

The Effect of Formation on Priestly Ministry amidst Contemporary Challenges in the Catholic Diocese of Homa Bay, Kenya.

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Abstract: *This study investigated the effect of seminary formation on priestly ministry amidst contemporary challenges in the Catholic Diocese of Homa Bay, (CDHB), Kenya. Traditionally, the formation practice has been to train holy, intelligent, competent, pastorally engaged men who know how to continue the work of Christ of presenting the mystery of the Church in the world. The Seminary tradition leads one to the integration of prayer, work, study, and Christ-centered service to the Church. There is a special emphasis on the liturgical, spiritual, and community formation for all the seminarians. However, little effort has been placed on the effect of the current seminary formation concerning the life of priests amidst the contemporary challenges. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to propose how formation could be improved to respond to contemporary challenges. The objectives of the study are; the effect of the Seminary Training program on the priestly ministry in the Catholic Diocese of Homa Bay, the nature of the ministerial life of priests amidst the contemporary challenges, and the model of ongoing formation that would make priests more effective amidst the contemporary challenges in the Catholic Diocese of Homa Bay. The study used both the quantitative and qualitative approaches. Data from respondents was collected through questionnaires and interview guides. The target population to which this study sought to generalize its findings was 70. However, a sample of 50 comprising of priests, formators, religious men and women, seminarians, and lay Christians was used for the study. The study employed the social identity theory to analyze the initial formation process of the candidates. It is hoped that the findings of the study provide some insights, regarding formation of future priests and the improvement of the quality ministerial life in the Catholic Diocese of Homa Bay and elsewhere.*

Key Words: *Formation, Priest, Ministerial, Pastoral, Seminary, Diocese, Vows, Church, Contemporary, Religious Men, Religious Women, Lay*

I. Introduction

This article presents the effect of the priestly formation and its impact on the ministerial life of a priest. It is in chronological order starting from the early church period, medieval period, the Middle Ages, the Reformation, the age of enlightenment, the Ecumenical Church Councils of Trent and Vatican II, current Church Documents, various Papal Encyclicals, Constitutions, instructions, and Canon Law. Insights of theologians globally and from within the continent of Africa are also cited.

1.1 Early Church Period

Before the end of the fourth century, 390 AD, there were no traces of what we may call seminaries for the formation of the clergy (Ellis, 1967). Saint Augustine (354-430) established the formation for Priesthood and challenges for clerical formation (Woestman, William 1999 p.80). During this period, Augustine's community was one of regular clergy and it was not a monastery, but for the training of parochial clergy. There was a common life of the clerics with studies that served as a model for other similar approaches for forming clergy. Soon, this method was imitated in other African dioceses, in Italy, Gaul, Spain, England, Ireland, and other parts of the world. The second council of Toledo (527) prescribed that younger clergy were to live and be educated in a house under the supervision of the bishop. Later, many bishops promoted similar establishments. (Woestman, William, 1999, P.95). Thus, the article proposes that the quality of education and spiritual formation for the priests must be relevant to the various challenges experienced at our times, due to immersing modern needs, circumstance, and situations.

1.2 Medieval Period and Middle Ages

At this period, (5th – 15th Century), the ordained ministry was further transformed by the influence of the Hierarchies of Pseudo-Dionysius in the 13th century, when all offices were in order and hierarchical structure (Allen, Y., 1960, p.32). St Thomas Aquinas also articulated the theological model for priesthood within the mendicant tradition and orders. Aquinas says, "Religious are committed by vow to a life-long pursuit of the perfection of charity and are taken up with observances, prayer, study, and discipline that lead to their holiness. Ordination, however, is ordered to the service of others in ministry and requires that one must be able to lead others on the way of charity." He goes on to state "Moreover, with the establishment of universities with faculties of theology and canon law in the Middle Ages, clerical students were attracted to them from all over Europe" (Woestman H., 199.p.119). What St Thomas Aquinas proposed is relevant to us in terms of the need for serious theological studies expected of the priestly candidate.

1.3 Reformation (Age of Enlightenment)

Luther and Protestant Reformation brought another new moment in the priesthood by challenging celibacy and class system within the church" (Ellis, 2021). However, the reform was slow to come and in 1551, Ignatius Loyola opened the Roman College, the Gregorian University for the formation of the clerics. In 1552, the German College in Rome was opened for the spiritual formation of German priests. While Mary Tudor was queen in England, (1553-1558), Cardinal Reginald Pole consulted with her and basing himself on earlier councils, led the way in 1556 by legislation the establishment of schools for the education of priests in England" (Allen, Y, 1960 p.43).

One result of the reformation was the development and new understanding of the pastoral role of the catholic priest highlighted along with the liturgy, canon law, catechetic and administration. Thus, the examination of transformation in priestly ministry throughout the history of the church, gives us an idea that the structure of formation for the priesthood has been under transformation, alteration and forms that have brought forth more accurate, systematic form of formation for the church (Ellis, 2021).

