father Piotin wins people by his goodness and charity. He lives very poorly, does not know how to keep anything, and gives away everything.⁴⁰

³⁸ Pope Pius in the encyclical *Evangelii Praecones*, states that, since young men, and especially those who have had the advantage of classical and liberal education, will direct the course of the future, no one can be blind to the supreme importance of devoting the best care to elementary schools, high schools and colleges. He exhorted mission superiors to spare neither energy nor expense in promoting this phase of missionary activity. Cf. AAS 43 (1951): 523.

³⁹ M. P. MacLoughlin, "Highlights of the History of the Catholic Church in the Lagos Ecclesiastical Province," in *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, 26.

⁴⁰ Isichei, *A History of Nigeria*, 321.

The missionaries were very pragmatic in their approach to charity. When Fr. Lutz first arrived in the Lower Niger, he came with seventy boxes filled with gifts for the villagers. These gifts did not imply that the missionaries were buying the people over, but simply disposing the people well toward the visitors. It enabled the people to distinguish the missionaries from other white settlers, and they were regarded as those who came for the good of the people.⁴¹ Religious sisters who worked in Asaba and Illah by 1894 also undertook charitable work. "The mission had three charitable institutions, one for the sick, another for lepers and the third for orphan girls."⁴²

The missionaries were praised for sensibly adapting their approach to the local situations in which they found themselves. It was commonplace for them to administer rudimentary medical care; on some such occasions they also administered baptism.⁴³ "The Catholics became at once popular thanks to their charitable work, especially the distribution of medicine."⁴⁴ Ministry to the sick was an important part of the work of missionaries. The example of the missionaries encouraged the people to show real concern for the sick which has today blossomed into a successful ministry in the whole country. The establishment of leprosaria in different areas where people suffered from leprosy bore testimony to this concern for sick people.

4.2.3 THE APOSTOLATE OF REDEEMING SLAVES

As mentioned earlier, the European presence in Nigeria saw the development of the slave trade. The trade had a serious impact on the social and religious lives of the people. Thus most missionaries undertook to buy back slaves and helped them in the process of gaining their freedom. The pope supported this type of activity. The pope outlined the strategy as follows: "Missionaries engaged in evangelization in Africa, should use the money collected every January 6 in all Catholic Churches the world over, to end this inhuman practice in Africa."⁴⁵ Many organizations in Europe welcomed the

⁴¹ See Obi, *A Hundred Years of Catholic Church* 29.

⁴² Grantly, *Mission to West Africa*, 2: 244.

⁴³ Nwaka, "One Hundred Years of Catholicism," 131.

⁴⁴ J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa* (Nairobi: Paulines Publication, 1994), 149.

⁴⁵ See Obi, *A Hundred Years of Catholic Church*, 34

pope's directives and offered financial support to the missionaries for this work. Thus the missionaries in Onitsha, Lokoja, and other places in Nigeria embarked on buying back slaves:

The buying back of slaves led to the opening of the Christian village . . . where the inmates lived a very strictly regulated life with definite hours for prayers, play and work. The missionaries considered it a most favourable circumstance where the Catholic doctrine could be imparted to the catechumens away from the neutralizing influences of non-Christian neighbours The Christian village system helped the growth of the Church in Onitsha.⁴⁶

It was important for the church in Nigeria at this initial stage to have indigenous people who were able to function as evangelists, otherwise the efforts of the missionaries would be futile. There is no doubt that the various people who passed through this system of villages of freed slaves functioned in different capacities in the spread of the church. "Redeemed slaves lived in the mission and later became some of the foundation members of early Catholicism in Eastern Nigeria."⁴⁷ Expensive as it was, it yielded an abundant harvest of souls for the early Christian communities. It also displayed to the local people the kindness and humanness of the missionaries and thus disposed them to seek membership of the church.⁴⁸

The fact that the missionaries could entrust great responsibilities to people who were just learning the faith testifies to the development of lay ministries in Nigeria long before Vatican II. Likewise, it will contribute to the growth of the church today if all members can make the maximum use of their (respective) talents.

There are some similarities between the beginning of the church in Nigeria and the beginning of the church in the first century. As we have already seen in Chapter Two, the apostles who embarked on missionary journeys established stations and had people assisting them in various ways. Paul in particular had co-workers, and when he passed on people were appointed to provide leadership of the community. These groups of people who assisted Paul and later became leaders of the communities have counterparts in the church in Nigeria. The early group of people, who were associated with the missionaries

⁴⁶ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁸ Imokhai, "Catholic Church in Nigeria," in *The History of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, 11.

and had the opportunity of early instruction by them, became the teachers and catechists, the basic lay ministries in the church in this country.

4.3 THE EMERGENCE OF THE MINISTRY OF CATECHIST

The first schools established in Nigeria by the missionaries were basically catechetical centres and trade schools. Because the missionaries were few in number and vulnerable to the tropical diseases that reduced their number by death, it was apparent, right from the beginning, that they had to get helpers if they were to be successful in their apostolate. Thus, the formation of catechists was an urgent task, to enhance the work of evangelisation in the interior. To achieve this, more funds were requested from the funding bodies to build catechist stations and more centres for the formation of catechists.⁴⁹ The catechists turned out to be the answer to the missionaries' prayers:

The missionaries eventually discovered an efficacious means of tackling the problem of insufficient personnel. The catechist-teachers, converted pagans of yester-years became a force to be reckoned with. Learning on the job, they began to instruct the people on the major truths of the faith, to teach prayers and some hymns, some reading, writing and arithmetic.⁵⁰

The missionary priests in the past and the priests today depend to a large extent on the assistance of the catechists to minister to the many local churches. Granted the huge scope of work of evangelisation and the inadequate number of priests, the dependence on catechists became inevitable from the very beginning of the Catholic Church in Nigeria. The catechist was seen as an easy solution to a pressing problem.⁵¹ Hastings sees the development of the ministry of catechists in Africa as the one real "minor order" in the church today.⁵² It is the ministry that has contributed immensely to the growth of the church in Nigeria. In spite of their immense contributions, the catechists' ministry very

⁴⁹ Ibid., 121.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 146.

⁵¹ Raymond Hickey, "Ministry in Parallel Lines," *African Ecclesiastical Review* (hereafter AFER) 23 (1981): 162.

⁵² Adrian Hastings, "Africa, the Church and Ministry," *Clergy Review* 58, no. 1 (1973): 23-24.

often seems to lie in the shadow of the ordained ministers. Some characteristics of the early ministry of catechists are indicated by Hickey:

The catechist did not need Latin or a long seminary training. He was not bound by a law of celibacy or have any claim to permanent employment or remuneration. He frequently was village teacher or mission sacristan, a general factotum who provided the essential link between the foreign missionary and the local community. At a time when the population was largely illiterate and undiscerning, his lack of education did not hinder his work or lessen his prestige in the village. He was able to recite the daily prayers, teach simple catechism answers and lead the faithful in praying the Rosary on Sundays. His work was largely taken for granted both by priest and local community. Yet when thoughtful tribute was accorded it was most generous.⁵³

When reference is made to catechist as teacher, it will be useful to explain the terminology involved. Catechists in the early years of the Catholic Church in Nigeria (c.1889-1905) were recruited in the central school from students trained to be teachers in the local communities. Catechist and teacher in this period were essentially one and the same, although the White Fathers stressed the role of catechist while the Holy Ghost Fathers stressed the role of teacher.⁵⁴

The education plan of Fr. Libermann was such that students in Eastern Nigeria who showed talent and ability, and exhibited signs of sincere piety yet could not advance to the priesthood were considered suitable to be catechists. Thus they were distinguished from teachers because their responsibility was solely to the church. Although most teachers at the initial stage could still combine professional teaching with catechetical work, the role of catechists stood out in the community. The catechists visited the stations, even when the priest did not go, and saw that catechism was taught. Usually they accompanied the priest on his station visitation. The teacher on the other hand visited the schools and inspected records.⁵⁵ One significant difference was seen in Libermann's arrangement whereby the catechists were looked upon as minor clerics when they appeared in cassocks:

⁵³ Hickey, "Ministry in Parallel Lines," 163.

⁵⁴ Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 583.

⁵⁵ Memoirs of Bishop McGettrick, 100.

Thus in their capacity as minor clerics and being exemplary men in their families and among their fellow citizens, catechists would replace priests to some extent by playing the leading role in the meeting of the faithful, conducting public prayers, in the morning and evening singing of offices on feast days and giving instructions to the people.⁵⁶

It has to be said here that this characterisation of the catechists was ambiguous. It seems to have portrayed a way of trying to clericalise lay people. The approach should be that those who are not in the clerical orders should not be clericalised, rather opportunity should be given to all baptised Christians to make effective use of their gifts from God. Rome rejected the suggestion of conferring minor orders on catechists, but it upheld the significant position of catechists in the church as was reflected later in the endorsement of Pope Pius XI:

It is hardly necessary to point out to you what the catechists must be and how they ought to gain pagans for Christ less by their words than by the example of their life. Take it as your inflexible rule . . . to train them with the greatest care. They must have a thorough knowledge of Catholic Doctrine, and when they comment on it, they should be able to adjust themselves to the mentality and intelligence of their listeners.⁵⁷

The ministry of catechists has assumed such a level of importance in the church in Nigeria that it becomes questionable why this ministry is not adequately recognised today. There is a disproportion between the greatness of the contribution of catechists to the life of the church in Nigeria and the lack of their official recognition.⁵⁸ For Pope Pius XII, "the catechist represents perhaps the most classic example of the lay apostolate by the very nature of his profession and because he supplies for the lack of priests."⁵⁹ The fact of supplying for the lack of priests presents the catechist as someone who is subsidiary and not existing in his own right. Pope John XIII affirms this when he described the catechists as "missionaries' right-hand men, sharing in their labours and

⁵⁶ Nnabuike, *The History of the Catholic Church*, 51.

⁵⁷ Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, AAS 18 (1926): 78.

⁵⁸ Raymond Hickey, *A Case for an Auxiliary Priesthood* (New York: Orbis Books, 1982), 41.

⁵⁹ Address to the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate in Rome. Cf. AAS 49, (1957): 937.

lightening their burdens.”⁶⁰ The 1983 Code of Canon Law refers to the catechists as the lay members of Christ’s faithful who have received proper formation and are outstanding in Christian life; who should be given a role in the missionary work.⁶¹ Since reference is not made to catechist as a ministry in the church existing in its own right it was thus cast within a clerical mould, and considered to be the all-purpose auxiliary of the priest.⁶²

4.3.1 THE IMAGE OF THE POST-VATICAN II CATECHIST

The catechist was traditionally seen from the perspective of the lay apostolate as some one actively involved in the instruction of people in the truths of the faith. This reflects the specific role of teachers in the early church. But we note that apart from merely giving religious instruction, the catechist in local churches in Nigeria leads in the Sunday service or para-liturgy and preaches in the absence of the priest. Details of the catechists’ duties we shall see shortly, but it suffices to say catechists emerged with pastoral and teaching duties. This role of catechists reflects in sharing their gifts in meeting the needs, liturgical, pastoral and human, of the community.⁶³ The Nigerian local church had long been familiar with this model of catechist, but its significance emerged when Vatican II officially stated the pastoral functions of the catechist:

Various types of ministry are necessary for the implanting and growth of the christian community, and once these forms of service have been called forth from the body of the faithful, by the divine call, they are to be carefully fostered and nurtured by all. Among these functions are those of priests, deacons and catechists, and also that of Catholic Action.⁶⁴

This statement from the council gives a broad understanding of ministry, which we have argued should be inclusive of both the ordained and lay faithful in the church. The council further suggests the ordination of some catechists to the permanent diaconate to strengthen them in their ministry. The issue of ordination will be discussed in the next chapter when we look at the Christian community as eucharistic community and how it

⁶⁰ John XIII, *Princeps Pastorum*, AAS 51(1959): 855.

⁶¹ The Code of Canon Law (1983), Can. 785 #1.

⁶² Aywald Shorter, “Marriage, Celibacy and Ministry in Africa,” *Clergy Review* 60 (1975): 445.

⁶³ Gideon Goosen, “Ministry – Where To Now?” *The Australasian Catholic Record* 69, no. 4 (1992): 426.