II. Ecumenical Church Councils

In the history of the Catholic Church, 21 ecumenical councils have been called, where the matters about dogmas, heresies, faith, scripture, and others have been discussed. Out of these 21 ecumenical councils, two councils; Trent and Vatican II, showed interest in the priestly formation (Tanner, 1990, p.12).

2.1 Council of Trent (1545 – 1563)

As the Middle Ages drew to a close, laxity in clerical life grew. Bishop Francesco Chierigati of Teramo (1522), in the wake of Luther posting his 95 theses, lamented, "We all, prelates and clergy, have gone astray from the right way, and for long there is none that has done well; non, not one." (Jedin, 1967 no. 21). The Church Fathers of the sixteenth century following the model of Jesus formed or started the seminaries as institutes for the training of priests. The simple but comprehensive profile of the first seminary, therefore, was sketched in the words of the Gospel: "He appointed twelve to be with him and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons" (Mark 3:14-15).

The sixteenth-century became a pivotal moment in the Catholic Church. It was not only the rise of Protestantism but also the transition of the Church from the Middle Ages to the modern era. Clergy abuses caused people to begin criticizing the Catholic Church. The causes for this were many, one of the major contributing factors was the lack of institutions of priestly formation that maintained high standards of conduct, (Ellis, (1967). However, by the 15th and early 16th centuries, monasteries and religious orders had receded from the forefront of societal life. Even the Fifth Lateran Council of 1512 was unable to effect a substantial change with its reform measures. It would take the strong reform spirit of the Council of Trent to address fully the formation and education of the clergy. Antonio Cardinal del Monte summarized its spirit: “The aim of the reforming activity is the revival of the pastoral ministry, the cure of souls,” (Jedin, 1967).

The greed and scandalous lives of the clergy and the rampant abuses by the hierarchy regarding Indulgences had created a split within the church, (Ellis, 1967). In that Century the 19th ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church, the Council of Trent (1545), was called to respond to these challenges, (Charles M. Murphy, 2006). The seminary was created to reform the clergy and in return reform the church, (Ellis 2021). Pope Paul III appointed a special commission made up of six cardinals guided by Cardinal Gasparo Contarini to undertake the cause of clerical reform in the Church in May 1536. The commission was called the “Holy Office” or Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition (Ratzinger, J., Messori, V., 1985, p.20).

This group denounced the ordination of poorly prepared priests, the selection of incompetent bishops, the accumulation of benefices, and the decadence of the religious orders, preaching and the care of souls. In 1537 the commission submitted a report to the Pope which scrutinized the causes for the principal abuses by the clergy. Giovanni Cardinal Morone suggested that the newly founded Jesuit order open a college in Rome to educate German candidates for the priesthood. Clerical reform began to take the front seat again. The recommendation was warmly accepted by the new Pope Julius III. The Roman College was opened in February 1551.

In an English decree drawn up by Reginald Cardinal Pole for a national council in November of 1555, it was stated: “that in cathedrals there be educated a certain number of beginners, from which, as from a seed bed (*seminarium*), the idea of a nursery to protect and grow young plants, priests can be chosen who can worthily be placed in charge of churches” (Ellis 36). The text of this decree was to have an important influence on the decision of the Council of Trent regarding seminaries. The Council of Trent decrees shaped Catholicism for centuries, right up to the Second Vatican Council (Murphy, 2006). By 1565 nearly 1000 students attended lectures on philosophy and theology. The regulations St. Ignatius wrote for the Roman College were adapted for several later seminaries in Rome, (Ellis, 1967).

This was the 19th ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church, known for its sweeping decrees on self-reform and for its dogmatic definitions that clarified virtually every doctrine contested by the Protestants (Tanner, 1990, p. 342). Despite internal strife, external dangers and two lengthy interruptions, the council played a vital role in revitalizing the Roman Catholic Church in many parts of Europe. This is the first council that issued and promulgated decrees with regards to the formation, seminary and canonical requirements observed for the priesthood (Sadis, 2015 P. 18). The Council of Trent decreed that, the seminary college was to be a self-sufficient place where those being prepared for priestly ordination and those responsible for their education, lived and worked. Teachers and students live alongside each other in a way that resembles the Gospel relationship between Jesus and His disciples, (Oakley, 2017).

St. Thomas Aquinas Nairobi is a typical seminary building following the Council of Trent. It resembles a monastery with a cloistered quadrangle. At each corner of this quadrangle, there is a significant place of life; a chapel for prayer and liturgical celebrations, a refectory for meals, a library for research and references, halls for lectures, a common room for social activities and private living rooms, an orchard and open space for farming to produce food and to raise income for the seminary. It is generally secluded from the “world” by the perimeter walls. Visitors are only welcomed but discouraged at the same time. It is exclusively a ground of meditation, study, and discernment. However, this form of exclusion from the world was a sixteenth-century monastic spirituality or way of life. The seminarians after training are expected not to run

away from the “world”, but to be sensitized about his place and role in the world, to bring Christ to the people by being with the people.