⁶⁴ AG #15

affects the role of catechists. By implication, Vatican II has elevated the *de facto* situation of the catechist and given full *de jure* recognition.⁶⁵ Since the council, the image of the catechist has changed, and his role is open to further change. Catechists are no longer to be seen as mere auxiliaries of the priests, but as exercising a pastoral responsibility and official mission in the church.⁶⁶ Their ministry is seen more in terms of the community they serve rather than of the priest they assist:

The Church in Africa did not have to wait for the Second Vatican Council to realize the fact that as a religious minister the catechist is both pastor and teacher. In actual fact the practice of the Church in Africa anticipated the Universal Church and paved the way for the teaching on catechists adopted by the council. It is an example of how the missionary Church in tackling its own specific problems can influence the universal Church. To a large extent it was the *de facto* position of the catechist, coupled with the new ecclesiology, which made the new *de jure* position of the catechist possible.⁶⁷

4.3.2 FUNCTIONS OF THE CATECHIST IN NIGERIA

The catechist was an important person in the life of the early missionaries to Nigeria. The late bishop McGettrick of Ogoja and Abakiliki saw the catechist as the most important man of the mission.⁶⁸ The catechist was indispensable for the missionaries and more so today in the local churches with the explosion of church communities. There are over 15, 000,000 Catholics in Nigeria with about 2,000 parishes and approximately only 5,000 priests to cater for the people.⁶⁹ Attached to these 2,000 parishes, there are probably over 20,000 out-stations. The catechists perform their responsibilities in various ways. Basically, there are three categories of catechists in Nigeria, the parish catechists, station catechists, and casual catechists.

The parish catechist is generally regarded as the head catechist who resides in the parish mission alongside the priest. He is expected to live close to the priest because he is

⁶⁵ Hickey, *An Auxiliary Priesthood*, 43.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁶⁸ *Memoirs of Bishop McGettrick*, 100.

⁶⁹ Cf. *1997 Catholic Diary and Church Directory*, (Iperu-Remo: Ambassador Publications), 109-245.

directly responsible to the priest. Unlike the station catechists, he would have done some advanced course to equip him for his work. The parish catechist is involved in the administration of the parish. Apart from directing the instruction in the parish church, he oversees the station catechists by visiting them regularly. He stands in for the priest when the priest is absent.

The station catechists (as the name implies) are responsible for the care of the “out-stations” of the parish. The story of the station churches goes back to the missionary era and continues today. The system of founding churches⁷⁰ adopted by the missionaries paved the way for the development of out-station structures. The fact that the priest in a parish could not be at all the stations at the same time made it very desirable to have catechists in the out-stations. We can connect this method of founding churches to the evolution and development of Pauline Church communities we referred to in Chapter Two.

Apart from the parish and out-station catechists there are also casual catechists. These can be regarded as not officially recognised catechists, but they can perform some of the tasks of a catechist. This position is casual because it evolves among the members of the community. Thus, the various types of catechist correspond to the various needs of a community.

Whether one is a parish, station or casual catechist, the duty of instructing people in the faith especially by teaching of the catechism is important. In Nigeria today, as in many other countries of Africa, the catechist leads the Sunday service in the absence of the priest. He does this by leading the people in prayer, reading the readings of the day and explaining the readings to the best of his ability.⁷¹ The catechist has also the duty of responding to and looking after sick people, and informing the priest in time if they will need the sacraments of reconciliation, anointing and communion. As the catechist is not authorised to administer these sacraments, he can pray with the sick people and give them encouragement.

⁷⁰ The method used by the missionaries was to make the place of their first arrival the headquarters of their journey. As the movement into the interior continued, they discovered new villages and established the church there but would always return to the main-station. These new stations will become attached to the ‘mother’ station. See Hickey, *An Auxiliary Priesthood*, 24.

⁷¹ Michael Okoye, “The Catechist in a Station without a Resident Priest,” in *Apostolate in Nigeria Today and Tomorrow*, ed. Stephen N. Ezeanya (Enugu: DCS, 1977), 68.

The question then arises as to why the catechist cannot at least bring Holy Communion to sick people. We shall consider this issue more in the next chapter. One thing to be noted is that the rapid growth of the Catholic population in Nigeria without a corresponding growth in the number of priests calls for a revision of the functions of the catechists which at the moment are very limited. The number of indigenous priests being ordained, while relatively high, is not keeping pace with the growth in the Catholic population. The catechists as grassroots ministers are closer to the people than the priest because they live with the people and are familiar with their immediate problems. Yet they cannot offer the people certain sacraments because they lack the authorization. The authorization to administer these sacraments is reserved to the priest who may not be familiar with the environment and is often regarded as a somewhat remote, official visitor.

In view of his closeness to the people, the catechist is able to counsel and admonish erring people thus helping them to develop spiritually. The functions of the catechists is summed up as follows:

In the absence of a priest they are regarded as leaders of the Christian community they serve and are called upon to admonish, entreat, rebuke, effect reconciliation; to be all things to all men. The conducting of Sunday service is surely their most important duty. This takes many forms according to the educational level of the catechist and the community. It is usually based on the Liturgy of the Word, but will also recall the Eucharistic sacrifice they cannot celebrate. It is in leading the community in Sunday worship that the catechist is most clearly seen as the local religious minister and leader.⁷²

The ministry of the catechist in Nigeria is a prominent one. The catechist normally functions within a particular community, but he has a place in the structure of the church. He substitutes for the priest and he is, in effect, a visible link between that community and the universal church. As such he is indispensable.⁷³ Generally, the people see the catechist as the substitute for the priest, a coadjutor associated in the work and responsibility of the priest. He is 'the man of religion' to whom one goes for anything

⁷² Hickey, *An Auxiliary Priesthood*, 45.

⁷³ Shorter, "The Catechist Research," *AFER* 12, no. 3 (1970): 198.

that is needed in the spiritual field when the priest is not available. He is sought after for baptism and funeral services. The priest has to consult the catechist concerning whether people are properly prepared and disposed for receiving the sacraments.

It is interesting to note at this stage that only men perform the role of catechist in the church in Nigeria. I personally have not known or heard of anywhere in Nigeria where women are functioning as catechists. The office of the catechist just like that of the priest is reserved to the men. We shall try to explore the reasons for this in the next chapter when we discuss the participation of women in ministry.

4.3.3 ORGANISATION IN OUT-STATIONS

The significant role of the catechist in Nigeria is complemented by the availability of other ministries in the out-stations. The catechist does not operate in the station churches as an absolute ruler. There are others who function alongside him for the effective organisation of the stations. The out-stations are so called because they depend on the central mission station where the priest usually resides:

The division of a particular church into local congregations called parishes is the structure, which is common in Europe. This is not the case in most of Africa. Here we find that dioceses are divided into mission-stations. The mission-stations in the rural areas are usually very extensive and include numerous local communities. These local communities are usually called "out-stations" which shows that they depend on the central mission-station where the priest lives.⁷⁴

The catechist as we saw above is generally regarded as the spiritual man of the local community, yet he works as part of a team to promote the spiritual life of the community.

4.3.4 THE HEADMAN AND HEADWOMAN

The structure of the out-station organisation could be compared to the structure of small Christian communities. The out-stations in Nigeria are scattered around the parish. Some parishes, mostly in the rural areas, have between ten and twenty out-stations. While the out-stations belong to a parish, they enjoy a good measure of autonomy with leaders

⁷⁴ Hickey, *An Auxiliary Priesthood*, 23.

to manage the affairs of the particular church community. These leaders emerge within the community but their position has to be ratified by the priest of the parish. These leaders constitute the church committee and report regularly to the priest.

The station headman (*Etubom*)⁷⁵ is the man in charge of the administration of the local station church. He must be one who is married in the church⁷⁶ and of proven character. In Chapter Two we saw (the Pastoral Letters) I Tim. 3:1-4 outlining the qualities that qualify one for the position of the presiding elder. These same qualities apply to the station-headman in Nigerian. In the era of the missionaries, he used to be one of the early converts who had maintained his faith and showed qualities of leadership. This ministry is significant in the local church in Nigeria because of the trust placed in a lay person to manage the affairs of the church. The headman oversees the social and economic affairs of the station, while the catechist looks after spiritual activities. We can see here some parallels with the organisation of the church in the first century. We recall how the Apostles had asked the people to appoint members who would be responsible for the economic administration of the group while they concentrated on preaching the Word of God (Acts 6: 1-2).

The local church headman, the catechist and a few other members constitute a church committee where decisions are made for the well being of the station. The headwoman, who is so designated because of her position in the church committee, has to be a well-respected woman of the community. She is often given the title *Eka Iban*⁷⁷ that is the mother of all women. This title reflects the image of Mary as the mother of all. Thus, the *Eka Iban* is a special ministry of rallying the women together for particular activities in the community. It is interesting to note that without this ministry, it is not easy to bring the women together. The women's leader has responsibility for what is in the women's interest in the community, and the women's association (*Nka Iban*) is very

⁷⁵ This title is peculiar to the Ibibio language community. Other communities with diverse languages and dialects in the country have their different expressions but with the same meaning implied.

⁷⁶ Africans have their traditional marriage ceremony, which is still followed today. The Catholic Church introduced the canonical form of the sacrament of marriage which every convert to the Catholicism is expected to observe. This issue of having to marry again in the church after one had married according to a traditional rite is a weighty one today and prevents many people from receiving Communion because their marriage is not recognised by the Church. This is an issue we hope discussions on inculturation will be able to resolve in Africa. See Nathaniel I. Ndiokwere, *The African Church, Today and Tomorrow* 2 vols. (Enugu: Snaap Press, 1994), 2: 141-143.

⁷⁷ See footnotes 75 on *Etubom*

beneficial to the local community. They provide food for the preacher (as the catechist is often referred to). In addition, the women cater for the orphans and the needy of the community. Thus, the women's leader provides a special type of leadership within the local community.

Even before the Second Vatican Council, this method of organising the local community was in force, and it is still being used today. The introduction of Parish Councils affects only the organisation of the parish. At the station level it is the church committee that is operative. The only innovation after Vatican II is that each out-station has to send representatives to the Parish Council in view of the fact that they form part of the parish.

The out-station organisation is not seen as a permanent structure, because with time it could become a parish. The priest and the catechists are encouraged to develop each station with a view to its becoming a parish. This depends to a large extent on the size and the rate of growth of the community. When the out-station grows to become a parish, the status of the above ministries changes also. The catechist becomes the parish catechist, the headman becomes the parish chairperson and the headwoman becomes the woman leader of the parish. As we shall see in the next chapter, these ministries in Nigeria are not limited to the local community and the parochial community, they extend to the diocese too. At the levels of station, parish and diocese, ministries abound in the church in Nigeria.

4.4 VARIETIES OF LOCAL MINISTRIES

The ministry of catechist stands out as unique in the church in Nigeria. Yet there are other ministries that are also very significant for the church in the country. Other ministries in existence in Nigeria are: youth ministry, ministry of the word, altar boys' ministry, Knights' ministry, Girls' ministry (Mary League), Nurses' ministry and ministry of hospitality. There are also ministries associated with the adult catechumenate based on the RCIA and CCD programme. The St. Vincent de Paul Society offers outreach services for impoverished and handicapped people. Other ministries, which have

particular significance especially for the local churches will now be discussed in a little detail.

4.4.1 CHURCH WARDENS

The ministry of wardens, or workers in the church is a significant one. Both men and women are involved in the ministry. At times this ministry is comparable to the obsolete minor order of porter. Wardens have the responsibility of opening, cleaning and maintaining order in the church during liturgical ceremonies. Besides, these ministers are trusted with the work of welcoming people to the church and escorting them to seats for the community celebration. Parkes has this description of his experience of the church in Nigeria:

My own personal experience of the Church in Nigeria has been limited to a six-week assignment at St. Joseph's Parish in Benin City St. Joseph's is a wonderfully alive and enthusiastic Christian community Church wardens (ushers), female and male, fan out among the congregation, poking noisy children, maintaining order during the offertory and communion processions, and reuniting lost children with their parents.⁷⁸

One interesting thing about this ministry is that it does not need any formal education or training to be able to handle it. However, the wardens do receive some specific instruction to help them discharge their duties. The ministry of wardens was helpful during the missionary era and is still in use in the contemporary church in Nigeria.

4.4.2 MINISTRY OF INTERPRETERS

The ministry of interpreter was a significant one during the early days of the church in Nigeria. Although it is no longer a very common ministry, yet it is important. It is the ability to listen to the words of the preacher and be able to translate it for the congregation. This generally involves the ability to understand the language used in preaching. The argument most people use to dismiss this ministry is that it was just a

⁷⁸ Parkes, "The Church in Nigeria," 232.

question of one's knowing the language and being able to interpret it. But there is more to this ministry than is indicated by that position.

While many people may have a good grasp of the two languages being used, not all are able to present in the local language exactly what the speaker is saying. The gift of careful and accurate interpretation is not a common one. But there were always talented people who had it. We see here an example of quite a particular charism. The ministry of interpreter is exercised within the framework of a liturgical celebration. People are carefully selected and entrusted with this responsibility. The ministry still exists in the church in Nigeria today, and provides an important channel, which ensures effective communication of God's word.

4.4.3 LEADER OF SINGING

The leader of singing in the local community is the one responsible for arranging songs for the community celebration. Initially, during the missionary era the catechist of the station was responsible for the arranging of singing in the local church. Later in the process of development, this becomes a separate ministry. With Vatican II and the introduction of the vernacular into the liturgy, the leader of singing or director of music as it is known today, became important. The duty of the leader of singing is the one who "sells" the word of God:

Many values today compete for the allegiance of people. The gospel of Christ is the only lasting value. We must be prepared to advertise and sell it. And this is where the choirmaster comes in. If he is good enough, he can try putting biblical doctrine into song, or at least, fixing biblical themes on to old airs.⁷⁹

Thus, the leader of singing leads the congregation in singing at every occasional gathering such as childbirths, deaths, marriages, civil celebrations and meetings. This ministry takes responsibility for searching for songs that put some biblical teaching into the music.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ James Okoye, "Bible Knowledge for the Catechist and Choirmaster," in *Apostolate in Nigeria Today and Tomorrow* 7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

4.4.4 LECTORS AND ACOLYTES

These two ministries which were approved by Pope Paul VI as lay ministries in the church are yet to be effectively recognised in Nigeria. Although lay people are now doing the readings at liturgical celebrations, they are not officially seen as lectors. Just a few dioceses in Nigeria have actually recognised readers as an official ministry. The ministry of lector is not just limited to reading alone. Pope Paul in *MQ* describes as follows the duties of lectors:

The office of the lector, and it is proper to him, is to read the word of God in the liturgical assembly. Accordingly, it will be his task to read the lessons from the scripture (but not the gospel) at mass and at other sacred functions; when there is no psalmist, he will recite the psalm between the readings; he will announce the intentions at the prayers of the faithful when the deacon or cantor is not present; he will direct the singing and the participation of the faithful; he is to instruct the faithful in the worthy reception of the sacraments. He may also, when necessary, prepare the faithful who are temporarily appointed to read the scriptures in liturgical celebrations.⁸¹

The functions of lector as outlined here are quite broad.

The document also indicates the duties of an acolyte:

An acolyte is appointed to assist the deacon and to minister to the priest. It is his duty therefore to attend to the service of the altar, to assist the deacon and the priest in liturgical celebrations, especially in celebration of the Mass. It also falls to him to distribute holy communion, as an extraordinary minister, whenever the ministers listed in Canon 845b of the code of canon law are not present, or are themselves unable to distribute communion because of sickness or old age, or because they have to perform some other pastoral function at the same time. . . . It is also permissible to entrust to him, in similar extraordinary circumstances, the task of exposing the Blessed Sacrament for the veneration of the faithful and of replacing it subsequently. He may not, however, bless the people.⁸²

⁸¹ *MQ* cf. Flannery, *Vatican Council II*, 430.

⁸² *Ibid.*

While Paul VI revised the details of the ministry of acolytes as we saw in Chapter Three, official recognition of this ministry hardly exists in Nigeria. There is a skeletal existence of the ministries of lector and acolyte in certain areas of northern Nigeria. The dearth of priests in the archdiocese of Kaduna necessitated the establishment of these ministries in this part of Nigeria in 1973. They were very much welcomed in that region because they were considered as substituting for the lack of priests. But these ministries were not instituted in the church because of the lack of priests they are lay ministries in their own right.

One sees immediately why they are not available at all in the whole south of Nigeria since this area, particularly the southeastern region, has a fairly plentiful supply of priests. The only officially installed lectors and acolytes in the southeast are those in seminaries preparing for ordination. And their ministry is very much limited to the seminaries. Another factor that militates against the official recognition of lectors and acolytes is that these ministries seem to overlap somewhat with the ministry of the catechist. But even so, the combination of pastoral and para-liturgical tasks which catechists perform sufficiently distinguishes the catechist's unique responsibilities and ministry. It would not be out of order to have lectors and acolytes for the liturgical activities of out-stations.

4.4.5 THE MINISTRY OF DEACONS

The only deacons well known in the church in Nigeria are those who are soon to be ordained to the presbyterate. We have already seen the teaching of Vatican II on the diaconate in Chapter Three. With this teaching, a new understanding was given of the office of deacons. It is no longer limited to being a step toward the priesthood, but it is a ministry in its own right. Therefore, we can distinguish between transitional deacons and permanent deacons. The former continues on to priesthood and observes the law of celibacy, the latter is open to both married men and those who wish to remain celibate.

The re-introduction of the permanent diaconate is seen as a landmark in the history of the church. It was like a lost treasure recovered. As we saw in Chapter Two, the deacons historically were significant in the early centuries of the church, but this significance was subsequently lost. The Second Vatican Council restored this ministry.

There is, in fact, no great difference between the roles of deacon and of catechist (as it is in Africa). But, while the catechist is essentially a lay ministry, the permanent deacon is ordained and a member of the clergy. Ordination, as a matter of fact, gives the deacon some sacramental functions:

It is the deacon's task, as authorized by the competent authority, to administer Baptism solemnly, to reserve and distribute the Eucharist, to assist at and bless marriages in the name of the Church, to take viaticum to the dying, to read the sacred scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside over the worship and the prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals, and to officiate at funeral and burial services. Dedicated to works of charity and functions of administration, . . .⁸³

The catechist ordinarily does not carry out the first four duties outlined for the deacon, because he is not ordained. The permanent diaconate was introduced in Nigeria in 1970. Two centres for the training of candidates were established at Malumfashi and Bazza both in Northern Nigeria. In 1976 four married men were ordained deacons in Nigeria.⁸⁴ Currently in Nigeria, there seem to be only four married deacons: in the diocese of Lokoja⁸⁵

4.5 CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE SITUATION OF MINISTRIES

From what we have discussed so far in this chapter, we have shown that in the local communities in Nigeria there is a flowering of ministries with the bishops occupying the top position of leadership in the structure of ministry in Nigeria. They constitute the hierarchy of the church in the country. In 1997, there were nine archbishops and twenty-eight bishops giving a total of thirty-seven indigenous bishops, with five missionary bishops in the church in Nigeria.⁸⁶ The power of coordinating and officially recognising ministries in Nigeria is vested in the bishops:

⁸³ LG. #29

⁸⁴ Hickey, *An Auxiliary Priesthood*, 55.

⁸⁵ See 1997 *Catholic Diary and Church Directory*, 222.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 109-245.

It is the bishops who enjoy the fullness of the sacrament of orders, and both priests and deacons are dependent on them in the exercise of their power. The former, in order that they may be prudent cooperators with the episcopal order, have been consecrated true priests of the New Testament; deacons, having been ordained for the ministry, serve the people of God in union with the bishop and his clergy. It is therefore bishops who are the principal dispensers of the mysteries of God, and it is their function to control, promote and protect the entire liturgical life of the church entrusted to them.⁸⁷

The bishops of Nigeria hold tenaciously to the function of control and are conscious of being invested with "a sacred power." Therefore, they are the authority in matters of ministry in the country. The priests form a class of lieutenants to the bishops. The priests in turn become lesser rulers in their respective parishes. Thus the "sacred" hierarchy of bishops (and priests) clearly dominate ministries in the church in Nigeria. With the dominance of the ministry of bishops and priests, rooted in the sacrament of orders, it is difficult for a broader range of ministries to flourish. It becomes imperative then to consider possible ways of restructuring ministry in the local churches in Nigeria.

One thing that has to be mentioned is that while there are many ministries in the Nigerian church, they are basically considered from the perspective of lay apostolate. There is need therefore, to stress that these should be given encouragement as significant ministries in the church in their own right. The existence of the ministries for example of lector and acolyte in some part of northern Nigeria is helping the growth of the church in these places largely Moslem regions. The first group of acolytes was installed in Maiduguri diocese in 1975. An insight into the ministry of acolytes in this local church is as follows:

They go out on their motorbikes every Sunday to churches where the Blessed Sacrament is not yet reserved. The ciborium is carried in a special leather case, to which a strap is attached which goes over their shoulders. The ciborium is hidden under the loose gown they wear. They wear a kind of stole to show the Christians they are carrying the Lord, and cannot stop to gossip. On their arrival at the church the bell rings and the Christian kneel down. The Blessed Sacrament is enthroned on a kind of high table, something like a lampstand, with two candles and a canopy. The Acolyte holds the usual service as in the forepart of the Mass: penance, praise,

⁸⁷ CD. #15.

reading of the Word, singing-but plenty of singing. Then the communion service and thanksgiving.⁸⁸

This description of the acolyte in the church in Nigeria comes very close to the style of some functionaries in about the third century. The example of St. Tarsicius who (attacked and killed on the way) gave communion to people can serve as a model for acolytes of the present day. In the second and third centuries they functioned as couriers of the bishops and ministers of the altar. "Know, therefore, that I have made Saturus a lector, and Optatus the confessor a subdeacon . . . I appointed Optatus, from among the lectors, to be a teacher of the catechumens."⁸⁹

While most bishops in Nigeria may regard the ministries of acolyte and lector as superfluous, we believe that they are significant ministries in the church, and if introduced into the entire church of the country, they would enhance liturgical celebrations. What is left now is for the bishops' conference of Nigeria to implement the directives of Paul VI. The same would apply to the permanent diaconate. The ministry of permanent deacons has not made any impact in Nigeria beyond what we have indicated. Not much publicity is given to this ministry and most of the training centres for this purpose are no longer functional. The question has ceased to engender interest and the permanent diaconate is generally regarded as irrelevant:

In some parts of the country it was experimented to introduce lay deacons into the Church. That experiment seems to have gradually faded away. No serious thinking has been given to finding lay assistants for the ministry of baptism, the eucharist, marriage, vaticum, etc.,⁹⁰

The reason for this lack of interest is not hard to perceive. The seminaries are booming with vocations to the priesthood. Calabar Provincial Seminary has more than four

⁸⁸ Hickey, *An Auxiliary Priesthood*, 70.

⁸⁹ This is the opening sentence of one of the letters of Cyprian of Carthage to his clergy in about AD 250. Cited in Jurgens, *The Faith*, 1: 228.

⁹⁰ Basil Kanayo Nwazojie, "The Nigerian Hierarchy and Liturgical Inculturation in the Nigerian Church," in *Inculturation in Nigeria: Proceedings of Catholic Bishop's Study Session, November 1988* (Lagos: CSN, 1989), 69.

hundred seminarians preparing for the priesthood.⁹¹ Therefore, with the addition of a very large number of new priests every year, the focus is on the priestly ministry, and the permanent diaconate is not seriously thought about.

It is clear from what we have discussed so far in this chapter that the ministerial arrangement in the church in Nigeria needs a re-consideration by the bishops. The various ministries in existence particularly in the out-station churches should be encouraged and promoted where necessary to enhance growth in these communities.

4.6 SUMMARY

The structure of ministries in the church in Nigeria began with the advent of the missionaries to the West Coast of Africa in the later part of nineteenth century. The Catholic missionaries arrived in Nigeria in 1861 and introduced the faith that was to have a lasting impact on the people. The missionaries' ministry was successful especially in western, eastern and southeastern Nigeria where there was ready acceptance of the faith.