III. Vatican Council II (1962 – 1965)

This was the 21st ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic Church announced by Pope John XXIII on 25th January 1959, was a means of spiritual renewal for the Church, to try to meet the pastoral needs of the Church and as an occasion for Christians separated from Rome to join in the search for a reunion (Tanner, 1990, p. 411). The Council noted that a seminary in Europe could not be the same as a seminary in Asia or Africa. “A special “program of priestly training” is to be undertaken by each country or rite (Ellis, 1967). It must be set up by the episcopal conferences, revised from time to time, and approved by the Apostolic See. In this way will the universal laws be adapted to the particular circumstances of the times and localities so that the priestly training will always be in tune with the pastoral needs of those regions in which the ministry is to be exercised” (OP. no.1)

Optatam Totius affirms the essential role of the seminary for priestly formation and does not suggest the provision of a different context in which this formation may take place (OT. 1965, n.4). The thinking of this document is a continuation of the Tridentine aspiration for priestly formation (OT. 1965) along with a makeover of the seminary to make it fit and effective for the purpose in the modern age. In some respects, the curriculum of studies retains the same familiar format that would be found in a seminary before the council. There are, however, some important developments. A contemporary seminary program, for example, should now be informed by sound knowledge on sexuality, psychology, and pedagogy (OT, 1965. n.11).

Above all, the Council’s thinking about preparation for priestly life and ministry very much reflects the Council’s understanding of the Church in the modern world. The ‘eternal truths’ of revelation must be applied to the changing conditions of human affairs, and to express them in language which people of the modern world will understand (De Ecclesia, 1965.n.25). The Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Priestly Formation (n.1) determined that the Episcopal Conferences of each country would draw up the authoritative program of priestly formation for that nation. Recognizing the fact that across the world there are a variety of challenges that come to light as a result of mankind’s new needs, and from the nature of modern civilization. The Basic Plan is nevertheless not a bond of uniformity but unity. It seeks oneness in understanding and apostolic zeal so that many humans with all their personal and natural and cultural differences may pursue one objective the formation of true servants of God and His people, (Basic Plan for Priestly Formation, 1970).

3.1 Decree on the Training of Priests (Optatam Totius)

This decree, Optatam Totius, was promulgated by Pope Paul VI, on 28 Oct. 1965. This document gives different directives on the training and the ministerial life of priests. It further stated that desired renewal of the Church depended greatly on its priests, who must all be well trained according to the principles of the decree. Bishops’ conference in each country and rite will prepare specific training programs, revised from time to time, and adapting universal laws to circumstances. Vocations are to be fostered by families, parishes, teachers, priests, bishops, and associations. Minor seminaries develop the seeds of vocations and in the major seminaries, the whole training of students ought to be providing for the development of true shepherds of souls after the model of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that they may know how to represent Christ before men, becoming the servant of all. Administrators and other members should form among themselves and with the students, a unified family spirit. The candidates’ freedom of choice and personal qualities must be well appraised. The students should accustom themselves to lifelong conformity and friendship with Christ.

Seminarians are to be thoroughly prepared to appreciate and live in celibacy. Human maturity is to be developed and the discipline of the seminary is to be integral in maturity and self-direction within seriousness. There should be the promotion of strictly pastoral training. In general, such trainings should be geared towards developing the abilities most appropriate to the promotion of dialogue with men, such as a

capacity to listen to other people and to open to their hearts in a spirit of charity to the various circumstances of human need.

3.2 Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (PO)

The Vatican II decree on the ministry and life of priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (PO), is the firmest document on the ministry and life of priests, (PO, n.58). After the training, the document highlights the ministerial life of priests and their core functions as follows: first, to preach the word of God. The priest is first of all a minister of the word of God. He is consecrated and sent forth to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom to all, calling every person to the obedience of faith and leading believers to an ever-increasing knowledge of the mystery of God, as revealed and communicated to us in Christ (PO, n.4).

Secondly, to be ministers of the sacraments. In this specific function, priests act as instruments of God to sanctify humanity, they exercise the cultic function: by baptizing, by granting reconciliation through the sacraments of penance, by the anointing of the sick, but above all, by the celebration of the Holy Eucharist which is the source and summit of all duties. Priests are also to intercede for God's people through the prayer of the Church, (PO, n.5). Third, to govern God's people as shepherds. The priest of the Church by encouraging and leading the ecclesial community, that is, by gathering "the family of God as a fellowship endowed with the spirit of unity" and leading it in Christ through the spirit of God the Father (PO, n.26). The Church has also treated priestly formation and life in the Code of Canon Law.

IV. Code of Canon Law

The 1917 Code of Canon Law, also referred to as the Pio-Benedictine Code, was the first official comprehensive codification of Latin canon law which was promulgated on 27 May 1917 and took legal effect on 19 May 1918. The code affirmed that the church alone has the proper and exclusive right to form clerics. The 1983 Code of Canon Law affirms its duty to do so and this formation should be integral for as Vatican II affirmed. The 1983 code places the formation of the clergy in the second book of the code of canon law, people of God, under the title "Sacred Ministers or Clerics" (Can. 232-264) which deals with the formation of clerics (Woestman, 1999, p. 89). Consequently, in this context, it refers to the personal formation of the cleric as a member of the people of God. Hence, this Code of Canon Law covers every aspect of the candidate such as spiritual, intellectual, communitarian, human, disciplinary, administrative, prolific, etc. coordinated with the pastoral aim and need. Finally, the 1983 code gives a glimpse of the canonical part of the priestly formation, the formation for the priesthood, and the challenges for the Church.