The missionaries adopted certain strategies like founding schools, charitable activities and redemption of slaves. One of the first African ministries to emerge in the process of evangelisation was that of the catechist. The ministry of catechist emerged in the church in Nigeria as very significant, especially in mediating between African languages and cultures on the one hand and foreign missionaries on the other. With the ministry of catechists there also emerged a system of local church organisation, of which the out-station is a characteristic feature.

Despite the significant role of catechists and other ministries in the local community, people are handicapped in certain functions. The ordained ministry is so dominant that it inhibits flourishing of other ministries in the Nigerian church. If we accept that ministry is the public activity for the sake of the kingdom of God, and undertaken by all the baptised whether ordained or lay in as much as it serves the good of the community, then it becomes imperative to restructure ministries in the church in this country so as to encourage the active contribution of all the baptised members of the Christian community.

⁹¹ A personal letter to me from Fr. Michael Bassey the Rector of St. Joseph's Major Seminary Ikot Ekpene Nigeria (3rd July 1997).

CHAPTER FIVE

TOWARDS A BROADENING AND RE-SHAPING OF MINISTRIES IN NIGERIA

In the light of our consideration of the theology of ministry in Chapter One and in view of the present arrangement of ministries in the church in Nigeria as outlined in Chapter Four, it becomes necessary in this chapter to relate this theology to some specific ministries in the church in Nigeria. This will help us to offer some positive proposals for the re-structuring of ministries in that country. The broadening and re-shaping of ministries in the church in Nigeria is one that has to be addressed in the overall interest of the church. Local Catholic communities have not experienced the church the way Vatican II promised it might be. The wave of change has not been rapid in Nigeria. This may be attributed to the cultural environment into which the church was planted. Therefore the present structure of ministries in the church in Nigeria could be justified from the way the traditional African society is organised.

5.1 THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

There is need for a thorough study of human beings in their environments to be able to explain their pattern of behaviour. This pattern of behaviour forms an important focus of anthropology alongside sociology and psychology. Anthropology from its cultural perspective describes the forms of social organisation and the cultural systems of human groups. It is that approach to culture that offers new and helpful insights both into

culture in general and into how religion operates.¹ Therefore, we have an insight from which to approach the behaviour of the church in Nigeria with regard to the shaping of ministries. There is no doubt that the traditional society has influenced the situation.

5.1.1 THE INFLUENCE OF TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

The domination of ministries by priests in Nigeria could be explained from the way that power and authority are conceived and exercised in traditional African societies. A look at the organisation of African rural societies reveals a structure of small autonomous groups comprising clans and villages; clan heads and village chiefs whose authority is very great administer these clans and villages. Because of the way the society is structured, scope for personal decision is very limited. Traditionalism marks the life of members, and this is perpetuated from one generation to another.² Thus, the authority of rulers is respected because authority is regarded as sacred and hierarchical. In Africa God is the supreme deity, and below him there are the ancestors who occupy a significant position in African traditional society. The only one capable of approaching the deity is the local priest who in most cases combines this role with that of ruling the community:

Because the traditional belief is that the well being of the society depends upon the maintenance of good relations with the ancestors on whom the living depend for help and protection, the ruler fulfils an important function as intermediary between the living and the ancestors. Since there is no sharp distinction between what is secular and what is religious, the ruler holds mystical credentials and is revered by everyone.³

Thus, African local anthropology supports a pre-Vatican II hierarchical ecclesiology. Priests are considered to be those leaders who are able to communicate with the spirit world of the Christian God hence they are revered and respected. Consequently there is a carry over of the same traditional model of exercising power and authority in their local churches. What is lacking in such a situation is the impact of our renewed ecclesiology with its broader concept of ministry as we reflected in Chapter Three. Ministry is not

¹ Gideon Goosen, *Religion in Australia: An Anthropological View* (Sydney: St. Pauls Publications, 1997), 19-20.

² Robert Kaggwa, "Looking at power in Africa," *Priests & People* 11, nos. 8 & 9 (1997): 349.

³ *Ibid.*, 350.

domination, but being of service to God's people. What should be most emphasised is not the exercise of authority but the promotion of the well being and growth and apostolic activity of the members of the Christian communities. This domineering attitude is seen in the way women too are treated in Nigeria. While there is a considerable respect for women, they are not on a par with men:

Traditional Nigerian society values women as partners to men in reproduction, maintenance of the homestead, economic sustenance, and moral education of the younger generation. Women as wives and mothers are respected and cared for by their husbands and later in life by their children. Numerous songs portray mothers as invaluable assets in the progress and well being of the society. Women in Nigeria are not considered equal to men. In particular, their physical nature, weak in comparison to men, puts them in a secondary position in the largely agrarian Nigerian communities. The husband is unquestionably the head of his wife.⁴

But in the traditional religion of Nigeria women function in their own right. In this respect, the deities in the pantheon include females such as *Yemoja*, *Olokun*, *Oshun* who have their numerous votaries and are very influential in communities near rivers such as Oshogbo in western Nigeria. Hence, the priesthood of women is recognised, as priests and priestesses abound and have equal status and authority in the religion.⁵ In some indigenous Pentecostal churches such as the *Aladura*, women feature significantly as prophetesses, and some are founders of these churches.⁶ In the Catholic Church particularly, this is a non issue hence the limitation of ministry.

A significant factor that limits ministry in the Nigerian church is the resistance to diversification and broadening of ministries on the part of both priests and people. The majority of priests in Nigeria today were trained and ordained since Vatican II. One might expect them to know and be implementing the teaching of the council. Part of the problem may be that those who prepared them for ordination were priests who retained a pre-Vatican II mentality.

⁴ R. Modupe Owanikin, "The Priesthood of Church Women in the Nigerian Context," in *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa*, eds. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 216-217.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 218.

5.1.2 RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

Individuals and organisations often resist major change, and the church in Nigeria has not shown itself to be an exception. Although the reforms of the council were promulgated over thirty years ago, some priests and most lay people would not be easily convinced of the value and necessity of adopting these changes. Some bishops are not ready to commit themselves to effecting needed changes lest they be looked on unfavourably in Rome. Some priests are yet to be convinced of the value of other ministries in the church. Most lay people oppose the new ministries because they feel the priests are trying to shed some of their responsibilities and to overburden lay people with extra responsibilities:

Entrusting ministries to the laity, this is virtually non-existent in some parts of Nigeria. The laity show no keenness, perhaps even unwillingness to accept such ministry. Some Catholic communities prefer to do without the Holy Eucharist than to receive it from the hand of the laity.⁷

Cultural factors are also operative. In the traditional society we considered above, people just look to traditional priests for every action within the community. There is no sharing of responsibility between traditional priests and the non-priests. Most importantly, because of the high level of illiteracy especially in the rural communities, people have no consciousness of their canonical rights and the theology of ministry as outlined in Chapter One. For instance there is lack of the awareness that by baptism every Christian shares in the common priesthood of Christ, and the implication of this for the church's mission. Therefore, the priest is looked upon for leadership even in temporal affairs, which belongs properly to lay people's area of influence and activity.

⁷ J. P. C. Nzomiwu, "The Laity and the Nigerian Church," *Christ to the World*, no. 31 (1986): 149.

5.1.3 MONOPOLY IN MINISTRY

In Nigeria catechists and other lay faithful are not properly incorporated into the church's structure of ministry; this is due to many factors. One such factor is the monopoly of ministry by priests. The background to this is, the way the church was introduced into Nigeria:

The impression of the people about the first missionaries was that they brought with them the monarchical system of Church government from Europe, where all planning and initiatives came from the bishop and the priests. The result was a passive dormant laity, untrained in organization, self-help and leadership, totally dependent on priests. The priests founded a 'priests' Church.⁸

Thus, when the priests absorb all ministries, other members of the community are made passive. But priests cannot do everything on their own without the active involvement of the parish community. On the whole, the structure still remains as it was before Vatican II when the priests were everything in the church. In other words the hierarchy monopolised all offices in the church and identified themselves with the church. The lay people were deprived of all authority and worth, and the only tasks they had left were to "pray, pay, and obey."⁹ This was the period as Dodo points out, when "the priest was the Alpha and Omega in the church in Nigeria. The priest enjoyed absolute power and the layman obeyed him as if the priest were God."¹⁰ In this structure, the lay person was not regarded as a full member of the church, but an object of pastoral care without any business in the administration of the church:

The Nigerian Church of the fifties and sixties was clericalistic and exclusive. That is to say, the Church was a Church of the pulpit, and more specifically the clergy. Lay involvement in the actual proclamation of the word or in the parish administration was minimal and passive. Not only

⁸ E. A. Ogidan, "Sharing of Christ's Function," in *Priests and Laity Formation in Nigeria*, eds. G. A. Ojo et al., (Kaduna: Layon, 1988), 30.

⁹ Walbert Bühlmann, *With Eyes to See: Church and World in the Third Millennium*, trans. Robert R. Barr. (Middlegreen, Slough: St Paul Publications, 1990), 34.

¹⁰ D. D. Dodo, "The Priest in Nigeria, A Layman's Perspective," in *The Clergy in Nigeria Today*, eds. Luke N. Mbefo & Ernest M. Ezeogu (Enugu: SIST, 1994), 32.

did the clergy dictate in matters of faith, morals and discipline, but they did the same in the field of finance, and social development.¹¹

This attitude of domination over lay people is often attributed to young priests who are fresh from the seminary. Nzomiwu considers it an important question to ask about “the role the laity should play in the government of the church, especially at the local parish level where young priests, sometimes fresh from the seminary, have far too much responsibility and powers than they often seem to be able to manage.”¹² Young priests showing off their talents, and recently acquired authority after ordination have always been with the church in Nigeria. Nevertheless, priests’ domination of the lay people cuts across all ages of priests. Therefore, positive steps need to be taken to bring people at all levels to the awareness of sharing in ministries. One of such steps would be by education.

5.2 EDUCATION IN MINISTRIES

The Nigerian church inherited the pre-Vatican II approach to ministry whereby the priest was responsible for everything in the church. For almost two hundred years of the Catholic Church’s presence in Nigeria, the ordained ministry as the only functional ministry has dominated the mentality of the people. There is a great need for the Nigerian church, especially the clergy, really to see the benefits of, and accept, the *aggiornamento* decided upon by Vatican II. This will necessitate a re-shaping of ministries. The first step towards achieving this would be through a re-orientation of mentalities and attitudes through a process of education for seminarians, priests and lay people.

5.2.1 SEMINARIES

An important focal point for this renewal is the formation given in seminaries. The church is in the world, and therefore theology must take account of the world. In view of this, theological courses must bring students face to face with life in their communities.¹³ Those who will be priests need to be formed in such a way that they will

¹¹ Nzomiwu, “The Laity and the Nigerian Church,” 147-148.

¹² Nwaka, “One Hundred Years of Catholicism,” 135

¹³ Kwesi A. Dickson, *Theology in Africa* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), 222.

have a humble and collaborative attitude towards lay people, and see themselves as catalysts and coordinators rather than “bosses”. Writing of priests in Africa, Hastings has claimed:

It is becoming clear that their collective mind and approach to the laity and the world is somehow antiquated and at times ineffective, and that this is due not to the personal defects of priests but to a seminary training which has not been sufficiently adapted to the circumstances of today.¹⁴

The post-Tridentine tradition of emphasising the dichotomy between priests and lay people is still in force. Before Vatican II priests were often formed in a monastic type of spirituality which had little to do with their pastoral ministry. What is needed today is a pattern of priestly formation and life that is adapted to the present time. The idea of the bishops and priests constituting the church and the lay people being an appendix is still dominant. It will not be easy to convince people with such attitudes to abandon a monopolistic approach to ministry in favour of a more pluralistic and collaborative approach.

It is thus essential to have study programmes that will promote new understanding and attitudes. These should be firmly based on the renewed ecclesiology of Vatican II and the emphases on church as the people of God and as communion. Appreciating the church as communion will facilitate a broader concept of ministry. These study programmes:

Would address the readiness of those who will exercise any ministry at all in the local church, not excluding a seminary program that demonstrates knowledgeability of and sensitivity to the Church to be served. It would also address the difficult task of enlightening the minds and, even, of transforming the mentalities (converting the hearts!) of those who are resistant to change, particularly to a change in the concept of ministry.¹⁵

The renewal of the ministry of priests depends upon an updating of priestly training. The *aggiornamento* of major seminaries should include new methods of theological and

¹⁴ Adrian Hastings, *Church & Mission in Modern Africa* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 190-191.