While drawing up programs for the priestly and religious formation, the code of canon law is the strict discipline of the Catholic Church and it should be followed legally and officially.

V. Priestly Formation in The Light of Church Documents and Encyclicals

The Catholic Church is very much active regarding priests and formation to the priesthood. There have been long lists of decrees, documents, encyclicals, apostolic exhortations regarding the priestly formation and the ministerial life of the priests at different generations and times.

The Popes, the local and regional conferences have also issued important church documents.

5.1 Papal Documents

Many Papal documents have been released on Catholic Religious Formation. This project will focus on four selected documents. These are; Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter on the Celibacy of Priests (*Sacerdotalis Coelibatus*, 1967), Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter (*Veritatis Splendor* 1993). Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter on Reserving Priestly Ordination to men alone (*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*) 1994. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on the relationship between Faith and Reason (*Fides et Ratio* 1998). We have also highlighted two Post Synodal Exhortations on the Consecrated Life. These are; Pope John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Formation of Priests in the circumstances of the present day (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 1992). And Pope John

Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and the world (Vita Consecrata 1996). The Catechism of the Catholic Church is also one of the Church documents which are used as a guiding book for the formation of the priests and the religious men and women.

5.2 Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, (CCC) contains the teachings of the Popes and Councils regarding Holy Orders namely that the priests are trained to be configured to Christ the priest, prophet, and king. After completing the entire seminary program, some priests will, unfortunately, lose focus due to worldly attachments. However, the unworthiness of the priest does not prevent Christ from acting but the faculties of a priest to exercise his ministry can be withdrawn for a just cause, CCC nos.1581 and 1585. In the liturgy of the Church, we see in the priesthood of Aaron and the service of the Levites, a prefiguration of the ordained ministry of the New Covenant, CCC, 1541. This in effect continues to give directives to the way the priest today is to be trained.

5.3 Pope John XXIII

The Second Vatican Council, the 21st ecumenical Council, was called on 25th January 1959, by Pope John XXIII as a means of spiritual renewal for the Church and as an occasion for Christians separated from Rome to join in a search for Christian unity. He intended the Church to train its priests in the understanding of the modern contemporary challenges. In the same year wrote an encyclical *Sacerdoti Nostris Primordia*, (from the beginning of our priesthood) on St John Vianney proposing to the Catholic priests around the world as a model of Christ-loving and Church-loving shepherd, (John XXIII, 1959). He highlighted the extra ordinary virtues of detachment, poverty, chastity, obedience, prayer life, devotion to the Eucharist, personal holiness, and ministry of reconciling penitents in the confessional where St John Vianney often spent 15 hours a day restoring hope to humanity, (Lukwata. J., et al., 2017).

5.4 Pope Paul VI

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, (1975), Pope Paul VI, was aware of the complex process of evangelization in the modern world. He stressed the three methods of preaching the faith; sanctification through prayer, sacrament, and witness. This message is valid for priests today who must support their preaching ministry with an authentic witness.

5.5 Pope John Paul II

In 1990, the 8th Ordinary Synod of Bishops in Rome was dedicated to the theme “The Formation of Priests in Circumstances of the Present Day”. St John Paul II (1992) gathered and presented the fruit of synod discussion and his profound reflections in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (I Will Give You Shepherds). This document presents formation within four strands or areas: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. St John Paul II sees this formation as ongoing even after the ordination, and that the candidate is an agent of his formation. In the exhortation on the *Church in Africa* (Pope John Paul II, 1995), reiterates the importance of nurturing spiritual, intellectual, and human virtues to ensure that priests become effective in contemporary African society, (Lukwata et al., 2017). It was not present in the seminary program before the Second Vatican Council, (Oakley, 2017).

For the priest to be effective in his ministry, the seminary must therefore insist on the four pillars of formation and their finality as well as a sense of the integrated wholeness of the different dimensions of formation. As future ministers, seminarians must be conscious about the fact that people are hungry for Christ; For the priest to be effective in his ministry, the seminary must therefore insist on the four pillars of formation and their finality as well as a sense of the integrated wholeness of the different dimensions of formation. As future ministers,

seminarians must be conscious of the fact that people are hungry for Christ; His Word, and the Eucharist. People look to the priest to satisfy their spiritual needs. They expect the priest to live what he preaches. Indeed, they search for the “*lived Word*” in a priest first because the “*proclaimed Word*” alone does not satisfy them, (Lukwata et al., 2017).

VI. Global Theologians

The topic on the religious formation and the ministerial life of priests has been studied and written and suggestions given by several world-renowned theologians. Some of the challenges that they posit are still real in the life of the priests that belong to the CDHB. These challenges include infidelity to the vows of obedience, chastity, and poverty among others. Some of these theologians we shall highlight here below as their comments are helpful and relevant to this research. Dolan argues that while addressing the seminarians of North America College, made a spiritual reflection on the nature of Priests for the third millennium. In his view, future priests must first be true Christians for them to live the noble priestly virtues of chastity, obedience, poverty, and service. In keeping with Dolan, we should find out whether the church in Kenya has a relevant seminary training program that nurtures the priestly virtues that enhances an effective ministerial life amidst contemporary challenges, (Dolan, 2000).

Rossetti argues that many priests have lost the joy of their vocation. There is a trend nowadays that priests fulfill the bare minimum of their duties necessary to remain in ministries such as the celebration of Mass and other sacramental duties, but afterward, spend the remainder of their quality time in solitary pursuits. The priests are constantly absent from the parish. Rossetti recommends that instead of sinking in despair, priests should live in hope. They should willingly embrace prayer, celibacy, and honesty. The priests should remain focused on their master, Jesus Christ who called them, (Rossetti, 2005). There is also a need for the priests to embrace the ongoing formation program especially those who have actively been involved in the pastoral ministry. The formation will help to check the risk of burnout (Lukwata, et al., 2010).

Cuzzens talks about the scandal of sexual misconducts in North America that were being reported. At the time his book, *The Spirituality of Diocesan Priest*, was written, there was a sharp decline of the vocations to the priesthood, (Cuzzens, 1970). This caused the pastoral ministry of the priest to stagger indeed (Lukwata, et al., 2010). Many priests in Africa are diocesan and hardly anything has been written on their ministry and spirituality. Our study should bring out some useful recommendations so that seminarians will be trained effectively on how to appreciate their sexuality instead of looking at it as taboo. In one of the seminaries, seminarians were advised to go to confession if they touched their private part. The seminarians were warned against sleeping while facing down. By sleeping in that position, they could be accused of the attempted sin of adultery. This kind of knowledge was completely distorted teaching about the virtue of celibacy.

VII. African Theologians

Some of the African Theologians have written on the formation of priests and their ministerial life. For Example, Chipuko, (2010), argues that the Year of the Priests should challenge the priests to recommit themselves and to reawaken their zeal and identity in a climate of secularization. He reiterates that the priests ought to strive always to live as per his duty which is to shepherd God’s people (*gubernare*), sanctification by offering sacrifices (*sanctifier*), and to preach, teach (*docere*). Our research will try to find suggestions for what makes the priest effective in their ministry in modern times amidst the contemporary challenges.

Mukiibi, (2008, p.168), focuses on the sustenance of priests in Uganda. He says that priestly remuneration is a contemporary challenge to the priestly ministry. The token helps the priests to meet their basic needs. The first missionaries had sources of financial support from their countries of origin to facilitate evangelizing tasks in Africa. As a result, they did not bother much about the contributions from the indigenous people. Local priests who have replaced the missionaries in the parishes have gone through stiff challenges in their attempt to solicit funds from local people for pastoral activities and their maintenance.

The majority of the lay Christians could not understand why their indigenous sons were asking them to give financial support to the church whereas missionaries from thousands of miles away did everything for them. Some Christians have ended up questioning the effectiveness of the training and ministerial life of indigenous priests in contrast to the missionaries. The issue of remuneration continues to be a challenge in the context of the Church in Kenya and the CDHB. The Christians in the urban centers are well off and can easily support their priests, unlike the rural setup. In this study, we will find suggestions on how the Church can standardize the priest's remunerations for priests both in the urban and rural setup.

Magesa, (2010), suggests a seminary academic curriculum with a major transformation and transposition of both content and context of studies: from predominantly medieval/scholastic to contemporary African in content and from Europe and American in orientation to the context of Africa. The revolution which Magesa calls a matter of painful major surgery. He, however, acknowledges that the *Optatum Totius* is sufficiently open to this transformation and transposition. I concur, with Professor Magesa in that the training and orientation of the African priests should be exposed to the issues that are proper to the environment and people that they will be ministering to. During my training in the seminary, the courses in the traditional African Heritage were significantly minimal, (Magesa, 2010).

VIII. Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher has demonstrated that Seminary formation implies the whole process of configuration to Christ the Head, Shepherd, Servant, and Spouse which consists in a mystical identification with the person of Jesus, just as it is presented in the Gospels. Historicity and reform throughout the centuries under different forms, structures, and modes enlighten us that our mother Church has been serious about the formation of all those who are called for this sacred vocation to the priesthood. It is imperative that formation for the priesthood ought to be convenient, maturing in faith and morals and every aspect of the candidate's life should be shined, so that people may witness Christ in him and through him and give glory to God.

Secondly, the Church has faced various challenges throughout the centuries of its existence. These challenges include the divisions, the heresies, the scandals, the science and the technological advancements, the formation of the clergy among others. The church authorities have always been inspired to seek solutions to the challenges. To address these challenges, the church has invested on the spiritual, intellectual, pastoral and human formation of its ministers in accordance to the signs of the time and cultural formations.

The formation of the seminarians of the Catholic Diocese of Homa Bay must therefore be conducted according to the context of his diocese and culture amidst the contemporary challenges.