¹⁵ Cunningham, “Church People As Missionary,” 177.

pastoral formation.¹⁶ Hickey has offered some insights into what will enable seminarians to have a better appreciation of other ministries like that of the catechists with whom they will work in the local communities. According to him, there should be a coordinated approach to the training of seminarians and catechists. This is not intended to gloss over the different roles between priests and catechists or to turn catechetical centres into mini-seminaries. While their distinctive roles are respected, seminarians would reflect a lot more on the role of catechists if they were to spend some time working as catechists as part of their formation for the priesthood:

This would be most advantageous if it took place after reception of the ministries of lector and acolyte and as a preparation for the definitive commitment of diaconate. They would be stationed in a large and well-organized out-station and be in constant contact with the parish priest. As acolytes they would be empowered to administer the Eucharist regularly, surely an appropriate preparation for the diaconate . . . Part of this time - during the 'off-season' periods - would be spent at the catechetical Training Centre with the catechists in training.¹⁷

The above suggestion by Hickey, if implemented, could give seminarians an opportunity respectfully and harmoniously to work with others in the church in such a way that diversity of ministries will be enhanced and not diminished. Bishops and vocations directors should make a systematic effort to place seminarians for lengthy periods with priests, who relate with lay people in the most inspiring, harmonious and collaborative way. The hope would be that such priests would become mentors and models for seminarians. *Optatam Totius*, brings out this fact when it says they should live their paschal mystery in such a way that they will know how to initiate into it the people committed to their charge¹⁸ The document stresses the importance of being able to dialogue with the world and listening to others.¹⁹

¹⁶ See L. Kaufmann, "The Priest in Africa Today," *AFER* 12, no. 2 (1970): 106.

¹⁷ Hickey, "Ministry in Parallel Lines," 168.

¹⁸ *Optatam Totius* (Decree on the Training of Priests), cf. Flannery ed. *Vatican II* #8.

¹⁹ Goosen, "A New Relationship," 20.

5.2.2 ORDAINED MINISTERS

The focus needs to be not just on future priests but also with those who are already in the ordained ministry. There is need for priests to undertake courses to update them with contemporary trends in theology, especially developments in the concept of ministry. These would help priests in their local communities to encourage diversification of ministries that will be of benefit to these communities. This will ultimately lead to a renewed and deeper understanding of the priest's role in the community, not as the one who monopolises all ministry, but as one who fosters, coordinates and supports the varied ministries that emerge in the communities:

Historically, the priest was practically the factotum (do-all) of the Church. He monopolised not only the ministries but also power in the Church He must rediscover his role as community coordinator Not that the priest is to be blamed for a historical situation. But it would be blameworthy if now he did not have the sensitivity to perceive the signs of the times and the Spirit speaking to the Church. So it is not merely a question of the priest stopping one activity to perform another, or changing style of dress! He has to review the way he exercises his mission within a new theology of the Church in which the key words are community and co-responsibility.²⁰

The leadership that is needed today is one that will seek above all to enable all God's people to grow individually and as a community in the service of God and each other. It is one that will empower people for active service in the church and not arrogate to itself the permanent role of acting "in the service of the people."²¹ There is no doubt that today a successful approach to ministry must emphasise collaboration. This is what concerns us in the next discussion. But before that let us now turn to something that can actually help the realisation of collaborative ministry. The formation and training of lay people for ministries are essential if new ministries are to flourish and be effective.

²⁰ Brian Hearne "Priestly Ministry and Christian Community," *AFER* 12, no. 3 (1970): 232.

²¹ Teresa Okure, "The Priest in Nigeria: A layman's perspective, A Response," in *The Clergy in Nigeria Today*, 56.

5.2.3 LAY PEOPLE

Preparing lay people for ministry is an important task for the church today in view of the necessity of having ministries at all levels. The fact that lay people are no longer expected to be spectators but participants in the different ministries of the church calls for adequate preparation for these ministries:

The Church is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy. For the Gospel cannot become deeply rooted in the mentality, life and work of a people without the active presence of lay people. Therefore, from the foundation of a church very special care must be taken to form a mature Christian laity.²²

The importance of training for ministry was highlighted by Vatican II which devoted a whole chapter of its *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay people* to this topic. With reference specifically to catechists, Vatican II declared: “their training must be in keeping with cultural progress and such that, as true co-workers of the priestly order, they will be able to perform their task as well as possible, a task which involves new and greater burdens.”²³ The Council directs that regional schools should be increased for the training of catechists to enable them have a solid foundation on doctrinal issues.²⁴ Among the recommendations of the Synod on Africa is one that catechists should not only receive a sound initial preparation, but also continuous doctrinal formation as well as moral and spiritual support.

Regular meetings should be organized for catechists so that they can discuss together how best to prepare their classes and devise plans for pastoral action, and so on. Bishops should give special attention to catechists and to their conditions of life and work. The parish priest should also carefully respect the special place of the catechist in the community.²⁵

²² AG. #21.

²³ Ibid., #17.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Maura Browne ed., *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 91.

Thus what the catechists need today is more careful training for effective ministry. The same is true of other lay people in the church. The basic requirement is that people be formed and trained for effective participation in the various ministries of the church. In view of the fact that the laity are becoming increasingly conscious of their vocation and role in the church, they should be encouraged to achieve these objectives. The African Synod of 1994 thinks that the achievement of these objectives would be through the establishment of schools and centres of biblical and pastoral formation in parishes, dioceses, countries and regions of Africa.²⁶

In line with the Synod's recommendation, Pope John Paul II in his post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation stresses the need to train women. "With specific regard to the church, women should be properly trained so that they can participate at appropriate levels in her apostolic activity."²⁷ This is an endorsement of the proposal of the Synod that women should be included in appropriate levels of decision making in the church, that ministries should be established for women, and that there should be an intensive effort toward their formation. The use of the word 'appropriate' makes it doubtful if women are really to be integrated in the mainstream of the church's ministry. It seems to suggest a slow level of integrating women into ministry. However, there is a ray of hope in this statement. If significant numbers of women are given better pastoral and theological training, their participation in, and contribution to, the mission of the church could increase considerably. This is where we think women religious in Nigeria should be given the opportunity to study theological disciplines to equip them for pastoral ministries.

Bishops and priests in Nigeria have a responsibility of providing the formation and training which lay people need. This calls for an objective discernment of the motives of the lay persons in wanting to be involved in the mission of the church. But often, priests have a negative attitude towards lay people:

²⁶ Browne, ed. *The African Synod*, 91.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 269.

Some priests continue to hold as suspect and untenable any initiatives taken by lay persons to exercise their rights through laity formation and lay apostolate activities. Such priests fail to exercise their responsibilities to form and train the laity for their role in the mission of the church.²⁸

The church stresses the need for priests to assist lay people in the process of formation because the parish should help to enable people to live their daily lives in the world as the mission given them by Christ. The parish community should help the members to build their confidence and discern their individual callings and ways of enriching the ministerial work of the church. Thus the parish, as a community of Christian formation, is called to be a place where people experience the joining of faith and daily life.²⁹ At diocesan level, it is expected that centres of formation and training for ministries should be established.

In Nigeria there is yet to be seen an outstanding programme of formations which priests have prepared and are using for the training of mature Christian laity.³⁰ Although there is a place of formation in Issele Ukwu diocese for Evangelisation 2000 and another one in Uyo diocese, otherwise, not much has been achieved. A few other centres for evangelisation are sprouting up here and there. The concentration of these centres is on evangelisation. While these are valuable initiatives, a lot more has to be done to include other areas of ministry. In view of the rapid population growth of the country, there is need to establish more centres to train catechists, eucharistic ministers, ushers, choir directors, leaders of local communities and other ministries that will help the growth of the church. Nigeria could take the example of the Lumko Institute in South Africa where the focus is on the *training* of people for a variety of ministries in the local communities. Lay people are trained here for such roles as “leading the Sunday service in the absence of the priest, distributing Holy Communion to people during the church service as well as to the sick at home and in hospital, knowing how to visit the sick, and how to read the Scriptures in the liturgical assembly.”³¹

²⁸ Ojo, “Responsibilities of priests in promoting Laity activities,” in *Priests and Laity Formation*, 54.

²⁹ Borders, “Royal Priesthood,” 173.

³⁰ Dodo, “The Priest in Nigeria,” in *The Clergy in Nigeria Today*, 40.

³¹ Anselm Prior, “A Brief History of the Lumko Institute” Lecture notes (Germiston, S. A. Lumko Institute, 1993): 5-6.

The Lumko institute has produced much literature, which can provide valuable resources for training for ministries, or even in parish based workshops. Training for ministries along Lumko lines could help build the church in Nigeria from grassroots. The church needs to produce lay people who have self-confidence and apostolic initiative and competence. When the efforts of such trained lay people are joined together harmoniously with those of ordained ministers the church could become truly dynamic. People would see that the church is much more collaborative than it is now.

As a step towards a successful evolution and growth of various ministries in the local churches in Nigeria, we have proposed a programme of training and formation for lay people. The establishment of various centres for this purpose is imperative on leaders of the church in Nigeria. The development of ministries for the local churches will be hampered if the bishops concentrate solely on the seminary type of formation. We have argued that, while the priestly ministry is significant for the life of the church, other ministries serve equally useful purposes. Therefore while there is a conscious effort to train people for priestly ministry, others should be trained for some other ministries. Hickey in his advocacy of auxiliary priesthood says that since the function of the auxiliary will be different from the professional priest, the level of his education would depend on the circumstances of his situation.³² There is no justification for obstructing the flowering of ministries in Nigeria just because only one method of training is available:

There is absolutely no reason to think that there is one single standard of education inherently fitting to the priesthood The functions of a priest are ministerial, correlative to a community, and his education should relate substantially to the type of ministry to which he is called, the work he is to do, the general educational level of the people whom he is going to serve.³³

The application in Nigeria of the above proposal would certainly help the training programmes suited to prepare people (especially catechists) for various ministries. The onus is on the bishops in Nigeria to implement these proposals. It is our expectation that

³² Hickey, *An Auxiliary Priesthood*, 121.

³³ Adrian Hastings, "The Ministry in Africa," *AFER* 12, no. 1 (1970): 7.

the hierarchy will show a better disposition towards various ministries in Nigeria and place their activity too in the position of service. As a matter of fact, the future of ordained and lay ministries would be more promising if the local church assumed a more active role in calling ministers and determining their status. "In crisis for some decades now, the "universal" model of presbyteral ministry no longer seems adequately to meet the needs and expectations of Christians."³⁴ We request at this point that the hierarchy should learn and accept in practice "to demythologize authority and sacramentalise humanity, to serve and not to rule. If our authorities could confide a bit and loosen the string that holds tightly to "power", perhaps it could give them greater scope to recognise talents, and utilise the expertise of those who have acquired them." ³⁵

In other words, thinking of ministry should not be limited to the ordained ministry, as others are also able to engage in ministry by virtue of their baptism and confirmation. This new orientation would help make the priests aware that they are not the "sole ministers" or absolute controllers of ministry. Besides, it would help lay people to abandon their passivity and become active members of the communities. But in order for this transformation to occur, lay people need to be provided with carefully prepared formation and training programmes which will enable them to develop the necessary skills to engage in different forms of ministry.

5.2.4 COLLABORATION

Ministries that are carried out in a collaborative way have a special character and attractiveness. Collaboration thus becomes an essential ingredient for success in ministry. No one is an island and a tree cannot make a forest. The attitude of the priest having to do-it-all alone is no longer acceptable in the pastoral and administrative life of the church. The wall that constituted the separation between clergy and lay people is crumbling and a way is prepared for the communal structure that should characterise the church. Indeed collaborative ministry is injecting a new awareness into the organisation

³⁴ Alphonse Bordas, "Ministerial Practices Today," *Theology Digest* 44, no. 2 (1997): 129.

³⁵ Nwazojie, "The Nigerian Hierarchy," in *Inculturation in Nigeria*, 71.

of the church. From the foregoing discussion we have seen that, in Nigeria, ministry is not carried out in a sufficiently collaborative way. One reason for this is as reflected in the anthropological context, priests do not regard the lay people as fellow-workers in the service of God.

The significance and importance of collaborative ministry cannot be overemphasised. The church needs the talents and gifts of its members for the diverse forms of service and ministry now emerging in the church. The theology of the body as developed by Paul (1 Cor. 12:12ff) implies collaborative ministry. As a result of Vatican II many Catholics now speak and think of the church as “We”. Collaboration therefore reflects a conviction that we, as the people of God, are called to work with each other to further the mission of Jesus. It is a process of identifying, releasing, and unifying the gifts of every baptised person for the sake of Jesus’ mission.³⁶ “To develop the sense of each individual’s baptismal call to holiness and ministry and responsibility for the mission of the church is essentially to be about developing a collaborative understanding of ministry.”³⁷

The concept of collaborative ministry extends beyond the mere incorporation of a specific group, for example the laity. It is broader than programs which add lectors and eucharistic ministers to the sacramental and liturgical ministries. Implementation of collaborative ministry calls for efforts to enable all Christians to respond to their baptismal call and engage in ministry with others in the Christian community.³⁸

The church officially exhorts pastors to acknowledge and foster ministries, but at present the emphasis seems to be more on fostering lay apostolate “in the world” than of collaboration of lay people with the clergy in pastoral ministries. The Instruction from Vatican³⁹ gives guidelines on how the non-ordained may be allowed to collaborate in pastoral ministry. “When necessity and expediency in the church require it, the Pastors, according to established norms from universal law, can entrust to the lay faithful certain

³⁶ John Reid, “Notes on Collaboration,” *Church* 4, no. 1 (1988): 39.

³⁷ Borders, “Royal Priesthood,” 173.

³⁸ Sofield and Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry*, 16.

³⁹ See *Instruction on Certain Questions*, in the Introduction, 2.

offices and roles that are connected to their pastoral ministry but do not require the character of Orders.”⁴⁰ According to this position, collaboration of lay people and clergy in pastoral ministries is something-exceptional (e.g., where there is shortage of priests). The argument once again is focused primarily on priests. Yet the essence of collaboration as Sofield and Juliano point out is to develop a church in which people continue to discover new and better ways of working together in ministry toward that common mission.⁴¹

The Nigerian church reflects a conservative and limited perspective on collaboration. This is hardly surprising since the bishops and priests operate out of a very hierarchical model of church; hence there is less effort to promote lay ministries. We have already noted in Chapter One that baptism gives equal dignity to all the people of God as far as ministry is concerned yet some priests are alleged to resist any form of consultation and dialogue with the laity:

Such priests are full of their own self-importance, deriving from the privileged position accorded to them in pre-Vatican Council times, that they cannot accept the laity on the basis of equality of dignity as having rights which could enable them to make suggestions on the mission of the laity in the church.⁴²

Collaboration is not feasible in a situation where individuals approach one another from a stance of superiority. Arrogance blinds people to the gifts of others as it attempts to exaggerate their own importance and self-esteem.⁴³ Therefore, dialogue is a prerequisite for collaborative ministry. “In order for ministers to work effectively together there must be willingness as well as opportunities for honest, open and frequent dialogue.”⁴⁴ Besides dialoguing which is essential for a proper arrangement of ministries, there is need for mutual respect. This needs to be stressed in the Nigerian situation where priests are very highly regarded as pointed out when we looked at the anthropological context for change,

⁴⁰ This document is restating what pope John Paul II had officially said in *Christifideles Laici*, #23.

⁴¹ Sofield and Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry*, 21.

⁴² Ojo, “Responsibilities of Priests in promoting Laity Activities,” in *Priests and Laity Formation*, 55.

⁴³ Sofield and Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry*, 30.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

and as a result, those who are not priests tend to be underrated. Lay people are always conscious of the respect they give to the priests. Yet in most circumstances priests do not reciprocate. Mutual respect will enable each one to appreciate not only his or her own contribution, but that of others too, and this will help collaboration:

Genuine collaborative ministry is a blessing in every aspect of the life of the Church. Any pastoral priest will affirm that the most enriching and fruitful priestly ministry is that carried on in co-operation with lay people who are seeking to fulfil their own ministry generously in the life of the Church.⁴⁵

The church in Nigeria should strive to create a situation where priests and lay people can work together and complement each other in ministry; the church should be modeled in such a way that it welcomes the contribution and participation of all. "The great task is to bring the Catholic teaching on office and authority more directly into the context of the Church as a communion in the Holy Spirit, so that office bearers do not appear to have a monopoly on the gifts of the Spirit."⁴⁶ The members of the community should have a say in the organisation of the church. And until the laity are given positions of trust and real responsibility, local churches will remain pastorally ineffective. The present structures of ministry are not adequate in serving all the communities.

In view of this inadequacy many people are deprived of the essential materials to build their faith. Where this occurs, there is discouragement in pastoral life and at times total abandonment of the faith on the part of the people. Collaborative ministry is an essential ingredient for good pastoral ministry. Thus when a sense of superiority is eliminated and all the people of God see themselves, as working together in the service of God there will be a more effective articulation of ministries in the church in Nigeria.

⁴⁵ Tim Finnegan, "Collaborative Ministry – a deeper look," *The Priest* 4, nos. 8 & 9 (1997): 8.

⁴⁶ Brian Hearne, "Priestly Ministry and Christian Community," *AFER* 12, no. 3 (1970): 228.

5.3 THE RE-STRUCTURING OF MINISTRIES

The church is getting very close to a new century of her history, the third millennium. While there is much preparation for the celebration of the new era, certain pertinent questions have to be asked. How will ministries be organised in order to fulfil the mission of the church? To what extent will the changes begun with Vatican II materialise in the new century? It will be useful to consider certain strategies that could be useful in restructuring ministries in Nigeria in preparation for the new millennium. As we traced the meaning of ministry in Chapter One, a significant finding was the overly narrow conception of ministry over many centuries prior to Vatican II. With ministry thought of solely as ordained ministry following the Council of Trent, the narrow conception of ministry became frozen, and ministry became compartmentalized.

Therefore thinking of re-structuring of ministries in this situation brings us to reflect on a fundamental issue for Catholic communities - the Eucharist. And the consideration is how ministries could be re-shaped to make the local churches truly eucharistic communities. The Eucharist is essential for God's people. It is an important celebration of the church. This basic understanding of the Eucharist is clearly brought out in the documents of Vatican II:

The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the source from which all its power flows. For the goal of apostolic endeavor is that all who are made children of God by faith and Baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his church, to take part in the sacrifice and to eat the Lord's supper.⁴⁷

The celebration of the Eucharist is an activity of the whole community. The "coming together" is fundamental to Eucharist. The General Instruction on the Roman Missal points out that the celebration of the Eucharist is the action of the whole church.⁴⁸ This notion makes it clear that the Eucharist is not a private activity. Rather, it is the one that brings the community together. It is a celebration of the life of the community. Therefore it is vital to ask what sort of celebration the people in the local churches in Nigeria have

⁴⁷ *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) #10.

⁴⁸ See The Sacramentary 1985 ed. s. v. "Importance and Dignity of the Eucharistic celebration."

when they gather. If they cannot celebrate the Eucharist whenever they gather, there must be a reason. "If we define a Catholic community as essentially a eucharistic community, then a whole section of the Nigerian church is being denied regular access to the very thing they have been promised as Catholics"⁴⁹

The vast majority of people in Nigeria live in rural areas and this will continue to be the case in the foreseeable future. In many rural dioceses there are many out-stations attached to the parishes. Consequently the distances involved, the bad roads and other factors have combined to make it impossible for the majority of Christians in these remote places to acquire any real sense of belonging to a local eucharistic community. The fact that the Catholic population continues to increase demands an immediate consideration of structuring ministry to suit the local communities. The present system of ministry and of recruitment to ministry offers absolutely no possibility of solution:

The only conceivable solution lies in the courageous development of new patterns of ministry more adapted to social realities here, and more intrinsically African The present type of priest with his long training, full-time commitment, relatively high rates of pay or (at least) standards of living, and obligations of celibacy will remain necessary, but it is absolutely clear that with this kind of priest alone we cannot maintain even a minimum of local pastoral service and sacramental life in the great majority of our dioceses.⁵⁰

The concern here stems from the fact that in Nigeria too, there is enormous number of communities of Christians living far away from the priest, regularly attending services led by the catechists and able to join in the celebration of Mass only very occasionally when a priest visits.⁵¹ The relevant question at this stage is, can people in local communities be motivated and empowered to participate actively and enthusiastically in the church's ministry, and if so, how?"⁵² The immediate answer to this question as far as Nigeria is concerned is that the local catechists who are already pastoral leaders of the communities should be empowered for further ministry.

⁴⁹ Paul Graham, "Nigeria Visited," *Clergy Review* 69 (1984): 29.

⁵⁰ Hastings, "The Ministry in Africa Today and Tomorrow," 6.

⁵¹ Hastings, *Church & Mission in Modern Africa*, 21.

⁵² Patricia Egan, "Empowering God's People at Grassroots Level" in *Redefining the Church: Vision and Practice*, ed. Richard Lennan, (Alexandria: E. J. Dwyer, 1995), 57.

5.3.1 EMPOWERING THE CATECHISTS

As we outlined the ministry of catechist in Chapter Four, we saw the significant role catechists play in the local churches. Therefore it will not be out of order if catechists are given an opportunity to do more within the community especially in matters affecting the sacraments. At this point we would like to consider this extended role of the catechist from the perspective of eucharistic celebration. What has been established is that while local catechists are doing their best to instruct and lead in prayers, one essential element of the life of the community is rarely experienced: the celebration of the Eucharist is not a regular occurrence.

Previously the ministry of catechists was considered as being a temporary substitute for the ministry of priests in the community. Ultimate responsibility remains entirely with the priest.⁵³ But the official recognition of catechists today is as “true co-workers of the priestly order.” Cauwelaert has argued that it is enough to recognise canonically the reality which already exists in fact. They are no longer just delegates of the priests but receive themselves a pastoral responsibility, a ministry in the church. Thus, to ordain someone a catechist constitutes a true ordination to a minor order.⁵⁴ Cauwelaert’s argument follows from Vatican II’s recommendation that episcopal conferences in recognition of the importance of catechists should consider them for ordination as deacons:

It would help those men who carry out the ministry of a deacon - preaching the word of God as catechists or governing scattered Christian communities in the name of the Bishop or parish priest, or exercising charity in the performance of social or charitable works - if they were to be strengthened by the imposition of hands which has come down from the apostles. They would be more closely bound to the altar and their ministry would be made more fruitful through the sacramental grace of the diaconate.⁵⁵

⁵³ Jan Van Cauwelaert, “The Ordination of Lay People to ministries in the Church,” *Lumen Vitae* 26, no. 4 (1971): 586.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *AG*. #16

Cauweleart concludes that if the church is consistent with the principle that the sacramental grace of the diaconate be conferred on these catechists who are actually carrying out such a ministry, then the church “should also confer the sacramental grace of the priesthood on some of her catechists who (except for the celebration of the Eucharist and the administration of the sacraments) practically carry out all the pastoral functions of the priest.”⁵⁶

Hickey supports the argument for ordination of catechists in his call for the establishment of “auxiliary” priesthood that will be drawn from the body of catechists.⁵⁷ These proposals show genuine concern for the problem of lack of priests in the local communities and also the fact that catechists’ pastoral responsibilities should be effectively expressed and no longer be seen as substitutes for the priests in exceptional situations. If these exceptional situations become the rule in many communities and if there is no hope that a remedy can be found in the near future, then such a state of affairs be called abnormal:

Thus the catechist no longer supplies for the priest in the case of necessity, but becomes his habitual substitute. Such substitution blocks the adaptation of the structure of ministries, with the result that sufficiently developed communities will never have their own priestly minister. On the contrary the institution of Catechists as occasional suppliers for the priest, should become the seed ground out of which each community under the leadership of the bishop, . . . could recruit experienced ministers to be proposed to the bishop for the sacramental imposition of hands.⁵⁸

The fact remains that even if the catechists were ordained deacons as indicated by Vatican II they would still not be able to celebrate the Eucharist. So, in order to realise this objective, priestly ordination is the ultimate. While a number of priests feel that the catechist should not be “clericalised” by being made a deacon, some on the contrary say he should be “clericalised” to the extent of being made a priest, because the priesthood would give him greater sacramental powers.⁵⁹ The priest has greater sacramental powers than the deacon; only a priest can lead the celebration of the Eucharist. Therefore, the

⁵⁶ Cauweleart, “The Ordination of Lay People,” 587.