IX. Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods design combining elements of both qualitative and quantitative research. (Kumar, 2014), asserts that the mixed method approach reinforces the accuracy and significance of the researcher's conclusions. He adds that this method provides a holistic picture and reconfirms findings.

This study used questionnaires with closed-ended questions to examine the views of sampled priests and seminarians quantitatively and qualitatively. Interviews using the same items on the questionnaires but with open-ended questions were conducted on purposively selected priests, the Bishop of the CDHB, and Formators.

9.1 Sampling Design

The target population to which this study seeks to generalize its findings within CDHB consists of (70) priests, formators, religious men and women, seminarians, and lay Christians. A sample of (50) was used for this study.

9.2 Sampling Procedure

The Catholic Diocese of Homa Bay Kenya was selected because it targets the intended case study. The study adopted a stratified random sampling technique to stratify the target population into four strata as follows; the priests, the Formators, the seminarians, the religious brothers, religious sisters and the laity.

The researcher employed purposive sampling on the first two of the four categories; thus, all the priests and Formators in the target population that were included in the sample for the study.

9.3 Description of Research Instruments

In collecting data, the researcher needs to establish the most appropriate means of eliciting data from the participants (Mvumbi and Ngumbi, 2015). This study used an interview guide and self-administered questionnaires as the instruments for data collection. The researcher used the interview guide to interview to collect data from the Formators. The other old and young generation of priests filled out self-administered questionnaires. This allowed the researcher to solicit their views and experience on the effect of seminary formation on the ministerial life of priests in contemporary challenges. The questionnaires for this study had closed-ended questions following the Likert scale.

9.4 Research Piloting

The researcher carried out a pilot test on seminarians purposefully selected from Tangaza University College in Karen, Nairobi, Kenya. Data collected was analysed and interpreted to allow the researcher to evaluate the validity and reliability of the instruments before administering them to the sample under study. The measurement instrument (a questionnaire) required self-completion by seminarians with the researcher's assistance. It was important to ensure that the questionnaire items accurately addressed the research questions. The pilot also tested whether the questionnaire was comprehensible and appropriate and that the questions were well defined, clearly understood, and presented invariably. Seminarian information statements and consent forms were also tested for comprehension.

9.5 DATA and Statistics Analysis Procedure.

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative approaches for data analysis. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), note that descriptive statistics allow the researcher to describe scores using a few indicators. IBM SPSS Version 21 used to run descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages to present the quantitative data in form of tables founded on the research objectives. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), affirm that qualitative analysis involves systematically analysing information collected to establish patterns, trends, and relationships. In this study, qualitative data collected from open-ended questions was transcribed, coded, and categorized into themes informed by the research objectives. It was recounted in narrative form along with the quantitative description. The analysis and interpretation of the data was done according to the research questions as explicated in the questionnaires.

Consequently, detailed analysis and discussion was done, allow for a fitting interpretation of data. The convergence of both the quantitative and qualitative data was explained after analysing the quantitative and qualitative data independently. The results were compared against each other to establish whether the findings have any relationship.

9.6 Ethical Considerations

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), attest that research must be carried out by people of integrity; sincerely concerned about the quality of life of their participants and not for personal merit. They also point out that researchers must abide by respective laws that prohibit unethical conduct. In this study, therefore, the researcher sought to expand knowledge honestly and sincerely. Before administering questionnaires and conducting interviews, the researcher obtained all the required documents beforehand. These include an introduction letter from Tangaza University College (CUEA) and a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). An audience with the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Homa Bay was sought to clarify the purpose of the study. The researcher also obtained the informed consent of the participants. According to Wiles (2013), informed consent encompasses: giving clear information to the participants as to what the research involved as well as offering them the prospect of deciding whether to or not to take part. Thus, the researcher allowed the respondents the freedom to respond or not to respond to any questions in the instruments. The participants were also be informed that their participation is always voluntary.

The participants were assured of confidentiality. This implied that identifiable information about individuals collected during the process of research was not disclosed and that the identity of the research participants was protected, (Wiles, 2013, p. 42). Thus, the researcher sought to establish a rapport with the participants to allow them to open up in sharing their thoughts and opinions. The respondents were guaranteed that any information obtained would be used only for academic purposes. Thus, they were requested not to reveal their identity on the research instruments. Upon getting clearance, the researcher interviewed the priests and Formators and distributed the questionnaires to the sampled seminarians and the laity. The purpose of the research was explained during the distribution and interviewing. Throughout the data collection, the researcher strived to abide by relevant steps such as ensuring that data collection was accurate (Mugenda and Mugenda 2003). The researcher informed the respondents of the time for interviewing and filling out the questionnaires to avoid inconveniences. Information gathered was kept carefully for analysis and interpretation.

X. Discussions in Line with Study Objectives

According to The Basic Plan for the Ongoing Formation of Priests,(2001), the formation of Catholic priests, mean “a process of continuous personal growth and development of a man aimed toward the goal of priestly ordination. It is a program of preparation and formation of the whole man in the context of the four areas of Human, Pastoral, Intellectual and Spiritual growth. This formation is supported by the availability of dedicated formators as presented by the respondents that there are few and committed formators.