⁵⁷ Hickey, *An Auxiliary Priesthood*, 76-79.

⁵⁸ Cauweleart, “The Ordination of the Lay People,” 592.

⁵⁹ Shorter, “The Catechist Research,” 198-199.

ordination of catechists would give a boost to the celebration of the Eucharist in the rural churches.

The position of ordaining proven Christians such as catechists so that they can make up for the lack of priests in the local communities becomes a significant one for the church in Nigeria today. The reason for calling for this ordination is the need to have somebody in each congregation, who can validly administer the sacraments.⁶⁰ In Chapter Two, we saw the first century church approach to the issue of eucharistic celebration with a certain level of flexibility regarding the one who presided at the celebration. Going back to the early church does not negate the process of development in the church since the first century. Rather it is viewing the fact that the process of development in the church today has blossomed into situations that need the application of some early church structures:

A description of origins can be a definitive solution only to a fundamentalist who does not believe in Christian development beyond the 1st century. Nevertheless, the biblical information must play an important part in our decisions and we must remain loyal to our NT origins. This does not mean that we are so subject to the NT picture that we cannot effect change, but that change is to be introduced only knowingly and with extreme care. Without that type of loyalty to the NT we risk becoming a Church that is no longer apostolic.⁶¹

It is evident (Chapter Two), that at the beginning of the second century, bishops emerged as leaders of the early church communities. And they were the ones who presided at the celebration of the Eucharist. By then, presidency at the Eucharist had been formalised. It was no longer the function of whoever leads the community, but that of the priest:

What is clear is that the eucharist was taken out of the hands of the people. And the one who presides at the eucharistic celebration, instead of being able to do so because of leadership role in the community, can now do so only if “he” is ordained, and even if “he” does not have a leadership role in that community.⁶²

⁶⁰ Fritz Lobinger, “Why we should ordain proven Christians,” *AFER* 17, no. 6 (1975): 347-348.

⁶¹ Brown, *Priest and Bishop*, 2.

⁶² Szafranski, “The one who presides at Eucharist,” 311.

Therefore we see the local churches in Nigeria not having this celebration regularly because there are not enough priests frequently to call on the stations. Some stations could stay for as long as two months before a priest could visit them for the celebration of the Eucharist. While the church stresses the right of Christians to receive the sacraments and that the Eucharist occupies a central place in the Christian life, yet in Nigeria the inadequate number of priests prevents a great number of people from receiving the Eucharist for much of the year. The danger is that the situation becomes confusing both to the local community and the leaders (catechists):

It creates confusion in the minds of Christians and above all among catechists who, since they are not aware of the theological discussions around ministry, ask themselves why they cannot preside over the Eucharist when they are allowed to do everything else. Moreover, since they focus their liturgy purely around the celebration of the Word, these communities no longer know what difference there is between themselves and the communities of the Protestant churches.⁶³

If the level of flexibility on who presided at the Eucharist that existed in the first century church were adopted in the out-station churches in Nigeria, catechists who at the moment are spiritual leaders of these communities would fit into the role of presiding at the Eucharist. The increasing number of Catholics calls for a change in the role of the catechist from auxiliary of the priest to a true pastoral minister within the community and alongside the ordained ministers/priests.⁶⁴ It needs to be understood why trained and approved catechists cannot be recognised as local, and associate, pastors of the communities, which they serve. The official teaching of the church makes allowance for non-ordained members of the faithful to lead Sunday celebrations in the absence of priests and deacons.⁶⁵ At the same time it is stated that such celebrations cannot substitute for the eucharistic sacrifice and that the obligation to attend mass on Sunday and Holy days of obligation is satisfied only by attendance at Holy Mass.⁶⁶ This is accepted as a

⁶³ Paul Rutayisire, "Assemblies without the celebration of the Eucharist in Africa: a sign of hope or a sign of crisis in ministry?" *Pro Mundi Vita Studies* no. 12 (1989): 8.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Instruction on Certain Questions*, #7.

⁶⁶ *IC in. Vatican II*, 226-8.

norm for the eucharistic community but the basic question is, what happens to those communities that do not see a priest for up to two months?

The significant roles individual persons can play in the local churches have been highlighted and we have argued that the leaders of the church in Nigeria have not done enough to encourage the flourishing of ministries. We have seen the potential of catechists, and they should be given the opportunity to do more. It would help the growth and progress of the local churches in Nigeria if catechists were considered for ordination to the priesthood that will empower them to function effectively in the absence of priests. In realisation of the assistance catechists offer in the pastoral life of the church, nothing stops such assistants from sacramental empowerment:

If, however, it was true that pastoral assistants were, *de facto*, doing the work of priests, and if the Church indeed had the power to determine the nature of office, then it was unjustifiable that the Church should make a person leader of a community, but deny them full sacramental empowering for that office.⁶⁷

In view of the above concern for the role of the catechists in the local situations, it will be worthwhile if those in authority begin to feel the need to listen to the voices of their people. A new type of leadership has to be developed that suits the situation and values of the people, seen basically in the light of sharing and service.⁶⁸ Some people favour the ordination of some catechists to the permanent diaconate as we have already seen but our argument is that this in itself will not enable communities to celebrate the Eucharist more often. What we think would be helpful to the local situations is what Hastings has proposed:

A larger body of priests, mostly married, largely self-supporting, who will preside over the Eucharist in the great majority of local communities and explain the word of God Sunday by Sunday. Some of these people will be upgraded catechists, some will be professional people of considerable secular education; some will have another full-time occupation, others will be men already retired from their main civil activities; all will be older men of real prestige in their community with a proved christian life behind

⁶⁷ Richard Lennan, *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 235.

⁶⁸ John Rich, "Ministry in Rural Areas," *AFER* 19, no. 4 (1977): 200.

them plus special training before incorporation into the ordained ministry.⁶⁹

However, if the ordination of catechists to the permanent diaconate were accepted now, it would be a decisive step towards recognising the truly pastoral role of the catechist as effective co-worker of the priestly order. It would give the catechist's ministry greater seriousness and the prospect of a life-long commitment.⁷⁰

The introduction of a married diaconate is no adequate solution here
As a stage in the evolution of the organized ministry it can, however, be of immediate value, just because it is possible to make a start on it at once . . .
.. It can help us to begin with the selection and training of men who will subsequently take on more than diaconal responsibilities.⁷¹

We have seen positive values for the ordination of catechists in this circumstance but we have not lost sight of the fact that certain problems may arise. For instance, what level of education would catechists attain to merit ordination? What about the issue of celibacy since these catechists are married men? Under education in ministries we presented the need to train people for different ministries with emphasis on the formation of catechists. It would be expected that before ordination, there would be series of courses, together with in-service training which would lead the catechist through the ministries of lector, acolyte and deacon, to the priesthood.⁷² These formation arrangements will not conflict with normal seminary formation since the level of education would be proportionate to the requirements of local communities. Therefore it will be arranged according to local needs and at the discretion of the local bishop.

While it is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss the complex issue of celibacy, we would like to suggest that in cognizance of the situation under discussion, the church could grant dispensation in the existing law of clerical celibacy. The above proposal as Hickey has pointed out "does not contest the value of celibacy for ministers

⁶⁹ Hastings, "The Ministry in Africa," 9-10.

⁷⁰ Shorter, "The Catechist Research," 202.

⁷¹ Hastings, "The Ministry in Africa," 6.

⁷² Hickey, *An Auxiliary Priesthood*, 78.

of the Gospel . . . But it does ask that the law of celibacy be dispensed with in the case of married catechists who after training are judged worthy of ordination to the priesthood.”⁷³

5.3.2 MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

The minister of the Eucharist is another ministry that has a certain level of significance for the local communities. Besides the catechist, certain Christians can also be entrusted with certain ministries in the local communities, e.g., ministry of the Eucharist.

The Instruction *IC* authorised local ordinaries to choose suitable persons who will serve as extraordinary ministers for the distribution of Holy Communion for a specific purpose, or in the case of necessity, or on a permanent basis. The list of suitable persons includes lector, student of major seminary, male religious, woman religious, catechist, Catholic man or woman. The order can be changed according to the prudent judgment of the local ordinary.⁷⁴

This instruction is yet to be put into practice in the church in Nigeria. There are a few instances in Lagos (western Nigeria) where some women religious have been allowed to help with the distribution of Communion during Mass. In the north we have already seen the case of some acolytes acting as eucharistic ministers. In the east and southeast, there are no extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist. In an instance when Bishop Joseph Ekuwem introduced Word ministers and extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist in his diocese of Uyo in Nigeria, he was very much criticised by some people of the diocese. The fact remains that the exercise of this ministry as Bishop Ekuwem explained would be of benefit to members of the community, particularly the sick who were unable to come to Mass.⁷⁵

Having many priests (as for example, Uyo diocese does) has not ensured the regular visitation of the sick. It has been observed that priests take the Eucharist to the sick only occasionally, for example when there is a sick call. As we have already noted, the catechist is helpless in this situation because he is not allowed even to take communion to the sick. The practice of eucharistic ministers in other countries (e.g.,

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁷⁴ *IC*, in *Vatican II*, 226-8

⁷⁵ Cf. *Akwa Uyo* (Newsletter of the Catholic Diocese of Uyo Nigeria), 1 no. 9 (1995/96): 3.

Australia) taking Communion to the sick every Sunday after Mass is very encouraging and makes the sick people feel a real sense of belonging to the community. If this responsibility is reserved to the priest alone, not much will be achieved. Priests alone cannot respond to the spiritual and pastoral needs of all parishioners, especially in countries such as Nigeria. The community as a whole must share in this responsibility. This is how we understand ministry as being essentially inclusive and embracing the various talents of members of the community.

There is a need to empower the immediate leaders of the local communities in Nigeria for this ministry. Authorising them to distribute Holy Communion will increase the level of participation in ministry. In the church in Nigeria, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist should be commissioned to bring communion to out-stations that have only Sunday service. In addition, "lay leaders of prayer, who may not be catechists, should be able to preside at Sunday service, give communion or viaticum to the sick, pray the different ritual of blessings, bury the dead and so forth."⁷⁶ The church should not continue to stress the need for the Eucharist to be the centre of the local Christian community but in reality constantly deprive this community of the Eucharist by restricting the ministry of the Eucharist to priests alone.⁷⁷

5.3.3 MINISTRIES FOR WOMEN

The role women are to play in the church has been under discussion in the universal church and in the different local churches. Recently in the church in Australia, there has been a move to determine how women's participation in the church's ministry will be effectively expressed.⁷⁸ The church in Nigeria has not shown any disposition towards addressing the role of women in the church. This has been a source of concern for some Nigerian women who have considered themselves marginalised in regard to ministries in the church.

The picture of the situation of the Nigerian woman as we saw above (influence of the traditional society) mirrors the state of women both in the larger society and the

⁷⁶ Ogidan, "Sharing of Christ's Function Among Priests and Laity," 32.

⁷⁷ Paul Crowley, "Christian Community and Ministry," *AFER* 19, no. 4 (1977): 202.

⁷⁸ See Edward Clancy, "Church spotlight on women's role," *The Catholic Weekly*, Sunday, September 1, 1996: 1-3.

church. Even in the church, the role of the woman has been subordinated to the man. This is an issue that official church documents have been very vocal against. Pope John XXIII pointed out as one of the signs of our times that “women are gaining an increasing awareness of their natural dignity. Far from being content with a purely passive role, or allowing themselves to be exploited, they are demanding both in domestic and in public life the rights and duties which belong to them as human persons.”⁷⁹

John Paul II affirms what John XXIII said by calling on the women to consider the task of advancing the dignity of women as theirs and so must recognise their responsibility as leading characters. Therefore vigorous and incisive pastoral action must be taken by all to guard against all forms of discrimination against women.⁸⁰ While the pope affirms the tradition of reserving ordination to men alone, he nevertheless believes “the presence and the role of women in the life and mission of the church, although not linked to the ministerial priesthood, remain absolutely necessary and irreplaceable.”⁸¹ The pope is merely reaffirming the statement in the document *Inter Insigniores*:

The Church desires that Christian women should become fully aware of the greatness of their mission: today their role is of capital importance both for the renewal and humanization of society and for the rediscovery by believers of the true face of the Church.⁸²

The emphasis of the document is that ordination cannot be conferred on women. “The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith judges it necessary to recall that the church, in fidelity to the example of the Lord, does not consider herself authorised to admit women to priestly ordination.”⁸³ The whole idea of recognising the dignity and

⁷⁹ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, (Peace on Earth), (London: CTS, 1963), 19.

⁸⁰ John Paul II in *Familiaris Consortio*, *Mulieris Dignitatem* and *Christifideles Laici* deals with the issue of the rights and dignity of women. He acknowledges women’s issues in the Church as significant and would not dismiss them as fads.

⁸¹ John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter on reserving Priestly Ordination to Men Alone* (Homebush: St Paul, 1994): 6.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Inter Insigniores*, Declaration on the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, cf. *Vatican II* ed. Flannery (1982), 332.

importance of women and at the same time limiting the level of their participation in the ministry of the church does not impress many women. And the reasons justifying this exclusion continue to be a subject of controversy.

Women in contemporary Nigeria society are no longer just content with sitting back to watch events they want to be participants and active participants. There is the demand for the society at large and the church to remove those structures that are oppressive and unjust towards women. The new consciousness of human dignity, of the oppression of socio-political structures and of every person's responsibility in history, has grown everywhere in recent times. This awareness has permeated and influenced the thinking and social activities of Nigerian women.⁸⁴ As a result of the impact of this awareness, women in Nigeria are becoming increasingly conscious of their legitimate role in the growth and development of the church.

Many women would like to follow the example of women who were involved in the various activities of the early church. While we admit that circumstances have changed, the church can still learn from history. Therefore, the women at the beginning of the church, as we noticed in Chapter Two, can provide a model for the women today. It is clear then that women were actively involved in the life of the early church communities. And Paul's list of charisms in 1 Corinthians 12 does not make any distinction regarding gender:

The gifts are given according to the measure of faith, not the sex of the recipient. In 1 Corinthians 7:7 marriage itself is a charism. The lists of charisms in Romans and Ephesians reveal Paul's functional approach to ministry. For Paul the crucial point for the ministries is not gender, but their capacity to build up the Church.⁸⁵

The question that one may ask at this point is, if women could do so much at the beginnings of Christianity, why could they not be doing more now? It becomes an important question for the church in Nigeria where women have very limited roles in the ministries of the church. Some significant trends of contemporary religious experience as

⁸⁴ Chukwudum B. Okolo, "The Church and the Nigerian Woman," *AFER* 27, no. 6 (1985): 366-367.

⁸⁵ Rademacher, *Lay Ministry*, 152.

Rosemary Edet states, include women coming together in groups designed to direct church action toward renewal and service, and secondly, the discovery and sharing of professional competence of women in interfaith settings. These two trends:

Assert the oneness of the Church and the oneness of humanity. These trends may be said to originate from women's reflection on the Gospels, reflection which has called church women to define themselves as human persons equal in capacity, in aspirations and in sinfulness with men. Aware of the potential for diverse human development which they share with men, women see their sexuality as a gift but do not accept the limiting roles imposed on them by church and society.⁸⁶

The thrust of the argument is that women in Nigeria have not been allowed into some ministries in the church just because they are women. Thus, looking at the Catholic tradition and praxis of ministries in Nigeria, women have little or no part to play. Some of the roles of women mentioned in Chapter Four could be considered more properly as participating in the women's league than as exercising a ministry. While these women's activities are beneficial to the church, they are not included in the mainstream of the liturgical life of the church. For instance, what prevents women in Nigeria from serving as catechists as they do in Australia, America and Europe and in some countries in Africa? This role is reserved for men alone; even in a situation where a man is not readily available the women cannot take it on. Vatican II did not restrict the work of catechists to men:

Also worthy of praise is that army of catechists, both men and women, to whom missionary work among the nations is so indebted; who imbued with an apostolic spirit make an outstanding and absolutely necessary contribution to the spread of the faith and the Church by their great work.⁸⁷

Elsewhere Vatican II makes reference to the role of the laity without placing any restriction on women:

⁸⁶ Rosemary Edet, "Women and Evangelization: A New Testament Perspective," in *Evangelization in Africa in the Third Millennium: Challenges and Prospects*, eds. Justin S. Ukpong et al., (Port Harcourt: CIWA Press, 1992), 132.

⁸⁷ AG. #17.

The laity are 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 to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of mankind.⁸⁸

In other words, women just as men have a right to become catechists in the local churches in Nigeria. They also have the right to be extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, especially to the sick, as is the practice in other places in the world. The church in Nigeria needs to reconsider these exclusions, which impede the involvement of women in the ministries where they would have much to contribute:

There are many issues, which face sincere followers of Jesus in these last decades of the second Christian millennium. The person and the role of the Christian woman is one of the more urgent of these concerns. Within the wider setting of the women's movement, the struggle of Christian women to stand equal with men before God is a nagging thorn in the side of the Church whose authority and ministry has become over-masculine.⁸⁹

Therefore, the inclusion of women in church ministries is not simply a question of women's rights. It is a step toward a psychological revolution in the way we relate to God, to leadership, to each other, to nature and to the relation of the church to the world.⁹⁰ Apart from participating in the Catholic women's league, women have no significant roles in the liturgical, pastoral and administrative life of the church. It is questionable why ministry should not be more inclusive when we know from history of the early church that women have been much more active in the life of the church. Our suggestion is that women should be brought into the mainstream of ministries in the church as they too share in the priesthood of Christ.

In sum, the idea of broadening and re-shaping of ministries in Nigeria is an important one. This implies that old structures and attitudes would give way to new

⁸⁸ GS. #43.

⁸⁹ See Brendan Byrne, *Paul and the Christian Woman* (Homebush: St. Paul, 1988), vii. From the foreword written by Francis Moloney.

⁹⁰ Edet, "Women and Evangelization," in *Evangelisation in Africa*, 133.

considerations of ministries in the church today. It will be very encouraging if this step is taken in the interest of the local churches and for the common good of the church.

5.4 SUMMARY

The attempt in this chapter has been to offer proposals for the broadening and re-shaping of ministries in the local churches in Nigeria. The immediate task is the examination of some factors that have hindered the proper structuring of ministries. These include: influence of the traditional society, resistance to change on the part both of priests and lay people, and above all, the monopoly of ministries by priests. A way out of the hindrance would be through an effective education programme. Education in ministries is necessary to re-shape the mentalities and attitudes of seminarians, ordained ministers and most passive lay people. It is hoped that through this process, there will be a better awareness of the theology of ministry especially from the perspective of collaboration.

As a step toward re-structuring ministries in this situation, it is proposed that catechists need to be empowered with ordination to the priesthood to make their ministry stand out in this context. Other members of the different communities could be recognised as ministers of the Eucharist to help in the out-station churches especially ministering to the sick. The development of other ministries is to be encouraged. Lastly, women too, share in the priesthood of Christ therefore they should not be denied the opportunity of participating in the various ministries of the church.

CONCLUSION

This study began by looking at the meaning of ministry. It was found that the way ministry was conceived in the centuries preceding Vatican II was very limited in scope compared with the understanding of it now. There has been a shift in the Catholic theology of ministry and the central idea in the theology of ministry is the church in which all members are participants in diverse ways in the various responsibilities of the community. Lay people, those, who were previously seen as passive members at the bottom rung of importance in the church, are now assuming some responsibilities that were previously reserved to priests. Ministry is not limited to delegating certain responsibilities to lay people such as Catholic Action or lay apostolate, as was the case before. It arises from the baptism and discipleship by which all Christians are required actively to share in the various activities of promoting the kingdom of God. Ministry assumes that baptism takes pre-eminence over ordination. It is the most basic and fundamental sacrament, the ultimate justification and source for all further sacraments, including ordination.

The historical overview of the NT times highlighted the arrangement of ministries in the first century church. There was much overlap of ministries particularly in the Pauline church communities. Ministries existed according to the needs of the local community. The ministerial arrangement of the first century of the church was stifled by the emergence of the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons. The Pastoral Epistles, the letters of Clement of Rome and Ignatius of Antioch in the second century buttressed the development of the threefold ministry. Consequently, ministries became hierarchically organised. This threefold ministry was formalised as the official ministries of the Catholic Church.

Vatican II offered the basis of a renewal for the church in matters of ministries. In its fundamental document *LG*, the Council presented a renewed understanding of the church in terms of mystery, Body of Christ, sacrament, communion and, above all, people of God. This new understanding of the church demanded a new approach to ministries in the church. With the emphasis of the Council on the church as a people of

God, the previous pyramidal, hierarchical ecclesiology was de-emphasised, and the active participation of all baptised members in the life and growth of the church was stressed. In the light of this renewed ecclesiology of Vatican II, this study proceeded to reflect on the situation of ministries in Nigeria.

This study concludes that the communal dimension of the church stressed by the Council should prevail in Nigeria. A look at the present structure of ministry in Nigeria revealed the existence of certain ministries which had developed since the missionary era, particularly the ministry of catechist. The role of the catechist was seen as being too restricted. Thus the ordained ministry overshadows the effective articulation of other ministries. The ordained ministry dominates in the church in Nigeria. In the local church situation, the catechist is looked upon as the spiritual leader of the community who collaborates with other members to meet the various needs of the community. These people are hardly literate, yet they provide the essential leadership that is needed for the community. But they are not able to lead the community in the Eucharist because they have not been given the power. From this we conclude that catechists should be empowered with ordination to the priesthood that will enable them more effectively to fulfil the pastoral responsibilities they already have. In the provision of a higher quality of ministry in rural churches, the ordination of catechists would play a big part. Other lay people should be allowed and encouraged to function as acolytes, lectors, eucharistic ministers and in other capacities in the local churches.

There is need for formation centres to be established in every diocese in Nigeria to enable people to be trained for various ministries. Such formation centres would give people basic instruction on the bible, theology and liturgy and provide them with training which would ensure that they develop specific skills for various types of ministries. If provided with well-planned programmes of formation and training, people would develop their potentialities and become actively involved in the various tasks of the church.

In view of the fact that the Nigerian church is still exhibiting the hierarchical structures, attitudes and clericalism which are characteristic of the ecclesiology of Trent and Vatican I, it becomes necessary to offer these proposals that will help with the restructuring of ministries. What are needed in Nigeria are programmes of renewal that will help all God's people-bishops, priests and lay people to internalise the ecclesiology of

Vatican II. The church in Nigeria needs to integrate the priestly ministry into a theology of church as communion.

On the eve of the new millennium, the church is still attempting to implement the reforms of Vatican II. While some countries have made significant progress towards bringing these reforms to fruition in their local church communities, Nigeria is going at a slow pace. There is need to emphasis the share of all Christians in the priesthood of Christ and at the same time effectively to encourage and enable people to exercise the ministries which flow from their baptism. The time has come for the Holy Spirit to be given a greater role to play in the future of the church. The new and practical ecclesiology of Vatican II calls for new thinking on the organisation of ministries in the local churches in which all the baptised are included. In Nigeria today there is need to promote and diversify ministries in order to energize the body of Christ. The recommendations of Vatican II on the active participation of lay people in the liturgy of the church need to be implemented.

The rapid growth of the church in Nigeria demands the emergence and encouragement of new ministries in parishes and out-stations to meet the needs of the people. This presupposes awareness among people of the meaning of ministry and the nature of the church as People of God. Thus, the role of ordained ministers would be understood within the context of a variety of ministries in the community. This will mean shared responsibilities and the abandonment of a priestly monopoly on all ministries. Ministry considered from this perspective will include all without demarcation of sex or gender. Women will then take their rightful place in the church by sharing their special gifts with the community. And ministry will have to be more strongly marked by collaboration.

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