Even in the presence of few and committed formators, seminarians feel unsafe to share their life history with formators. This may be due to the fact that some seminarians’ way of life may be considered as not acceptable. Formators may also show bias if they are aware of their life history and lack of confidence in seminarians. However, In the light of the challenges faced by the seminarians, it is expected that the bishop, priests and the laity accompany and support them in their formation.

After ordination, some priests say goodbye to the studies and personal spiritual exercise while some continue to take part in them through taking part in short courses and seminars linked to their specializations, and others choose to get more qualifications such as degrees and even postgraduate degrees that are essential in their line of work.

The clergy exhibit positive intellectual qualities as observed after the initial seminary formation. This is in expense of the human and spiritual formation. The grades acquired is more appealing than the meditation and prayer life. This may negatively impact on the poor pastoral ministry and service. Thus, the seminary formation may not satisfy the pastoral needs of the clergy of the Catholic Diocese of Homa Bay. This finding satisfies the first objective of the study which was to understand the effect of the seminary formation and identify what it meant for the clergy of the Catholic Diocese of Homa Bay.

The second objective set out the nature of the ministerial life of a priest of the catholic diocese of Homa Bay. It is a right and duty for every priest to take part in on-going formation. However, it is general view that the clergy are reluctant in participating in on-going formation programmes. It is evident that the seminary provides regular one to one spiritual direction exercises for seminarians. However, after ordination, some priests discard spiritual directors and never take part in spiritual direction exercises.

Never the less, it is acknowledged that there are various parties that contribute to the formation of the clergy. Priests are major advisors, mentors, formators and advocators for each other. Seminarians support their own formation through peer group counselling, prayers, and mutual support of one another. The families of seminarians assist them in moral, spiritual and financial aspects. The religious help in mentorship, companionship, advice, and financial support when required. The parish offers mentorship opportunities, material support, prayer support, education support and it is a home for one's on-going formation.

The third objective identify the contemporary challenges faced by the clergy of the Catholic Diocese of Homa Bay. The major challenge faced by the clergy is that: some priests do not lead their Christians with love; they are rough and dictatorial as suggested strongly by most of the respondents. The other challenge is that some priests are incompetent communicators of the word of God. Some priests are conspicuously absent from the parishes. Some priests fail to observe the evangelical vows betraying their fidelity. The other one is that a good number of priests failing to fulfill their roles well and change their characters after initial formation.

The change in character may be since the person being formed never gives attention to important areas that are vital for the priestly life to be developed. This is due to lack of openness on the part of the seminarian, whereby he goes through formation but without the willingness of being transformed to be prepared well for the mission awaiting him.

The mentality of some of those being ordained is a major contributing factor. Some think that they have now grabbed what was almost being taken away from them. They forget about cherishing their vocation but concentrate on the revenge mission, which ends up making them more miserable. Another factor is the love for money more than their ministry. This trend leads to poor service delivery, unnecessary complaints, dishonesty and having wrong priorities. Peer influence is another contributing factor. This leads to some falling in the trap of alcoholism, entertaining risky relationships, etc. Some want luxurious life. This ends up bringing collision among priests and the Christians they serve.

High expectations, which are never fulfilled, are major causes of the change of character after one is ordained. Some of the priests might have been good academically and thought that immediately after ordination they would be sent for further studies. When this expectation is not met, some start giving up in their pastoral ministry or even start indulging themselves into activities which are not compatible with their calling. Still on high expectations is the type of appointments after one has been ordained. During the appointment you may find that the one who thought that he was very clever academically and loved by the bishop, is appointed to a financially poor parish whereas one who looked weak academically is put in a well-to-do parish. Some might be appointed to work with priests whom they had crossed before. Some may be discouraged by their brother priests.

Some are normally mishandled by their fellow priests whom they are sent to work with. They are made to work under very strict rules and receive little or no support morally, materially, and spiritually.

Change of character might also be due to forces outside the seminary, for example, in the pastoral field. Seminarians and young clergy are sent for pastoral work in parishes and other church institutions, whereby some of them copy bad examples shown by the clergy who are supposed to be their role models. They become vulnerable and give up most of what they had learnt and start to embrace the bad example of those they are working under, which seems more attractive and pleasurable.

The lesser challenges acknowledged are the lack of priests failing to administer the sacraments. The last least felt challenge is the clergy being poor administrators, with poor managerial skills and very few are unable to deliver administration skills effectively contributes to the challenges by stating that:

Some of the major challenges are finance, lack of qualified personnel, and unwillingness of some of the clergy to take part in on-going formation programs. The major challenge is that the seminarians we now have some pose a challenge because they have a keen interest in priesthood but are not keen with what priesthood is all about. They do not want to take the package that goes with priesthood. Their spiritual dimension, e.g., the area of prayer is wanting.

The intellectual formation is also wanting. Seminarians, deacons, and priests have no interest in developing a reading culture. This might be because of modern technology, particularly cell phones, which seem to have taken over community life. The concentration now is mainly on the phone.

In terms of the capability of the person coming forward to be formed can pose a challenge. If the person himself is not one who can open up to formation, then this already becomes a challenge. Selection of candidates for priesthood must be carefully carried out so that only suitable candidates are chosen. Family members in some cases push their sons to join the seminary and even after ordination demand financial support. This makes them vulnerable to any danger coming in their way.

The foundation of faith in the candidate for priesthood is very important. If the faith is narrow, then this can cause many challenges. The intellectual dimension is a very important area of formation since its absence can paralyze the other three dimensions. The main challenge here is that after ordination, some priests relax and give up anything to do with studies and even develop a negative attitude towards it. Some even when approached by the bishop to go for further studies perceive it as punishment or a plan to remove him from well to do parish. Once the priests forget the value of continuous development in the intellectual dimension then he stagnates in all other areas.

The pastoral dimension has a very close relationship with the human dimension which is the foundation of priestly life. Pastoral dimension will always be fruitful if a human being is well formed. But we have cases where some priests find it hard to relate well with Christians. They do not foster dialogue. Such trends make it difficult for the pastoral dimension to be fruitful. Priests should always remember that they are human beings and should treat other people in a human way (Father R, 2022).

10.1 Recommendations

First, there is urgent need to review Seminary and post-Seminary formation programs. Seminary formation programs should be evaluated periodically, reviewed, and upgraded to meet current needs of the Church. Apart from the traditional philosophical and theological courses, spiritual, moral, and pastoral formation programmes should be emphasized to empower candidates for the Catholic priesthood.

Second, due emphasis should be given in the various theological disciplines to the topic of marriage and the family. There should be interdisciplinary approaches to priestly formation so that seminarians understand modern pastoral issues affecting the laity. For example, the curriculum could be reorganized so that the topic of the family becomes an important dimension of pastoral and intellectual formation in all major seminaries in Africa, in general, and Kenya in particular.

Third, diversification of the team of formators is to be encouraged. Formators should be qualified and outstanding not only for their intellectual abilities, but also, for their human, pastoral zeal, moral and spiritual qualities.

Fourth, priests who have worked for over ten years after their ordination should, as a matter of diocesan policy, be given the opportunity, time, and resources to go for further studies or sabbatical leave. This will help in avoiding the burn out that priests experience in their ministry.

Fifth, the seminarians should be trained and encouraged to value manual work, use, and manage local resources to create wealth as opposed to begging and depending on the offertory and stipends from Europe and from

individual wealthy parishioners. Some priests have been known to align themselves with the rich while ignoring the poor.

Sixth, the lay faithful and the religious men and women should be prepared for collaborative ministry and to pray daily for their priests. They should evoke and challenge priests as well as openly dialogue with them concerning the nature, identity, and giftedness of the Catholic priesthood, in which the laity also share in some way through baptism and confirmation. The laity should assist their priests in all possible ways to effectively carry out their mandate and ministries in Homa Bay Diocese. The study also offers five related suggestions.

10.2 Suggestions

First, the following human formation qualities ought to be fostered in seminary program: freedom, openness, honesty and flexibility, joy and inner peace, generosity and justice, personal maturity, interpersonal skills, common sense, aptitude for ministry, and growth in moral sensibility and character. The seminarians are to esteem and cultivate virtues that are most valued by people and commended for the minister of Christ. Among these are sincerity, a keen concern for justice, a spirit of poverty, fidelity to one's promises, good manners, modesty in conversation joined with charity.

Second, there should be uniform remuneration for all priests from different dioceses and regions. The priests from dioceses in the cities are "swimming" in massive riches whilst the priests from the villages are languishing in abject poverty. In the history of the Catholic Church, richer churches have always supported the poorer ones. The Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops (KCCB) can design a policy around this matter. If support is given to local churches from other churches outside Kenya, KCCB can also do the same internally.

Third, the problem of tribalism should be discouraged. Priests tend to favor the political leaders from their tribes even at the pulpits during the Sunday liturgy celebrations. It is not prudent for pastors to declare publicly their support for politicians of their choice or worse still, from their own ethnic communities. This is a matter that should be handled well during the formation period.

Fourth, spiritual direction should be improved. Many Christians complain that many of their priests have neglected their spiritual exercises. A regular meeting (at least once a month) with an approved spiritual director is an essential part of spiritual formation of priests. Spirituality of the priest and integration needed for growth in sanctity and virtue even after the ordination, is needed as a good example for Christians. Ongoing spiritual Formation is, therefore critical in the life of priests. Like all other studies, this particular research did not address all matters pertaining to the lives of Catholic priests. Other areas that may need future studies are still there.

10.3 Areas of Future Studies

It may interest the bishops of Kenya and the seminary formators to have results from a study looking into the best curriculum that would suit the priest of today and tomorrow. This study was more focusing in the life of the priest than on the programme. Another possible area of study would a comparative study on the formation programmes in Kenya and others outside of Africa. Another related study could be carried out on religious brothers and sisters who are the very first collaborators with the priests.

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